



“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

First African Lion Workshops Are Successful

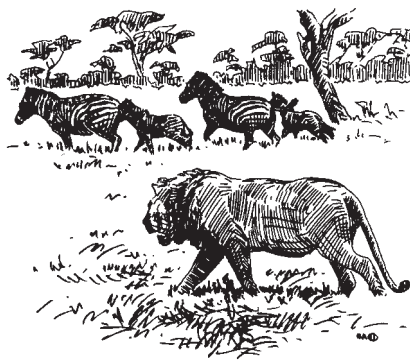
■ Monumental steps have been taken for lion conservation. The lion workshops for West and Central Africa held in Douala, Cameroon, were a great success. They advanced lion conservation in both regions and recognized hunting as an important tool for the long-term survival of lion.

Both workshops were under the auspices of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group. Each was three days in length. The first was a technical workshop to create an agreed-upon database of the number and range of lion in West and Central Africa. A second objective was to identify and prioritize lion conservation units in the two regions. The first two objectives were achieved, with the caveat that new field data that has recently been collected by Philippe Chardonnet through a “bush book” reporting system will be added. Philippe has created a network in the field that are recording and reporting lion observations in *Carnet De Brousse*, bush books. This is focused outside of parks where most lion range, as no systematic attempt is being made by other researchers beyond the borders of protected areas. This is an im-

portant, complementary contribution.

The first workshop was funded by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), which was represented by Luke Hunter and a team of WCS technical specialists. It was attended by a total of 27 individuals.

The second workshop was to iden-



tify the conservation problems and to develop conservation strategies to deal with the identified threats to West and Central Africa lion. It was attended by directors of the wildlife departments, stakeholders and decision-makers. Forty-one individuals participated. The single largest financial contribution to this workshop was from Safari

Club International Foundation (SCIF), that had two solid representatives present, biologists Bob Byrne and George Pangeti. That fact and the demeanor of SCIF’s representatives reflected very well on the hunting community and its conservation concerns.

The three primary causes of the decline in lion were thought to be: 1.) habitat reduction/degradation; 2.) reduction in prey populations; and 3.) human-lion conflict. Hunting can be a conservation tool to help solve all three. The action plans to contend with these threats is still being formulated by the participants over the internet. It is to be finalized before the East and South Africa workshops scheduled for early January 2006 in Johannesburg.

There was general agreement that the regional workshops should be followed by national workshops in each lion range country to develop individual national action plans. This is the protocol first established for the African elephant and is very ambitious and will be expensive. If the hunting community is to maintain its role and leadership, it will have to continue its financial investment. The fate of the

lion depends upon it. On the positive side, this is an uncommon opportunity to save what is so very important to us. We've done so smartly so far. One can only wish that we had taken this kind of proactive approach before the markhor, argali, elephant and rhino were listed.

Philippe Chardonnet, who did the all important African lion study for Conservation Force and the International Game Foundation (IGF), was an important expert in both workshops and provided an invaluable contribution. He co-authored the two substantive background papers that were used to kick-off both workshops. As it unfolded he was clearly the most knowledgeable about the population and range of lion in the technical workshop of experts and the most informed about the problems and solutions in the conservation strategy workshop that followed. Conservation Force's lion study proved to be the most comprehensive and authoritatively referenced resource. At times, it seemed that we had already done all the work and the workshop was serving as a means for everyone else to catch up. It was very gratifying. Our years of work have paid off big time. Our lead was quite obvious. Those who have supported our efforts need to know and share this uncommon, total success.

The workshops have been organized in response to the growing concern that the number and range of African lion are declining. The African Lion Working Group (ALWG), which is an affiliate of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group; Conservation Force; and IGF were the first to raise concern for the African lion in two studies completed in 2002. It grew more serious when the media exaggerated the ALWG "partial" population estimate and some claims that the lion was endangered. The ALWG was already planning a technical meeting to develop a more comprehensive database, and Conservation Force was also already planning an all-of-Africa workshop with over 100 participants to develop a conservation strategy to deal with the "driving forces" described in Chapter III ("Driving Forces") of the Chardonnet

Lion Study. The Kenya proposal of CITES COP13 caused a reaction that has temporarily shuffled the roles of some interests but the outcome should still be the same. The workshops are covering the same ground the original workshops were designed to cover. Potentially, the lion may become one of the best-managed species in the world.

