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1 **METHOD AND ARTICLES FOR PROVIDING EDUCATION AND**
2 **SUPPORT RELATED TO WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**

3
4 **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

5 *Field of the Invention:*

6 The invention herein relates to the wildlife conservation and methods for
7 education and promotion related to such conservation. More particularly it
8 relates to methods for involvement of individuals, especially children, in
9 appreciation of wildlife generally and conservation of wildlife using specific
10 animals as surrogates for the larger population of general wildlife.

11 *Description of the Prior Art:*

12 The plight of wildlife in many areas of the world is well-known. While not
13 all species are endangered or threatened, virtually all have had their habitats
14 limited by competing activities of humans, such as agriculture, domestic animal
15 production and urbanization. This has created a real problem of maintaining
16 sufficient habitat to avoid disruption of their normal living patterns and becoming
17 dependent on the human environment. For many species the situation is critical,
18 and there is a real question of their survival. While the loss of habitat and the
19 threat of either local or global extinction of wildlife have been widely described
20 and documented, a major problem for conservationists who are interested in
21 preserving animals in the wild is to gain the attention of the members of the
22 public generally and attract both financial and moral support. Many adults pay
23 little heed to the needs and survival of wild animals and consequently do not
24 transmit any concern for wildlife to their children.

25 Children, however, are known to be curious and to show great interest in
26 animals when they are exposed to wildlife, whether by visits to the zoo or
27 through viewing programs or films about wildlife on television, at school or at the
28 theater. Unfortunately, there is often little support for this curiosity and interest
29 in a child's home. Therefore to insure future support in adulthood by the current
30 youngsters, what is needed is a medium and method which can reach children
31 notwithstanding the relative indifference of their parents and which can allow
32 children to explore the real world of animals and make an active contribution to

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1 the survival and well-being of the animals, while also developing a lifelong
2 knowledge of animal life and behavior and interest in wildlife conservation.

3 Children of course are attracted by things that they find to be fun, such as
4 games, toys and well-presented educational activities. Many successful
5 educational programs are designed to provide a child with a series of enjoyable
6 activities through which the child absorbs the educational information which is
7 provided. When children learn in this manner, the information imparted
8 commonly is retained and understood for a significantly longer time than
9 information which is presented to them in what they considered to be a dull or
10 boring manner. Further, children have been found to be well able to absorb and
11 understand information about significant environmental issues when the
12 information is presented in the context of enjoyable activities. It is also well-
13 known that the interests that children develop a young age often result in
14 continued interest as they grow into their adult years.

15 It would therefore be advantageous if there were multimedia and
16 interactive means for presenting information about wildlife conservation to
17 youngsters in a manner that they would find enjoyable and which would allow
18 them to relate to the welfare of animals at an interest level appropriate to the age
19 of the child, such that it would be likely that the interest would be maintained and
20 grow throughout the child's life.

21 22 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

23 The present invention provides a child with an interactive mixture of
24 information content, activities, games, physical objects such as toys, and
25 interconnection and communication with other like-minded children and
26 supportive adults, all of which are directed to instilling in the child an appreciation
27 for wildlife and interest in the conservation of wildlife. A unique feature of the
28 present invention is that it causes the child to focus on a specific wild animal,
29 one which is symbolically "adopted" by the child and which the child comes to
30 know on a very personal basis. This invention therefore allows the development
31 of a bond between the wild animal and child as the child learns about and follows

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1 the day-to-day activities, life and well-being of the animal.

2 For most children, particularly younger children, it is difficult to understand
3 the nature of a large number of objects in a group. They usually cannot relate
4 very well to the concept of an entire species of animals or even to the concept
5 of animals at the level of a living group such as a herd, troop or pack. On the
6 other hand, children are very good at forming attachment and understanding with
7 a single animal, as is well exemplified by the bond rapidly formed between a
8 child and a family pet. It is the function of the present invention to allow a child
9 to form a similar, although more vicarious, bond with a specific wild animal. The
10 invention herein provides the child with information and activities which allow that
11 type of bond to form, in the same manner that a child engages in activities and
12 obtains information about the life of the family pet.

13 The present invention provides an interactive electronic method,
14 supplemented by physical objects such as games and toys, through which the
15 child is introduced to, learns about and forms an attachment with the specific
16 animal. In the present method an accessible wild animal, usually an animal
17 which is resident in an animal preserve or which has been taken in by an animal
18 welfare organization because of illness or injury, is selected and identified. The
19 animal is assigned a familiar name, in the same manner that a family names the
20 family pet. Often the animal chosen is from a threatened or endangered
21 species, so that the child develops an understanding not just of wildlife in general
22 but rather of a specific animal in a group whose very existence may be
23 threatened. (For the purposes of this invention, definitional differences between
24 "endangered," "threatened" and similar terms are not important. The term
25 "endangered" will be used generally to broadly refer to wildlife which are
26 considered to be "at risk.")

