



“SERVING THE HUNTER WHO TRAVELS”

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

Special To The Hunting Report World Conservation Force Bulletin

by John J. Jackson, III

□ ESA Listing Pending Polar Bear Crisis Is Growing

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has found that listing polar bear “throughout its range may be warranted” (71 FR 6745, February 8, 2006). The Service has initiated a status review to make the determination. Comments must be received on or before April 10, 2006. This is serious and the window to file opposition comments is small.

The effort to list the polar bear as threatened or endangered on the Endangered Species list commenced when the Service received a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity dated February 16, 2005. That petition reported threats to the bear from climate change and sea ice change, oil and gas development, contaminants, hunting and poaching. It also claimed that existing regulatory mechanisms are inadequate to protect the bear and its habitat. We reported this to you in an earlier bulletin (April 2005), and we began tracking the listing effort.

On July 5, 2005, The Natural Resources Defense Council and Greenpeace, Inc. joined in that petition to

list and submitted new information to be considered. Then the Service received new information from the petitioners on December 27, 2005. Also on December 15, 2005, the petitioners filed a suit in Federal Court in Northern California to compel the Service



to make the required 90-day finding on their petition to list.

The notice is entitled “Notice of 90-day petition finding and initiation of status review.” The Service states “[w]e find that the petition presents substantial scientific or commercial informa-

tion indicating that the petitioned action of listing the polar bear may be warranted. We, therefore, are initiating a status review of the polar bear to determine if listing under the Act is warranted.... We must receive your comments on or before April 10, 2006.”

Don’t be confused by the fact that the Service claims to have twelve months from December 27, 2005 to make its determination. The court may not agree that the time limits commenced again on December 27th when the petitioners submitted additional information. Moreover, the comment period itself is scheduled to close on April 10th regardless of when the Service will publish its decision. April 10th is the narrow window to oppose the listing.

It remains to be seen whether or not the Court will allow the Service to restart the clock on the date that it received the supplemented information from the petitioners on December 27th, ten months after the initial petition and also after the suit was filed. Regardless, the Service has now made the posi-

tive finding that listing “may be warranted” and the limited comment period of 60 days is running out. The comment period will have passed by the time you receive the next issue of this bulletin.

The Service has specifically called for comments on polar bear throughout the bear’s entire range because all bears are being considered for listing. It specifically asks for information on the effects of climate change and sea ice change on the distribution and abundance of polar bears and their principal prey over the short – and long – term. It also requested information on the effects of other “potential threat factors” including oil and gas development, contaminants, hunting, poach-



ing and changes in the principal prey for polar bear. The Service wants information on all conservation measures including “hunting conservation programs” and “government conservation programs which benefit polar bears.” It also calls for information that qualifies any populations as “distinct population segments,” which means they should and can be treated separately for listing or not listing purposes.

Conservation Force is scrambling to deal with this because once any population of polar bear is listed it is extremely unlikely that US hunters will ever again be able to import trophies from that segment of the population. Also, Conservation Force’s own pending petition to establish the import of polar bear from the Gulf of Boothia region is caught up and being delayed until this is resolved.

We need your help to consult with innumerable experts to file authorita-

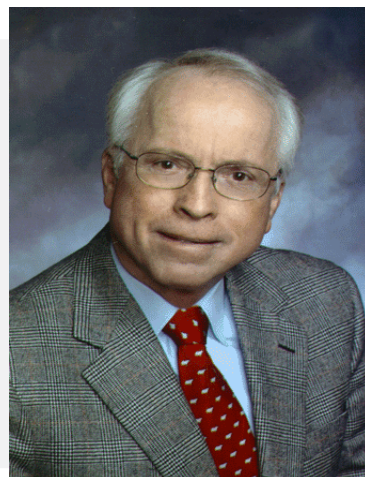
tive, responsive, factual and timely comments. The consequences may be forever. Please send your tax-deductible contribution to Conservation Force at PO Box 278, Metairie, LA 70004-9821.

If you wish to file your own opposition comment, it must be received by the Service on or before April 10th by postal mail addressed to: Supervisor, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Marine Mammals Management Office, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503; or by e-mail addressed to: www.AK_Polarbear@fws.gov. If you comment by email, your comment must include “Attn: Polar Bears” in the heading. Don’t forget to include your name and address in your e-mail, as anonymous comments are not considered.

DATELINE: AFRICA
News Analysis
More On Those
African Lion Workshops

A monumental effort to conserve African lions in eastern and southern Africa was launched in two back-to-back workshops held in Randburg, South Africa in early January 2006. I reported on the first one in the last issue. That one was a “technical” workshop aimed at assessing and mapping the range of lions in eastern and southern Africa and analyzing potential lion conservation units. This bulletin is about the more important second meeting which was a planning workshop to develop a conservation strategy to secure and restore sustainable lion populations over the next 25 years. It is more important because it devised a proactive action plan.

