

REMARKS OF CAROLINE D. GABEL
INNOVATIVE SHORT-TERM FUNDING FOR FIELD
CONSERVATION

Thursday, March 6, 2011, afternoon session

It is a pleasure to be among so many field conservation scientists, who have been my heroes since reading Jane Goodall's books many years ago. I have learned well the value of field research and have been a funder starting with a trip to Borneo in 1991 with Birute Galdikas and Earthwatch. And I'm impressed with the work of my colleagues here on the dais, with some of whom I share partners.

I've had a long-term relationship with Janine Brown and Brian Gratwicke of National Zoo's Smithsonian Conservation Biodiversity Institute; the National Aquarium in Baltimore, especially its Marine Animal Rescue Program; and the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program here at Woodland Park.

I have one or two ideas to add to the strategies described so fully and elegantly by my colleagues, and my partners have tried some of them. But mine is a different story, told from a different perspective – that of a small, personal foundation dedicated to conservation. I also serve on a number of nonprofit boards, and so am a getter as well as a giver. And I'm not alone, as I'll explain later.

I retired in 1999 after 30 years with the all-time greatest non-profit in the world – the US Congress where I was a staffer -- and established The Shared Earth Foundation. Its central tenet is that we have the responsibility to share the Earth with our fellow creatures. To that end, I support groups working with endangered species, habitat protection, and biodiversity.

The Shared Earth Foundation works across the globe, from Tree Kangaroos in Papua New Guinea to orangutans, elephants, rhinos and sun bears in Borneo, the entire Himalayan range of the Snow Leopard, lions in

Africa, guanacos in Bolivia, Darwin's frog in Chile, many amphibians in Panama, jaguars in Mexico and Ecuador, wolverines in our Southwest, as well as organizations that protect them through legislation, advocacy and lawsuits, including the lawsuit by Defenders of Wildlife to relist the wolf in the West.

We work with species. We give seed money, our own risk investment. And we do long-term funding.

We are still with some of our partners. I have resources; my partners have know-how, and work closely with the local people. We have a deal.

With field conservation partners, we favor but do not demand three priorities: research, betterment of life for the local people, and training.

I support field research for a number of purposes. Obviously, you have to know about the critter. If you saw Bear Trek last night you met Wong. He's the only scientist in the world studying sun bears. I support research for political reasons, like Bruce Beiler's transects down the mountains of Papua New Guinea to pile up the evidence on climate change. Let us hope that some day our politicians will look at these data. And I support it for – and I hate this word – adaptation to climate change. And in case we do make it through E. O. Wilson's bottleneck, we'll need lots of research to return all the critters to their rightful places.

I learned from Birute Galdikas, on my first trip into the field way back in 1991, that research, though critical, is not enough. While we were observing orangutans, illegal loggers were bringing the forest down around our heads. More and more, I get the panicked feeling that there's no time left for research, it's too late, let's just grab what we know and go.

I also learned in Borneo that you can't keep the local people out of the forest, can't get them to stop hunting or logging, unless they get greater benefit from the critter alive than as dinner, collateral damage or, worse, a product for illicit trade. It may not take much of an improvement – in fact, it's amazing how little they will sometimes accept in exchange for not damaging their homeland – they get it even if people in this country don't.

It occurs to me that I'm quite schizophrenic about this – I say work with the folks abroad, but throw the book at the cattlemen in the West or the watermen on the Chesapeake Bay if they violate protective laws. I wish there were a way to convince Americans of what other peoples know intrinsically; or a conflict toolbox that would work in this country.

The third thing I look for is training -- again giving the local people a stake, a pride in accomplishment, a role and responsibility -- to enable a project to continue, to institutionalize the work and the mission, to begin to hand it over.

Three of my long-term partners are here at this conference – Lisa Dabek and the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program here at the Woodland Park Zoo; Rod Jackson, of the Snow Leopard Conservancy; and Marc Ancrenaz of HUTAN, Sabah, Malaysian Borneo. I intend to stay with these programs.

I'm sure you're familiar with their research work. They also work closely with the indigenous peoples: Lisa has brought education and medical care, and self-governance, to the YUS people of New Guinea, and they are dedicated to TK conservation. Marc and HUTAN have created Red Ape Encounter, an eco-tourism company run by, and for the benefit of, the OrangSungai, or River People, along the Kinabatangan River. And Rod Jackson brings hard cash through homestays for ecotourists; or cat-proof corrals for the people's goats and sheep.

I've collaborated with the Atlanta Botanical Garden and its Darwin's Frog project in Chile. It combined research, conservation and training elements. Now the Botanical Garden has been able to hand the project over to the Santiago Zoo and the Chileans.

