



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](http://www.conservationforce.org) August 2014

### Status of Elephant Import Suspensions for Zimbabwe and Tanzania

As this went to print, decisions by US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the elephant import suspensions for both Zimbabwe and Tanzania were imminent. First, Zimbabwe. USFWS was expected to make a "final" determination on the interim suspension by mid-July and confirmed to us that it was in fact reviewing the responses provided by Zimbabwe and the extensive comment (100-plus documents) filed by Conservation Force. Zimbabwe also confirmed to USFWS that they have accepted an offer from Conservation Force and Shikar Safari Club to fund an up-to-date National Elephant Action Plan. That important impediment to lifting the suspension has been removed.

Zimbabwe has also confirmed that all elephant areas are being surveyed over the next few months as part of the Pan-Africa Survey of all of Africa. Some are already being surveyed. There was a dispute over the methodology of the surveys, but that too has been resolved so the results will be compiled by a comparable, agreeable technique. Gonarezhou National Park may not be included because it has so recently been surveyed, 2013, which survey estimate is increasing, even though it may be said to be one of the most vulnerable areas of Zimbabwe bordering Mozambique.

The alleged "siege," as USFWS described it, in Hwange National Park has been dispelled. That has been shown to be the poisoning of 100, not 300 elephant. The poisoning was discovered and reported by none other than the adjacent hunting operator, and the poachers were caught and are serving stiff sentences. It was stale news more than a year ago. Over a dozen were arrested and sentenced up to 16 years impris-



John J. Jackson III

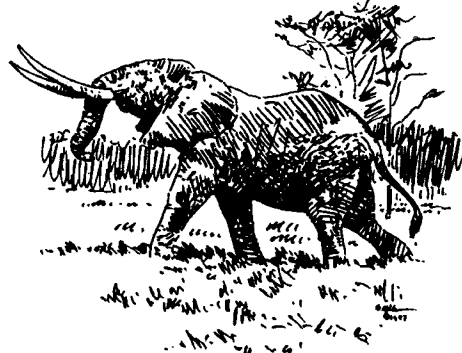
onment. That is serious enforcement, not neglect as USFWS represented. It was no longer an issue when the suspension was announced a year afterwards. At the 65<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee meeting of CITES in Geneva on July 10, the Director General of Zimbabwe denounced the false reports about the nominal incident to the whole world once again.

One other important mistake made by USFWS was a serious misinterpretation of the IUCN African Elephant Specialist Group's African

of time between aerial surveys. This did not change the total number of estimated elephant; it merely moved the estimate to a different column of lower quality or reliability and did that as a matter of procedure when a survey is aged, not because it had become suspect. There were actually non-aerial surveys demonstrating an increasing population that were not included in the AED, so an increase was the most up-to-date information. The Chair of the African Elephant Specialist Group has now written and also discussed the USFWS error with them. It was a major flaw in USFWS' negative assumptions about Zimbabwe.

In consideration of these points and so much more, I do expect USFWS to make a positive enhancement finding shortly, but, of course, I am sticking my neck out. The questionnaire USFWS sent to Zimbabwe should define the issue, but we have to wait and see. USFWS may choose to send a follow-up questionnaire before lifting the suspension, which will extend into the season.

Tanzania presents a different picture because the Tanzania elephant remains on Appendix I of CITES and because of the admitted poaching and drastic decline of elephant. On the other hand, Tanzania is sparing no effort to contend with the unforeseeable illegal ivory demand driving poaching and trafficking. Who could foresee such an unprecedented demand? Again, as this went to press a decision on the administrative appeals of the permits that have been denied had been imminent, but we received too many signals that the decision was going to be negative. Conservation Force asked for an extension of time to file an expert report on a pivotal management issue and additional quantification of the benefits arising from the hunting operators in the elephant areas. Conservation Force has been granted an extension of time to submit an expert report being prepared by elephant expert Rowan Martin on the key issue of the sustainability of authorizing imports when the population has been and may still be



