



“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

Zimbabwe Hunting Will Continue – But Zimbabwe Needs You Now

By John J. Jackson, III

(Editor Note: Conservation Force’s John J. Jackson, III was in Zimbabwe this past month, where he filed this on-site report on the hunting industry there, and its need for support.)

Most hunting land in Zimbabwe is unaffected by the “listing” of private farms in the fast-track resettlement program. Approximately half the hunting areas in Zimbabwe are communal lands. Most of the rest of the country is made up of hunting concession areas, Forest Commission areas open to hunting and National Parks. Private hunting land is less than six percent of the country. In the important Hwange region, the “listed” private land makes up less than a fraction of one percent of the land. Zimbabwe should continue to be the second largest hunting destination in Africa, but it needs your help.

The transfer in ownership of those private properties that are “listed” will not even end hunting on most of that land. The conservancies are also expected to continue to operate as safari destinations. After all, that is the best and most lucrative use of those proper-

ties regardless of the ownership. All sorts of negotiations are taking place to operate safari hunting property lucratively in the future under the new ownerships. Some current owners are negotiating to continue on as managers and operators of the private hunt-



ing areas. Some are leasing back the property from the new owners/settlers in long-term agreements. Many continue to hunt unaffected.

Regardless, most hunting land with most of the game is unaffected. Unlike South Africa, most hunting does not occur on private land in Zimbabwe.

The CAMPFIRE, Forest and Concession operators need us and need us now. They need us more than ever before. You can’t blame the Professional Hunters Association, hunting operators, professional hunters, conservancy operators, concession holders or the CAMPFIRE Association for politics beyond their control. Don’t blame them. Don’t punish them. Don’t boycott them. Also, don’t let media hyperbole mislead or confuse you about the status of hunting in Zimbabwe. There is great hunting here, and in most instances it is getting better. All but a small fraction is to continue.

The industry needs you and needs you now. If you are upset about the listing and resettlement process, don’t react inappropriately. Don’t hurt the industry and people in Zimbabwe that we all care about. The only thing that can destroy the safari hunting industry in Zimbabwe is confusion, misinformation and overreaction. Zimbabwe has been a friend of hunters and hunting. Its role in worldwide bio-political circles has been crucial to all hunters

who travel, no matter the continent. It is not a place that can be dismissed without a terrible toll on hunting. Believe me, we need them as much as they need us.

The recent firearms export gun ban is a perfect example. The near-tragedy was avoided almost wholly because of the diligence and perseverance of Don Causey. He is almost totally responsible for the State Department reinstating the three firearms and 1,000 rounds exemption. He cannot be given enough credit, yet he has been unfairly criticized by those too ignorant to know the seriousness of the matter.

The Department of State fully intended to make it a major felony for American citizens to take safari firearms and ammunition to Zimbabwe. They intended to close the safari industry in Zimbabwe. This was a result of confusion and misinformation. The people it would have hurt were those that we care the very most about, our dear friends who are hanging on with that safari revenue. The very people we know and want to help were the direct and immediate target. It targeted everything that we know and care about in Zimbabwe, including what it means to us. Political leaders and their politics come and go. The only thing that can destroy the safari industry in Zimbabwe is action like that taken by our Department of State. It would have been a spike in the heart of all of our friends and the wildlife and conservation system too. It would have even been the finish for that small but dependent fraction of the industry on listed private lands. They operate them for hunting. They have been hanging on with that revenue. The tragedy was barely avoided! Thank you, Don Causey, for what you have done to restore the firearm exemption! There will never be another Zimbabwe. We must save what we can.

What It's Really Like Now

■ I am on a marvelous safari in Zimbabwe as I write this. It is equal to any of the previous 24 safaris I have taken in Africa. I deliberately chose the dates and places to know the truth. I hunted through the August deadline date for the final move-off of listed private

lands. I hunted both on a private conservancy of 750,000 acres held by 16 private landowners (10 hunting operators), as well as on the largest, highest income producing Communal Land, CAMPFIRE Program area. I hunted near Hwange National Park in the far western corner of Zimbabwe. The sub-region extends from Victoria Falls southeastward towards Bulawayo.