The first workshop was focused on the status of, and threats to, the lion, and it was repetitious of the Char-donnet Study, 2002, sponsored by Conservation Force and the International Foundation for the Conservation of Wildlife. It was funded and facilitated by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in its effort to launch its own comprehensive African lion



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conservation program with a \$1 million dollar donation from an anonymous benefactor.

The second workshop was attended by a broader spectrum of 67 participants, including the foremost lion experts, range nation wildlife managers, stakeholders and conservation NGO's. Its purpose was to develop and initiate a proactive lion conservation strategy which, of course, is political as well as biological.

The workshops were organized by Kristin Nowell of IUCN's Cat Specialist Group and its affiliate, the African Lion Working Group (ALWG), and African Resources Trust of Zimbabwe at the request of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). SADC had called for the workshop at CITES COP 13. It was primarily funded by Stephen Chancellor through Safari Club International Foundation, but was also funded by WCS and the UK Department of the Environment, Food Resources and Agriculture.

This workshop was larger and far more comprehensive than the preceding workshop. Dr. Holly Dublin, Chair of the IUCN SSC and Dr. Russell Taylor facilitated this extremely important second workshop. Its importance was demonstrated by the attendance of the management authorities from nearly every range state; the Co-chair and Vice-chair of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group; Chair of the African Lion Working Group (ALWG); Chair of ROCAL; the Director of the International Foundation for the Conservation of Wildlife; the Chair of Conservation Force and President of the Commission on Sustainable Use of the International Council for Game & Wildlife Conservation (yours truly); the coordinator of the Global Carnivore Program of WCS; the Director of Conservation for Safari Club International Foundation; both the Director and Program Officer of TRAFFIC ESA; and the world's leading lion scientists, such as Craig Packer, Paul Funston, Laurence Frank, Hans Bauer, Norman Monks, Philippe Chardonnet, Christian Winterbach and others. That is just a sampling of the participants but demonstrates the seriousness of this unprecedented under-

taking and the high caliber of the participants.

The workshop to develop a lion conservation strategy began with the presentation of key papers providing the most cutting-edge information and developments in lion conservation. Three background papers were sent to participants before the workshop began and the principal authors delivered these papers on the opening morning. These papers are all available on the internet at the *African Indaba* Website: <http://www.africanindaba.netfirms.com> (click on the lion conservation link).

The *Lion Status and Distribution in Eastern and Southern Africa* was prepared by Hans Bauer, Philippe Chardonnet and Kristin Nowell. In this document, two key lion surveys are compared: *Bauer and van der Merwe*



(published in 2004 but actually completed in 2002); and the *Chardonnet Study* by the International Foundation for the Conservation of Wildlife (IGF) and Conservation Force, also completed in 2002. The different methodologies in the two surveys were not really comparable as the Bauer survey was only “partial” and focused more on protected areas, while the Chardonnet study was “more complete” and included more protected and far more unprotected areas than the Bauer survey. For example, the Bauer Survey had no estimate whatsoever for several range countries and included only a fraction of Tanzania that has the largest lion population in Africa. Tanzania's lion population is thought to be equal to all the rest of Africa.

There is a common sense assumption among many lion researchers that there has been a considerable decline in

overall numbers of lion over the past several decades, but the trend cannot be quantified because no precise baseline data exists. Tanzania, with the largest lion population, largest prey base and greatest suitable habitat, has a growing lion population, as well as the largest lion population. It also has a worsening problem with man-eating lions that has been documented in a study by Craig Packer funded by the Tanzania Wildlife Department and Conservation Force.

The second paper was *Lions, Conflict and Conservation in Eastern and Southern Africa*. It was prepared by Laurence Frank, Graham Henson, Hadas Kushnir and Craig Packer and reviews lion-human conflict in all its ramifications. Laurence Frank emphasized the need for preventative actions to protect livestock and the importance of using mechanisms to provide the local people benefits from lion and wildlife, especially outside of protected areas. Interestingly, he mentioned that the lion population was increasing in his Kenya study area even though 20 percent of the lion population was being killed each year. He estimated the potential revenue from those lion that were being killed to be more than \$1 million (US) per year if Kenya permitted tourist safari hunting.

We are proud to note that Dallas Safari Club, the Dallas Ecological Foundation and Conservation Force are funding Laurence Frank's program in Masailand. They escorted the speaker of the Assembly of Kenya to both SCI and DSC's Conventions in January and, like the Speaker, they have a fervent belief that well regulated tourist safari hunting can benefit lions and the local people who will ultimately determine its fate.