Elephant Database (AED). The USFWS misinterpreted the population estimate data on Zimbabwe to mean its elephant population was down by nearly half when it is stable or increasing. We discovered this early and informed the USFWS of its mistake, but as recently as late June USFWS was still misrepresenting this. In an Oversight Hearing before the Committee on Natural Resources (June 24, 2014), one of Zimbabwe's senior research ecologists testified at least five times that the Zimbabwe elephant population was stable or increasing, while the USFWS representative contradictorily misrepresented that the population had been halved. What happened was the AED reflected a change in the quality of the estimate in the Hwange National Park area merely because of the passage

in decline. This will delay the administrative appeal determination 45 days, but there is little doubt that the issue is pivotal. "Is it sustainable to use/hunt a population that is in decline?" The hard documents demonstrate that the operators contribute millions of dollars a year to conservation, anti-poaching and community programs that enhance the survival of the species in addition to the operating budget of the wildlife authority.

This core issue with imports from Tanzania arises from the accepted fact that the population is in decline, it is not stable or increasing. The USFWS questions whether or not it is sustainable to hunt a population that is declining. In fact, it may not still be in decline and may not have declined as much as thought. All indicators are that the rate of poaching has already been reduced and Tanzania and the hunting operators have taken drastic measures to control the poaching. One hunting operator, already spending up to half a million dollars a year on anti-poaching, has just donated two new vehicles and doubled the number of game scouts in his area, for just one example.

Whether or not a game population has to be stable or growing to be hunted and trophies to be importable goes back to the Elephant Guidelines fight in 1991-92. At that time, the USFWS promised to be more flexible. The number of elephant taken in Tanzania is inconsequential, i.e. less than a small fraction of one percent. This is wholly offset by the number of elephant saved by the hunting, so it is a net gain, not an additive loss. If the

population is declining, it is declining far less because of the elephants being saved by the hunting activity. The hunting is the very medicine necessary to cure the ill – control and disincentivize the poaching.

We have not given up on reopening Tanzania this year, 2014, but it is a harder sell than Zimbabwe. Tanzania admits the poaching crises and is asking the world for help. No one could have foreseen the level of demand and unprecedented poaching Tanzania has experienced. All Tanzania populations are also being surveyed this year (2014) as part of the Pan-African survey and that surveying has already begun.

Tanzania has complied with the suggestion by USFWS in its correspondence that Tanzania reduce its quota. It has halved its quota effective July 2014. We await the USFWS decision on the pending permit appeals and some new import permit applications Conservation Force has filed while we continue on every front. If the pending appeals are denied, we have continued building a great deal of additional information to submit with the final appeal and oral argument before the USFWS Director. Hunting is a large part of the conservation solution, while the quota is not statistically significant.

Some are critical of Tanzania for losing so many elephant, but in reality Tanzania is a pace-setter. It still has one of the largest elephant populations, the most habitat, the most lion, the most buffalo and so much more. Don't blame Tanzania for the unforeseeable. ■

## The True Status of White Rhino Populations

**D**espite the unprecedented level of poaching in recent years, white rhino populations are at an all-time high. Of course, not as high as they would be but for the poaching, but not in decline. In South Africa, the high level of poaching has not yet reached the rhino growth rate, which would be the tipping point. Moreover, the poaching rate has declined. The hard-fought reduction in poaching has occurred before the level of poaching reached the rate of reproduction.

There has been plenty of reason

for alarm and pro-action, but claims that the system is broken are false. The rhino is not in decline and the poaching peak is behind us. All is not lost.

The African Rhino Specialist Group of IUCN (AfRSG) issued "final figures" for the rhino at the recent CITES 65<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee meeting in Geneva, which Conservation Force attended. The Group reports that "growth is slowing in response to the rise in poaching," but the "tipping point" has not been reached. The "tipping point may have been reached"



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**EDITOR/WRITER**

John J. Jackson, III

**PUBLISHER**

Barbara Crown

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Conservation Force  
3240 South I-10 Service Road West, Suite 200  
Metairie, LA 70001  
Tel. 504-837-1233 Fax 504-837-1145  
[www.ConservationForce.org](http://www.ConservationForce.org)

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in Kruger with that “population just starting to decline,” but now poaching is declining there.

