US Import Suspension for Elephant Hunting Trophies from Zimbabwe and Tanzania
Gerhard Damm

On 4th April 2014, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) announced a suspension on imports of sport-hunted African elephant ivory taken during calendar year 2014 in Tanzania and Zimbabwe. In Tanzania, USF&WS cited catastrophic elephant population declines resulting from uncontrolled poaching, questionable management practices, a lack of effective law enforcement and weak governance. For Zimbabwe the Service relied on what was called “available, though limited data which indicated [sic] a significant elephant population decline”. Ironically, the Service mentioned in the same announcement that “legal, well-regulated sport hunting, as part of a sound management program, can benefit the conservation of listed species by providing incentives to local communities to conserve the species and by putting much-needed revenue back into conservation”.

Estimates of the elephant population in Zimbabwe (listed on CITES Appendix II) put the total number at over 100,000 individuals. Professor Nigel Leader-Williams in a letter to Science magazine pointed out already in 2011 that controlled hunting was beneficial for Zimbabwe’s elephants. “Implementing trophy hunting has doubled the area of the country under wildlife management relative to the 13% in state protected areas, thanks to the inclusion of private lands” Leader-Williams said. “As a result, the area of suitable land...
available to elephants and other wildlife has increased, reversing the problem of habitat loss and helping to maintain a sustained population increase in Zimbabwe’s already large elephant population.”

In Tanzania elephant are listed on CITES Appendix I. The elephant poaching situation in the country is bad, with the number of elephants in Selous and Ruaha reportedly having dropped from 74,416 in 2009 to 33,084 in 2013. Nevertheless, the Tanzania National Ivory Action Plan was judged largely positive and on track by the CITES Secretariat (SC65 Doc. 42.2) and will be discussed at the CITES Standing Committee in July. Already in December 2013 a mission to the Selous Game Reserve (SGR) by the UNESCO World Heritage Center and IUCN concluded that “voices questioning hunting are becoming louder at a time of a poaching crisis … [however elephant] hunting can make a significant contribution to conservation through revenue generation [and] through the presence of actors with an incentive to maintain the resource underpinning their business. Given the substantial contribution of hunting revenues to the management and conservation of SGR [Note: the retention scheme by which the SGR can retain 50% of hunting income for management and conservation], the banning of hunting in SGR would be ill-advised and counterproductive.

The USFWS decision came without prior consultations with representatives of the two countries, elephant specialist scientists in Africa, or experts from international hunting associations. Yet, US President Obama had stated in July 2013 during a Joint Press Conference with Tanzanian President Kikwete that his new executive order explicitly requested “to better organize U.S. government efforts [so] that we can cooperate further with the Tanzanian government and others”. The USFWS apparently also did not consult with the International Conservation Caucus Foundation (ICCF). This organization educates US policy makers on international issues of natural resource management throughout the legislative process. ICCF represented by ICCF Vice Chairman [and CIC Vice President] Dr. Kaush Arha had signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Dar es Salaam in March 2014 with Tanzanian Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism Lazaro Nyalandu and UNDP’s Philippe Poinset. These partners, including the Global Environment Facility and World Bank held a Summit in May 2014 to combat wildlife crime and advance wildlife conservation. CIC members John J Jackson III (Conservation Force) and Dr. Ali Kaka also participated on invitation of Minister Nyalandu.

The International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) is concerned that the unilateral banning of elephant trophy imports to the US from both countries was made arbitrarily, with disregard for science and the rural citizens in the affected countries, and with ignorance of on-the-ground realities of conservation in Africa. USFWS should have first consulted with African, US and international partners as well as the major international hunting associations on adaptive elephant management processes and best practice parameters in elephant conservation and sustainable use. What has to be jointly looked at are: adequate and motivating benefit-sharing with hard-pressed rural residents, expansion of poaching control at grass-root level, transparent reinvestment of revenues in elephant conservation and surveys, strict compliance with sustainable use principles, scientifically sound and independently set quotas and periodic reviews of age limits, minimum tusk weights and lengths. A blanket import ban is counterproductive.

The CIC is at the forefront in combatting wildlife poaching and trafficking. The recent Global Summit “Hunters United against Wildlife Crime”, held on the 24 April in Milan, Italy during the 61st CIC General Assembly, adopted the Milan Declaration Hunters United Against Wildlife Crime. The members of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW) consisting of 12 member global organizations also held its third meeting in the fringes to prioritize actions in its core working areas which include legal hunting as well as wildlife crime.

“Hunters have their boots on the ground in most of the heavily threatened areas in Africa, and are for many years funding dedicated anti-poaching efforts in cooperation with conservation and
“law enforcement bodies” said CIC President Lozé at the conclusion of the Milan Summit.

The CIC calls on the USF&WS to lift the elephant trophy suspension. “[This] suspension on import of elephant trophies from Tanzania and Zimbabwe is not a solution, but a problem for elephant conservation”, said CIC President Bernard Lozé in Brussels during the launch of the EU Platform on Coexistence with Large Carnivores in June. “Revenue loss from trophy hunting and, consequently underfunding of wildlife sectors will undermine the capacity of governments to undertake conservation work including population counts and law enforcement, and will deprive rural communities and community-based conservation programs from one of their few legal sources of income”, Lozé added, “the USF&WS action constitutes an unilateral and uninformed decision that will have disastrous effects on elephants and other wildlife in both countries”.

The Monster Crocs of Lake Chamo
Dr. Ludwig Siege

A look at the crocodile entries in the SCI trophy records reveals the astonishing fact that the four largest crocodiles and six out of the top ten entries come from a single location in Ethiopia: Lake Chamo in the Central Rift Valley. All were hunted in 2006 and 2007. The largest measures 18 feet 7 inches; the first three entries are all surpassing 18 feet (ca. 5.50 m). The 40 year-old SCI records contain more recent entries than the much older Rowland Ward Records of Big Game Animals. The 28th edition of Rowland Ward lists only four crocodiles over 17 feet, the largest one a 17 ¼ footer from Tanzania, harvested in 1995. Only number four is from Ethiopia, taken in Gambella in 1969. There are very few older records of crocodiles in the record books since crocs were regarded as vermin and nobody bothered with record book entries in those times. There have always been speculations about how long Nile crocodiles (Crocodilus niloticus) can grow. Rowland Ward remarks in the 28th edition that "legends of crocs over 20 feet are many, but that it is doubtful if Nile crocodiles grow that big".

In older travel, exploration and hunting books on Africa there are of course many references to monster crocs. Hans Besser, a German agriculturist from German East Africa, probably described the largest croc in African literature: "One crocodile that I shot in March 1903 at the Mbaka river [a tributary to Lake Malawi from the North] had a height at the highest point of 93 cm, a circumference at the belly of 4.26 m and a total length of 7.6 m, even though around a quarter of the tail was missing, a fact which could be concluded by the abrupt and thick end of the tail. The bones of the head measured 1.4 m in length and 0.96 m in width. When I saw this monster lying at the riverbank I thought at first that it was a large, damaged canoe...." 7.6 m are almost 25 feet!

We do not know much about Hans Besser, apart from what he wrote in German in his two small books, but he presents himself there as a very accurate observer of African wildlife, not at all given to exaggerations. In those days the hunt for record trophies was not yet really on, so that this motivation could not have been a reason to exaggerate.

Whatever the largest length of a Nile crocodile might be, fact is that the largest ones recorded by hunters and scientists come from Lake Chamo. This lake is situated in the lovely landscape of Ethiopia’s Central Rift Valley close to the university town of Arba Minch. The lake is around 30 km long in north-south direction and around 15 km across. Its northern shores form part of the Nechisar National Park, known for its large herds of zebra. These shores are also renowned for the large crocs that tourists can observe at the so called crocodile market, a sandy piece of shore
where the huge saurians like to bask in the sun. The park can be easily reached by road and plane, hence visitor numbers are rising.

Arba Minch is also the location of Ethiopia’s first and until today only crocodile ranch. The ranch, run by Government, is relying on the crocodiles of Lake Chamo for hatchling collection. Another private ranch has recently failed.

Crocodile ranching and hunting started after Ethiopia submitted a proposal at CITES CoP 8 in 1992 to transfer its *C. niloticus* population from Appendix II (export quota) to Appendix II pursuant to Resolution Conf. 3.15 on ranching. Between 1992 and 2007, legal international trade was carried out for ranched skins and a limited number of hunting trophies.

Subsequently the Government declared the southern part of Lake Chamo as Controlled Hunting Area and trophy hunting for crocodiles started in 2005. Also in 2005, Ethiopia contracted African Parks Foundation (APF) to take over the management of the Nechisar National Park. During this process, APF contracted a consultancy to report on crocodile surveys in Lake Chamo. This report was intended to assist in the formulation of recommendations for a management program for the “Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of the Lake Chamo Crocodile Resource.” The surveys confirmed that the crocodile population had increased following the cessation of widespread and unregulated hunting in the 1950s and 1960s, but suggested that it had only increased to around 17.5 to 25% of historical population levels. The Wildlife Department, then under the Ministry of Agriculture, wrongly assumed the report represented official recommendations from the IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group and, on that basis, stopped the limited trophy hunting at Lake Chamo in July 2007.

During the CITES CoP 2013 a meeting between the Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG) and the Ethiopian delegation took place to discuss this issue. It was decided that CSG undertake a mission to Ethiopia to review the crocodile management activities of the Ethiopian government and private operators. This took place during from 28 April to 08 May 2014 and the Arba Minch Crocodile Ranch was visited to provisionally assess production protocols, facilities, harvesting procedures, and future
needs. For three days night and day surveys of the Lake Chamo crocodile population were conducted. The team was composed of Dr. Matt Shirley (CSG), Dr. Ludwig Siege (Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority), Mesereth Ademasu (Senior Biologist for the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State’s Bureau of Culture) and Abraham Marye (Chief Warden of Nechisar National Park). For the crocodile surveys, staff from the crocodile ranch and Prof. Dr. Murali Pai (Biology Department University of Arba Minch) participated.

