



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

"Hunting provides the principal incentive and revenue for conservation.  
Hence it is a force for conservation."

# World Conservation Force Bulletin

www.conservationforce.org September 2015

## Cecil-Mania: Setting the Record Straight

The death of Cecil the lion has been international news for weeks. Most of the facts have been misrepresentations and hyperbole. This is not good for the image of hunting. The media's naive and uncommon fascination with the story has not helped, and constant re-reporting has allowed the misinformation to spread unchecked.

The habitat, revenue, anti-poaching, and community incentives tourist hunting provides should not be ignored. To that end, in this bulletin we debunk some myths and misinformation about hunting which have been consistently repeated during the "Cecil mania." The good news is that we have the facts on our side. As a community, we need to correct false impressions and widely share these critical facts. The following is just a sample.

**Myth:** Lion are "in danger of disappearing from the wild in our lifetimes."

**Reality:** The latest continent-wide data compilation estimated 32,000-35,000 lion (Riggio 2011). The recent IUCN update of the Red List does not challenge that estimate. The Chardonnet estimate in



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2002 was 32,000-38,000; not so different more than a decade before.

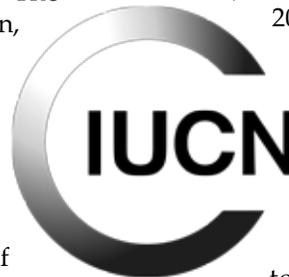
Further, "Chicken Little" statements about extinction ignore the recent estimate of 24,000 lion inhabiting "strongholds": areas with protection, positive growth trends, and substantial lion

populations. Due to the strongholds, Riggio optimistically concluded: "If conservation efforts are focused on protecting these lion strongholds and ... potential strongholds...25,000 lions can persist across the continent over the long-term." (Riggio 2011at 59.) In other words, lion populations have declined – but lion are not likely to go extinct any time soon. They are resilient breeders that recover quickly once threats are removed (Packer et al. 2006). The IUCN has not reclassified the lion, which remains "Vulnerable" – not endangered (IUCN 2015).

**Myth:** Excessive trophy hunting caused the decline in lion populations.

**Reality:** Like the first myth, a fact has been blown way out of proportion.

Unsurprising, poorly regulated hunting can impact lion populations (Lindsey et al. 2006), but range nations adaptively respond to over-hunting. Licensed, regulated hunting does not have a population-level effect. For instance, after a study found that lion were being unsustainably hunted outside Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe's Parks and Wildlife Management Authority responded by closing hunting in that area from 2005-2008, and monitoring the population to ensure it sufficiently recovered before re-opening hunting with a lower quota (Loveridge et al. 2007; Lindsey et al. 2012). Benin, Central African Republic, and Zambia have also adaptively employed moratoria and lower quotas (Lindsey et al. 2013). In the same vein, Tanzania and Mozambique adopted age restrictions on "hunnable" lion, leading to substantially reduced offtakes (Lindsey et al. 2012, 2013). In



2014, Zimbabwe reduced its quota and imposed age restrictions on "hunnable" lion (ZimParks 2015). Also Burkina Faso (Chardonnet 2015).

Experts agree that tourist hunting is not a primary threat facing lion. Dr. Luke Hunter of big-cat conservation organization Panthera emphasized in a recent interview that, "many, many more lions are dying each day, week, and month ... [from] Widespread illegal poaching, mainly by wire snares, and retaliatory killing from rural Africans." (ResearchGate 2015.) Similarly, the IUCN ranked human-livestock-lion conflict, losses of habitat and prey base, and bushmeat poaching, as the significant threats to lion (IUCN 2015).

The Red List also supports this: regulated hunting does (or did) occur in all the African countries with increasing lion populations (IUCN 2015). A good

Cecil the lion at Hwange National Park, 2010.