It should be noted that some rhino are being removed from Kruger on “strategic grounds.” Get this: That is expected “to enhance metapopulation growth rates.” Yes, there were too many rhino. Countrywide, the Specialist Group concludes that poaching in South Africa is “still at sustainable levels...[w]hile poaching levels...are approaching the tipping point where poaching ceases to be sustainable and deaths will start to exceed births.” Keep in mind the poaching is now in decline. The poaching of three rhino a day, which is the average in 2013, is sustainable. The Group concludes that “the apparent leveling off in poaching in the first half of 2014 is to be welcomed as current poaching levels of 4.3% of rhino numbers (all of Africa) are just sustainable.”

The population is not in decline. The trend in increasing arrests corresponds

with the stabilizing and declining of poaching. “A minimum of 54 poachers died following shootouts in 2011 and 2012 increasing to at least 50-plus in 2013 with the majority in Kruger Park and small numbers in KwaZulu-Natal. So far this year a further 30 poachers have died as a result of armed contacts in Kruger and another two in KwaZulu-Natal.”

Sustainable or not, there has been a distressing decline in white rhino sale turnover in South Africa following the upsurge in poaching. The Group reports, “[t]his is primarily as the major conservation agencies have fewer surplus rhinos to sell due to the poaching.” “In addition, the trend of increasing numbers of private sector owners in South Africa getting rid of some or all of their rhino given the increased security costs and increased risks that have accompanied the upsurge in poaching...” is also of concern.

This is distressing because it is the loss of millions of dollars of

revenue for operation of the responsible agencies and the private sales reaction to the poaching “may reduce the range available for expansion of rhino range and numbers.”

In short, the rhino is not yet in decline, but there is plenty of reason to step up emergency action until this crisis passes. ■



## ***Win the Wild, A Fictionalized Account of How South Africa Reclaimed Its Wildlife Heritage***

**D**on Lindsay has just written a novel that is not really fiction at all. It is the story of the game ranching industry in South Africa. It is the story of three generations of a South African family that explains the entire ranching industry, i.e. the restoration of game and wildlife to a land that had been denuded of wildlife for livestock – the re-wilding of South Africa. The family’s ranch is the very first wild game ranch in RSA. I understand it is, in part, Don’s own family story.

The reader witnesses the conflict between livestock and ranching of game as game is restored. The beef and livestock industry was king and absolutely above economic challenge. On top of the conflict between livestock and wild game ranching, the concomitant biopolitical issues are seen in real context. The issues of today are each addressed in turn as the third generation son courts a beautiful expatriate young woman who has a strong protectionist philosophy. She is with the news media

and has come to Africa to save its wildlife and to report what must be done. In the end, she understands, as will the reader, “a hunter and his contribution to the wild.”

It is a genius of a book. The introduction by Ian Player, the father of rhino conservation in South Africa, makes it even more compelling reading.

Don was President of the International Professional Hunters Association (IPHA) for 14 years and President of the Professional Hunters Association of South Africa (PHASA) for nine years. Don cites that he is a member of Shikar Safari Club and a founding and current member of Conservation Force. Many know him as the owner of African Railwood. It was he who grew up around the first game ranches. His book is dedicated “to those conservationists and hunters whose passion it is to bring wildlife back to the land from where it was eliminated in the past, and to keep wildlife on the land where it is constantly threatened at present.” Noble indeed.

The hunting community owes Don a great deal for all he has done and now for capturing the win for wildlife and habitat in this book. The book is available from the Rowland Ward website ([www.rowlandward.com](http://www.rowlandward.com)).

