



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 May 2017

Is the US Fish & Wildlife Service Acting Responsibly?

The African lion was listed on the ESA in December 2015 - effective in January 2016. Other than about 10 wild and wild managed lion a year from South Africa approved last October, 2016, the FWS has not granted or denied any import permit from the threatened listed populations. It is not acting on any import permit applications though supported by rhymes of information. Conservation Force has filed 16 applications for Zimbabwe, including six for Buby Valley Conservancy since January 2016. The FWS has neither denied or approved the applications. The following two articles shed light on the growing problems. We wait and we wait some more. – John J. Jackson, III

Clarifying a Proposed Lion Cull on the Buby Valley Conservancy

I am an independent scientist working on the Buby Valley Conservancy (at the time this statement was made), focused on lion ecology, which actually means just about every aspect of the ecosystem, such is the influence that lions have. I am neither pro- nor anti-hunting. I simply focus on practical conservation solutions that actually work in the real world.



Dr. Byron du Preez

We are hopeful that we will be able to translocate some lions, although all previous attempts to translocate lions out of the Buby Valley Conservancy have been derailed by factors entirely out of our control. However, if the species was in as much trouble as the sensationalist reports like to focus on, one would think that it would be a lot easier to find new homes for these magnificent animals than it actually is. 'There is basically no more space left in Africa for a new viable population of lions.' The fact remains that habitat destruction is their biggest enemy, and there is basically no more space left in Africa for a new viable population of lions.

The Science of Culling

A cull is not a once-off fix (neither is translocation, nor contraception), but would be more of an ongoing management operation conducted on an annual basis. When given adequate space, resources, and protection, lion populations can explode, such as they have done on the Buby Valley Conservancy.

Reducing numbers to alleviate overpopulation pressure does nothing

to permanently solve the problem, nor halts the species' breeding potential; [it] only slows it down for a relatively short time until their population growth returns to the exponential phase once again.

Culling is a management tool that may be used for many species. That includes:

elephants, lions, kangaroos, and deer, basically animals that have very little natural control mechanisms other than disease and starvation, and that are now bounded by human settlements and live in smaller areas than they did historically. As responsible wildlife managers who have a whole ecosystem full of animals to conserve (not just lions), we have therefore discussed culling as an option for controlling the lion population, but have agreed that, for now, this is not necessary just yet and we will continue to try and translocate these animals until our hand is forced.

As already mentioned, there is very little space left in Africa that can have lions but doesn't already. Also, where lions do occur, especially in parks and private wildlife areas, they often exist at higher densities than they ever did historically. This is mainly due to augmented surface water supply resulting in greater numbers of non-migratory prey that now no longer limit lion nutrition and energy availability,

allowing the lion population to rapidly expand. For example, successful hunting to feed cubs all the way through to adulthood and independence is one of the greatest stresses for a lion, and often results in dead cubs and reduced population growth. In turn, a high density of lions can severely reduce the density of their prey, ultimately leading to the death of the lions via disease and starvation—far more horrific than humane culling operations conducted by professionals.

The Dangers of Single Species Management

Lions are the apex predator wherever they occur, and as such exert a level of top-down control on the rest of the ecosystem. Lions prey on a wide variety of species, and we are starting to see declines in even the more common and robust prey such as zebra and wildebeest—not to mention more sensitive species such as sable, kudu, nyala, warthog, and even buffalo and giraffe.



Apart from their prey, lions are aggressively competitive and will go out of their way to kill any leopard, cheetah, wild dog, or hyena that they encounter, and have caused major declines in these species, not just

on the Buby Valley Conservancy, but elsewhere in Africa where lion densities are high. According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), cheetah are listed as vulnerable, and wild dogs are endangered.

It is easy to simply focus on the

number of lions remaining in Africa that has fallen steeply over the last century from ~100,000 to ~20,000 today, but which is directly linked to the reduction in available habitat. Simply focusing on increasing the abundance of one species at the cost of another cannot be considered a conservation success—assuming that holistic conservation for the benefit of the entire ecosystem is the end goal—no matter how iconic that species is. Luckily, lions kill lions, resulting in more lion mortality than any other species—including man on the Buby Valley Conservancy—and in an ideal world the lion population would level off at a putative carrying capacity where lions control their own numbers (deaths from conflict equal or exceed new births). However, it is possible and probable (man-made water points increase the carrying capacity of — and therefore also the competition and conflict between—all wildlife species) that this would still be at the cost of certain other sensitive species.