27 Once the animal has been selected and identified, the operator of this
28 invention collects information about the animal and organizes it into a package
29 that will appeal to children. Photographs and films are taken of the animal as it
30 goes through its daily routine, information is gathered and tabulated regarding
31 details about the animal such as its physical condition, age, size and similar

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1 characteristics, as well as information about its needs, such as the type of food
2 it eats, the type of habitat it requires and type of interaction it has with other
3 animals, such as predators or prey. From this information various interactive
4 activities are developed, such as games that the child can play to learn about the
5 animal or to have some experience as to what it would be like to live as the
6 animal does, as well as other activities which allow the child to develop an
7 understanding of the animal, its species, its life, and the hazards that it faces.

8 Such information is then made available through the process of this
9 invention with electronic media such as CDs, DVDs, videotapes or cassettes, as
10 well as by establishment of a Web site on the Internet. The information on the
11 physical media such as the CDs will generally be fixed in time, presenting the
12 animal a particular time. It is, however, possible with recent developments that
13 such media can be updated electronically, or of course updated media can be
14 issued to supersede the earlier media. On the other hand, the Web site
15 preferably will be interactive and can be updated on a frequent basis, even on
16 a daily basis, so that when the child accesses the Web site, he or she will see
17 the animal in essentially a current state. Indeed, if the Web site incorporates a
18 live-action camera, the child can observe the animal in real time.

19 Also as part of the present invention, the operator provides a variety of
20 wildlife-related toys and games which can be purchased by or for the child.
21 Chief among these is a line of stuffed plush toys, respective ones of which are
22 designed to resemble particular ones of the selected animals. The child can
23 therefore not only learn about his or her "adopted" animal from CDs or the Web
24 site, but can also have a toy version of that specific animal. This is particularly
25 attractive to younger children, who commonly attribute "real" personalities to their
26 teddy bears and other animal toys.

27 As part of present invention, the operator selects and identifies the
28 animals, collects and assembles all of the animal-related information and creates
29 the information media and the Web site, and develops and markets the toys,
30 CDs, DVDs, and other products. The child (usually through an adult, such as
31 parent or grandparent, acting on the child's behalf) purchases the toys, CDs,

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1 DVDs and similar merchandise and pays for access to some or all of the areas
2 of the Web site, such as access to portions of the Web site related to specific
3 animals. The income received by the operator from the sale of the merchandise
4 and access to any restricted areas of the Web site are divided to provide a first
5 fund for operating the organization, producing and marketing the various media
6 and products and maintaining the Web site, as well as a second fund for
7 providing direct monetary assistance to entities such as the wildlife preserve or
8 wildlife organization which cares for and houses in the specific animals. In
9 addition, other portions of the fees may go to wildlife conservation in general,
10 such as through payment to the specific wildlife preserve or organization which
11 that organization passes on to other organization or a parent entity, or through
12 payments to other wildlife conservation organizations which are not related to the
13 specific animal. Thus the child's interest in the specific animal effectively
14 extends to provide for overall wildlife conservation and preservation of wildlife
15 environment.

16 Therefore, in a principal embodiment, the invention involves a method for
17 promotion of and education regarding wildlife which comprises identifying an
18 individual animal; compiling a database comprising a first body of information
19 regarding the individual animal and a second body of information regarding
20 animals other than the individual animal and incorporating the database in
21 electronic media and on a global computer network system; providing an
22 educational and play article having a configuration which is a recognizable effigy
23 of the individual animal; providing for access to the database and opportunity to
24 purchase the article and the electronic media by a person, the access to the
25 database comprising symbolic adoption of the individual animal by the person,
26 the symbolic adoption comprising registration of association with the animal of
27 the person; requiring a first monetary payment by the person for access to at
28 least a portion of the database and for purchase of the article and the electronic
29 media; and apportioning a part of the first monetary payment to maintenance
30 directly or indirectly of the individual animal and support of wildlife generally.

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1 In another embodiment, the invention involves an educational and play
2 article having a configuration which is a recognizable effigy of the animal
3 selected and identified in the method described above.

4 In yet another embodiment, the invention involves an educational and
5 play article comprising electronic media depicting the individual animal selected
6 and identified in the method described above and including information regarding
7 activities and environment of the animal.