Hwange National Park is the largest park in Zimbabwe. It is one and one-half times larger than Yellowstone National Park in the USA. The surrounding Communal Lands, Forest Commission Lands, hunting Concessions and Gwayi Valley Conservancy (750,000 acres) are much like those hunting areas surrounding our own Yellowstone National Park. The sub-region contains approximately half of the elephants in Zimbabwe - i.e., 40,000 of 81,000. It has the densest elephant population in Zimbabwe and consistently produces the biggest tusks in the country, as might be expected with such an enormous park at its core. This makes it one of the largest and most dense elephant populations in the world. That itself justifies an analysis.

It is one of three comparable sub-regions in Africa. The Chobe National Park in Botswana has 25,000 elephant with a density of 2.42 per kilometer. That is part of Northern Botswana's elephant population of 89,227. Second, the Selous Game Reserve has 49,500 elephants with a density of .73 per kilometer. All are huntable (no associated park). Hwange National Park has an elephant population of 31,613 with a density of 2.08. The sub-region population is 40,000. Those three areas are the largest elephant concentrations in the world, excluding West and Central Africa. Gabon has an enormous concentration in the Northern region and Cameroon has suggested it may have 65,000 in its Southeastern region, though that figure is disputed.

I chose to hunt the South Tsholotsho Communal Land bordering the Southwestern border of Hwange National Park. It is the largest and highest income producing area in the CAMPFIRE Program. It also has the largest elephant quota of any CAMP-

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Publisher

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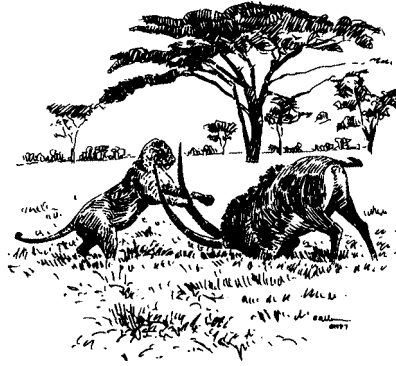
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“Serving The Hunter Who Travels”

FIRE area (10 in North and 10 in South). The average weight of the elephants taken there is 61 pounds. I literally shot the first bull I saw in the first hour of my hunt for a Safari Hunter's Journal television film. I had no trouble taking one 62 x 60, as well as seeing thousands of others. The hunt is the most economically priced of the three Botswana, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe super elephant concentration sub-regions. The point is this: The hunting operator, Thys De Vries of Lions Den Safaris (Booked through Jerome Knapp: 613-256-4469 – from the US) has bought the entire elephant quota out for the next five years in Tsholotsho South. He is opening new roads into un hunted land in the CAMPFIRE Area. The “listing” and still threatened resettlement of his own private land elsewhere has not changed his plans with CAMPFIRE. The potential loss of his own private hunting area may have encouraged him to invest more heavily and expand his operation in unaffected Communal Lands.

My second hunt was in the Gwayi Valley Conservancy. There I hunted

with both Lion's Den Safaris and with Nemba Safaris. It too is in the Hwange sub-region. The conservancy is made up of 32 private properties owned by 16 owners totaling approximately 750,000 acres bordering the East side of Hwange National Park. It continues to operate. The Hwange region has the



largest population of Cape buffalo in Zimbabwe, as well as elephant. I saw herds of up to 500 buffalo on the Conservancy and took a nice 43-inch bull. Up to 3,500 elephant use the area, which is more than twice the population of the famous Amboselli Park of Kenya. We also took a 43-inch sable,

and then went on to see others measuring up to 48 inches. Never have I seen so many sable antelope. We took eland, kudu, bushbuck and all the usual plains game. My wife Chrissie's bushbuck measured 16 inches, which is not uncommon here, where the world record Chobe bushbuck was taken.