My partners and I have tried some innovative approaches. We've held PES conferences, brought in experts to survey some of the forests of Sabah, supported a biobank, and an ecotrading enterprise on the Chesapeake Bay. I can't say that any of these have been a rousing success, but perhaps it's just the current world economy.

On the grand scale I work with The Nature Conservancy/Maryland Chapter to support TNC's efforts to guide industry in siting their extractive enterprises. The Nature Conservancy works with local and national governments, and corporations and the people, to create Water Funds in Colombia and Ecuador, under which cities at the river mouths buy the water, and the money goes back to preserve and expand the watershed in a – hopefully – never-ending cycle. They have had some success, are still trying to get the cattlemen on board at the project I visited. I have high hopes for this approach.

I chair a group called Rachel's Network after Rachel Carson. We are a group of slightly under 100 women whose passion is the environment in all its aspects. And to put us in perspective, at least before the recession, we collectively gave \$500 million a year to environmental and other causes, out of a base of over \$8 billion. And that's only from our foundations. It doesn't count the amounts we give personally, which are also substantial. I'm not bragging, just pointing out that passion has power.

We bill ourselves as "Impassioned leaders and agents of change dedicated to stewardship of the Earth". The accent is on impassioned. And the better I get to know these women, the more I realize how their passion drives their giving, whether they are individual donors, single heads of foundations like me, or have to deal with steely-eyed executive directors and other trustees or, worse, family members, with different interests.

You have passion for your work. As Dr. Bonner said during his opening remarks, let your passion show when you talk to a prospective supporter. Many of you know George Rabb, with whom I serve on the Defenders of Wildlife board. He has generated an enormous amount of support for amphibians, simply by caring so much about them, and letting it show.

I believe, at least for the world in which I work, that the real secret to keeping your supporters long-term is no secret. The most effective is, for me at least, the oldest, least innovative -- stay close to your partners. I don't need to be schmoozed for schmoozing's sake, but if a partner ignores me I think

either that I'm not important, or that there's something very wrong with the organization; that it's not as effective as it should be. In either case, perhaps my support could be better placed elsewhere.

Take your donors to the field. Show them firsthand what you are doing. Nothing beats staring at a snow leopard across a small river, who watched us for an hour, and then fell asleep--because he knew he was safe where the SLC works. For you the hard part is over. I'm already a convert. I'll certainly stick with the project, may see the need for more if you point it out to me.

Make sure your Zoo or Aquarium is on target and strongly supporting your mission. Get close, or stay close to your Development Director. The ties I've developed with the National Zoo and the National Aquarium came through their development staff, who care deeply about the creatures under their institution's care, and brought the project people to meet me. I brought a friend along to see the cold-stunned turtles at the National Aquarium. Thanks to the staff's enthusiasm, she fell in love with the turtles also, and is now a supporter in her own right.

I mentioned that you need the commitment of the people on the ground.

I work with a group in Sabah, on the Lower Kinabatangan River, who decided to plant trees, to restore their degraded forests so that the animals – orangutans, elephants, monkeys, hornbills – would return to their damaged area. They got private funding, and support from American Forests, and planted trees. Then the Sabahan Forestry Ministry saw their work, and hired them on a long-term tree-planting program, restoring the forests of Sabah. Together with their ecotourism enterprise, MESCOT is well on its way to being self-sustaining.

Enlist the support of your host government. Sabah is a wonderful place to work because the government is with us. And the Tourism Minister REALLY understands the need for conservation, as the base for the tourist industry. People come to Sabah to see animals. He helped us raise substantial support for, first, a Sun Bear Sanctuary, then a Rhino refuge. He gave his Ministry's money, and leaned heavily on the major industries in Sabah, who

reluctantly, or not,ponied up and helped us meet and surpass our goals at both fund raisers. Not all governments are friendly, in fact few are, but it's worth a try, and rich rewards if you can convince your hosts that it's in their interest as well.

One of the purposes of this session, I know, is to help your programs become self-sustaining, with endowments, enterprise, other great and innovative approaches.

But until endangered and all species are recognized as intrinsically valuable, inherently payingtheir own way; until ecosystem services are appreciated enough for fair compensation; until short-term destruction ceases to be more profitable than long-term conservation of resources – until all peoples believe, and act on the belief, that we really do have a responsibility to share the Earth with our fellow creatures and their habitats – you will have to secure some of your support through plain old-fashioned fund-raising.

My presentation may seem to be all about me, and for that I beg forgiveness. But there are a lot of people like me out there – your current and future providers of whatever type of sustained funding you seek.I hope my perspective has been helpful. Whether you're talking to an individual, a group, or a foundation large or small, or even a corporation, ultimately you're appealing to human beings and their passions. You just have to make sure your passion inspires theirs. Because the Earth desperately needs your work.

Thank you.