



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

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

World Conservation Force Bulletin

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The Brewing Storm: New, Compounding Threats to Wildlife Conservation

In September I was asked to attend a planning meeting being hosted by Resource Africa in Johannesburg. An important gathering of concerned stakeholders in the wildlife, conservation, hunting, taxidermy, airline and air freight industries met to discuss the extraordinary general and social media reaction to the sport hunting of a lion (named Cecil in social media), and a number of other related issues brewing. The intent was to plan a workshop to adopt the Johannesburg Declaration, perhaps as early as October, to proactively take charge of the threatening issues. I was invited to make the opening presentation to set forth the historical development of these issues. The brewing storm described is unique and may be a game changer. There may be no going back. The presentation follows:

There are a number of events that you all know of but may not fully appreciate that have brought us together today. It began very positively. After decades of work the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) recognized that conservation hunting, specially designed by experts to serve as a recovery tool for listed species, warranted trophy import permitting. The USFWS granted trophy import permits of wood bison from Canada, followed by endangered listed Sulaiman markhor from Pakistan's Torghar program, and finally endangered listed black rhino from Namibia. This dramatically validated the role of hunting and was fortified by CITES Resolutions, specialist groups, wildlife departments and others.

There was little public or media attention paid to the first two issuances. There was more attention to the black rhino. When the conservation auction of a black rhino hunt was advertised to



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pull in the high bidders (and thus maximize the dedicated revenue), the news of the pending auction went viral, first on social media then in general media like seldom, if ever, before. The ensuing firestorm was fueled by mischievous misinformation, such as statements that the rhino was "critically endangered," when over a decade before

Namibia's population had been reduced two levels to "vulnerable."

Everyone involved in the auction was slandered and most were threatened over the internet. Social media was "anti-social," vicious, and offensive. The USFWS, CITES, Republic of Namibia, Dallas Safari Club (the conservation organization that sponsored the auction at its own expense), Conservation Force (the organization that arranged the auction and performed the permitting) and the hero hunter (Corey Knowlton) who made the record

bid were all targeted. It was more than TV news. The hunt was the subject of talk and entertainment shows on mainstream TV. This awakening of media to the conflict between sustainable use and animal rightists was the first big dark cloud. Big game hunting is now a common subject of mainstream media.

The second cloud did not arise from a validated activity like CITES approved black rhino hunting. It arose when some professional hunters in RSA were told that pseudo-hunting of white rhino was legal. The hunting community had

saved the white rhino, so now they felt they should be able to earn the higher hunting fees select clients were offering to pay. Not so. The hunters were not taking the rhino for private, personal use as personal trophies. The hunters were intending the commercial use of the horns. The confusion and rationalization was soon checked, but at the next CITES CoP the EU representatives pledged to review EU trophy imports of elephant and rhino which ultimately evolved into the new EU regulations that import permits are now necessary for most of the Big Five to enter the 28 EU countries.

In the short term this appears to be a greater impediment than anyone expected or foresaw. The exporting countries must document on 30 days' notice not simply that the export is not detrimental, but also the status of the species and that the hunting enhances the species. This giant burden is expensive and time consuming. It flies in the face of CITES Res. 2.11. Many countries may never be able to muster the documentation and many trophies are already "prohibited" imports. I venture that most Big Five trophies may be prohibited EU import in the

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short term. Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique and Benin are struggling with this right now. The unprecedented criminal syndicates behind rhino poaching in Kruger National Park and elephant poaching in Tanzania have ignited an enormous response against wildlife trafficking. Tanzania readily admits to losing 60% of its elephant and Kruger rhino are near the tipping point. For a number of reasons much of the public cannot distinguish between lawful and unlawful trade. They both are

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understood to additively reduce the populations said to be endangered. Even the USFWS and EU SRG tend to ignore the net benefits from licensed, regulated hunting when poaching has a population on the wane. Both the US and EU have stopped the import of elephant trophies from Tanzania even though the hunting operators fund many millions of dollars of anti-poaching and the hunting habitat is the largest

expanse of wildlife habitat in Tanzania and surrounding countries; five times greater than Tanzania's national parks. In the case of Zimbabwe, the US suspension of elephant imports is in its second season, yet there are too many elephant. The recent countrywide survey confirms the population is stable since the last countrywide survey in 2001. This suspension was largely based upon suspicion and concern from misrepresentations from one local anti-hunting media source. Zimbabwe is the home of the CAMPFIRE, which includes nearly 800,000 families. It is a country that recently updated its elephant management plan and has held five elephant management workshops in 2014 and 2015.

Then there are the wholly unexpected but growing number of airline trophy embargoes against trophy carriage. Who would have thought public carriers would dare disrupt core conservation practices and policy essential to most wildlife habitat, anti-poaching, wildlife operating budgets, and the local communities of these developing nations? These public carriers need to be made responsible before the convention season. What if the operating and anti-poaching budget revenue of these countries were to fall as little as 20%? It would be a field day for criminal poaching syndicates.

