

I have chosen to devote my life to being a Wildlife Warrior, speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves. Being a Wildlife Warrior means to dedicate your life to making the world a better place for future generations.

Often when people hear the word 'conservation' they think of little woodland creatures. Actually, conservation is ultimately about us: people.

I believe that most problems in the world today, such as climate change, stem from one immense problem which seems to be the 'elephant in the room' that no-one wants to talk about. This problem is our ever expanding human population. We are experiencing Earth's sixth mass extinction right now. Keep in mind that the previous five were caused by things like asteroid impacts or volcanic eruptions.

I once had a friend who lived to be 104 years old. Ruth was a remarkable woman who experienced so much in her life time. When she was born there was no such thing as sliced bread, zippers or even plastic. Ruth did not see a car until she was ten years old. However, to me the most astonishing fact is that when Ruth was born there were 1.5 billion people on the planet. Ruth died a few years ago at age 104 and today there are over 7 billion people on the planet. In one woman's lifetime, the human population increased by more than 5 billion people. These are truly overwhelming figures.

I must ask the question, how is it possible that our fragile planet can sustain these masses of people?

Think of it this way. Pretend for a moment that I'm having a party, inviting 15 of my closest friends. I've rented a room big enough to fit 15 people, I've bought 15 sandwiches for each of my friends to eat, and I have put together 15 party bags, one for each friend.

My party is about to start, and I hear a knock at the door. My friends are here! Only, when I open the door, 70 of my friends are standing there wanting to come to the party!

What do I do?

My room is only big enough to fit 15, with 70 we won't have any room to move and dance. I don't have enough food. Do I divide the sandwiches among the 70 people? But then everyone will still be hungry. What about the party bags? Do I

only give the party bags out to my closest friends? Isn't that unfair to everyone else?

THAT is the crisis facing mother earth today.

She only invited 1.5 billion people to the party, but 7 billion showed up. In fact as I'm writing this about another 150 people have been born. Shocking isn't it? An average of 150 people is born. Every. One. Minute.

This means, every day approximately 489,600 people are born.

How can the poor have any improved lifestyles with more people to share fewer resources?

These are alarming figures as earth only has so many resources and cannot keep up with our ever growing population.

Now, I'm not saying that there is any one answer. This is an extremely delicate topic and one certainly not to be taken lightly. I'm just suggesting that perhaps this is an issue we should start discussing as a society.

Maybe family planning is one solution. Some women don't get the freedom of choosing whether they want many children or not. Surely when these women are living on \$1.00 a day it would be easier to feed 5 children than 10.

I want our mother earth to have clean air, unpolluted drinking water and an abundance of wildlife forever. If you want a beautiful world for your children, we must all start taking action now, to create change. If we don't start changing our ways soon, there'll be nothing left for my generation, and the generations after me.

Everyone can help. We all have a voice and can take a stand. Even small things like planting a tree can help.

One of the greatest messages my family and I stand up for is the non-consumptive use of wildlife. We do not want to see our wildlife like crocodiles, kangaroos and sharks being eaten. If we have cows and pigs and chickens that can be sustainably farmed we should not be consuming our native wildlife. We want to encourage everyone to never purchase any wildlife products. If you enter a shop and see them selling shark fin soup on the menu, then tell the manager why you can never eat there again, and leave. It is as simple as that. When the buying stops, the killing can too.

As an ambassador for Wildlife Warriors I'm also very blessed to be involved with many conservation projects around the world. We support anti-poaching patrols in Sumatra for orangutans, and tigers; we have a partnership with Cheetah Outreach in South Africa protecting cheetahs and farmers cattle, Asian elephant conservation in Cambodia and rhino conservation in Kenya. Just to name a few.

Australia Zoo is also home to the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, first started back in 2004 by my mum and dad in memory of my grandmother, Lyn Irwin who was a compassionate and dedicated wildlife carer. The Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and last year alone treated 7, 515 sick and injured animals. Some of these animals include koalas, native birds, all kinds of reptiles and even sea turtles. Without the kind donations from the public and help from Australia Zoo, we couldn't continue to save so many precious lives.

I'm a believer in 'kid empowerment'. As kids we are the next voters, the next decision makers and the next generation to be making a difference on our planet.

I believe that each of us, young or old is in a wonderful position to be able to effect change on our planet, before it's too late.

So be the change you wish to see in the world.