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## KATIE LOSEY, CONSERVATION CATALYST FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

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rench children's author Jean de Brunhoff and A.A. Milne are responsible for introducing many young readers to Babar, the little elephant whose mother is killed by a hunter leaving him to escape the jungle. Forced to fend for himself, he travels the world, has many adventures and shares his knowledge with other elephants so that they can rise up and leave the jungle and become more civilized. There are critics who claim that these stories are an allegory of French colonization, and while this may be



true, they also serve a purpose in creating interest and affection for elephants in young children.

The plight of elephants is heartbreaking. The insatiable demand for ivory has led to poaching on horrific levels leaving these magnificent creatures to die painful deaths and their young orphaned and traumatized. The ivory trade remains strong while politicians and police are slow to enforce punishment for crimes.

Khalil Gibran eloquently said, “You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.” There are so many ways in which we can give back and make a difference, yet for many of us it’s overwhelming to know where to begin and how to make time for it.

Katie Losey leads by example and illustrates how we can follow our passions and make an impact through dedication and resourcefulness. I recently met with Katie after her presentation at the New York Public Library on the intersection of art and conservation. I was impressed by her words and inspired by her compassion for these remarkable animals.

She is a true global citizen who spent a decade as the director of marketing with an experiential travel company. She has explored the ancient jungles of Borneo, Southern Africa and the wilds of Wyoming. Her wildlife experiences include swimming with sharks in remote Cuban waters, meeting with mountain gorillas and their protectors

(many former poachers) and witnessing the delicate restoration of the American Prairie and life in the American West. Her efforts are educational, far reaching and fulfilling.

Katie’s current collaborative undertaking is The Elephant Map Project, which she describes as “A





unique cocktail of art, science, cartography, gumption and effort created with the talented cartographer Connie Brown. We were very clear about our intentions when setting off on this project. The map is our effort to connect others to an elephant's world and to create new ways of building hope. This project helps to create more individuals who are compelled to preserve what we have left, and has garnered the attention and participation of renowned scientists, leading conservationists, recognized artists and poets and perhaps the most important group, children, the world's change makers."

Up close it's a beautiful and insightful work of art, which I find very impressive and emotive. I asked Katie what she envisioned when she started the project and her reply was heartfelt,

"Connie and I wanted this to be a beautiful map that lured others in, and we wanted this educational tool to appeal to all groups, from children and CEOs to teachers and grandparents. We wanted to illustrate the daily life of an elephant and how they experience compassion, grief, anger, joy—emotions that are ingrained in the daily rhythm of their lives, and ours. We illuminate how infinite lands and the iconic creatures that live in them are just the opposite: they are fragile and finite and of course we wanted to impact the future change makers, children, and raise funds to support boots on the ground conservation work and give exposure to this important story."

I personally believe we all have a catalyst for embarking on a new path, be it work, school and relationships and wondered what was behind Katie's determination to help this project?

"I have always been enchanted by elephants, but it was reading a National Geographic article by Jennifer Hile that changed everything. She wrote about the plight of Asian elephants and featured the Elephant Nature Park in northern Thailand, essentially a sanctuary for abused and neglected elephants. Months later I quit my desk job and was floating down rivers on bamboo rafts helping the founder, Lek Chailert, and her team. Experiences like this have cemented my love for these remarkable creatures.