(Photo credit: Daughter#3/Wikimedia Commons under CC Share Alike 2.0)

summary is the finding by the USFWS:

*Finally, we found that, if trophy hunting of lions is part of a scientifically based management program, it could provide considerable benefits to the species, by reducing or removing incentives by locals to kill lions in retaliation for livestock losses, and by reducing the conversion of lion habitat to agriculture. Trophy hunting, if managed well and with local communities in mind, can bring in needed revenue, jobs, and a much-needed protein source to local people, demonstrating the value of lions to local communities....the amount of habitat that has been set aside by range countries specifically for trophy hunting has greatly increased the range and habitat of lions and their prey base, which is imperative given the current ongoing rate of habitat destruction occurring in Africa. The total amount of land set aside for trophy hunting throughout Africa exceeds the total area of the national parks, providing half the amount of viable lion habitat....trophy hunting is not a significant threat to the species.*

Federal Register Vol.79, No. 209, pg. 64494 (October 29, 2014) [citations omitted]

**Myth:** *Photographic tourism is a better option than hunting tourism.*

**Reality:** To begin with, there is no reason why photo-and hunting tourism cannot coincide. In Namibia, for example, conservancies often do both, with great success (Weaver et al. 2011).

At the same time, photo-tourism cannot replace hunting, because hunting land and tourists differ from photographic land and tourists. Much hunting land lacks adequate wildlife, scenery, and infrastructure to sustain photo-tourists, but smaller hunting parties are less focused on density and scenery (Hanks 2013; Lindsey et al. 2006). Photo-tourists are sensitive to political instability (Gordon 2015; Lindsey et al. 2006), while hunting tourists are surprisingly resilient (Gandiwa 2010). And because hunting tourists pay higher daily rates than photo-tourists, many more photo-tourists must visit to generate equivalent revenues, which has environment impacts (Rust & Verissimo 2015). Safari hunting areas are profit centers, while national parks largely operate at a loss.

More critically, photo-tourism does not require the same amount of habitat and wildlife. Kenya's photo-tourism industry does well financially, but the country has lost two-thirds of its wildlife and habitat since hunting was closed in 1977 (King 2009; Lindsey et al. 2006). Only 14% of Kenya's land is protected, as compared to Tanzania (50%), Namibia (40%), Zambia (28%), and Zimbabwe (27%) (IUCN 2010). Kenya has 1.5x the land mass of Zimbabwe, but Zimbabwe has 2.5x the amount of habitat (including hunting area) and 2.5x the number of elephant (AfESG 2015; Dunham et al. 2015; IUCN 2010). A survey of six range nations indicates that protected hunting areas are *double* the size of protected national parks/non-hunting areas (IUCN 2010).

Photo-tourists are content to observe wildlife in national protected areas, so there is no incentive to set other areas aside as habitat. But more protected habitat generally equals more wildlife. As a recent study concluded, imposing trade restrictions on lion trophies could potentially render hunting "unviable across at least 59,538km<sup>2</sup> that could result in a concomitant loss of habitat," and lead to "reduc[ed] ... competitiveness of wildlife-based land use relative to ecologically unfavourable alternatives." (Lindsey et al. 2012.) That means an area larger than Maryland, Massachusetts, and Connecticut *put together* would be lost to wildlife's use.

Of course, the lion needs both, and much more. For a fact "lion need hunting as much as hunting needs lion," Craig Packer, 2015.

**Myth:** *Hunting contributes an almost insignificant impact to range nations' tourist sectors and GDPs.*

**Reality:** The myth that hunting contributes a fractional percentage to GDPs (aside from ecological services) misses the essential point – *hunting contributes to GDPs in some of the poorest countries in the world.* That is an achievement on its own.

But further, while the percentage of the hunting industry's contribution to GDP is sometimes small, the dollar value and job creation value of the hunting sector are high. According to the Professional Hunters' Association of South Africa, tourist hunters paid US\$69.4 million in trophy fees in 2012,



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and the “total measured value chain” of the hunting industry was ~9 billion Rand (US\$1.09 billion), about 0.27% of the country’s total GDP (US\$408 billion). The industry created or supported 75,000-100,000 jobs in a country with ~40% unemployment (PHASA 2014).

Although “0.27%” of GDP does not sound like a lot, it is when put in perspective. The contribution of the U.S. farming sector is only 1% of GDP (USDA 2015); the South African hunting sector’s contribution is not too far off. Further, the **total** GDP of Central African Republic was US\$ 1.78 billion in 2014 (World Bank 2014). Similarly, the Gross State Product of Texas was US\$1.6 billion, which ranked second among U.S. states (Wikipedia 2015). For a single industry to compare to a country or the second largest U.S. state is an accomplishment.

