

The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

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Dear Sirs,

I have just learned, with deep concern, about the intention to send two African elephants from the Philadelphia Zoo to the International Conservation Centre in Pennsylvania for supposed breeding purposes. As someone who was had a very intimate affiliation with African elephants for over 50 years of my life, both in a captive and wild situation, and who has hand-reared over 100 orphaned infant African elephant calves in my time, and successfully returned them to wild herds in a Protected National Park the size of Michigan State when grown, I feel competent to raise the following issues regarding the breeding in captivity of African elephants. Our work can be viewed on www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org and in fact has been portrayed three times on the CBS 60 Minutes Programme and shown worldwide on the BBC Series Elephant Diaries.

It is my opinion that trying to breed elephants in captivity serves no conservation purpose whatsoever, and claiming that it does merely confuses the public. The offspring of those breeding captives are actually destined for a life imprisonment in Zoos and Circuses for entertainment and financial gain, brutally "trained" by the use of Bull Hooks to prod and beat them into submission, and who usually end up psychotic and dangerous, often ending up killing their Keepers, which is something very un-elephant like to do without just cause. Elephants are essentially extremely gentle by nature. They are also highly intelligent and sophisticated who duplicate us humans in terms of emotion, age progression and longevity under natural conditions but whose life is understandably shortened by captivity and life imprisonment. It has been proven that elephants have a memory that surpasses that of a human, and other attributes that we humans do not possess, for instance the ability of infrasound, detecting seismic sound through their feet, and from my long and very intimate rearing of their orphaned young, also the powers of telepathy. These are animals that should not be confined because they need far more space than it is possible to give them under any artificial circumstances, and they need companionship, friends and family just as we humans do. Elephants cross international boundaries and walk hundreds, if not thousands of miles in their long range migrations. For instance our orphaned bull aged 10 years walked 100 miles in a day, turned round and walked another 120 miles the next, searching for his favourite Keeper!

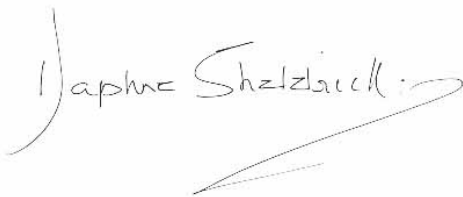
The use of bullhooks to beat elephants into submission and make them too fearful to disobey commands (so-called training) is extremely cruel and should be outlawed in this modern day and age when Animal Welfare is a concern of all caring people. Their skin is sensitive, responding even to the touch of just a feather. Keeping elephants in captivity does not serve conservation, and nor is it educational for people to view a miserable captive which can be likened to keeping a human being in a cupboard for life. Consider this, the worst possible punishment we impose on wrongdoers in our own society is life imprisonment, and now in this age of technology and

Television, when it is possible for view elephants enjoying a quality of life under natural wild conditions, to my mind is unacceptable.

I have pioneered the complex rehabilitation of African elephants, reared as orphans in captivity, whose natural elephant family has to be replaced by a human family of dedicated Keepers, who treat them only with compassion, kindness and care, and discipline them as the elephant do themselves, merely with a shove and isolation for a short time away from the main group, before welcoming them back again with joy. At any age an elephant duplicates its human counterpart, so the rehabilitation is a process that can span 10 years and more. Unlike us, elephants are born with a genetic memory which must be honed by exposure to a wild and natural situation as the elephant grows up until the animal has made friends amongst an established wild community and is confident enough to leave its human family and make the transition. By about the age of 10 years an elephant also finds its human family rather dull compared to elephant friends – unable, for instance, to cover 100 miles in a day. The orphaned elephants are usually with us for at least 10 years, walking in the bush with their Keepers, mingling with wild elephants at will (the Keepers sitting under a bush keeping a safe distance) forming bonds of friendship until eventually having made friends with others and finding them more interesting than their human family, they make the transition in a time of their choosing, dependent upon how well an orphan can remember its elephant family, if at all, as some are orphaned too young to remember. Many of our orphans return to keep in touch with their Keepers when wild, even bringing back wild-born young to proudly show their human friends. The few elephants that we have received who have previously been confined in a Zoo-type situation have **never** chosen to return and that surely says a lot.

I urge the Philadelphia City Council to pay heed to these truths, and consider the question of captive breeding very carefully and very seriously, bearing in mind that most good European Zoos no long keep elephants for the very reasons mentioned above. As a world Leader, surely it is time that America did the same, making amends to its many captive elephants by at least allowing them some freedom in a recognized Elephant Sanctuary that can offer them more space, and the companionship of others and display to the general public, instead of a miserable captive, elephants enjoying **a quality of life under natural conditions**, on a big screen.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daphne Shelldrick". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Dr. Dame Daphne Shelldrick DBE MBE MBS DVMS
1992 UNEP Global 500 Laureate and Winner of the 2000 BBC Lifetime Achievement Award ‘