The point is this. The Gwayi Valley Conservancy is practically operating as usual. The Ministry of Tourism this week is hosting a workshop to ensure that the Gwayi Valley Conservancy and every other private land safari hunting operation in Zimbabwe continues to operate as such regardless of any transfer of ownership. Most will continue to operate. Those Zimbabweans who have left will defend their personal decisions. They had more than adequate justification. Those that remain in Zimbabwe will be able to carry on the industry and all that springs from it. Zimbabwe promises to continue to be as great an example to the world that hunting is a force for conservation as it has been in the past. Go hunting there for yourself, for our Zimbabwean friends and for the wildlife there too.

“Hunting Ban in Botswana”

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(John J. Jackson, III Note: We have known of a letter from the African Lion Working Group that provided a good deal of insight into the closure of safari hunting of lion in Botswana, but had not been able to share it. An article about it has since been published in the African Lion Working Group's Newsletter (African Lion News, Vol. 3, p. 5). The ALWG has given us permission to reproduce the newsletter article here in full.)

■ The Botswana Department of Wildlife and National Parks recently took a very bold step towards the conservation of lions, with very good intentions indeed, which can be seen as a meaningful victory from a [somewhat blunt] conservation point of view. But, on the other hand, it will bring about major unforeseen problems with dire consequences to both man and lion.

On 2 February 2001, the Minister proclaimed a total ban on the hunting and/or disturbance of lions in

Botswana, for a period of 12 months. Immediately, one might think that this is a major victory for the lions, but in fact, if all the consequences are taken into account, one cannot help but wonder if this was a worthwhile effort, and if this proclamation may not perhaps have more negative effects on the medium and long term.

The ALWG viewed this bold step very seriously and took it to its members for comments. Responses varied from full support to highly upset. One faction supported the idea fully, while others members warned that, if seen from a broader perspective, the ban might have serious negative effects on both lions and communities in some areas. In some areas, it was felt, the ban was justified, but in other areas, especially where clashes between livestock owners and lions occur, more careful

consideration was needed.

The chairman of ALWG, Sarel van der Merwe, took all these comments and recommendations into account when he wrote a formal letter of response to the Director of Wildlife and National Parks, stating the following: “We suggest that the viability for sustainable use and the threats to each sub-population of lions in Botswana should be evaluated individually. In some areas we agree that a ban may be justified, yet in others, particularly those devoted primarily to cattle, it is difficult to see what it will achieve other than to arouse an antagonism towards lions and by association all wildlife and also your Department. We would urge that the solution to lion/livestock conflict lies not simply in a hunting ban on lions but in the implication of a number of management

strategies aimed at lessening the conflict while maintaining sustainable lion populations.

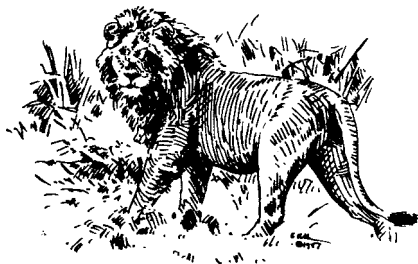
“We feel that the implementation of a ban, special problem animal control measures and sustainable use of the various lion sub-populations should reflect the status, threats and available data. The ALWG supports the principle of sustainable utilization, based on the results of sound and unbiased research results. While tourism may be able to take the place of hunting in some areas, particularly in the Delta, there are vast areas, for example in the Southern Kalahari, which hold little attraction for photographic tourism, where trophy hunting may be the best form of wildlife utilization...”

This letter caused a major upset amongst some of the members, especially those who supported the ban unconditionally. In fact, two of the ALWG members felt so strong about the contents of this letter that they resigned from the Group with immediate effect. Their resignations were accepted.

The problem was complicated by the abuse of problem animal control (PAC), because lions were actually hunted under the pretext of being “problem animals.” This was a free license to kill. As Dereck Joubert (Wild Life film producer and member of ALWG) puts it: “Two weeks ago, when I was in the Vice President’s office, we were discussing the possibility of a ban on all cats being shot as problem animals. This was sanctioned a few days later. A huge number of lions are killed under this law or under the pretext of being problem animal or stock raiders. It was a good start.”