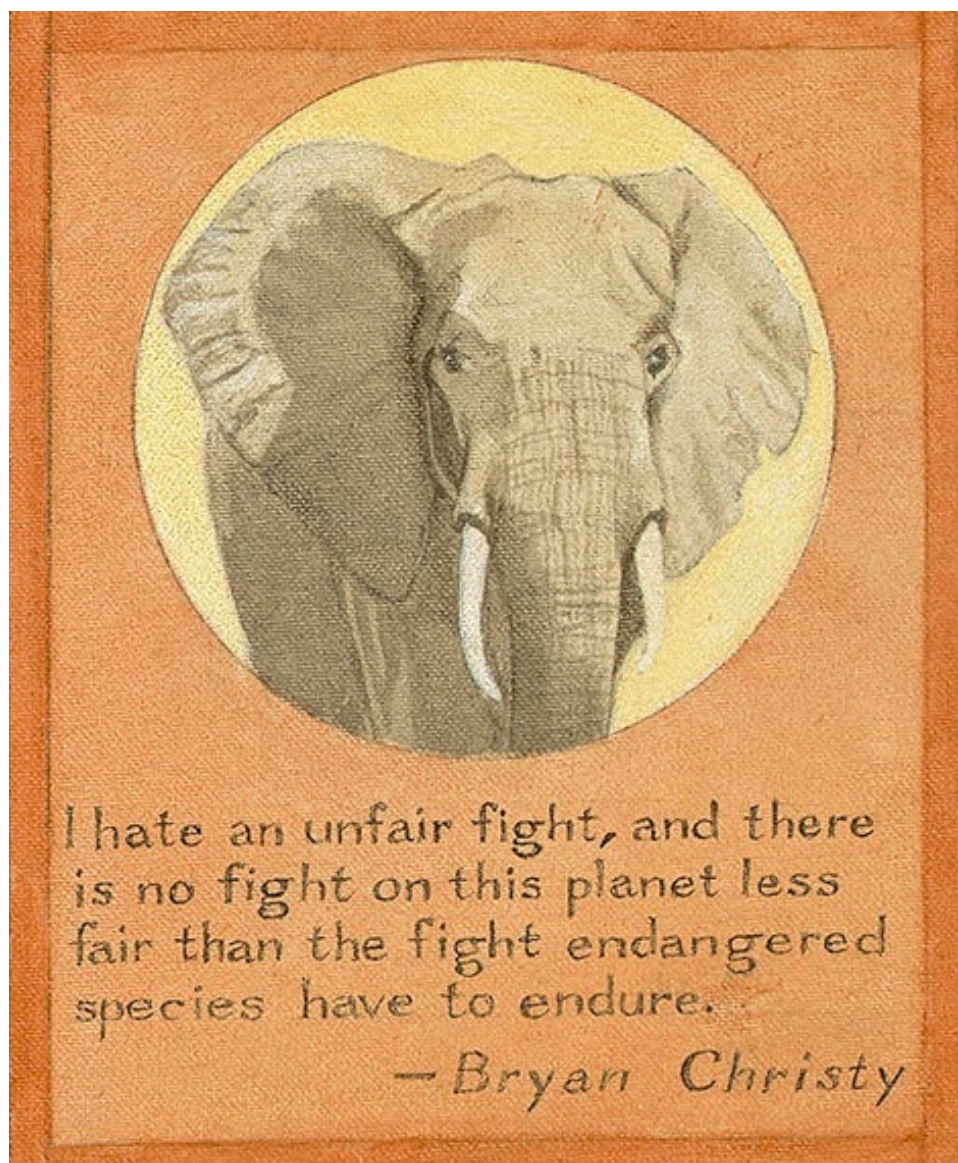




I'm a strong believer in the connection between sensitive travel and conservation—first-hand experiences stick with us and are a conservation catalyst.”

Education and public awareness is paramount for the survival of elephants. I learned from Katie that, “Elephants plant trees with their feet and are not only the soul of Africa, but the gardeners and architects too. Matriarchs anchor the family helping create bonds that keep families alive and her leadership affects all aspects of family life. They are walking memory banks—vital information passed along to their family. They can remember watering holes from decades earlier and their family depends on them for this knowledge—so when an older elephant is killed, her survival skills go with her—reverberating throughout that family and the species. I was aware when starting this project that elephants are emotional creatures, it's part of the reason I am drawn to them, but their need for affection, connection and love runs deep. Oftentimes elephants can survive a bullet wound and will die of a broken heart. Sometimes losing their mother breaks their spirit and they don't have the will to live.”

I am in awe behind this tremendous effort and motivated to share Katie's story and become part of this appeal. I asked what we can do to help and move forward?



She believes that there is hope. She says, “Our voices are being heard. China is responsible for about 70% of the ivory on the market and their ivory ban is in effect as of 2018. It is now illegal to buy or sell ivory in China, which is tremendous step forward. I also think there is hope to be found in the next generation. I recently gave Atlee and Shep (my niece and nephew) an elephant map for Christmas along with an adopted elephant, and they absolutely loved it! Instilling childhood admiration for wild creatures is so important. Both the map and adopting an elephant is such a powerful way to connect kids with this cause and a great way to develop an interest and educate our future change makers.”



Her words give me hope and my purchase of the Elephant Map made me feel empowered and connected. The map costs \$48, the Elephant adoption fee is \$50 and 100% net profits from the purchase of an Elephant Map support The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. Their conservation efforts include, The Orphan project, aerial surveillance, community outreach, and mobile vets.

Katie Losey has fallen in love with the wilds of our planet and is dedicating her time to a new graduate course in the nature-obsessed discipline of biomimicry as well as honorable organizations and conservationists whose work is rooted in protecting wild creatures and wild places.

Learn more about The Elephant Map Project [here](#). Explore artist Connie Brown's website [here](#).

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