A report of the findings was prepared for the annual CSG meeting in Louisiana (May 2014), the highlights of which are the following:

- Like the 2007 report, it was found that Lake Chamo supports a large and healthy crocodile population.
- The number of nets in the lake has increased at least two-fold since 2007. The concession holder actively patrolled and controlled for illegal mesh diameter nets and actively managed the lakeshore habitat to facilitate crocodile nesting and basking. These activities, however, were discontinued after the concession was closed in 2007 and the cessation of controls certainly has a negative impact on the crocodile population.
- Contrary to the suggestions of the 2007 report limited trophy hunting will not negatively or unsustainably impact the population as a whole and the benefits derived justify it as a continued component of Nile crocodile management.
- The permit fee for trophy-sized Nile crocodiles should be increased from US$2,000 to as much as US$6,000 – $8,000, though a sliding scale depending on the ultimate size of the trophy or the hunting area.
- The system of bi-annual quota setting surveys should be reinstated. It was stated that, unlike for other concession-based quota setting, the survey covers the entirety of the lake and not just the concession area.
- Human Crocodile Conflict (HCC), in the form of crocodile attacks on people and livestock, does exist at some level on Lake Chamo, but investigations do not support that this is
increasing or that people feel exceedingly threatened. Establishing a better managed crocodile program, that includes a combination of better fisheries management in Nechisar NP, trophy hunting, and habitat management/protection of nesting and basking beaches could help significantly reduce HCC.

Other findings of the 2014 report are:

- There are obviously healthy hippo populations in the lake
- The integration of the ranch's harvesting procedures into the overall management of the lake makes sense (guarding of hatching sites, collection of hatchlings), even though no nesting surveys were made recently.
- The crocodile ranch practices good animal husbandry. There is, however, a problem with procuring enough food for the ranched animals.
- The economics of the crocodile ranch management have to be changed radically. Presently it is run as a Government department and not as an economic entity with own budgeting and marketing.
- There is a problem to find markets for the skins. CSG may be able to help.
- Documentation of non-detriment of the utilization is difficult due to lack of data. This concerns above all the annual hatchling collection. The collection must be based on nest censi.

Note: Both photos © Dr. Ludwig Siege

Runaway Game Prices – An Economic Bubble With Major Conservation Risks?
Chris Niehaus (reprinted with permission from SA Hunter’s Magazine March Issue 2014)

There has been a lot of press coverage recently about the investment potential of game animals, especially disease-free buffalo of East African origin, sable antelope, roan antelope and Livingstone’s eland. Articles like the one in the FM of 16 August 2013, where game industry participants are quoted as saying: “There will be market fluctuations and prices will go up and down, but the bubble will never burst.” and “The rise in prices is more than sustainable.” and “Annual returns on investment of 80% or more are feasible on top breeding animals.” place this industry fairly and squarely within the bubble definition.

Sir Isaac Newton’s quote: “What goes up must go down” has been in common use in the financial investment field for many years. It is equally applicable to any other investment where there have been price increases of the magnitude of the game industry’s. Like religion is based (taking a simplistic view) on the struggle between good and evil, markets operate against the background struggle of greed and fear. When greed is in the ascendency, you have a bull market; when fear triumphs, you have a bear market. When high returns are stressed, stimulating greed, and risks are glossed over, reducing fear, you create an imbalance and thereby fertile ground for an economic bubble.

A later article in Moneyweb (9 October 2013): “Why do business heavyweights like Johann Rupert invest in buffalo?” goes even further by comparing returns on buffalo and sable antelope with the JSE ALSI and the DJIA. Statements like “Even those without the land, skills and knowledge can participate and follow in the footsteps of business giants like (Cyril) Ramaphosa and (Johann)
Rupert and reap handsome benefits” are irresponsible and would, if they were made about financial instruments, attract the close attention of the Financial Services Board.

There is one immutable, inescapable fact of any investment – higher returns come at the price of commensurately higher risk. When people start talking about high returns on investment without mentioning risk at all or even worse, imply that there is low risk associated with a high-return investment, investors should be very, very cautious.

There have been very many bubbles in the past, from the Tulip Mania of 1636/7, through the South Sea bubble of 1771 and the massive Commodities bubbles of the 1970’s, the Tokyo asset price bubble of the late 1980’s, the Ostrich bubble in the US, South Africa and Namibia of the early 1990’s, and even the most recent sub-prime mortgage crisis in the US, brought about largely by the housing bubble.

All of these were characterized by investors using past financial performance to justify future performance without taking any heed of the intrinsic value of the underlying asset. All of these, and I mean every one of these, were only sustained by a continuous stream of new investors prepared to buy in. When these new investors dried up, prices collapsed.

There are many models used to explain why bubbles develop, including, inter alia, extrapolation (where excessive use is made of past performance to justify future performance); the greater fool theory (there is always a greater fool who will take the investment off you); and herd theory (which simply stresses the human behavioral tendency to follow other people’s actions, i.e. buy when other people are buying and sell when others are selling). Summarizing these however, bubbles develop as a consequence of the price at which assets trade being based purely on past financial performance and not on in-depth analysis of the intrinsic or fundamental value of the asset. Furthermore, all bubbles have these things in common: assets trade at levels much higher than their intrinsic or fundamental value, the early entrants make money, the late entrants lose money, and the transition from a steadily-increasing price environment to a steeply decreasing price environment is catastrophic.

Prices for “top quality genetics” i.e. animals with unusually long horns, may continue to rise for a while as this trade consists almost exclusively of transactions between a few, extremely wealthy individuals and, at least in financial market terms, would probably not be given particularly high marks for price integrity/transparency.

Furthermore, it is also a little bit disingenuous to present animals that are being bred for single traits or characteristics as being genetically superior. They are in the main being bred in small and protected enclosures, in close proximity and with daily exposure to humans, and will inevitably lose all sorts of necessary survival traits, making them genetically inferior, if anything. The less said about color-variations the better. At least, the animals with longer horns may, in the short term, attract trophy hunters. Color variants like golden Wildebeest and black Impala hold little interest for most hunters and pose a genetic risk for wild populations.

The other, and in my opinion, the most risky consequence of breeding for horn length lies in its potential conservation impact. The economic sustainability of game ranching (and thereby conservation outside the proclaimed game reserves of South Africa) depends to a material extent on the income derived from hunting. Trophy hunting, where mainly mature bulls, usually past their genetic prime, are hunted at prices substantially higher than those asked for other animals, in turn makes a disproportionate contribution to the hunting income of the average game ranch. If, for example, the major international hunting associations were to start questioning the authenticity/admissibility of trophies hunted in South Africa as being artificially manipulated for horn length, they will not differentiate between game ranches where animals exist naturally and those where horn lengths have been manipulated. All South African trophies will be suspect.
If one takes into consideration that privately-controlled game ranches comprise some 20.5 million hectares, with some 18 million animals on them, and Government-controlled protected areas consist of only 7.5 million hectares, with some 6 million animals, any development which has the potential of detrimentally affecting the income stream of such a large proportion of the total South African game conservation universe, is of immense significance.

Chris Niehaus is a former Investment Analyst, a previous Deputy Chairman of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and ex-CEO of HSBC Investment Services (Africa) and HSBC Securities (Asia). He is currently CEO of the South African Hunters and Game Conservation Association, the largest hunting and game conservation association in South Africa.

A Letter from Professional Hunter Natasha Illum-Berg

Dear fellow hunters of Africa,

am I the only one who finds it rather arresting that we, as a hunting group, are letting go of this once in a lifetime opportunity to show the outside world that we are conservationists who happen to be hunters (thereby propelling ourselves into the future), as opposed to staying in the role the hunter who only very occasionally does active conservation (thereby asking for a prospect as bright as that of the Dodo)?

By active I am not talking of a bit of anti-poaching, but efforts based on both own experience and willing dialogue with relevant scientists, in the aim of TRULY looking for balance through hunting and the future of a species, beyond our own comfort levels.

Do you, like I, see where “the hunter” is, from the historical aspect, living in 2014? Do you hear the clock ticking in this environment full of stubborn hunters who refuse to open up to the world and step in to the light, in the fear of waking up sleeping dogs outside our continent. Don’t you already see the eyes pointing in our direction?

We feel misunderstood. We are misunderstood! We say that we are conservationists. We explain, again and again, that if it had not been for us, nature would suffer huge consequences, certainly on a continent like Africa. And of course we are right to say this!! But how on earth, pray tell, are we going to make anyone believe this, when, in this, we watch most of the western world fight for the survival of the African elephant, while hunters operating in countries worst hit by this crisis are just fighting to keep elephant hunting open?

I often hear this argument: "but if elephant hunting is closed, the business will suffer somewhat. Some hunting companies will close down and then those areas will be poached to bits." I say, if we do not see where we are in history right now and use this amazing opportunity to raise money for anti-poaching and to clean up our name and stand out as conservationists, we will ALL see the end of our hunting lives on this continent, quite soon and ALL those areas will suffer and we will be out of a job. To me it is not really about whether or not we hunt a handful of elephants. Our off-take, as long as the sizes we hunt are sustainable, will not do much to the population. But it is to do where our focus is right now. It is to do with what we are doing to our image right now.

Are we using this world focus to make ourselves understood better? Or are we doing something that will make us even more misunderstood? What are our efforts right now to show that we are the conservationists that we say we are? More importantly, what are we truly doing for conservation? Sitting on huge tracts of the wilds of Africa and saying that its better we are there than not, might be true, but it is not enough anymore. I am not disrespecting the funds hunters have
so far put in to anti-poaching, but in the light of the present, we must clearly look for other and stronger ways forward. I do not for one moment believe it is elephant hunting that is going to keep these areas open for hunting and thereby protected, quite the contrary. What, I think, will give us a few more years to hunt and protect these areas, is if we start standing out as conservationists.

Do you not see who is knocking on the door? Do you not see the money and influence watching? I can tell you the big money and influence does not come from rich hunters overseas.

What is also bad, if we go down like this, we will go down as the dirty people that the outside world always tried to make of us. Let me tell you – I am not going down on a dirty ship like that. Even if I have to take on this entire fight on my own! I am a hunter not only because I love hunting more than anything, but because I truly know that hunting is an amazing conservation tool, when done properly. Let us do it properly then!!!

The crux for company owners in a country like Tanzania, where I operate, is often (and understandably) a fear of putting too much private money in to an area, as it is not known for how long those efforts will be relevant, if the area is suddenly taken over by someone else. I have therefore, a while ago, suggested to the board that TPHA [note: Tanzanian Professional Hunters’ Association] could create an independent big anti-poaching team, to satellite all the hunting areas of Tanzania. Since TPHA is an independent association it no longer matters who sits in the individual areas. And what about APHA [African Professional Hunters’ Association]? What are they doing on the matter? What are hunters actually doing right now? On the big scale of things, private landowners exempted?

