

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

A few weeks ago, shortly before sunrise, a solitary mountain lion made her way through a human-dominated landscape and arrived in my backyard. She was on my deck, looking towards my bedroom window. I never actually saw her, but my trail camera captured her startling beauty and ghostly presence in the pre-dawn. We know they live with us and around us. They are one of the most critically important, misunderstood and heavily exploited species in the Americas. Yet, here was a lion at my house, steps from my window, as if to provide assurance “we’re still here”.

Like millions of us, the last couple of years have seared my soul. Staggering losses and heavy grief have been our companions too often. It can be exhausting, and one looks for respite, hope, and direction wherever one can find them. I need to step back and re-assess. To that end, I have decided that it is time for me to retire from my current role at the Summerlee Foundation, effective at the end of this year, 2021. It has been a transformative 33 years beginning with my introduction to Annie Lee Roberts in 1989 and our brief time together to help establish her legacy for her animal protection program. In the last three decades Summerlee has funded over 1,200 grants and awarded nearly \$23 million to help both domestic and wild animals throughout much of the world.

I am thrilled to announce that Mitchell Fox will be the new Program Director for animals. He is an experienced animal grantmaker, as well as having been a grantseeker, and has decades of experience and knowledge in this broad and complicated field. Please see the Summerlee website for more information about Mitchell Fox. I know you will enjoy working with him as he is approachable and supportive.

I have more admiration for all of you than I can ever express. Your commitment and dedication to easing the suffering, helping the most vulnerable, ensuring homes, habitat, safety, and a better quality of life for animals throughout the world is nothing short of heroic and profound. I am deeply grateful to have read your stories and listened to your dreams and will be forever inspired by you. You are the future and the hope. Because of you, there will be less suffering and pain. There will be food, shelter, survival and enough space for all of us.

Wishing you the very best. Keep in touch.

*Melanie*

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