Similarly, In Namibia, the hunting sector accounts for \$39.5 million in revenue, representing 0.6% of GDP (Namibian Sun 2015; World Bank 2015).

Further, hunting provides backbone revenue to sustain wildlife authorities in range nations. According to Tanzania’s Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, “trophy hunting is the main source of revenues for the Wildlife Division and therefore for wildlife conservation in the country.” (MNRT 2015.) Similarly, the wildlife budgets of Zimbabwe and Zambia are primarily comprised of income from hunting fees and revenues (Hunter et al. 2015). Contributions to the Game Products Trust Fund in Namibia allowed the country to expend over US\$2 million from 2012-July 2015 on black rhino protection and management (Decl. of the Permanent Secretary 2015). These are critically important dollars for anti-poaching, surveys, provision of water, and other wildlife protection and management activities.

**Myth:** *Hunting does not benefit local communities: “Even pro-hunting organizations like [CIC] have reported that only 3 percent of revenue from trophy hunting ever makes it to the communities affected by hunting. The rest goes to national governments or foreign-based outfitters.”*

**Reality:** The 3% figure is widely cited, but has been taken completely out of context and was only for some areas of Tanzania. It was fabricated in a 2013 report by “Economists At Large.” This 17-page report was commissioned by animal rights organizations IFAW, HSUS, and Born Free Foundation (Campbell 2013).



The report cites a 3% figure from a 2010 study conducted for CIC and FAO: “Contribution of Wildlife to National Economies” (Booth 2010). The study’s objective had nothing to do with the contributions of the hunting sector to local communities. It had the opposite goal – to “assess the contributions of hunting tourism to national economies.”<sup>1</sup>

The cited page of the study used “confidential financial records” of hunting operators in Tanzania to “draw up an approximate income and expenditure statement of a hypothetical company...and guesstimate a gross ‘profit’ before tax.” (Booth 2010 at 22.) This “guesstimate” was limited to data from safari operators who leased government, not communal, land (Booth pers. comm. 2015). One line of the analysis calculated that, from these sample records, 3.1% of the “Estimated Gross Expenditures” was directed to “Area and Community Development” (Booth 2010 at 23).

The Economists At Large report used this figure, a Tanzania-specific, “guesstimate,” hypothetical income statement to extrapolate the conclusion that “hunting companies contribute

only 3% of their revenue to communities living in hunting areas.” (Campbell 2013 at 3.) But the underlying report was not drawing a continental conclusion. It was not looking at hunting areas on communal land. It was not looking at the sizable voluntary expenditures from operators to communities that we reported on in the October 2014 bulletin. Rather, Booth’s 2010 report simply evaluated data from the Tanzanian hunting industry, during a period in which block fees were low (and about to increase), before Wildlife Management Area (WMA) regulations were revised to require greater devolution to communities (Booth pers. comm. 2015). The Economists At Large report essentially took a small piece of data and represented it – falsely – as a Tanzania-wide and continent-wide conclusion about the industry.

If the report had surveyed benefits-sharing across the continent, it would have seen that in most countries besides Tanzania pre-2012, benefits and hunting revenues were shared far more widely. For instance, 100% of benefits from the sustainable use of wildlife on communal conservancies in Namibia (representing 17.6% of Namibia’s land mass and 12% of its population) accrue to communities (Weaver et al. 2011). Communities in Zambia split hunting fees with the Wildlife Authority “50-50” (ZAWA 2015). And as of 2007, communities in Zimbabwe received 55% of concession payments in direct-deposits from safari operators (Jonga 2014). That is 95% of the revenue of 800 thousand families averaging three children!

Further, the Economists At Large report improperly relied on information for Tanzania that was outdated at the time of its writing. Prior to 2012, distributions to WMAs were not high, but the Ministry of Natural Resources addressed this issue in 2012 by revising WMA regulations to require a greater percentage of hunting fees be shared with communities (USAID 2013). As a result, an additional 17 communities applied to be gazetted as WMAs (WWF-Tanzania 2012). The revisions to the WMA regulations and immediate

<sup>1</sup> Notably, this report concluded, among other things, “through careful management and implementing appropriate policy environments, hunting tourism can demonstrate its contribution to national and local economies.” (Booth 2010 at 33.)