The whole world is watching the hunting areas of Africa right now as the elephant population has gone down rapidly. Why are we not asking for help? Countries are different. The laws are different. The political environment is different.

But take a country like Tanzania: TPHA could be engaging in fundraising, collective anti-poaching and major information sharing with the scientific community. Instead we are spending this amazing chance to file lawsuits to keep something going that is clearly against the time.

Hunting areas consist of 68% of the entire "wildlife" estate of Tanzania and Tanzania is one of the most important countries for the African elephant on earth. We have a major responsibility towards the species in our areas and we have a major opportunity to do something good for elephants, indeed for all the fauna and flora, and for our image and future as hunters.

Under the umbrella of TPHA we could put together a strategy and then go out and raise money, do talks, articles in daily newspapers etc. and spread awareness all over the world and do amazing work in the field with scientists who actually generally understand the sustainable use of wildlife. Thereby protecting the areas, the animals and our own future!

This is not only up to your national hunting organizations, your game department or your government. All your individual names are at risk or at glory here. What do you think? Where do you stand? By saying nothing right now, in this point of our history, you are saying an awful lot!

Afterthought: I am often told by the board of TPHA to not be so emotional about these things. Well, without passion and emotion nothing in history would ever change.

Blame War, Not Safaris
Louisa Lombard, New York Times OP-ED Contributor

Safari hunting strikes many people as distasteful in the best of times, and during a conflict, as morally outrageous. The Central African Republic is at war again, and two loose-knit coalitions —
one mostly Muslim, the other mostly Christian — are massacring each other. Yet the trophy hunting goes on. A few intrepid foreigners are traveling to the eastern parts of the republic to kill Lord Derby Eland, the largest antelope in Africa, and its shy forest cousin, the bongo.

Earlier this month, Peter Bouckaert, the emergencies director at Human Rights Watch, tweeted at a local safari operator: “No, it is not OK for ignorant US hunters 2 come hunt 4 sport in #CARcrisis at time its people r hunted w hate.” And then: “Plus US hunters you hosted left #CARcrisis w nice trophies & no more knowledge re horror unfolding, shameful.” A couple of days earlier, Jon Lee Anderson, a New Yorker staff writer then in the Central African Republic, had snapped a picture of two unsuspecting hunters chatting in an airport lounge and tweeted: “#CARcrisis Amidst 1 of Africa’s worst humanitarian crises, hunters come to kill animals x fun. Here’s a few going home.”

Mr. Bouckaert’s recent work has been invaluable in bringing the world a nuanced picture of the country’s horrible conflict. But he and other concerned parties are missing the mark when they shame safari hunters and their hosts: They are irrelevant to the war, and by staying through it they are providing a rare source of livelihood to people long neglected by the central government and now largely abandoned by everyone else.

Many liberal Westerners think of trophy hunting as an anachronism — a throwback to a Hemingway vision of Africa as a playground for white foreigners with guns. The history of safaris in the Central African Republic does bear the mark of colonial-era racial inequalities, and it is marred by smuggling and the poor enforcement of conservation rules. But in its current, regulated form, the sport is helping to maintain islands of relative peace in remote parts of the country.

Beginning in the late 1970s, conflict, as well as desertification, in Chad and Sudan, drove cattle herders into eastern Central African Republic. Their livestock then competed with the local wildlife for water and grazing land. When global prices for ivory rose, armed poachers invaded the savannas and killed off elephants, driving safari business away. Hunting lodges have been looted by the various rebels who have sought refuge or emerged in the region over the past decade. The few remaining safari operators are looking for new ways to run their businesses.

During an earlier wave of rebellion in 2006-7, hunters and local hunting councils took it upon themselves to distribute hunting tax revenue directly to local communities. More recently, hunters were among the founders of the Chinko Project, which will turn a former hunting ground into a protected area and fund human development. (I serve as an unpaid adviser to the project.)

Safari operators are motivated by profit, of course, but even though a two-week trip can cost a tourist more than $30,000, running safaris is not especially lucrative. Lodge managers often do this work because they feel loyal to the country, where some of them grew up, and to the 250 or so locals each lodge employs. Still, the conditions are difficult. In 2002, there were 14 safari lodge in operation. Today, there are two.

Directing anger at safari operators and Western hunters who kill a couple of animals a month is a waste of good outrage. Recent campaigns about blood diamonds and conflict minerals have exposed how economic activity can cause or worsen war. Not so with the safari industry in the Central African Republic.

Trophy-hunting reflects inequalities in money and mobility, and sometimes also insensitivity to conservation practices or local politics. But by pointing a finger at hunters, activists and observers like Mr. Bouckaert and Mr. Anderson are playing the old game of making a few ignorant white people out to be more meaningful or worthy of outrage than they are. The white faces stand out amid the black ones, even though the crisis in the Central African Republic, like so many issues in Africa, is not about white people at all. And attention paid to a few white hunters is at best a distraction from the more important matter of examining the roots of the crisis of political legitimacy that is ripping the country apart.
When the foreign aid workers in the Central African Republic pack up their NGO T-shirts and laptops and fly away to the next emergency, a few safari-lodge operators and their employees will stay behind. It would be a pity if their fragile industry collapsed, not because of the war itself but because of the misdirected criticism of Westerners trying to help.

Louisa Lombard is a postdoctoral fellow in natural resource economics at the University of California, Berkeley. A version of this op-ed appeared in print on June 30, 2014, on page A19 of the New York edition (The New York Times Opinion Pages) – see also the article “The Chinko Project”

The Chinko Project
http://www.chinkoproject.com/

The Chinko Project sustainably manages a nature reserve in the heart of Africa – one of the last pristine mosaics of wooded savannah and tropical lowland rainforest deep within the Central African Republic. This project goes beyond conservation, it represents hope for stability and governance in one of the poorest regions on earth with an endless history of corruption, depletion of natural resources and military conflicts. The Chink Project as a governance body supports local communities, protects the ecosystem and maintains economic value through tourism thus providing the key to a sustainable future for this thriving ecosystem.

Humans have had a low impact on the Chinko/Mbari Drainage basin due to the fact that there are no permanent settlements or agricultural activities within the region. The Chinko nature reserve covers roughly 17,600 sq km of the basin’s southern part - representing a purely fascinating ecotone of rainforest and savannah. The particular habitat of the Chinko allows for an incredible richness of species, and puzzling phenomena, making it a hotspot of biodiversity. So far more than 75 mammals (including Wild Dog, Elephant, Lelwel Hartebeest, Eastern Giant Eland, Bongo, Lion and Leopard) have been documented.

The area of the Chinko Project faces two major threats: armed Sudanese herdsmen with cattle herds exceeding 1000 each use the area for grazing, thus depleting the habitat and putting stress on wildlife, including actively pursuing and exterminating predators and bushmeat poaching for Sudanese markets; specialized Sudanese ivory poachers threaten the small herds of surviving forest elephants. The Chinko staff takes action by
conducting research to better understand the complexities and trade chains underlying the bushmeat and ivory trade from Chinko to Sudan

providing incentives for the herdsmen to pass through a designated livestock corridor as quickly as possible

informing herdsmen about possibilities of protecting their livestock against predators

building capacity by training and deploying CAR park rangers and supporting local school programs to make people better understand the value of wildlife

monitoring and patrolling the area with advanced surveillance strategies

detecting and disarming poaching infringers inside the nature reserve and hand them over to the next state authority.

Erik Mararv, owner of Central African Wildlife Adventures, born and raised in CAR and well-known professional hunter has an extensive knowledge of the region, and a profound network in Central Africa. His involvement was indispensable in the founding of the Chinko Project and he serves as one of the board members. On the advisory board are personalities like Jean-Baptiste Mamang, Director of Wildlife for the Central African Government from 2007 until 2014, Philipp Henschel, Lion Regional Program Coordinator at Panthers, and Louisa Lombard, writer of the preceding article "Blame War, not Safaris", and famed John Michael Fay of the Wildlife Conservation Society.

You can stay informed about the Chinko Project by subscribing to the Chinko Project Newsletter on the website, or by following on Twitter or Vimeo. There are also several publications as downloadable pdf files available on the Chink Project website, like for example,

- Chinko Project Headquarters Masterplan
- An Update On African Elephant Loxodonta africana In The Chinko/Mbari Drainage Basin, Central African Republic
- Evidence Of African Wild Dogs In The Central African Republic
- Study Design: Using Camera Traps To Survey Bongo Antelope In The Chinko/Mbari Drainage Basin, Central African Republic

Note: All photos © Chinko Project

For hunter-conservationists and all people who are interested in the conservation, management and sustainable use of Africa’s wild natural resources. African Indaba is the official CIC Newsletter on African affairs, with editorial independence. For more information about the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation CIC go to www.cic-wildlife.org
Hunting Plays Role in the Protection of Environment
Deon Schlechter, New Era Publication Corporation

“Hunting can play a very important role in protecting the environment and true, pure hunting always will ensure protection of wildlife”, President of the Namibia Professional Hunters Association (NAPHA), Kai-Uwe Denker, said during a presentation prior to the opening of the hunting season on May 1st. Denker said, in a superficial approach the non-hunting section of the conservation community often tries to blame hunting for the decrease in wildlife populations. Some 40 ago several institutions involved in nature conservation realised that a ban on hunting did not have the desired effect in protecting animals, and their natural environment. Denker said the true reasons for the disappearance of species are intensive agriculture, air- and water pollution, roads and road traffic, urbanisation and regulation of streams and rivers, destruction of natural habitats.

“Namibia is a speaking example of the huge positive results of the concept of sustainable use of natural resources,” Denker observed adding that the trophy hunting industry creates jobs and foreign currency is thereby generated. Although there is a global trend, a global concern to protect the natural environment, this movement is to a considerable extent based on superficial perceptions, because the majority of the human population on earth is detached from nature to such an extent, that many a false conclusion is made.

“Hunting is a very important aspect not only in nature conservation, but also in the self-examination of humankind. Hunting is an age-old human activity, only hunting has enabled the survival of the human species, there is nothing strange or perverted about somebody being a hunter, as some people nowadays often want to have it. The pronounced hunting instincts and hunting qualities of our ancestors laid the foundation to all human culture. We have to realize that such an important aspect of the human evolution is deeply embedded in the human instincts. However, we hunters also very clearly state that we feel that hunting should be conducted according to very strict legal regulations, ethical behaviour and in circumspection,” he noted. NAPHA therefore, has strict ethical guidelines and a Disciplinary Committee to enforce these.