Ecosystem stability is related to size (and conversely ecosystem sensitivity is inversely related to size) and smaller areas need to control their lion numbers a lot more carefully than large areas such as the Buby Valley Conservancy, which is over 3,000 square kilometers [1,160 square miles]. In fact, small reserves in South Africa alone culled over 200 lions in total between 2010 and 2012, according to the 2013 report from the Lion Management Forum workshop.

Understanding Carrying Capacity

The Buby Valley Conservancy does not rely on trophy hunting to manage the lion population. I will discuss the economics of hunting in brief. The most recent and robust lion population survey data calculate a current lion population on the Buby Valley Conservancy of between 503 and 552 lions (it is impossible to get a 100 percent accurate count on the exact lion number — which also changes daily with births and deaths).

Carrying capacity is an extremely fluid concept, and changes monthly,

seasonally, and annually depending on all sorts of factors including rainfall, disease (both predator and prey), and economics. It is estimated that 500 lions eat more than US\$2.4 m. each year (meat value calculated at very conservative \$3/kg—compare that to the price of steak in a supermarket, and then remember that the Buby Valley Conservancy used to be a cattle-ranching area, and if wildlife becomes unviable, then there is no reason not to convert it back to a cattle ranching area once again).

To give the question of carrying capacity a fair, if necessarily vague, answer, I would personally estimate that the upper carrying capacity of lions on the Buby Valley Conservancy would be around 500 animals—assuming that they are allowed to be hunted and therefore generate the revenue to offset the cost of their predation.

Remember, lion numbers can get out of hand. And if there was no predation, then thousands upon thousands of zebra and wildebeest and impala would need to be culled to prevent them from over grazing the habitat, leading to soil erosion, starvation, and disease. The ecosystem is a very complex machine and whether anyone likes it or not, humans have intervened with cities, roads, dams, pumped water, fences, and livestock. The only way to mitigate that intervention is by further, more focused, and carefully considered intervention, for the sake of the entire ecosystem.

It is important to bear in mind that the wildlife here, and in the majority of other wildlife areas in Africa (hunting areas exceed the total area conserved by Africa’s national parks by more than 20 percent), does not exist as our, or anyone else’s, luxury.

The Buby Valley Conservancy is a privately owned wildlife area, or to put it another way, it is a business. The fact that it is a well-run business is the reason why it is one of the greatest conservation successes in Africa, converting from cattle to wildlife in 1994 (only 22 years ago) and now hosting Zimbabwe’s largest contiguous lion population at one of the highest densities in Africa,



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as well as the third largest black rhino population in the world (after Kruger and Etosha).

This is only possible because it is a business, and is self-sufficient in

generating the funds to maintain fences, roads, pay staff, manage the wildlife, pump water, and support the surrounding communities—all extremely necessary factors involved in

keeping wildlife alive in Africa. ■

Dr. Byron du Preez was Project Leader at Bubyte and member of WildCRU at an earlier stage. He initially made this statement for National Geographic.

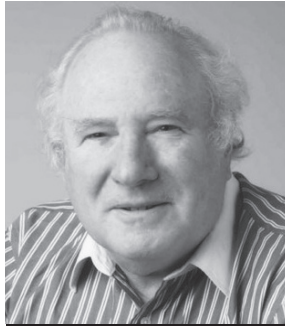
Strategies to Effectively Handle the Next Cecil

Walter Palmer killed a lion bestowed with a name—Cecil. For a while, much of the hunting world, particularly hunting iconic African big game, imploded as if into a death star. For months people uninformed about lion hunting, who never heard of the Hwange Game Park and who couldn't find Zimbabwe on a map if their fat-free soy lattes depended on it, issued death threats on social media, threatened the person and business of the hunter, condemned much of hunting with broad-brush swipes and raised fortunes for predatory opportunistic animal activist groups.