The third background paper was entitled *Impacts of Trophy Hunting of Lions in Eastern and Southern Africa: Recent Offtake and Future Recommendations* by Craig Packer, Karyl Whitman, Andrew Loveridge, John Jackson (yours truly) and Paul Funston. It reviews lion trophy hunting and the biological “best practices” being developed to raise the conservation value of lions, while also reducing the im-

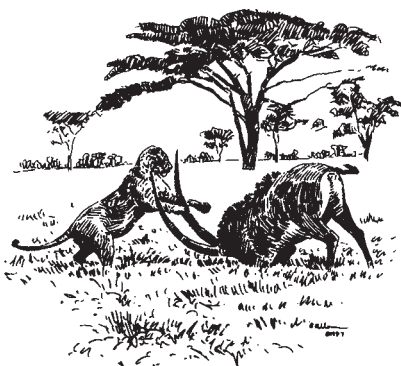
pect of the regulated hunting. Craig Packer recommended that tourist hunting be restricted to older males and that females normally not be on quota. He emphasized the importance of tourist safari hunting to lion conservation, including the fact that most lion range is in hunting areas. Tanzania has the most lion safari hunting and partly in consequence has the most robust lion populations.

Holly Dublin, chair of the SSC of IUCN that acted as facilitator, made it clear that the workshop was not about the narrow issue of safari hunting. Nevertheless, the issue could not be avoided because of the positive contributions to lion conservation being derived from that form of hunting. The participants concluded that lion safari hunting was not the threat, but was an important means of alleviating the threats to Africa's lion. This fact was emphasized in IUCN's official Press Release and was disseminated by the media worldwide. It broadcast a positive image of hunters for a change. Safari hunting is an important means of maintaining lions, lion habitat and abundant lion prey. Lion safari hunting can make lions valuable to local people, which is necessary if lions are to be tolerated beyond the borders of protected areas. Tourist hunting is the principal conservation tool in more than half of all African lion habitat in eastern and southern Africa.

One program that the safari hunting community can be particularly proud of is one that was described by participant David Erickson of the Cullman & Hurt Community Wildlife Conservation Project. Through that project a single hunting operator provides direct benefits to 33 villages in Tanzania containing 100,000 people. In 15 years, the project has provided more than \$2 million (US) to those local communities, including funds for the construction of 34 schools, 12 medical dispensaries and mobile medical units. It has also operated three full-time anti-poaching patrols, conducted leopard and lion studies and much more (Yours truly is the Treasurer of that project, and contributions can be made to the project through Conser-

vation Force).

Though the background papers and initial presentations were interesting and useful, most of the workshop was devoted to development of an actual proactive conservation strategy. Participants selected six issues and were then divided into working groups to address the six issues that were identified: Mitigation, Trade, Management,



Policy and Land Use, Politics and Socio-economics.

Targets and activities were developed under each of those six issues. The workshop ended with an uncommonly positive and upbeat attitude by the participants that have taken charge and responsibility for their own natural resources. The final strategy for eastern and southern Africa is expected to be published in June or July 2006. A continental lion strategy, including the

results of the October 2005 workshop in Douala for western and central Africa, is expected to be published by January or February 2007.

Sarel van der Merwe, chair of the ALWG, summed it up when he wrote that “no one doubts that we are at the foot of the Lion Conservation Mountain of Africa.” Indeed, the second workshop was an unprecedented and important effort. Saving the lion entails saving its habitat and prey base, effective management and reducing human and livestock-lion conflict. It is synonymous with saving wild Africa, or as Craig Packer and others put it, saving “savannas forever.”

This is the beginning, not the end. Yet it is the culmination of many years of work by Conservation Force and others. It was a milestone for Conservation Force. Despite hurricane Katrina, the successful outcome has made 2005 one of Conservation Force's most successful years. Since 2000, Conservation Force has engaged as many as 50 lion specialists at a time and has had as many as 20 different lion projects a year.

The enormity of Conservation Force's effort to save African lion is unprecedented and unmatched. No doubt, WCS may soon surpass Conservation Force's efforts with its \$1 million anonymous benefactor funding. Nevertheless, we will do our best to continue the effort and will be guided by our “smart” project philosophy to select projects that are practical and proactive forces for conservation of the African lion and forces to forever maintain the savanna's of Africa.

One of our objectives has been to turn the underlying attack on lion trophy trade into a stump to improve the image and perception of safari hunting. We are now positioned for a better image. We are being given that chance. This alone is a great accomplishment, perhaps one of the greatest of our lives. Though this can still turn around and finish badly, the role safari hunting plays in conserving the African lion may well dictate how we are perceived in the future. Please remember, if we are to maintain our lead we need continued support. - John J. Jackson III.

Conservation Force Sponsor

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