South Africans boast that the returning numbers of wildlife is the “greatest terrestrial success story ever.” Initially, no one could believe horns or game could be worth anything at all, much less far exceed the value of beef. Today, all wild species are thriving in South Africa, even the cattle-killing lion and leopard. The rhino is undergoing serious poaching in Kruger National Park, but still remains at its highest population in over 100 years. Who would believe that lion and leopard would ever be anything but vermin, killers of livestock and people? This is a remarkable story told in a remarkable way by a remarkable conservationist and friend. Thank you, Don. We are so very proud you have been a part of Conservation Force from its founding. ■

## CIC Caprinae Atlas of the World, The Ultimate Mountain Species Guide

**G**erhard Damm and Nicolas Franco have compiled the ultimate atlas of all wild Caprinae of the world. It consists of two volumes, 1,104 pages in total with over 1,000 color photographs. The set has no equal in the hunting or management world. No serious Caprinae hunter should go without the set.

This is the atlas many of us have been waiting for. It has taken decades

to complete. Its origins go back to the 1980s. Gerhard Damm is the President of the Division of Applied Science of CIC, the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation. He is also a founding board member of Conservation Force, which provided a substantial contribution to the financial costs of the publication. The Wild Sheep Foundation also provided a large financial contribution towards the production of the publication.

Nicolas Franco is Past President of the CIC and the nephew of General Franco of Spain.

We have already used some chapters of the *Atlas* before its publication in Conservation Force's comments on the downlisting proposal of all straight-horned markhor. The coverage of the book includes range, management, genetics – whatever you desire, it is the ultimate information source. Never has there been such a resource book.

It is available for \$350, plus postage through CIC Headquarters at [www.cic-wildlife.org](http://www.cic-wildlife.org), Rowland Ward Publications at [info@rowlandward.com](mailto:info@rowlandward.com) or Gerhard Damm at [gerhard@muskwa.co.za](mailto:gerhard@muskwa.co.za). ■



## Latest Update on Status of Polar Bear

Environment Canada has issued a report and map update (May 2014) that reflects its polar bear population units are improving. From 2010 to 2014 more populations have been shown to be stable or improving. None are known to be in decline and two that were classified in decline in 2010, Southern Beaufort Sea and Baffin Bay, are classified as only “probably” in decline. Those two are thought to be improving. The Western Hudson Bay that was so significant and in decline in 2010 is now classified as “probably stable.”

Canada has also succeeded in fending off two attacks on its polar bear management in other international areas. The European Union rejected a request to impose new restrictions on polar bear importation into the EU and a petition by the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) to North American Agreement on Environment Cooperation (NAAEC) was dismissed. When will it stop? (Incidentally, the CBD has recently made a vehement opposition to the hunting of markhor in Pakistan as well.) ■

## Government Defines “Significant Portion of its Range” Language in ESA

**O**n July 1, 2014 both the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), Department of Interior, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce, published a *Final Rule* defining a critically important clause in the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The clause applies to both “endangered” and “threatened” listed species.

If a species is found to be endangered or threatened throughout a *significant portion of its range*, the entire species is listed as endangered or threatened. So

what is “significant” and what is not is all important.

The *Final Rule* provides that a range is “significant” “if the species is not currently endangered or threatened throughout all of its range, but the portion’s contribution to the viability of the species is so important that, without the members in that portion, the species would be in danger of extinction, or likely to become so in the foreseeable future, throughout all of its range.” Even if a significant portion of its range, if that portion is a valid, distinct population

segment (DPS), then the DPS will be listed rather than the entire taxonomic species or subspecies.

The *Final Rule* is 32 pages long and can be viewed at 79 FR 37578 – 37612, July 1, 2014. It may well come into play in the treatment of the petition to list all lion as endangered, which may have been awaiting this ruling. Conservation Force’s legal position has been in accord with this *Final Rule*. The lion in Western and Central Africa are not significant enough to warrant the listing of all other lions in Africa. ■

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