“If you remove natural predators and drought-mortality-factors, they will be replaced by disease, if you succeed in combating one disease, it will be replaced by another disease. That is a fundamental law of nature. Hunting is nothing but an original way of life. A large proportion of the human population on earth has completely lost all comprehension of natural connotations, yet feels a great urge to protect the last fractions of unspoiled nature. Regulated trophy hunting via the principle of sustainable use can play a hugely important role in this. And tourist-hunting is a way of learning the very basics of nature in its purest form. It is the purest form of eco-tourism,” Denker maintained.

The unethical things in hunting are mainly stimulated by the money involved. Circumspect, selective hunting is conservation. The major reasons for the disappearance of species are intensive agriculture – not regulated trophy hunting. This applies mainly to industrialised countries where intensive agriculture and the use of pesticides and fertilisers destroy important links in the natural food chain, and result in large-scale extinctions of species. But it also applies to big game in Namibia.

Hunting ethics are a yardstick of human quality. We don’t own wild animals; they are free creatures living a natural life. “Ethical hunting, these moral standards of humanity kindled through awareness and compassion in dealing with nature and wild animals, while still accepting nature’s laws, is of immense value to humanity. This knowledge keeps the qualities of rejuvenation alive within humanity, as opposed to the very likely self-destruction of humanity by the selfish disregard of the everlasting laws of life,” he concluded.
Namibia: If We Ban All Hunting

Helge Denker

The poaching of rhino and elephant for horn and ivory is having horrendous impacts for both species across Africa. Local and international conservation organizations and the general public are mobilizing time, energy and resources to combat commercial poaching and wildlife crime - in Africa, and across the world.

At the same time, trophy hunting continues to be practiced widely in Africa, and includes the legal hunting of rare and endangered species - even rhino and elephant. In America, the Dallas Safari Club has recently auctioned a permit to hunt a black rhino in Namibia - to raise funds for rhino conservation. In light of the current poaching crisis, this has led to a storm of international outcries and condemnation - including death threats against the hunter who bought the permit. The outrage is centered on the questions 'how can rhino hunting be legal?' and 'should not all hunting be banned? There are two aspects to consider when discussing legal trophy hunting: Firstly, does legal trophy hunting have a negative impact on wildlife populations or does it contribute in positive ways to conservation? Secondly, what are the ethical and moral implications of hunting wildlife?

A brief look at the bigger picture is needed: There are very few places in Africa without pressure on the land and its resources. As human populations continue to grow, more and more pressure is placed on all land to provide livelihoods for people.

Agriculture is the most wide-spread land use on the continent. Cropping and livestock herding are subsistence activities on most communal lands. Commercial agriculture utilizes large tracts to generate profit. Wildlife is generally seen as a threat to these activities, and is eradicated. In most African countries, wildlife is in severe decline.

In Namibia, the situation is different. Innovative legislation enables rural people to practice wildlife management as a viable land use that generates significant returns. This is the case on both communal and privately-owned land. Returns are generated through tourism, legal trophy hunting, harvesting game for meat, and the trade in live game, which can be moved to other conservation areas with low populations. Wildlife use can be strategically combined with agriculture, or practiced on its own. Tourism is only possible in a small portion of Africa’s vast spaces. Many areas are too monotonous, too remote or too inhospitable to allow viable tourism development. Legal trophy hunting can, however, be practiced in almost all of these areas - as long as there are viable game populations. If wildlife is not conserved to enable returns from hunting for the people living there, other land uses will be practiced to generate the income that could have come from hunting - and wildlife will be eradicated.

Put very simply - if wildlife does not generate benefits, it will be displaced by agriculture and other land uses. Even national parks must provide benefits to neighboring communities if they are to be viable conservation entities, rather than isolated islands surrounded by conflicting land uses and communities hostile to conservation.

By allowing wildlife management to be a viable land use, with both hunting and tourism providing the returns, large tracts of African habitat can be maintained in a healthy state. This includes habitat for valuable, rare and endangered species such as rhino, elephant, lion, leopard, cheetah and numerous other species. In Namibia, healthy populations of all these species occur in communal areas, on private land and in national parks - simply because they generate income. Take away legal trophy hunting, and wildlife will be the loser. Commercial poaching is minimal in Namibia, because poaching is seen as stealing from local communities. In the very few incidents of rhino poaching, the help of local people has led to the arrest of the culprits.
What of the ethical and moral implications of hunting a wild animal? At some stage, each individual animal must die. That is part of the cycle of life. Generally, old or weak wild animals die a painful or violent death - either from starvation or disease, or by being killed and eaten by predators, or by being killed by rivals of their own species. But the overall population continues to thrive - as long as there are enough suitable habitats available. Saying 'I don't want any animals to die' does not help the situation. Becoming a vegetarian will not save any African wildlife. Condemning legal hunting does not help either. African land is needed to generate livelihoods - if these livelihoods are not generated through wildlife use, then wildlife disappears. The less wildlife is used, the less it will be able to survive. Eating game meat is in fact an ecologically sustainable option, because it adds another area of income that gives people the incentive to allow wildlife to remain on the land.

Trophy hunting generally focuses on post-reproductive males, as these have the most mature trophies. Only a very small percentage of the population is hunted (0.5 to 2%), with no impact on the overall species’ health. This is true for antelope, rhino and elephant. Trophy hunting requires minimal infrastructure and has a minor ecological footprint, but generates significant income: for local communities, hunting operators, conservation activities, and for the national economy. In many parts of Namibia, hunting income far exceeds income derived from tourism.

Legally hunting one old rhino bull for its trophy will generate significant income (several million Namibia dollars) that will help to conserve the species. The old bull will soon die in any case - starving to death or killed by a stronger bull in a fight for dominance. This would be a natural death, but no returns would be generated for local communities to conserve rhino habitat, or to provide funds to combat poaching. No one would gain anything, least of all the rhino population.

Legal, responsible trophy hunting has proven, over and over again, to have no negative impact on wildlife, while making significant contributions to the conservation of species and their habitat. At the same time, the income generated from legal hunting generates funds for conservation activities, including anti-poaching initiatives, and makes important contributions to the livelihoods of local communities as well as the national economy.

In light of these facts, and in the face of severe environmental degradation through a variety of ecologically unsuitable land uses, can it be considered responsible to dismiss legal hunting just because we personally may not like it or consider it morally wrong? Would we rather see intact habitats converted to agriculture or other land uses than allow hunting? Would we prefer to see all wildlife eradicated, rather than having a few individual animals hunted out of a healthy population in an intact habitat? It’s about having to make some pragmatic compromises in order for wildlife to survive in a real world faced with rapidly increasing human pressure. The choice is ours.

Hunting For a Way to Save Wildlife
James Clarke

Two issues have created a deep division among conservationists across South Africa. Is recreational hunting an honorable source of revenue for wildlife conservation? How should we deal with poachers?

More conservationists say hunting is a useful wildlife management tool and poaching is inevitable until rural people benefit from the wildlife around them. The protectionist lobby would like to ban all hunting. Its strategy regarding rhino poachers is simple – shoot the bastards. It is a strategy that has developed into a lethal bush war that conservationists – and the rhinos – are losing. Looking at the plight not only of rhino but wildlife populations as a whole, scientists are
concluding that game hunters have more practical answers, and more humane ones, than the animal rights lobby.

If the rapid decline in wildlife north of the Limpopo is to be stemmed, sustainable and ethical game hunting for both trophies and meat and skin production should be a vital conservation tool. Why not south of the Limpopo? Because here, in South Africa and Namibia, where hunting is encouraged, there has been no decline. Quite the opposite! Environmental historian, Professor Jane Carruthers, has estimated South Africa had about 500,000 large wild mammals in 1966 – the number had risen to 18.6 million by 2007. South Africa hasn’t had that much game in the last 100 years.

The number of game farms – where recreational hunting is often used to keep game numbers within the farm’s carrying capacity – is increasing annually. Professor John Hanks former South African head of the World Wide Fund says the number has risen from fewer than 5,000 in 2002 to more than 12,000 today. Hanks, a scientist, believes conservationists must recognize the positive role hunting is playing in South Africa and Namibia. They are the only two African countries that have shown substantial growth in wildlife populations. South Africa’s hunting industry – now bringing in more than R8-billion annually – is injecting funds into conservation and communities on a scale never before experienced.

Kenya, once Africa’s No 1 tourist destination, especially for hunters, has lost its position to South Africa. Kenya banned hunting in 1977. Seventy percent of its wildlife is now gone. Rural dwellers poach areas where once hunting safaris provided meat, money, jobs and anti-poaching surveillance. In Zambia where the government has withdrawn funds for fighting livestock diseases, rural dwellers have turned to poaching. Zimbabwe’s hunting industry too, lacking government interest in the overall wildlife picture, is in disarray.

Hanks says conservation scientists have provided “substantiated evidence of the ecological and socio-economic benefits” stemming from hunting when compared with livestock farming in marginal land. “Game farms in South Africa generate revenue from a combination of ecotourism, the sale of live animals and several forms of hunting, with meat as a by-product,” he said. “Hunting makes the largest contribution, earning R7.7bn in 2011: R3.1bn from 250,000 South African bilton producing hunters; R2.1bn from 15,000 foreign trophy hunters; and the balance from services like accommodation and food. “Government-owned national parks and reserves rely on game farmers for help,” said Hanks.

In 2011, after days of debate, 1,000 members at the IUCN assembly confirmed “well-managed recreational hunting has a role in the managed sustainable consumptive use of wildlife populations”. Ecologist and resource economist, Professor Brian Child of the University of Florida, says the game ranching economy – as opposed to cattle ranching in Africa, “is a legitimate option that should be supported by those serious about the future of Africa’s biodiversity”.

Ironically the big game animal that is bringing the most wealth to impoverished communities is the rhino. But that’s only because of the demand for rhino horn and the enormous amount of money Far Eastern criminals are paying poachers. Yet the rhino could have been bringing in extraordinary wealth but for pressure from northern hemisphere protectionists.