<sup>2</sup> Economists At Large should also have noted that, in 2012, 76% of WMAs earned income from safari hunting (WWF-Tanzania 2012).

community response caused USAID to conclude: "WMAs represent the best hope for conserving wildlife outside of Tanzanian protected areas while enhancing rural economic development." (USAID 2013)<sup>2</sup>

In 2015, the benefit-sharing guidelines for WMAs were revised again to give communities an even larger share of hunting revenues: 75% of block fees, 70% of permit, observer, and conservation fees, and 65% of game fees (Tanzania MNRT 2015). For these reasons, the author of the 2010 study cited by Economists At Large believes it is likely the revisions to the WMA guidelines have improved distributions (Booth pers. comm. 2015); thus, "3%" is too low for Tanzania and as a continental estimate.

**Myth:** Over 600 lion are killed each year in trophy hunts, while the population dwindles.

**Reality:** This number apparently comes out of a 2009 report published by the IUCN. This report is quite negative on hunting, and also hard to follow because it does not support its conclusions with citations. On the other hand, Lindsey et al. (2013) used CITES trade data to conclude that only 244 wild lion are exported each year since 2005.

**Myth:** Trophy hunting "repeats systems of colonialism."

**Reality:** This allegation is puzzling when countries like South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are choosing to incorporate tourist hunting as a use of their wildlife and arguing against airline trophy embargos and the ESA listing of lion (Namibian Sun; Zimbabwe letter to USFWS).

Moreover, tourist hunting occurs in countries that are hardly indicative of colonies, such as Hungary, Canada, Russia, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. Tajikistan, for instance, now has a number of conservancies to protect markhor, argali, ibex, and urial, covering



(Photo credit: Rufus66/Wikimedia Commons under CC Share Alike 2.0)

Markhor trophy hunting has been a boon to both Tajikistan and its markhor population.

2,500 km<sup>2</sup>. Conservancies developed organically, when a local poacher chose to stop poaching and start investing in wildlife, to benefit from future sustainable use (Alidodov 2014; Michel et al. 2014; Rosen Michel & Michel 2014; Baldus & Michel 2011.)

Tajikistan issued its first export permits for markhor in 2013/14 and 2014/15 and generated hundreds of thousands of dollars for the government treasury as well as for the conservancies to reinvest in anti-poaching, management, and community projects (Maskaev 2014; Rosen Michel & Michel 2014).

No one imposed tourist hunting on Tajikistan. The country is poor, without a lot of other attractions. But they have wildlife, which was being exploited for little gain. Now, the wildlife is being protected instead of poached, habitat is being conserved, and the region's markhor, argali, and even endangered snow leopard populations are increasing. (Conservation Force's website contains a lot of data in support of a recent application to the USFWS to import a markhor trophy from Tajikistan.)

**Myths:** Listing the African lion will recover it.

**Reality:** Listing the lion under the ESA – or any other foreign species, for

that matter – does nothing to recover it because the ESA does not apply outside U.S. jurisdiction (U.S. territory and the high seas). The USFWS admits this on its website (under Endangered Species and Foreign Species) and in its regulations (for example, 50 C.F.R. § 424.12(h)).

The benefits of listing to a native species, such as designation of critical habitat and required preparation of a recovery plan, do not extend to listed foreign species. The only effect to a foreign species is that the import – not the take – of the species may be prohibited (FWS Website 2015). See C-Span video *Endangered Species and Big Game Hunting* at <http://www.c-span.org/video/?327491-5/washington-journal-john-jackson-big-game-hunting>

The ESA directs the Secretary to only consider five factors. The USFWS cannot and does not evaluate if a listing itself will have positive or negative effects. It admitted as much in the proposed lion listing: "We have not analyzed the costs or benefits of this rulemaking action because the Act precludes consideration of such impacts on listing and delisting determinations." (79 F.R. 64472.) This very issue went to the Supreme Court that denied Writs in the polar bear suit. In short, ESA listing benefits domestic species, but it does little for foreign species other than restrict import. For this reason, countries like Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Namibia oppose the proposed threatened listing (Letter 2015).

We hope these facts help clear up some of the unsupported allegations floating around on the Internet and in the reporting of journalists who are apparently not fact-checking. Some additional "debunking," a full list of references, and copies of cited documents are posted in a fact sheet on [www.conservationforce.org/news.html](http://www.conservationforce.org/news.html). ■

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