SPECIAL REPORT

News... News... News

IUCN Polar Bear Listing Upgraded

The Polar Bear Specialist Group of IUCN held its 14th meeting in Seattle, Washington, in June. The group reviewed the status of polar bears for the IUCN Red List and concluded that the IUCN Red List



Classification of the polar bear should be upgraded from the "Least Concern" to "Vulnerable" category based on the likelihood of an overall future decline in the size of the total world population. They felt that there is a "likelihood" of an overall decline in the total population of more than 30 percent within the next 35 to 50 years. The principal expected cause of this decline is projected climatic warming and its consequent negative affects on the sea ice habitat of polar bears. In our view this is speculation, but it warrants concern and monitoring.

The Polar Bear Specialist Group meets every 3 to 5 years to review and exchange information on progress in the research and management of polar bears throughout the Arctic and to review the worldwide status of polar



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bears. At the June 2005 meeting, delegates from each of the five circumpolar nations signatory to the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears were present (Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Norway, Russia and USA). A number of interests in climate change were also in attendance.

The Polar Bear Specialist Group reported “future challenges for conserving polar bears and their Arctic habitat will be greater than at any time in the past because of the rapid rate at which environmental change appears to be occurring. The complexity and global nature of the issues continue to require a significant degree of international cooperation and development of diverse and new approaches”. In at least one geographic area, “the greatest challenge to conservation of polar bears may be large scale ecological change resulting from climatic warming.” The only example cited was a new analysis of the long-term subpopulation database in Western Hudson Bay, which indicates that the size of that subpopulation has declined from 1200 to less than 1000 in the last decade (There is no other documented bear decline thought to be caused by climate warming as of yet. The uplisting is largely precautionary and based upon a hypothetical melt down). The group concluded that the Western Hudson Bay decline was due to “reductions in the condition in survival, especially of young bears, because climatic warming has caused the sea ice to break up about three weeks earlier than it did 30 years ago”. That gives polar bears less time to feed and store up fat needed to survive on shore for four months before the ice re-freezes. “The decline in multiyear ice in the polar basin continues to decline at the rate of eight to 10 percent per decade,” according to the specialist group. The heightened listing is based on a projection of that melt down and consequences.

On the positive side, the group continued to recognize the primary importance of polar bear hunting to the culture and economy of the aboriginal people. The group remains supportive of hunting. The best-known and man-

aged areas are those that are hunted. The world’s polar bears are distributed in 19 subpopulations over vast and sometimes relatively inaccessible areas of the Arctic. Their total number has been thought to be between 20,000 and 25,000 and is still thought to be in that range.

The Group also commended Greenland on its recent initiative to improve polar bear management in its region. Greenland has finally adopted a quota and also a licensing system for its polar bear hunting that are to begin in January 2006, as we cited last month.

The Specialist Group addressed the recent flap about basing population estimates and hunting quotas on “traditional ecological knowledge” (termed IQ in Nunavut). It confirmed the importance of integrating the lo-



cal information about the number and range of bear into the research and management process. Nevertheless, it resolved that estimates of subpopulations and sustainable harvest levels “should not be made solely on the basis of traditional ecological knowledge without supporting scientific studies.” It went beyond that by emphasizing that “because of continuing changes in ice cover,...the precautionary principle should be observed in determining harvest quotas, regardless of how certain the combined (local knowledge and scientific surveys) information appear to be.”

Now for our observations.... It remains to be seen if all the conjecture about global warming bears out. In many Canadian and Nunavut areas the Inuit are reporting increasing numbers

of bears while contradictorily expressing alarm over a conjectured continued Arctic melt down of ice. Generally, polar bear populations are increasing or stable. The decline of 200 bears over a decade at their southern most range (edge) is not in itself significant and has been offset by increases elsewhere. The bear numbers may well be increasing in many areas as reported by locals. They should be increasing because it has been more than a decade since the harvest quotas were reduced from their historical levels (in Canada from over 700 to less than 500 per annum) and the harvest take was shifted away from females. Roughly half of the bear that used to be taken were female. Now, female harvest is limited to one-third of the quota in each sub region. Unlike tags held by local Inuit’s that are passed from local person to person until filled, roughly ten percent of the non-resident hunters with non transferable tags are not successful. Those bears are spared. Moreover, at least one bear population has been scientifically shown to be substantially larger than thought. That is the Gulf of Bothia population that Conservation Force has petitioned the USF&WS to approve for trophy import. Eventually the USF&WS should Notice those in the Federal Register for import approval.

The IUCN Red listing should not be confused with a formal regulatory listing under the US Endangered Species Act. There is news on that front too. The Center for Biological Diversity, the Natural Resources Council and Greenpeace have just sent a 60-day Notice of Intent to Sue to the US Fish & Wildlife Service for failing to act on the Center’s petition to list the polar bear as threatened on the US Endangered Species list. The Center filed a listing petition last February that we reported to you but the Service has not published a preliminary determination within 90 days as required. That petition is also largely based on the assumed threat to polar bear from the Arctic ice cap shrinking. Global warming is alleged to be the primary threat but so were new harvest quotas. We will be reporting the outcome of this

in a future issue and/or filing an inter-vention in any suit should there be one to stop hunting through listing.