However, some of the other members were less positive. They reason that where good relations were developed - in some cases over many years - between researchers and/or officials and local communities where clashes between lions and livestock owners exist, such relations are now shattered and may well be replaced by mistrust, which will inevitably result in lions now being poisoned, snared and shot relentlessly without such occasions being reported to DWNP. Reports of this nature were already received from

Graham Hemson, researcher in the Makgadikgadi Pan National Park area. It is also felt that such good relations will probably - in some cases at least - never be restored again. Furthermore it is felt that hunters, of which many over the years have developed good and trustworthy relations with governmental structures, now may also react negatively and may decide to take their



business elsewhere - which can be devastating to the hunting industry.

Members also warned that it cannot be reasoned that tourism will simply replace hunters as a source of income. It simply does not happen that way. Christiaan and Hanlie Winterbach reasoned as follows: “Our experience with photographic safaris and trophy hunting in northern Botswana is that

in general the prime areas are occupied by photographic safaris and the rest by hunting operations. When the concession areas (6 areas) between Moremi Game Reserve, Chobe National Park and Nxai Pan NP came up for tender, interest from photographic companies was almost non-existent.

“A combination of photographic and hunting safaris ensures the economic viability of the Wildlife Management Areas in Botswana in a way that neither can achieve on their own. The two community areas bordering the Transfrontier Park have lost their only key trophy hunting species with the ban on lion hunting and thereby also the economic viability of the quota.”

So, in summary: The general feeling is that the moratorium or total ban on lion killing/hunting for one year does not necessarily guarantee positive results for the lion populations of Botswana. But, we all learned a few valuable lessons from this whole issue: 1.) The ALWG’s letter to DWNP was the appropriate action for the Botswana situation.

2.) Differing opinions within ALWG stimulate discussion and should result in a better understanding of the complexity of the situation.

3.) Such differences of opinion also clearly distinguish between members who regard the group with the necessary respect and place a high value on being a member, and those who became members simply to enhance their own selfish goals.

4.) Researchers have an ethical responsibility to present data accurately and not to mislead their audience for personal and selfish reasons.

5.) We should make certain that we distinguish between facts, an educated guess, a hypothesis, an assumption and conjecture - and to keep unnecessary emotion away from the harsh reality of today’s demands for sound, science-based lion population management.

The ALWG wishes to emphasize the fact that we support the Botswana Government’s approach towards the conservation of lions, simultaneously acknowledging the fact that the need exists for debate.

Conservation Force Sponsor

The Hunting Report and Conservation Force would like to thank International Foundation for the Conservation of Wildlife (IGF) for generously agreeing to pay all of the costs associated with the publishing of this bulletin. IGF was created by Weatherby Award Winner H.I.H Prince Abdorreza of Iran 25 years ago. Initially called The International Foundation for the Conservation of Game, IGF was already promoting sustainable use of wildlife and conservation of biodiversity 15 years before the UN Rio Conference, which brought these matters to widespread public attention. The foundation has agreed to sponsor *Conservation Force Bulletin* in order to help international hunters keep abreast of hunting-related wildlife news. Conservation Force’s John J. Jackson, III, is a member of the board of IGF and Bertrand des Clers, its director, is a member of the Board of Directors of Conservation Force.



International Foundation for the Conservation of Wildlife

MEMO

To: Jim Young, Print N Mail
From: Leonardo Mocci, The Hunting Report
Re: September 2002 Issue of Conservation Force Supplement
Date: August 16, 2002

Jim,

Here's the September 2002 issue of the Conservation Force Supplement to be inserted in The Hunting Report. Don't forget to insert John Jackson's picture on page 2. Please fax "blue lines" for approval A.S.A.P.

Print run is 4,900 . Ship overs to us as usual.

Please call me if you have any questions.

Leonardo

P.S. Please make sure that John Jackson gets his 25 copies.