The Cecil incident has had the worst impact because it has had the longest legs. Again, mainstream media was set afire by anti-hunting instigators broadcasting hyperbole and largely-

misrepresented facts. Like with the black rhino, those engaged in social media have become irrational and have been given disproportionate attention. They really do not care if the hunting was within the letter of the law or not, or if the hunt was biologically sustainable. They do not even care that the alternative to the hunting in the buffer zone of the park is the care and raising of livestock - in which case all lion from the park would likely be killed in defense of property without the benefit of any quota. The outraged minority would rather the game cease to exist or exist in reduced

numbers and habitat than be hunted. These are not responsible, rational people who should have their way.

On top of this, we have the recurring media attacks on hunting of captive bred lion. This is once again under review by the government of the Republic of South Africa. It is a soft and easy target for the antis and in too many instances is not hunting at all.

We are also burdened with certain inherent problems. Non-hunters find it counterintuitive that we are the shepherds of game. They are perplexed by why we hunt at all. They are uninformed about how hunting is a net benefit even in a declining population. They think that the loss of individual animals must be significant to the population, particularly those with names. They do not know a wild game animal from their family pets. They think a Disney film is a conservation film.

As if this was not enough, there is more; too much to be ignored. This all calls for action.

Obviously, this was a brief summation of the "storm" of problems. The participants went on to identify other problems and then the solutions, which no doubt will evolve into the Johannesburg Declaration and more before the year is over at a larger and more formal meeting. ■

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Rupert Brown Joins Board of Advisors

The godson of founding board member Don Lindsay, Rupert Brown, has been appointed to Conservation Force's Board of Advisors. Rupert Brown lives in Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa and has asked to serve in a volunteer capacity. Conservation Force needs additional volunteer representation in southern Africa, which is the largest safari hunting destination in all of Africa. He is an avid hunter, the father of two children and an investment banker. His godfather, Don Lindsay, was the President of both the Professional Hunters Association of South Africa



(PHASA) and the International Professional Hunters Association (IPHA) as well as a founding board member of Conservation Force. Both of those organizations have been full Supporting Members of Conservation Force from its inception in 1997 (\$5,000 per year contributors).

The next CITES Conference of the Parties is to be in the Johannesburg area September 24th through October 5th, 2016. The uplisting of African lion, elephant, rhino and polar bear are expected to be on the agenda. There are two more workshops on hunting in the planning in Southern Africa. ■

PETA Enhancement Suit Dismissed

The Federal District Court of Eastern Virginia has dismissed the suit filed by The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) against the US Fish & Wildlife Service for issuing enhancement permits. PETA was challenging what it called the USFWS's "Pay for Play" policy. The suit included all enhancement permitting, including two of the black rhino trophy import permits Conservation Force has been able to get approved. The court granted the threshold motion to dismiss on the jurisdictional ground that the suit was a "programmatic challenge" beyond the jurisdiction of the court. Conservation Force was well aware of this threshold defense as we have had our own cases dismissed when trying to get USFWS to act in a timely

manner on and issue enhancement permits. Our suits attacked the practice of never having issued trophy import permits, and the PETA suit challenged enhancement permits that have been issued since our success in getting the USFWS to issue those kinds of permits.

The PETA suit allegations grossly oversimplified the enhancement permitting process and findings, so we expected to win on those merits had the suit proceeded beyond the early motion.

Conservation Force filed a motion for intervention on behalf of the Republic of Namibia, Dallas Safari Club (which auctioned one of the two rhino hunts) and itself. We did not intervene on behalf of the two individual hunters because we wanted to shield them from

PETA harassment and unnecessary inconvenience. The suit was not against the hunters individually, just USFWS for the issuance of the permits and the validity of the permits for use/import.

One more black rhino suit remains. That is the suit by Friends of Animals and Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force (Johnny Rodrigues) pending in the Federal District Court in Washington, DC challenging black rhino import permits. Conservation Force has successfully intervened in that case on behalf of itself, Dallas Safari Club and the Republic of Namibia. Both the government and Conservation Force intervenors have filed threshold motions and sworn declarations to dismiss the suit, which are pending. ■

CITES Matters: Next Conference, Polar Bears, Lions

The next Conference of the Parties (CoP 17) is to be in Johannesburg, South Africa, September 24 through October 5, 2016. The US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) has published its provisional positions, 80 FR 51830, August 26, 2015. USFWS "is likely to propose" for the third consecutive CoP to list the polar bear on Appendix 1, which would prohibit all commercial trade, including that by American native people, otherwise allowed under the ESA and MMPA.