Briefly Noted

ESA Reform: The House has passed an ESA reform bill (H.R. 3824) by a vote of 229-193 after it cleared the House Resources Committee by a margin of 26 to 12. It is the Pombo bill titled the Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Act of 2005. Conservation Force joined the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation and more than 20 other groups in sending a letter to support the legislation. Nevertheless, the bill does not include any reform or provision dealing with foreign species whatsoever. This is a grave disappointment that must be addressed as it weaves its way through the Senate. Conservation Force has a position paper on the need to reform the foreign aspects and how to do it for anyone that would like to see it. As I write this Don McMillian of Conservation Force is in Washington, D.C., lobbying on the Hill for reform of the foreign species aspects of the ESA. Conservation Force also provided an appeal to reform the foreign aspects of the ESA application in a joint letter sent out by the American Wildlife Conservation Partners (forum of 42 of America’s leading hunting-conservation organizations).

Despite long awaited administrative changes in the ESA (proposed “enhancement” policy and practices), the use of hunting as a management tool to recover listed game species in foreign lands is not likely unless Congress expressly mandates changes in USF&WS practices. The ESA train for change is passing but conservation progressive foreign and US hunter interests are not on board. It is time to let your Senator know that we must support and reward worthwhile programs for game species the USF&WS lists in foreign lands. Most listed mammals are foreign. The present Act provides protection by prohibiting trade, but has no provisions for recovery as it does for domestic species. Worse, it obstructs recovery efforts and is often a diplomatic affront.

Dave Hall New Director: The new

Director of the US Fish & Wildlife Service is Dave Hall. Dave is an active hunter and a career USF&WS employee (27 years) with plenty of experience. He has been the Southwest Regional Director in Albuquerque, New Mexico, since 2001. He has served in supervisory positions in Atlanta, Georgia, Portland, Oregon and in Washington, D.C.

Grand Slam Club/OVIS: The 2006



Hunter Outfitter Convention of Grand Slam Club/OVIS has been moved to the Grand Casino, Tunica, Mississippi. It is only 15 minutes from the Memphis, Tennessee, airport and is touted to be the “largest casino resort” between Las Vegas and Atlantic City. The dates are unchanged, February 9-12, 2006. The GSC/OVIS is also plan-

Conservation Force Sponsor

Grand Slam Club/Ovis generously pays all of the costs associated with the publishing of this bulletin. Founded in 1956, Grand Slam Club/Ovis is an organization of hunter/conservationists dedicated to improving wild sheep and goat populations worldwide by contributing to game and wildlife agencies or other non-profit wildlife conservation organizations. GSCO has agreed to sponsor *Conservation Force Bulletin* in order to help international hunters keep abreast of hunting-related wildlife news. For more information, please visit www.wildsheep.org.

GRAND SLAM CLUB  OVIS

ning some shooting and other camaraderie events (plantation-style quail hunt and a sporting clay event) on the 7th and 8th of February, the two days preceding the Convention. It’s the 50th Golden Anniversary of the organization. See you there.

Black Rhino Replica: Taxidermist Harry Paulson of Washington State is donating a full-size replica of a black rhino to Conservation Force for sale. It looks and feels real, has a main horn of 21 inches and secondary horn of 12 inches. If you’ve darted a black rhino, taken one and can’t import it, or just want this life-like, full-size, textured beauty in your trophy room here is your chance. It is available for \$10,000 on a first-come basis. The \$5,000 is to compensate the taxidermy artist and the second \$5,000 is a tax-deductible contribution to Conservation Force. Conservation Force’s share will be dedicated to its Black Rhino Conservation initiative.

For an extra \$400 Harry will substitute replica horns of your own black rhino. For a picture, or more information, contact Harry at 253-796-0878; or e-mail him at taxidermyschool@juno.com. We can also email you a digital photograph of the replica. Harry was a long-standing board member of the National Taxidermist Association, which is one of Conservation Force’s important Supporting organizations.

African Elephant Numbers Growing: The African Elephant Specialists Group of IUCN has reported an increase in elephant numbers in sites in Southern and Eastern Africa. The repeat surveys using comparable methods between the late 1990s and 2002 show an increase from 283,00 to nearly 355,000, which translates to an estimated overall rate of increase of around 4.5 percent per year. Note that the number of elephant is not all-inclusive, i.e., generally only protected sites are included. For the full report see www.IUCN.org/themes/ssc/news/Article/IUCN_elephant_population_increase.pdf. - John J. Jackson, III.