According to Hanks: “A quarter of South Africa’s 20,900 rhinos – that is more than the entire rhino population outside South Africa – is on private land.” Were it not for overseas pressure, some of these could be hunted. And if trade in rhino horn were to become legal, at least 1kg could be harvested annually from each of these animals without a single one having to die. Even this is opposed by most in the protectionist lobby.

Yet the hunting industry has been responsible for re-introducing rhino as well as sable and roan that are now being bred by game farmers and re-introduced to where they were once common. Had South Africa been left to establish its own wildlife strategy and allowed the
sustainable hunting of rhino and the harvesting of horn, had hunters been allowed to export their trophies, the animal would probably be in less danger.

Protectionists claim trophy hunters, by pursuing trophy animals, are depleting the gene pool. But according to the records, trophy heads today are about the same as they were 50 years ago. Hunters have also been blamed for depleting game numbers by going for males in their prime. The opposite is true.

During the culling of hundreds of impala in the overstocked Mkuze Game Reserve, rangers took out several trophy-sized rams that had harems of up to 60 ewes. These old buck could fend off young rivals, but they could impregnate only a few of the females. As soon as they were removed, the population shot up because the young buck divided the females among themselves and all became pregnant.

Award-winning environmental journalist, Glen Martin, in his 2012 book, Game Changer: Animal rights and the fate of Africa’s wildlife, compares Kenya’s failing wildlife protectionist policy with developments in Namibia and South Africa. “Unfortunately, an objective assessment of conservation benefits is rarely the primary concern of animal rights groups,” he said.

Why do men hunt? The pleasure is in the pursuit, the physical challenge, a love of the outdoors, in stalking prey. Some say humans are hard-wired to hunt. It’s the reason humans survived in Africa. Our ancestors were forced to abandon the retreating forests and, fangless, clawless and not fleet of foot, had to compete with the great predators of the plains for meat. For 4 million years humans and pre-humans did just that. Only in the last 10 000 years did some of our forebears settle. Hunting’s in our genes, so can photo safaris and other forms of eco-tourism become a substitute?

Wilderness Safaris says: “Ecotourism on its own can’t ensure the conservation of Africa as a whole. We share the views of respected academics that have applied dispassionate analysis to Africa’s hunting industry and conclude that: trophy hunting is of major importance to conservation by creating economic incentives.”

If You Really Want to Save the Elephants, Farm Them
Simon Jenkins

Ivory is the cocaine of south-east Asia. Millions of people demand it, and the world thinks it can stop them by banning supply. The world is wrong. [The] London conference [saw] panjandrums from 46 countries meet with British royalty in the painted halls of Lancaster House. Previous Lancaster House conferences liberated Africans from bondage. This one put them back. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cambridge pledged to "end the ivory trade" and "secure the future of these iconic species", notably the rhino and the elephant. Never were words so futile.

The futility would not matter if it were not so counterproductive. CITES is to wildlife what the US Drug Enforcement Administration is to narcotics. Its chief, John Scanlon, talks like a hardline cop about the need for ever more "undercover operations and harsher penalties". But however many NGOs and bureaucrats it takes fill a luxury hotel, you cannot defy the law of economics. You cannot stifle demand by banning supply. You merely raise price. One rhino horn can be worth as much as $300,000. That figure is a death sentence on every rhino.

Few people care deeply enough about distant wildlife to challenge those who offer to make them feel good. Hence the ghoulish PR that precedes CITES conferences, of members destroying quantities of ivory in fires and crushers. This time Barack Obama ordered the US to crush six tons and China duly crushed the same. France crushed three tons. This appalling waste merely increases
poachers’ profits and insults Africa, to which the value of the ivory properly belongs. It is like medieval princes burning food to taunt starving subjects.

When CITES first began flexing its muscles in the 1980s an argument took place between ivory-producing southern Africa and western wildlife charities. The Africans, notably South Africa, Namibia and Tanzania, argued that conservation was best achieved if local people had a vested interest in it – whether from tourism, controlled hunting or ivory sales. As long as people craved ivory, the alternative was massive poaching.

The American writer Raymond Bonner, in his book *At the Hand of Man*, described how US charity fundraisers overwhelmed the Africans. Big money required “charismatic megaspecies” to be saved from imminent extinction. The elephant was declared endangered when it was not. The world was flooded with pictures of mangled animals and in 1989, the trade in ivory and horn was banned.

Every prediction made by Africans was right. Prices soared. In 10 years elephant numbers halved, and have continued to plunge by another two thirds. An estimated 22,000 African elephants are killed annually in industrial massacres. The Asian elephant faces extinction. Rhino deaths have gone from a handful a year to more than a thousand, with horns the price per kilo of gold.

It is hard to think of a more desperate failure of world government. Yet those responsible gather at Lancaster House to call for more of the same. Reducing consumption of any product requires reducing demand. Birds of paradise were hunted close to extinction until they went out of millinery fashion. Ivory demand did decline in Japan in the 1980s and China in the 1990s, leading to lower prices and less poaching. The market soon recovered with economic liberation. Illegal suppliers now hold 90% of the Chinese market and rule their empires like Afghan drug lords.

The survival of wild animals depends entirely on those among whom they live. Elephants eat up to 453kg of vegetation a day and, in India, kill up to 200 people a year. They may be glorious creatures but they are destroying their ever-shrinking habitats. Unless local people want to save them, they will be poached to the point where just a few remain in fortified reserves.

The movement for African “community conservation” gained ground in the 1990s, with such ventures as Campfire in Zimbabwe and regulated hunting in Tanzania and Namibia. It has gained little purchase with western conservationists. Tanzania’s wildlife director, Alexander Songorwa, had to plead with the US in the New York Times recently "on behalf of my country and all our wildlife" not to ban trophy hunting. His $75m revenue supports 26 game reserves.

Meanwhile Namibia auctions up to five ageing rhinos a year for culling, recently fetching $350,000 each. This is far more than photography tourism could ever generate, and goes straight into wildlife protection and breeding. While more than 1,000 rhinos a year are reportedly poached in South Africa, Namibia’s population is rising. Yet the auctions are vilified in the US. Richard Conniff, author of *The Species Seekers*, wonders that Americans who struggle to preserve the prairie dog "should be telling Namibians how to run their wildlife".

But hunting will not deliver the sort of money for conservation that could come from sales. Here CITES has an example from elsewhere. The killing of wild crocodiles has virtually ceased, demand for skins being met from captive breeding. The South African conservationist 't Sas-Rolles has already made a powerful case for "ranched horn" from rhinos to underpin their protection.

Vague promises to get tough with ivory and horn dealers will have no more impact than getting tough with drugs growers. Animals will not be protected in the wild unless some value can be imputed to them. They will go the way of the European bear and the American bison. That value must accrue to those who alone can save them – Africa’s hard-pressed farmers, now increasingly inclined to turn to poaching. They and China’s consumers have a shared interest in wildlife conservation. Why criminalize them both?
Namibian Government Responds to Elephant Hunting Debate

Extract from Namibia Ministry of Environment and Tourism Press Release 2 June 2014

Namibia’s Ministry of Environment and Tourism has reacted to articles and letters titled “do not allow trading the lives of rare Desert Elephants for political votes in Namibia”. In these circulating articles and letters, it is alleged that the Namibian Government has apparently secretly proceeded with the sale of hunting permits for elephants in the Kunene Region for the ruling SWAPO Party to get political support from the communities in the region. It has further been alleged that elephants in the Kunene Region occur in low numbers, the population is declining and the sex ratio is skewed with only 18 bulls of which 6 of them are to be sold for non-trophy hunting.

Elephants occur across the entire north of Namibia with two main subpopulations in the north-east and north-west. In 2005 the total population was estimated at about 16 000 animals, while current figures is over 20 000. The north-west population of ca. 4 000 includes the elephants in the Etosha NP. Elephants are being seen as far south as the Ugab River and in all of the river catchments which flow westwards to the Atlantic Ocean. The north-eastern population counts over 16 000. The recent increases are well in excess of normal growth rates. 391 elephants were recently counted in the Kunene Region with a biological sound sex ratio.

Elephants are able to survive in a very wide range of habitats across the extremes of rainfall in Africa. The elephants in Kunene are being referred to as desert elephants because of the adaptation to living in desert conditions and for tourism attractions.

[Strictly speaking there is no Desert Elephants. All our elephants are African elephants (Loxodonta africana). If there was a concern of a skew in the sex ratio as alleged, MET could have made efforts to translocate some bulls from the north-eastern part of the country where they are abundant in numbers to the Kunene Region because they are the same species, but this is not the case. Except for the most extreme desert areas, all of Namibia is suitable elephant habitat.

Elephants are classified as Specially Protected Game under Namibian Law. The original justification for such a listing may well have disappeared as elephants are no longer endangered. [They] are no longer rare in Namibia, but only potentially valuable. The current conservation status of elephants in Namibia is more than satisfactory, their numbers already exceed what many would consider desirable for the available habitats and they have been identified as a possible threat to other rare and valuable species. There are no limiting factors preventing an increase in the elephant numbers in Namibia.

Although about 17% of land surface of Namibia has been placed in proclaimed protected areas that only covers 50% of the national elephant range as well as other wildlife species. An increasing proportion of wildlife, including elephant range, is in communal areas. As a result in 1996, the government of the republic of Namibia through the Ministry of Environment and Tourism amended legislation, the Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996 (Act 5 of 1996) to allow of the formation of Communal Area Conservancies that gave consumptive and non-consumptive utilization rights of wildlife to rural communities.

In line with this Act, the Elephant Management Plan, National Policy on Community Based Natural Resource Management, two elephants are included on the game utilization quota of 2014 for the conservancies in the Khorixas district in the Kunene Region, and Omatjete area of the Erongo Region. The two elephants are shared by the conservancies. Torra and Doro !Nawas Conservancies share another one elephant, Otjimboyo, Tsiseb, Sorri-Sorris and Ohungu Conservancies share another one elephant. These two elephants are for own use and not for trophy purposes and therefore the conservancies can utilize elephant cows as well and are not limited to hunting bulls
only. The allocation is also to be utilized for the period of three years, meaning only two elephants will be hunted for that purpose in these conservancies for three years. The quotas include problem causing animals and the ministry will only under exceptional conditions consider granting approval that any additional problem causing animal be destroyed.