Since that published notice, the 28th Animals Committee of CITES was held in Tel Aviv, Israel and was attended by yours truly. Interestingly, the polar bear were given a bill of good health in the Significant Trade Review Process. That is the process where the level of trade is reviewed as a check to make sure it is not excessive. The bear, over the objection of the USFWS, was cleared and removed from further review. That stamp of approval flies in the face of USFWS's likely proposal to move for

uplisting at CoP 17.

The African lion was also due to be reviewed in another process, the Periodic Review of its Listing Status. The matter was not ready and has been deferred, but is to be completed before the Standing Committee on January 11, 2016. Nevertheless, Kenya issued an information document at the Animals Committee meeting that it intends to file a proposal at CoP 17 to uplist the lion to Appendix I. ■

Longtime Conservation Partner Robin Hurt Warns of Inappropriate Reaction to Cecil Incident

Zimbabwe wildlife regulations and laws are not familiar to me. But, in all other countries I have operated in, the professional hunter is responsible for his client's actions. Nevertheless, I was deeply upset to hear about the demise of a lion named Cecil, a study lion equipped with a GPS collar around his neck, at the hands of an overseas client on safari with a Zimbabwe professional hunter. I was upset that a hunter could be uncaring enough to shoot a known study lion and hope to get away with it. I was upset because it made all hunters look evil in the eyes of many. I was upset because this was a case of seemingly unethical hunting causing unfair worldwide condemnation of legal hunting as a whole.

I can't give further opinion on Zimbabwe game laws as I have never operated there. However, if on investigation the law is found to have been broken, then the Zimbabwe Wildlife Department should prosecute the perpetrators to the full extent of the law.

Some consideration at this time needs to be given to the benefits to wildlife conservation from proper, ethical licensed use of wildlife and not to tar all hunters and wildlife managers with the same brush as those who willingly break wildlife laws.

All too often well-meaning people who don't understand the issues involved try to dictate to Africans on wildlife matters without any consideration to African requirements from this resource, any consideration of the heavy financial cost of wildlife conservation to Africans, any consideration of the conservation and management benefits that the role of safari hunting plays, or any consideration of the heavy cost of setting aside land for wildlife at the expense of other forms of land use such as agriculture.

Wildlife and wild places need to be self-supporting financially, whether through photographic or hunting safaris. It is not possible to make all wilderness areas into fully protected National Parks, so viable sources of income for non-protected areas need to be found to encourage its stewardship. Legitimate safari hunting is one such source. Buffer zones surrounding protected core areas, such as hunting blocks, concessions or private land, are essential to survival of the core; to allow wild animals room to migrate.

This is all of utmost importance to human communities living on a day-to-day basis with wild animals in the wilderness - they must benefit from sustainable wildlife use if they are to be encouraged to look after this resource outside of national parks and protected areas.

Simply put, legal hunting is a management tool strictly controlled by quota offtakes set by respective wildlife departments (and in some cases by CITES, the international regulatory body responsible for international permits). Wildlife, just like domestic animals, must be managed, when populations warrant this. The key is sustainability.

All too often legal use of wildlife through safari hunting and illegal theft of wild animals through unchecked poaching are lumped together through misunderstanding under one umbrella as wildlife destruction. Nothing could be further from the truth. A bank manager is not lumped together with a bank thief as one entity. Similarly, legally licensed management and illicit poaching are at opposite extremes - one being legal the other pure theft. To underline this point: There is an enormous difference between legal hunting on the one hand (sustainable licensed management) and illegal poaching on the other (uncaring, unethical, unchecked, criminal theft of

the wildlife resource).

Costly anti-poaching is undertaken by most safari companies. The motivation for the wildlife manager to look after and conserve wildlife is greater than anyone's because their very livelihood depends on healthy game populations. If the bush is vacated by legal hunters for whatever reason, they are replaced by illegal poachers. Hunting bans in some African countries have been tried. The results have been catastrophic, with plummeting wildlife numbers. When people don't benefit from wildlife, they tend not to keep it.

An additional part of the problem are the end users in Asian countries of lion bones, elephant ivory and rhino horn creating demand for these illicit wildlife products. It is these end users who need to be targeted. No market results in no poaching.

Let us not forget that an avid hunter, President Theodore Roosevelt, was the founder of what today is the worldwide National Parks system. A true conservationist.

In fact, the biggest danger to wildlife today in Africa is through an ever increasing human population encroaching into the wilderness, displacing wild animals.

Yes, I am a legal hunter and wildlife manager, but I am also a staunch conservationist in the true sense of the word. (Conservation means wise sustainable use, not just protection.) I abhor the illegal use of wildlife, but condone its careful use as a sound management tool. Most of us have a common interest in the well being of wild animals, whether we are licensed hunters or non-hunters. It is time for realism in conservation and not feelings of emotion that cloud management issues. It's time for all parties to work together for the benefit of wildlife and wild places we love. ■

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