Drenched in ignorance, energized by a luscious sense of moral superiority and the need to feel good, they were unmoved by the damaging consequences their demands would have inflicted. Unleashing a flash mob of hate, death threats and physical intimidation, they illustrated their deceit in purporting to value life. Another Cecil-esque event will occur again, either by the act of a hunter or by an event orchestrated by an anti-hunter in a propaganda hit. We must be prepared to mobilize factual and rhetorical defenses for that next event. I offer eight strategies for crafting our defenses.

Strategy 1: Understand the Moral and Intellectual Terrain

We are in a defensive asymmetrical war against people and organizations that do not value reason, logic or consequences. Indeed, reason, logic and consequences are an anathema to anti-hunting people and organizations. Ignorance is a virtue for it facilitates self-righteousness. Hunters tend to see defending hunting and conservation as a high-minded chess game, winnable by reasoned strategy. Consequently,



Michael Sabbeth
for NRA

hunters over-value truth and facts. We tend to see the battle through a narrow lens. This small aperture stifles a comprehensive understanding of hunting's opponents. We tend to ignore the complexity of human nature; its narcissism and need to feel morally superior, its cowardice, its lust for easy solutions, the avoidance of pain and the pervasiveness of predatory opportunistic greed.

Our opponents operate on a more primal and effective level. They see anti-hunting in terms of power and the opportunity to advance anti-human and anti-conservation ideologies. Hunters value the research of South Africa's Ron Thomson and are motivated by the stirring speeches of Shane Mahoney and the narratives of Craig Boddington. The anti-hunters disregard them totally. In his *Four Quartets*, T. S. Eliot wrote that "Human kind cannot bear very much reality." Eliot is partially correct. Often human kind does not care much about reality. Reality impedes their ideological advancement. The anti-hunters grasp this fundamental truth; the hunting community does not. Our failure to grasp this point jeopardizes our ability to effectively refute the anti-hunters.

Strategy 2: Use Social Media More Effectively

We know a picture is worth a thousand words and that a lie travels around the world before the truth gets out of bed. Social media has exposed several undesirable qualities of the hunting community: its aloofness from reality, its complacency, its inability to present a unified front and, worse, its lack of confidence. For example, powerful forces in the hunting community turned on Palmer before the facts were known.

The new media era battle space is complex. We must be willing to

fight fire with fire, as the expression goes. We must show the vile wires, snares and traps poachers use and the resultant loathsome injuries they inflict on animals. We must highlight the consequences of children with unclean water and food deprivation. Show the decapitated rhinos with a subtitle screaming: "This is what hunting bans cause!" We should have illustrated the vulgar immorality of the self-satisfied somber-faced American woman arrogantly carrying a sign "I am Cecil," attempting to parasitically leach morality from the Charlie Hebdo slaughter in Paris. We must show the images; employ powerful iconography and trenchant rhetoric. We must change the social media paradigm!

Strategy 3: Shed our Delusions:

I attended the annual meeting of African Professional Hunters Association at the 2017 SCI convention. Wonderful dedicated all! However, one statement troubled me. Citing Cecil, an attendee said that "that the world will not tolerate unethical behavior." I disagreed. There is no world in any unified sense, I said. Moreover, the world is incapable of distinguishing ethical from unethical behavior. Indeed, the Cecil event proved my point rather than the speaker's. Additionally, this so-called world has no interest in ascertaining ethical behavior or supporting it. A hunting community, I argued, that seeks to appease 'the world' and which acts upon the belief that the world will embrace hunting if hunters are universally ethical is doomed to commit suicide.

It is delusional to believe that the organized anti-hunting advocates—well-funded animal organizations and European and American NGOs—will come to accept elephant, rhino, leopard hunting and remove bans on trading ivory and rhino horn if only they knew the facts. This thinking is self-destructive. It is idiocy. They know

what we know. They read the reports, the data, the arguments. Secrets do not exist. Rather, they don't care. They have different agendas; they submit to different ideologies, they make their money based on different arguments. We must understand that reality if we are to craft winning strategies and rhetoric.