Communal area conservancies manage about 19% of communal land in Namibia and thus over 240 000 people live within these conservancies. To date, there are 79 registered conservancies that generate over N$ 40 million from consumptive utilization of wildlife including trophy hunting of elephants, per year. It should also be noted that Human Wildlife Conflict is also escalating, and in 2013, the number of problem causing animals incidents reported to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism was over 5 000. In some unfortunate incidents, human lives are being lost due to elephant attacks. Addressing human-wildlife conflict requires striking a balance between conservation priorities and the needs of people living with wildlife. Elephant-human conflicts is not new to the Kunene Region.

It is of the opinion of MET that the aggressiveness of the elephants and their new migration patterns inland as an indication of disturbance in the Uchab River, probably caused more by irresponsible ecotourism and vehicles than anything else. Namibia is committed to the sustainable use of wildlife resources, as is indeed provided for in our national constitution. Sustainable use of wildlife resources is the result of good conservation and good wildlife management, and it is our collective interest to ensure that we use this resource sustainably. By now it has become common knowledge that tourism in general and trophy hunting in particular has grown to be one of the most important industries in Namibia in terms of its strong contribution to the Gross Domestic Product, employment creation and the well-being and social upliftment of our rural people.

Namibia’s elephant population and the Kunene population in particular, is a healthy and growing population. It is growing at about 3.3% per year. The current levels of consumptive off-take are extremely conservative. They are well below sustainable off-take levels, and the population continues to grow and expand. There are more elephant in Namibia today than at any time in the past 100 years. One of the reasons for their increase in numbers is that they have a value, communities have rights to manage and use the wildlife, and are starting to earn significant income from wildlife and this is creating the incentives for them to look after and protect wildlife, including elephants, all of which leads to a positive conservation result. Trophy hunting and sustainable use of wildlife is a result of good conservation.

MET is also aware of specific NGOs and individuals who are working against the wildlife conservation activities of Government and sustainable utilization of wildlife by rural communities through the Conservancy Program. This has negative implications to our Community Based Natural Resource Management which has now been widely regarded as an innovative and successful people-oriented approach to conservation. We have become recognized as a leader in this field. We have restored the link between conservation and rural development by enabling communal areas farmers to derive a direct income from the sustainable use of wildlife and tourism activities.

These specific NGOs and individuals have no research permits on elephants in the Kunene Region or elsewhere in the country. Neither do they have operating agreements to Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of the Republic of Namibia through the Ministry of Environment and Tourism on their activities. Any work being done on the elephant status in the Kunene Region by these NGOs and individuals is illegal and cannot be relied on. I urge them to refrain from this irresponsible behavior before an action is taken. The Namibian public and the international community is called upon to ignore these inaccurate false reports and assumptions on our elephants and sustainable utilization practices.
Will Hunting Save Lions From Extinction?
Andrew Wyatt

African lions are one of the most charismatic species on the planet. Images of the King of the Jungle are etched deeply into our collective conscience. The debate on how best to conserve lions has been stirred anew with a recent Twitter post by Melissa Bachman who killed a “trophy” lion while on safari in Africa. The image of a rifle-toting Bachman posing over the carcass of a dead lion offended activists and animal lovers alike. However, Twitter hype aside, the hunting/conservation of African lions is a controversial topic that begs a thorough understanding of the facts.

In 2011 US Fish & Wildlife Service was petitioned by animal rights activists to add African lions to the Endangered Species list, sharpening the divide of an already philosophically polarized conservation community. Contradicting the underlying premise of the petition, at a recent lion workshop hosted by FWS, three experts on African lions agreed that the lion, in their opinion, is not currently in danger of extinction. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the central body in conservation for the African lion, currently lists lions as “vulnerable” on their Red List of Threatened Species.

All agree that populations of lions have declined significantly. According to a study authored by Professor Stuart Pimm of Duke University in 2012, about 75 percent of Africa’s savannahs and more than two-thirds of the lion population once estimated to live there have disappeared in the last 50 years. There are likely between 32,000 and 35,000 free ranging lions on the African continent today. According to Pimm, “massive land-use change and deforestation, driven by rapid human population growth” is the primary reason for the decline of the lion.

Sixty percent of all lions harvested in Africa are destined for trophy rooms in the United States. Proponents of an Endangered Species listing claim the issue is a “no brainer.” Allowing hunters to harvest lions and export trophies back to the US sends the wrong conservation message. They say lions would be best conserved by blocking access to American hunters, thereby reducing pressure on lion populations. Jeff Flocken of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), the group spearheading the petition to list lions on the Endangered Species Act (ESA), wrote, “Why should anyone spend money to protect an animal that a wealthy American can then pay to go kill?” Flocken characterizes his argument as common sense, but acknowledges that, habitat loss and human-lion conflict, not hunting, are the primary causes of the lions’ disappearance from Africa.

It is absolutely essential that local communities identify the presence of lions as a direct benefit to them. Reducing human-lion conflict is critical to conservation success. According to Dennis Ikanda, of the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute’s Kingupira Research Centre, his country generated $75 million in lion hunting from 2008 to 2011. Opponents of an Endangered Species listing assert that trophy hunting is the only thing standing between the lions and extinction. Although those claims may seem counter intuitive, the money generated by hunting is being plowed back into the local economy, into conservation measures and into protecting lions from poaching. Hunting advocates say the only chance for survival of the lions is management as a valuable and sustainable natural resource.

Melissa Simpson of SCIF wrote in an opinion piece for National Geographic Society, “If the (FWS) were to take regulatory action and put the African lion on the Endangered Species list, it would be in spite of the overwhelming scientific evidence to the contrary. Such an overreaching decision would deprive the countries that grapple with lion management the resources they need the most. And the most essential resource is money.” Hunting advocates believe that more closely
monitored hunting and the millions of dollars injected into management, conservation and the local economy is the best way to conserve lions.

Additionally, proponents of listing insist that adult male lions being harvested are in fact dominant pride males in their breeding prime. They assert that harvesting pride males destroys pride stability by instigating less dominant males to cull the former pride male’s cubs in order to establish themselves, thereby disrupting the natural pride dynamic and throwing breeding cycles into chaos. If this were true, and management practices didn’t focus on males who have passed their prime, then damage to pride stability would be a serious problem.

Hunting advocates have argued that it is irresponsible and unsustainable to harvest pride males in their prime. Responsible game management practices dictate only aging males that have passed their prime and are often alienated from the pride should be harvested. These are males that were possibly once dominant, but have become too old (6+ years) to maintain status within the pride structure. Although the idea of trophy hunting does not enjoy wide popularity, its value as a pragmatic conservation tool has proven to have merit. The questions are, will an Endangered Species listing relieve pressure on lion populations? Or will blocking American hunters from harvesting lions remove economic incentives necessary to protect a valuable resource?

Animal rights advocates dismiss the conservation benefits of hunting. However, a study of trophy hunting by the University of Zimbabwe supports claims of conservation success tied to responsible hunting practices. Peter Lindsey, the lead author of the study, wrote, “trophy hunting is sustainable and low risk if well managed.” Lindsey continued, “Trophy hunting was banned in Kenya in 1977, in Tanzania during 1973–1978, and in Zambia from 2000 through 2003. Each of these bans resulted in an accelerated loss of wildlife due to the removal of incentives for conservation. Avoiding future bans is thus vital for conservation.” When local communities are not incentivized to protect lions they are subsequently killed. To date there appears to be no clear evidence that would support the premise that listing lions as endangered in the USA would inure conservation benefit to lions in Africa; to the contrary, listing could undermine real conservation efforts by diminishing the value of lions to local African communities.

Admittedly, oversight of hunting practices in Africa is not likely to be commensurate to standards in the west anytime soon. Trophy hunting is by no means a perfect solution, but the IUCN Cat Specialists Group says, “Properly managed trophy hunting was viewed as an important solution to long-term lion conservation.” There will always be some abuse from unscrupulous individuals. But the monetary incentive to manage sustainable lion populations for hunting is the only protection lions currently have. Removing economic incentive for Africans to conserve lions has been demonstrated to be counterproductive. Working to improve oversight and lion management should be a priority. Until a better conservation model proves its mettle, responsibly managed hunts are the best chance for lions to survive in Africa.

A Model for a Smart Trade in Rhino Horn

Michael Eustace

The Chinese have always wanted rhino horn. South Africa can satisfy that demand without killing rhino. But, trade is banned by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Current Market Supply: 1,004 rhino were reported as being poached in South Africa in 2013. Examination of the census numbers in the Kruger Park, relative to the reported numbers of poached
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animals, suggests that the numbers poached in Kruger were higher than the carcasses found. A total of 1,300 rhino poached in SA seems a more likely figure. Add to that number the rhino poached in the rest of Africa, horns stolen from official stocks and horns sold illegally from private stocks, and the total supply figure approximates 1,500 horn-sets, with an average weight of 4 kg, or 6,000 kg in total.

**Current Market Demand:** Supply and demand are equal, brought into balance by price. The price is thought to be $60,000 per kg at the retail level and $30,000 at the wholesale level. There will be many different markets and many different prices. The demand, in the past, has been mostly from China for Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Recently Vietnam has been promoted as a major source of new demand but, according to the CITES representative in Vietnam, most of the trade there is in fake horn. Historically, Vietnam has been a conduit for horn into China.

The value of the wholesale trade in 2013 was about $180 million (R1.9 billion). Costs are small throughout the trade pipeline and large profits are made exclusively by criminals, with nothing going to Parks and private owners, where the profits are rightly due. On the contrary, both have been faced with crippling security costs.

Prices of horn have risen steeply in recent years which must have attracted a significant speculative component within overall demand. Nobody knows the level of speculative demand but there is a need to take a view on the likely level when structuring a trade model. Assuming speculative demand in 2013 was 400 horn-sets then the balance of 1,100 horn-sets was sold to consumers. (If the speculative demand was higher, then the case for the trade model suggested below is stronger. If it was lower, the suggested level of farmed horn can increase as to fill the gap.)

Some 80% of Chinese, or one billion people, are said to use TCM, mainly herbal medicines. The underlying demand for rhino horn is huge and often referred to as “insatiable” by the donor agents. But, the very high price limits the actual demand to very few people. If a course of treatment needs 5 grams of horn then only 880,000 people use the entire 1,100 horns supplied to consumers, excluding speculators. This represents less than 0.1% of the Chinese population who have an interest in TCM. Any “demand reduction” strategy needs to persuade more than 99.9% of the TCM consuming population, or it will not be effective.