8 Numerous other embodiments and objects will be evident from the
9 description below.

10

11 **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

12 Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the various components of the
13 present invention and of their interrelation.

14 Figure 2 is a perspective view of a plush toy representing the animal
15 illustrated in Figure 1.

16 Figure 3 is an oblique view of an electronic medium used in this invention,
17 in this case illustrated as a CD or DVD.

18

19 **DETAILED DESCRIPTION AND PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS**

20 The method of the present invention is best understood by reference to
21 Figure 1 of the drawings. An animal 20 is first selected by the operator 22.
22 While any animal which is attractive to children can be selected, whether or not
23 endangered, In the embodiment exemplified here the animal 20 selected is a
24 chimpanzee. Not only are chimpanzees very attractive to children, but the
25 endangered status of chimpanzees in the wild is well-known, having been
26 described in several popular books and on a number of widely watched
27 television programs. While the animal 20 is exemplified here by a chimpanzee,
28 many other animals are sufficiently attractive to most children to be used in the
29 program of the method of this invention. Although there are no absolute
30 limitations on the types of animals selected, it will generally be best to select
31 animals which are easily recognized, especially by young children. Further,

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1 since the method depends on identification of specific animals, the particular
2 animals selected will normally not be in the wild when they are selected,
3 although some or most of their species probably will be in the wild. The choice
4 is not limited to land animals, since some types of birds (e.g., ostriches,
5 penguins) and some types of sea animals (e.g., porpoises, seals) often stay or
6 are kept at specific locations. Thus, for example, the animals selected could be
7 lions, tigers, wild sheep, zebras, porpoises, monkeys or apes, otters, elephants,
8 and so forth. In the particular example used here, the chimpanzee 20 selected
9 to be identified for the process of present invention is a resident of a privately
10 held wild animal preserve, having been taken there after being found injured in
11 the wild.

12 Once a particular animal 20 is selected, information 24 about its habits
13 and behavior are collected, its activities are captured on film and videotape and
14 in electronic media and the sounds the animal makes are captured on audio tape
15 and also in electronic media, and these are all compiled for presentation in CDs,
16 DVDs, and similar media, as illustrated at 46 in Figure 3, and also for display on
17 the operator organization's Web site, as illustrated at 28 in Figure 1. Also a large
18 amount of information 24 regarding the life and activities of that animal species
19 in the wild, its endangered status if applicable, the reasons for the
20 endangerment, and other information which is of interest to children (and
21 perhaps also to their parents) is collected and incorporated into the content of
22 the media and for the Internet Web site. This content will of course be carefully
23 edited and organized to provide high attraction to children. Such editing and
24 organization will commonly include creation of attractive graphic representations
25 for the information, editing and insertion of photographs, video clips, film clips,
26 and animation sequences, all of which are intended to attract and hold children's
27 attention. The information 24 presented is carefully checked to insure its
28 accuracy and to present it in terms of that a child can understand. Content is
29 preferably tailored to the age ranges of the particular groups of children to which
30 specific CDs or portions of the Web site are focused. When a child begins
31 participation in the program of the present invention, the age of the child is

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1 among the pieces of information collected as part of the initial registration
2 process. Under the method of this invention there will preferably be a series of
3 different CDs and similar media and different portions of the Web site, each of
4 which is targeted toward children of different age groups. It will be evident that
5 content directed toward early grade school children will be different from that
6 targeted to later grade school children or junior high school children. Information
7 24 describing worldwide wildlife conservation generally will also be organized
8 and presented in several different manners, formats, etc., each appropriate to
9 a particular age group of children.

10 The range of the program of the present invention includes, as noted
11 above, CDs and similar media 26, at least one Internet Web site 28 and also a
12 merchandise component 30. The merchandise component will include facilities
13 for manufacture and sale of toys, games, books and various other playthings and
14 educational items that are related to animals generally and endangered species
15 in particular.

16 A key item of merchandise 30 in the present program is a line of stuffed
17 cloth animal toys 42, as illustrated in Figure 2, each of which represents one of
18 the selected animals, such as a plush toy representing the selected chimpanzee
19 20. In order to closely represent the selected animal as an individual which is
20 familiar to the child, the plush toy 42 representing the animal will be, so far as
21 practical, manufactured to look like the particular animal. Thus, for instance, if
22 the animal has a prominent and uncommon marking or other feature such as 40,
23 the marking will be incorporated into the appearance of the plush toy, as at 40'.
24 As an example, the tongue of a lion selected as a representative animal usually
25 protruded from its mouth, which was not a common behavior of lions but was
26 prominent with that particular animal. In the plush toy representation, a small
27 piece of fabric was used to simulate the protruding tongue of that particular lion,
28 being a feature of the individual animal that would be immediately recognized by
29 the children subscribing to the program. The use of such techniques enhances
30 the attraction of the method of this invention, for children become very attached
31 to toys which represent animals that they recognize as individuals. It will of

