

# Karl Ruf

## *In Memoriam*

It is with great sadness and loss, that I must report the tragic death of three of Gilman International Conservation's most dedicated field conservationists who have been with the Okapi Project since 1987.

Karl Ruf, Director: GIC Okapi Project, Kambale Saambili, Director of Research and Logistical Coordinator for the Okapi Project and Jean Nlamba: Okapi Project Co-Director, Coordinator of World Heritage Sites in Eastern Congo for UNESCO; were all killed in an automobile accident in Mburra, Uganda on Sunday afternoon, December 8, 2002. They were returning from a very dangerous mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo where they met with rebel leaders in control of armies fighting in and around the Okapi Wildlife Reserve. They were lobbying for respect of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve boundaries and intervention to control the looting and killing by undisciplined troops. The situation in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo is the worst it has been since the war started in 1997. Karl, Jean, and Kambale could not stand by and let the Okapi Wildlife Reserve be overrun by rebel armies. Karl's last words to me were , " I cannot do nothing! I must try and convince the military leaders to help us protect all the wildlife of the Ituri!"

Jean Nlamba leaves behind a wife and six children in Kinshasa. Kambale Saambili leaves behind a wife and three children in Kampala, Uganda, who must now move back to the Democratic Republic of Congo as Kambale was in Uganda on a student visa. Karl Ruf leaves behind his wife and partner, Rosmarie, who worked side by side with him over the last 25 years to conserve wildlife in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

All these families will need additional help and support to get through these already difficult times. We are creating a family support fund at White Oak Conservation Center to help fund basic housing, food, education, and health care for the families of these dedicated conservationists. Your tax-deductible donation can be sent to Gilman International

Conservation in care of White Oak Conservation Center at 3823 Owens Road, Yulee, Florida, 32097.

There will be a service for Karl Ruf in Switzerland as soon as that can be arranged. When Rosmarie returns to the United States, we will have a special memorial service for Karl at White Oak and you will be notified.

On behalf of all the GIC Staff, I thank you for your ongoing support of okapi conservation in the Congo and ask for your continued help to overcome this great loss of our very dear friends. Gilman International Conservation will be rededicating its efforts in memory of Karl, Jean and Kambale to protect and preserve the remarkable Ituri home of the okapi, Mbuti Pygmies, and many more forest species for all the people of the world.

**John Lukas, Gilman International Conservation**

### **SPEECH GIVEN BY KARL AT THE IZE CONFERENCE 2000, Guadalajara, Mexico**

I must apologize for taking this time from the regular meeting schedule, I know your time is very valuable. I had not planned to give a speech at this conference so I do not have any slides, diagrams or overheads to show you. However, after being with you for several days, I feel the need to speak to you from my heart.

First, I must admit that I am not a Zoo Educator. I do not have a University background. You know what I am? I am a butcher! Yes, I know how to butcher cows and pigs and I know how to make wonderful, tasty sausages.

But then, I worked for 10 years as a zoo keeper, mainly with Elephants and Gorillas and I dreamed of working in a field project to help save the wild habitats for these animals. Today, I am Project Director of Gilman International Conservation. My dream became true.

But, I have another dream!

On Wednesday, I participated in a workshop, lead by Angela Hernandez, where she demonstrated the interdependence of eco-systems in the oceans. She used a thin rope, held by 12 people and as soon as one single person let go of the rope, the whole system collapsed.

South America, Central America, North America, Europe, Asia and Australia, all these Continents are represented in this room. If we would demonstrate this same interdependence between the Continents, we would soon find out that the largest and one of the most important pieces is missing: AFRICA!

Jambo Rafiki! Mbote Nabiso! Bonjour mon ami! I miss these greetings and I miss sharing this wonderful experience with our friends from Africa who were not able to be here in Mexico.

Yes, we had sponsors from two institutions for Marcel Enckoto and Peter, two guys many of you know very well. Unfortunately, they could not get a visa to enter the country. Mexico is not the only country that makes it difficult for Africans to enter their country, so does the United States and many countries in Europe. However, if we would have sponsorship for people of other nationalities working in Africa, I am convinced that someone in this room would be from that Continent.

And let me tell you, it makes a big difference to participate at the IZE meeting.

Six years ago, I went with Marcel to the IZE conference in Los Angeles. Marcel is not a Zoo Educator. I hired him off an Italian road construction company, where he worked as an accountant. What he learned from YOU in Los Angeles, Copenhagen and Taipei, he brought back to the Okapi Wildlife Reserve in Congo, and today, Marcel is the leader of the Education team which contains 12 Educators. He is also Chairman of AZOREN. I am very, very proud to say that we have one of the best education programs on the whole African continent thanks to Marcel and thanks to YOU, for all he learned at the different IZE meetings.

You all know the terrible story about the bushmeat

crisis which has so badly increased over the last five years in Africa. Elephants, Gorillas, Chimpanzees, Antelopes, Birds, thousands of kilograms of bushmeat changes hands every day. About 180,000 people, hired by logging companies, eat bushmeat every day! In war zones, thousands of soldiers eat bushmeat as their daily rations. Gorilla meat is served as a delicacy by some African leaders when they have parties for their wealthy friends and neighboring dignitaries.

I blame it on Conservation Education which is non existent for 99% of the whole African Population.

YOU, zoo educators made a big difference in your institution. I am sure that the coming generations, like those young people sitting there: Jenner, Edgar, Jose, Norma, Diana, Karina, Sandra, Adriana, Luis, Norma Elizabeth and Maria, will make a difference for the environment in YOUR country thanks to all the wonderful Education programs you have in YOUR zoos.

**BUT CAN THEY MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN AFRICA? Look into their eyes and ask yourself: They understand the importance of Conservation and they like Snakes, Elephants, Gorillas, Spiders, Birds and Butterfly's, but CAN THEY STOP THE KILLING IN AFRICA?**

**NO!**

As long as the African children and the parents do not have access to education programs like you have in YOUR zoo, the killing goes on. **WITHOUT EDUCATION, there is NO CONSERVATION!**

I told you at the beginning that I had another dream: Let me share it with you now. My dream is **THAT THIS ORGANIZATION, IZE, HELPS THE AFRICAN CHILD AND THE ADULTS IN CONSERVATION EDUCATION WITH THE SAME EFFORT AND DEDICATION YOU DO FOR YOUR OWN PEOPLE!**

**HELP ME, THAT THIS DREAM BECOMES TRUE.**

Thank you.

Karl Ruf