**The Ideal Trade Model:** The ideal model should be the one that is the most capable of reducing rhino poaching. Attributes might be that the model has the capacity to damage the illegal trade by increasing their risks, increasing their costs, reducing their prices and decreasing the size of their market. In addition, it should be able to capture high prices and profits for Parks and private owners over the long term. Ideally, the legal market should be a clearly differentiated trade channel that is insulated from the illegal market with no opportunity for illegal horn to find its way on to the legal market. The structure and process should be relatively simple and not depend on layers of bureaucracy to be effective. The profits from the wholesale trade should all go to Parks and to private owners without being dissipated. The current trade ban is not working and has never worked. It has favored criminals and been at huge cost to the rhino. A “one-off” sale has been suggested but that would achieve the worst possible prices and favor speculators, as was demonstrated at the ivory “auctions” in 2008. A monopoly of supply selling to a cartel of retailers may be the best structure to achieve what is wanted.

**A Monopoly of Supply:** A new company (“Newco”) can be formed to manage all sales of legal horn. Initially it can be wholly owned by the South African Government but the governments of Namibia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Botswana, Swaziland and others can be invited to join with a shareholding that is appropriate relative to the number of rhino in their countries. Newco needs to outsource the management of the trading operations to a skilled trading company on a commission of, say, 2% of turnover or a likely income of $2.6 million p.a. on a turnover of 1,100 horn-sets. The
commission charged to sellers might be 3% so as to allow Newco a small profit of, say, $1 million p.a. It would seem fair for the suppliers of horn to receive 97% of the wholesale revenue, rather than Newco making higher profits, as Newco is purely a broker.

The Board of Newco can be small and made up from the main suppliers such as SANParks and KZN Wildlife, the Department of Environment and an equal number of business people who have trade experience and skills. The Private Rhino Owners Association (“PROA”) should be represented as private owners have 25% of the SA rhino population and they own wildlife areas that are much larger than the Parks’ estate.

SA has stocks of about 4,000 horns and a further 1,000 horns are thought to be held in other countries in Africa. Newco does not have to own those stocks and bear the financing costs but can simply set equitable quotas and call on stock from the various suppliers from time to time.

It is suggested that sales might take place at a secure room at Johannesburg International Airport. Suppliers such as SANParks, KZN Wildlife and PROA can deliver horn there in the quantities called for by Newco. Eight “sights” p.a. might be held at which an average of $16.8 million (140 horn-sets) is offered to a select list of buyers at a given price on a “take it or leave it” basis. It will not be an auction. Once the horn has been sold it will be loaded on to a plane for China and payment will be made directly to the authorized suppliers such as SANParks. There will be no chance of illegal horn entering the sight or anybody other than legal suppliers being paid. Only properly marked horn with a DNA record will be “good delivery”.

Newco sources of supply: Some 2% or 400 of SA’s rhino population of 20,000 die every year from natural causes. With Newco prices of R1.3 million ($120,000) for a horn-set there is likely to be a great deal of effort applied to collecting those horns.

Stocks of 4,000 horn-sets in SA can provide 400 horn-sets p.a. for 10 years. With the decline in poaching to, say, 200 rhino p.a. the population should increase at a net 6%, or double in 12 years. Natural deaths from double the population and increased farming of rhino will be more than able to substitute for the depletion of stocks after year 10. Private owners have 5,000 rhino and if they were to crop 2,000 of those sustainably and produce, on average, 1 kg per animal p.a. they could provide the equivalent of 500 horns p.a., assuming an average horn weight of 4 kg. (Horn can be cropped from rhino without any harm to the animal and the horn re-grows at the rate of 1 kg p.a.)

Thus, Newco can source 1,300 horn-sets p.a. from SA alone without the need to kill one rhino. In the absence of speculators, that should be more than enough to satisfy the market. In addition, natural deaths and farmed horn should grow at 6% net p.a. which will go some way towards filling increased annual demand. If demand was to grow more strongly, Newco could always raise prices in order to bring back the level of demand to sustainable supply levels or perhaps Parks will decide to crop some of their animals, maybe on farms established outside the protected areas.

In addition, the private sector can always increase supplies.

Some purists would prefer to restrict trade to horns from stocks and natural deaths but in those circumstances the quantities are unlikely to be sufficient to satisfy the market on a sustainable basis.

The Buying Cartel: The main demand for horn is for Traditional Chinese Medicine. There are 3,000 TCM hospitals in China with revenues of $37 billion. A group of, say, 20 buyers from those hospitals can be assembled as “sight-holders”. They will need to sign a “best practice” undertaking which will include not dealing in any horn other than horn from Newco. If they are found to be dealing in illegal horn then they will be dropped from the list of sight-holders. They will also have the threat of being dropped from the list of sight-holders if they consistently turn down parcels of horn offered. Parcels will contain a variety of sizes and quality of horn but the parcel will be at a price that allows the hospitals to make a large profit margin of, say, 100%. TCM hospitals currently
sell drugs at a profit in order to finance their operations so selling horn shavings will be nothing new. They also buy their drugs through dedicated buying agents. Some 85% of total medicinal drug sales in China are via hospitals.

Trading Strategies: It would be best to remove speculative demand from the market. That is likely to happen naturally when speculators realize that a legal trade will provide a large and consistent supply of horn that will satisfy annual demand and, as a consequence, there will be little scope for price appreciation. In addition, and more concerning to the speculators, will be the fact that illegal goods in a market dominated by legal goods typically trade at a 30% discount. If there is the risk to the buyer of fake horn and poisoned horn, the discount will widen to, say, 40%. Speculators will turn sellers and fill the illegal market with horn. That will have the effect of reducing the demand for new supplies of poached horn because there will not be the market for it. Newco will have the ability to disrupt the illegal market from time to time by lowering prices and can withhold supplies in a weak market and increase supplies in a strong market. Newco’s strategy should be to achieve the best possible prices and volumes in order to generate income for Parks and private owners in Africa, over the long term.

Outlook for the illegal trade: The Chinese government, via their TCM hospitals, will be invested in the legal trade and making some $30,000 profit per kg on 1,100 horn-sets weighting 4 kg each which amounts to $132 million p.a. That should encourage them to close down the illegal trade. (Nobody wants to accommodate criminals.) The risks to the illegal trade in China will increase, and their profits will fall. Poaching is unlikely to cease but a decrease in the number of rhino killed from 1,300 p.a. to, say, 200 animals p.a. would be a major achievement. The African population of rhino of 25,000 is capable of growing at 7% p.a. or by 1,750 animals p.a. so 200 is manageable and will allow the population to recover. The population of Asian rhino (3,500), given large legal supplies from Africa and a crowding out of the illegal market, should experience a decline in poaching.

The criminal trade will see total income decline from 1,500 horn-sets or 6,000 kg, at $60,000, or $360 million, to 200 horn-sets or 800 kg, at $36,000 or $29 million. That is a decline of 92%. The illegal horn trade will become much less attractive to the criminal syndicates. There will be more money for law enforcement and the risks to the local poacher will increase, his profits will fall and the volume of trade decline. Local poaching gangs are said to be receiving up to R200,000 ($19,000) per horn-set. On 1,300 rhino that is a total of R260 million. That number should decline to R120,000 on 200 rhino or to R24 million.

Conclusion: The current illegal trade is secret and the numbers used above are estimates. Other numbers might be preferred by some but the conclusions should not be different. If the genuine-horn market in Vietnam is found to be significant (100+ horn-sets p.a.) it may be necessary to establish a retail cartel there as well.

The value of the current illegal retail trade is about $360 million or R3.8 billion p.a. The costs at each stage of the pipeline are minimal so the profits are extraordinary. Law enforcement is essential but the criminals are not going to withdraw easily...the profits are too attractive and the risks are low. It is more likely that the criminals will meet additional force with aggression and, also, they can be expected to sponsor increased levels of corruption.

Most commentators do not consider anything beyond standard trade models but there are much smarter ways of establishing a legal trade. The structure of the model above draws heavily on the old De Beers diamond trade model which operated successfully for over 50 years. It is a tried and tested model and has many advantages over free trade.

A monopoly selling legal horn to a cartel would satisfy market demand, at current high prices. There would be no need for poaching, although it is likely to continue at a low level. There
would be a clear legal channel. The Chinese government being invested in the legal trade would have an incentive to close down the criminal trade. The suggested model would increase the risks to the criminals, reduce their profits and greatly reduce the size of their market. It would remove the important speculative element from demand. Newco would be able to control prices in order to make the volume of trade sustainable. It would reduce poaching substantially and generate income for Parks and private owners in Africa of some $132 million (R1.4 billion) p.a., if 1,100 horns were sold at the wholesale price of $30,000 per kg. That income should allow for financially strong Parks and greatly improved conservation and tourism prospects (an additional 1 million tourists p.a. would generate income of $2 billion if they stayed for 10 nights at $200 per night. 50 million tourists visit Africa every year, which is less than Spain.)

With little poaching South Africa will have surplus rhino and may wish to sell, loan or give rhino to other parks in Africa in order to improve their tourism prospects and to establish a source of income for those parks from horn sales. SA can also establish rhino farms in communal areas and even accommodate rhino farms in SA for the financial benefit of Parks outside SA.

A monopoly selling to a cartel would provide for substantial conservation rewards at minimal risk and no capital investment and, most importantly, there would be no need to kill rhino. Surely that model must appeal to CITES?

South Africa owns 70% of the world’s rhino and needs to take the lead in developing and promoting a more intelligent plan for the rhino. Nobody else is going to do it and the current situation is absurd. A smart trade is probably the solution.

News From and About Africa

Angola

Pedro vaz Pinto reported with photos of giant sable calves from trap cameras in Cangandala NP. The poaching curse is far from resolved despite of the significant successes. However, the recovery and survival of this magnificent and iconic species hangs by a thread.

Botswana

Botswana’s Okavango Delta became the 1000th site inscribed on the World Heritage List at the June meeting of the World Heritage Committee in Doha, Qatar. The delta, one of the few major interior systems that do not flow into a sea or ocean, comprises permanent marshlands and seasonally flooded plains during the dry season, with the result that the native plants and animals have synchronised their biological cycles with these seasonal rains and floods.

Congo, Democratic Republic of

UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee and IUCN stated that no extractive exploration or extraction activities should be carried out in World Heritage sites. “Virunga has been danger-listed for 20 years but it has not lost its outstanding values and international efforts are still focused on its conservation” said Tim Badman, Director of IUCN’s World Heritage Program.