The anti-hunters are willing to impose on the world's hunting regions, generally, and African hunting nations and their populations, specifically, costs that these far-removed wealthy elites will never pay. African hunting nations, specifically, find themselves in the untenable and frankly, absurd, situation of being dictated to by people who will pay no consequences for being wrong.

Strategy 4: Shift the Paradigm

We should focus less on the virtues of hunting and focus more on the arrogant and deceitful character of those that oppose hunting. Extolling hunting's conservation virtues is a necessary but insufficient process to persuade the vast middle ground.

We know from studying the facts regarding Cecil the lion and the black rhino hunting auction orchestrated by the Dallas Safari Club that hunting saves animals and people. No rational decent human being can intellectually and morally refute these claims. Yet such hunting is opposed. What is the explanation? Let us not flatter ourselves. We do not have an exclusive divine link to wisdom and knowledge. I accept that many anti-Cecil protesters are decent but uninformed yet that is only a small aspect of their personality structure. What kind of person rejects a rhino hunt knowing that many young rhinos would be saved? What kind of person demands a ban on rhino horn trade knowing that the result is more poaching, more rhino deaths and more hunger for the local populations? These are the messages

hunters must make. Data puts people to sleep. Mutilated animals inspire people to fight those that enable the mutilation.

Paraphrasing Winston Churchill, we know that those who choose animal protection over animal conservation will get neither. And we know that airline trophy bans will kill more lions than a thousand Palmers. We know that the feelings business is profitable and the thinking business not so much.

Strategy 5: Focus on the Proper Audience

Mark Duda of Resource Management estimates that as many as 60-80 percent of the population is non-committal regarding hunting in a general sense. My reading of Duda's material leads to the favorable conclusion that most of these people can be reached by reason, ethical arguments, caring for native populations and passion. Thus, our strategy should be to forcefully refute the radical anti-hunters, not expecting to change their minds, but to persuade the large 'middle' of uncommitted people. This vast group will align with those that seem to have winning arguments.

Strategy 6: Get Legislation and Enforcement

We must develop strategies, including legal action, to combat the extreme anti-hunters' sadistic fetish for violence and intimidation. Civil and criminal legal action should be taken in extreme cases by skilled lawyers. We should lobby state legislators to pass legislation assessing criminal and civil liability against those who make credible threats, whether in person or through cyberspace, against hunters, their families and their businesses. Paraphrasing Michael Corleone, we must become wartime consiglieres.

Strategy 7: Don't Avoid the Fight

I spoke with many people who advise hunters to maintain a low profile when confronted with a Cecil-

like situation. "Let it blow over; don't draw attention!" they say. This passive avoidance is self-destructive. Our strategy should be to make the anti-hunting attacker pay a price for its misinformation, greed, narcissism and the unethical consequences of its beliefs. Let us be guided by two of the most fundamental laws of human nature: avoidance is interpreted as weakness and weakness invites aggression. Unlike donors to the anti-hunting causes, the animals we fight to conserve do not live in a therapeutic utopian world. Nature's one constant is life-and-death brutality. The lion does not co-habit with the gemsbok waiting for a dinner of locally sourced, non-GMO, gluten free, organic steamed broccoli. We must fight for reality if we are to conserve the animals.

Strategy 8: Unify with a Central Resource

Our focus must be on persuasion, which is not the same as spewing out data and making abstract arguments. We must identify and then use people who are smart enough and intellectually agile enough to deconstruct future anti-hunting attacks in concise, simple language. We must identify and emphasize the morality or lack of morality of the consequences of policies advanced by the anti-hunters. We must give our hunters the words to fight back. We must craft arguments that align the virtues of animal conservation and human enrichment with the values of the larger audience. Strategic thinking and action offer the best hope for conserving animals and those in the hunting world who lives are affected. ■

Michael G. Sabeth is a lawyer in Denver, Colorado. He lectures on ethics and rhetoric. He has written the book, The Good, The Bad and The Difference: How to Talk with Children About Values. He is now working on a book titled, No More Apologizing! Arguments to Defend and Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports.

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