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1 course be recognized that manufacturing constraints and the nature of the
2 typical plush materials will mean that the representation of the particular animal
3 is still fairly general. Thus personalization of the plush toy to the particular
4 animal will usually constitute including the appearance of one or a few distinctive
5 features of that particular animal, such as the aforementioned marking 40', and
6 many of the details of the animal's actual appearance will necessarily be
7 generalized or omitted, such as having "feet" rounded as at 44 rather than
8 including separate "toes."

9 As part of the education and personalization aspects of the present
10 invention, each child 32 is designated as an "adopter" of a particular animal, and
11 receives, in addition to various information and education items such as
12 described above, a set of "adoption papers" identifying the "adopted" animal by
13 name and indicating the child's individual association with the animal. Of course
14 there will be many children 32 who are "adopters" of the same animal, but each
15 will feel a particular relationship to the animal, in the same manner that an
16 individual child feels an affectionate relationship to his or her own copy of a
17 mass-market doll, notwithstanding that many other children also own copies of
18 the same doll and have the same feelings toward their copies.

19 As part of this adoption process a significant portion of the income
20 received by the organization are directed by the subscription organization 22 to
21 be used for the care, housing, and feeding of the specific selected animals 20,
22 as indicated at 38. This reinforces each child's feelings of affiliation with "his" or
23 "her" animal, since the child is aware to a some degree (depending on the child's
24 age) that a portion of the money paid by or on behalf of him or her is going to
25 care for that specific animal. The child thus develops a degree of responsibility
26 for maintaining the animal, in a manner analogous to a child's responsibility for
27 taking care of a family pet. In practice this funding is normally directed by the
28 operator 22 to the particular wildlife refuge or other caretaker organization which
29 possesses the animal 20, and the operator 22 relies upon the special expertise
30 of the caretaker organization to allocate those funds in an appropriate manner
31 with respect to the particular animal 20. It will be recognized that to a large

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1 extent such funds may be allocated for the caretaker organization's animal
2 environment enhancement and maintenance generally, which will include benefit
3 to the specific animal 20.

4 As described above and indicated at 36, the operator 22 works in
5 conjunction with one or more general wildlife organizations 34, which may be
6 wildlife conservation organizations, zoos, national parks or game reserves,
7 environmental groups working for habitat preservation, and the like. This
8 interaction will include funding for the wildlife organization 34 from the operator
9 22 which can be expected to be reciprocated by the wildlife organization 34 by
10 providing the operator 22 with information and materials related to wildlife
11 generally, including endangered species, all of which information can be
12 incorporated by the operator into enhancements to the program, its merchandise
13 and information resources for the children 32. The method of this invention thus
14 not only enhances children's education, knowledge and interest regarding wildlife
15 and wildlife preservation but also can result in the creation and growth of a
16 significant database of information about wildlife and wildlife preservation.

17 The creation of the CDs and other media indicated at 26 and creation and
18 operation of the Web site indicated at 28 are done in a conventional manner, the
19 details of which do not need to be describe here. It will be advantageous for the
20 Web site to be divided into several different pages or groups of pages, some of
21 which can be focused for individual age groups of the children 32, as described
22 above. Other portions of the Web site can be designed to be attractive and
23 interesting to all age groups of children as well as to their parents. The latter
24 portions of the Web site may, for instance, be directed to announcements of
25 various family-related wildlife events at places such as zoos or national parks,
26 which a family could then visit as part of a family vacation. As another example,
27 those family portions of the Web site could include announcements and details
28 of significant wildlife conservation news items, especially those which involve
29 endangered species, such as the recent successful breeding and release
30 program for the endangered California condor.

31 As part of the division of the Web site into different portions, it is

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1 contemplated that some of the portions will be available for viewing on the
2 Internet without charge, and others will require one-time or periodic fees for initial
3 and/or continued access. For instance, there may be free general interest
4 portions which are designed to attract the initial interest of a child and his or her
5 parents or grandparents, explain the program to them, and encourage them to
6 want the child to participate in the program. Such portions might include
7 identification of the various individual animals 20 available for "adoption."
8 However, for the actual in-depth involvement and "adoption" of a specific animal
9 20, the child 32 (or those acting on his or her behalf) would have to pay an
10 access fee for the portion of the Web site devoted to that particular animal 20,
11 in the same manner that many information-content Web sites current charge
12 access fees for access to or downloading of information from some parts or all
13 of such Web sites.

