



# The Elephant's Secret Sense: The Hidden Life of the Wild Herds of Africa

*Caitlin O'Connell*

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While observing a family group of elephants in the wild, Caitlin O'Connell, a young field scientist, noticed a peculiar listening behavior. A matriarch she had been watching for months turned her massive head and lifted her foot off the ground. As she scanned the horizon, the other elephants followed suit, all facing the same direction. O'Connell soon made a groundbreaking discovery: the elephants were "listening through limbs," feeling the ripples of the earth's surface for approaching friends and enemies. Through their feet, toenails, trunks, and other, subtler modes of communication, these enormous animals were communicating to one another, demonstrating the vital importance of social relationships in their lives.

Yet this grand revelation about the intelligence of wild animals is also a story of the relationship between humans and elephants as neighbors, vying for the same resources of an increasingly crowded continent. For when O'Connell was first contracted by the Namibian government to develop new methods to deter elephants from raiding villagers' crops, she was unprepared for what she would encounter -- political upheaval, tribal disputes, inhumane poachers, and a fundamentally ineffective approach to wildlife conservation. Despite these setbacks, she came to know and love each of the fascinating, unique elephants under her watchful eye, while at the same time witnessing a change in attitude and policy, providing hope for the elephant's future.

An unforgettable journey of scientific discovery, *The Elephant's Secret Sense* takes you deep into the wilds of Namibia, from the tops of isolated, desert observation towers to the jaws and claws of ravenous lions to aerial expeditions and dusty highways, where the naturalists do their difficult work in a troubled land threatened by expanding human populations and unstable politics. Resonant with the powerful calls of the mysterious elephant, this is a story about the resilience of nature and the inspiring, astonishing, and often heartbreaking places where humans and wild animals come together.

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