Kenya

Kenya’s central government will oversee the running of the country’s wildlife authority for the next three months in a bid to stop poaching of the country’s elephants and rhinos after six senior KWS officials were placed on leave to pave the way for investigations into the wildlife service’s
operations. Sources at KWS said they are just the first casualties and more changes are coming. This follows allegation by Richard Leakey that the service had been infiltrated by powerful people enriching themselves from poaching.

Mozambique
WWF Wildlife Trade Policy expert Colman O’Criodain said that “Mozambique has emerged as one of the main locations for elephant slaughters and the illegal transportation of ivory in Africa”. WWF stated that in a survey last year of Mozambique’s Quirimbas NP, almost half of the elephants sighted by air were carcasses.

Mozambique
A bill which dramatically increases the penalties for poaching passed parliament in first reading. It proposes prison sentences of between 8 and 12 years for poachers. Using illegal firearms or snares can carry 2 years. Illegal exploitation, storage, transport or sale of protected species will be fined between 50 and 1,000 times the minimum monthly national wage (at current exchange rates between USD 4,425 to 88,500).

Namibia
Between 2005 and 2011 just two elephant were illegally killed, while 121 have been poached in the past 2 ½ years. During the same periods the figures for rhino are zero, and 11 respectively. Most poaching occurs in protected areas. The Namibian government recognized the poaching problem and actively works on counter measures.

South Africa - Mozambique
South African and Mozambique signed a MoU in Biodiversity, Conservation and Management to assist in addressing wildlife crimes, including rhino poaching.

South Africa
SANParks confirmed on May 18TH that an elephant bull was poached and its tusks removed in the Pafuri region (close the Mozambique border) in the far north of Kruger NP – the first such incident to hit KNP in 10 years.

Tanzania
Indigenous Maasai and Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA) may head for a land dispute. The Maasai Community is up in arms against a ‘secret NCAA move’ to lease prime lands within the fragile ecosystem to private developers. The community has threatened to disrupt tourism activities should the NCAA go ahead. Traditional Maasai leaders claim that the disputed areas serve as crucial pastureland, sustaining nearly 60,000 livestock.

Tanzania
Tanzania’s Selous Game Reserve has been listed as “World Heritage in Danger” at the 38th World Heritage Committee meeting in Doha due to the unprecedented levels of illegal wildlife trade. The decision, which aims to trigger international action, follows the advice of IUCN.

Tanzania
The East African Court of Justice (EACJ) declared that the proposed action by Tanzania to construct a high way road across Serengeti National Park was unlawful and an infringement of articles which
provide for the promotion of sustainable utilization of natural resources of Partner States and the taking of measures that would effectively protect the natural environment of Partner States of the East African Community Treaty. The Court also added that all these issues must be looked at from the common thread [of the] need to protect the Serengeti ecosystem for the sake of future generations and whether the road project has potential for causing irreparable damages.

**Prosperity Humbug Kills Rhinos: Miersch Interviews Baldus**

Michael Miersch (MM): You just came back from the Selous Game Reserve. What has changed since you worked there, from 1987 to 2005, as an advisor and wildlife warden?

Rolf Baldus (RB): The most striking change is the decline in the elephant population: from 70,000 in 2005 to about 13,000 today. Poaching is responsible for the reduction. This was possible because the effectiveness of the management in the reserve had fallen back to the level of the eighties. "Back to square one," you might say. A key reason: During my time there the Selous was allowed to retain half of the revenue from hunting and tourism. That money was used to finance the park management. When the Tanzanian government transitioned back to low-level funding from the state budget, the decline began.

MM: Many African countries report encouraging economic growth. The UN says that poverty is decreasing. What is the cause then for the current wave of poaching?

RB: Less poverty does not necessarily lead to better protection of endangered species. And among those people who do the dirty work in the bush, the wealth has certainly not arrived. The sharp increase in poaching has probably more to do with the growing wealth in Asia. The demand for luxury goods and prestige objects such as ivory and rhino horn has increased dramatically there.

MM: Is the situation similar to the ivory and rhino horn crisis of the early 90s, or are there significant differences?

RB: It is simply much worse. In the Selous up to 7,000 elephants have been poached yearly, in Africa between 20,000 and 30,000 according to the estimates. The delivery quantities and the individual shipments to Asia have become much larger. Increasingly, the bones of carnivores, pangolins, etc. are also being smuggled. The illegal transport of ivory and rhino horn to Asia has been perfected. Chinese living abroad are often involved, as we know from occasional seizures.

MM: Who are the poachers and where do they come from?

RB: This varies from country to country. In eastern Africa, the poachers often come from local villages. In central Africa, they come on horses and camels from distant Sudan. In civil war countries, poaching is perpetrated by the regular armies and the rebels alike. In South Africa it is sometimes veterinarians and other specialists who work with the latest technology. The average poacher is like a guerrilla: If he does not have the support of the local people, then he can do very little.

MM: What role is played by the demand for wildlife products in Asia?

RB: Effective demand creates its own supply. Prices have risen significantly in recent years. Despite some lip service and a bit of posturing, such as the senseless burning of a few tusks, the Asian countries largely responsible for the high demand have so far done very little to stop the illegal imports. At least now there is some negotiating going on.

MM: Why is the demand for ivory and rhino horn currently increasing?

RB: In Asia rhino horn is considered as medicine against many ailments, although its effectiveness has not been scientifically proven. It is a matter of belief. And in China, it is based on ancient traditions. Growing prosperity leads to better medical care, apparently also to growing consumption
of traditional medicine. China, incidentally, has in recent years imported many rhinos from South Africa. It will probably soon start producing rhino horn domestically. The horn grows back and can be ‘harvested’ from the live animal. There is no evidence of any desire to suppress the use of traditional Chinese medicine to protect endangered animals. Nevertheless, the attempt to educate about the relationship between traditional medicine and endangered species should be undertaken in Asia.

**MM: For years the dispute among conservationists is whether a total ban on hunting is the better protection tool, or whether legal hunting better removes the foundation for poaching. What has proven to be more effective in practice?**

**RB:** Serious conservationists agree that controlled and sustainable hunting, where the income is invested in the conservation of the resource and in the local community, is helpful. This has been proven as effective conservation. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) has recently presented a policy document in which this is clearly stated. In Germany our conservation policies function in the same manner. A total ban on hunting would be counterproductive for the protection of endangered species and would be very costly to landowners and farmers. Why should it be different in Africa? Kenya banned hunting 35 years ago and has since lost three quarters of its wildlife populations. That is not exactly a success story. Hunting bans are only demanded by animal rights activists. They however only say what they think should not be done. They do not have an answer to the question of what effective conservation should look like.

**MM: There are still thousands of elephants, but what is the outlook for the two African rhino species? Are they at the brink of extinction?**

**RB:** The black rhino will probably become extinct in several more countries. This species has been, by the way, strictly protected for three decades, apparently without success. This hardly speaks for total protection. The white rhino was as good as extinct a hundred years ago. A clever combination of protection and hunting, on both public and private property in South Africa, has saved the species. There are currently more than 20,000 rhinos in that country. About 5% of them were poached last year, ca. the same number that are reproduced each year. I am confident that the South Africans will get the problem under control.

**MM: Some economists recommend allowing legal ivory trade to dry up the black market. Others say precisely this would heat up the black market? In South Africa there are even rhino farms that want to sell the coveted horn legally in Asia. Are such concepts realistic?**

**RB:** Long-term solutions must endure within the framework of market economics. In the long run conservationists can’t win by working against the market. Without sustainable use and trade charismatic species cannot be preserved for the future. Why should private farmers breed rhinos in South Africa, if they cannot sell the horn on a permanent basis? Momentarily, however, there are more pressing issues in the foreground: Stopping poaching and preventing illegal trade.

**MM: What measures must be urgently taken to curb poaching in the Selous Reserve and elsewhere?**

**RB:** The many international conferences have raised awareness in the realm of global politics that international coordination and control instruments are essential. Both the export and import countries must be convinced to finally adopt effective measures. What needs to be done is known. It just has to finally get done. Examples: Locally train and equip the game scouts, and improve leadership. And demonstrate zero tolerance for apprehended poachers and smugglers, even when they are very important people. Corruption is a problem everywhere, seemingly holding our best intentions hostage. And it shouldn’t be forgotten that all of this his costs a lot of money over the long haul. Unfortunately, the summit meetings usually don’t take this up.

**MM: What role could Germany play?**
RB: I am very pleased that Germany is providing eight million Euros next year for engagement in the Selous. What is needed additionally is an immediate action program to stop the poaching that is going on there as we speak.

Note: Michael Miersch is a leading German environmental journalist. Interview was translated from German by Chris Eberhart of “Hunters’ Path” and published with friendly permission of Michael Miersch and “Die Achse des Guten”. The interview can be found in German here.

Dual Tragedy in Pondo Camp, Musalangu GMA, Zambia

Robert Muir of Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) reported that on 24 May a female resident in Fulaza village in Musalangu GMA was killed in her field by an elephant. Lusaka Times also reported the incident with photos. Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) officers were called to assist at the scene and they helped with the repatriation of the body to Fulaza. There the villagers blamed the ZAWA officers for the women’s death. Eventually a riot broke out at the Pondo ZAWA camp. The rioters torched the radio shack and then razed 6 village game scout houses to the ground. ZAWA equipment and personal belongings were looted. ZAWA staff from Mano Sector and Mpika and Chama Police subsequently arrested 11 rioters. ZAWA Pondo Camp is located in Fulaza village, a sub-sector of Chikwa hunting block. It accounts for 2,000 km² that form part of the Musalangu GMA covering a total of 17,000 km² which border North Luangwa NP. It is one of 27 ZAWA base camps and supported by FZS as part of the regional resource protection strategy. Musalangu GMA acts as an important buffer zone for the National Park which harbors Zambia’s only black rhino population.

Emergency funds of US$15,000 are immediately required to replace equipment loss and rebuild temporary infrastructure at the scout camp. Permanent infrastructure could be built for an additional $12,600. The International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation CIC has already confirmed emergency assistance of US$ 2,000 which is being matched dollar for dollar by an American hunter. This hunter further confirmed that he will similarly match all other donations. For information on how to best donate please contact P J Fouche p.j.fouchesafaris@prodigy.net