14 It will be recognized that the method of this invention thus is a significant
15 educational tool for teaching children about the environment and wildlife
16 conservation. It has long been recognized that children learn best and retain
17 longer what they learn if the learning activity is fun to them. The integrated
18 aspects of the present method thus attract the interest of children and provide
19 them with enjoyable activities in which they learn as they play. The method of
20 the present invention thus represents a unique combination of learning and
21 conservation which is mutually beneficial to both children and wildlife.

22 It will be evident that there are numerous embodiments of the present
23 invention which are not expressly described above, but which are clearly within
24 the scope and spirit of the invention. The above description is therefore to be
25 considered exemplary only, and the actual scope of the invention is to be defined
26 solely by the appended claims.

27 I CLAIM:

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CLAIMS

1. A method for promotion of and education regarding wildlife which
2 comprises:
 - identifying an individual animal;
 - 4 compiling a database comprising a first body of information regarding said
individual animal and a second body of information regarding animals other than
6 said individual animal and incorporating said database in electronic media and
on a global computer network system;
 - 8 providing an educational and play article having a configuration which is
a recognizable effigy of said individual animal;
 - 10 providing for access to said database and opportunity to purchase said
article and said electronic media by a person, said access to said database
12 comprising symbolic adoption of said individual animal by said person, said
symbolic adoption comprising registration of association with said animal of said
14 person;
 - requiring a first monetary payment by said person for access to at least
16 a portion of said database and for purchase of said article and said electronic
media; and
 - 18 apportioning a part of said first monetary payment to maintenance directly
or indirectly of said individual animal and support of wildlife generally.
2. A method as in Claim 1 further comprising providing said article in the
2 form a stuffed fabric representation of said individual animal, said representation
including indicia recognizably related to said individual animal.
3. A method as in Claim 2 further comprising providing merchandise related
2 to said individual animal other than said article and said electronic media and
providing means through said global computer network system for said person
4 to purchase said merchandise for a second monetary payment, and apportioning
a part of said second monetary payment to maintenance directly or indirectly of
6 said individual animal and support of wildlife generally.

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4. A method as in Claim 1 further comprising said access to said database
2 comprising an interactive exchange between said person and said database
through said electronic media or through a computer link to said global computer
4 network system.

5. A method as in Claim 1 further comprising said database as incorporated
2 on said global computer network system having two portions, and said first
monetary payment being required for access to a first of said two portions but
4 not for access to a second of said two portions.

6. A method as in Claim 5 wherein said second of said two portions of said
2 database contains a limited portion of said first body of information about said
individual animal and said first of said two portions of said database contains a
4 more extensive portion of said first body of information about said individual
animal.

7. A method as in Claim 5 wherein said symbolic adoption further comprises
2 issuance to said person of a unique identifier and using said identifier to gain
said access to said first of said two portions of said database, said identifier also
4 indicating said person's association with said individual animal.

8. A method as in Claim 1 wherein said simulated adoption further
2 comprises intercommunication means through said global computer network
system for said person to communicate with another person who has also
4 obtained a symbolic adoption of said individual animal.

9. A method as in Claim 1 further comprising identification of a plurality of
2 individual animals, each of which is of a different species.

10. A method as in Claim 9 further comprising said person being a child.

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11. A method as in Claim 10 further comprising said person comprising a
2 plurality of children including children of different ages.

12. A method as in Claim 11 further comprising identifying of said species of
2 said plurality of individual animals in part on the basis of attraction of different
ones of said species to children of different age groups within said plurality of
4 children.

13. An educational and play article comprising having a configuration which
2 is a recognizable effigy of said animal selected and identified in the method of
Claim 1.

14. An article as in Claim 13 comprising a soft fabric stuffed toy.

15. An article as in Claim 13 wherein recognition factors defining said
2 recognizable effigy comprise visual features unique to said animal.

16. An educational and play article comprising electronic media depicting said
2 individual animal selected and identified in the method of Claim 1 and including
information regarding activities and environment of said animal.

17. An article as in Claim 16 wherein said electronic media comprises a CD,
2 a DVD, a video tape or an audio tape.

18. An educational and play article as in Claim 16 wherein said electronic
2 media further depicts information regarding activities and environment of said
species to which said individual animal belongs.

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19. An educational and play article as in Claim 16 wherein said electronic
2 media further depicts information regarding activities and environment of wildlife
generally.

20. A article comprising said unique identifier provided in the method of Claim
2 7, said identifier providing access to said first of said two portions of said
database and also indicating said person's association with said individual
4 animal.

