

# AFRICAN INDABA

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Dedicated to the People and Wildlife of Africa

## Editor's Notes

Dear Reader,

We are having a glorious and cold winter in Southern Africa and the hunting season has been kind to me, despite of a truck load full of work in the review of the CIC trophy scoring system. I barely managed to catch my breath after returning from a very interesting CIC General Assembly in Paris hosted graciously by Victor Scherrer, head of the French CIC delegation, and his able delegation members. You can read more about the CIC General Assembly on Page 6 and even more on the [CIC Website](#). Suffice it to say here that I had most interesting discussions with from people hailing from all over the globe. And I realized that I have to polish my rudimentary Russian – besides Africa and North America, this vast country stretching from eastern Europe to the shores of the Bering Sea has such a lot offer for the hunter, not only hunting, but also knowledge of wildlife species and conservation. Truly a unique country worth while exploring.

Closer to our own shores in Africa we are hit with a bevy of news – true, half-true and fabricated-emotional – about the situation of the rhinoceros species in southern Africa. The regular readers of African Indaba may recall that I have touched this topic quite frequently in the past. The recent media reports make it necessary to touch on it again.

You can read some accurate and unbiased details in the IUCN-WWF-TRAFFIC report presented to the CITES Standing Committee earlier this month on page 18. Poaching, illegal trafficking and even burglaries (i. e. in the rhino horn storage room of SA's Addo National Park) are rife and the hunting community must do whatever is in its power to cooperate with the national authorities and international agencies in order to put a stop to this. PHASA's president Peter Butland recently announced welcome and necessary measures to all PHASA members advising them not to "book and conduct hunts with nationals from Vietnam or other Far Eastern countries" until the government had "removed this abuse of the SA legal system." PHASA again rallied to the cause. Butland said evidence from enforcement and trade monitoring agencies show a direct link between Far Eastern syndicates and the export of rhino horn from recent legal rhino hunting by Vietnamese, rhino poaching on private and state land, cross-border smuggling and theft of rhino horn from stockpiles and museums. Butland continued stating that "we do not want to be part of anything that is illegal, that is linked to crime syndicates or to organized crime in the Far East.

*It is of extreme concern to us."* (compare also PHASA PR on pages 19 and 20). This development is indeed of grave concern, since it could undermine the future of South African professional hunting and game ranching. In fact the South African Conservation Model is being put at peril!

A recent case of two rhino shot at Dwesa Nature Reserve (Eastern Cape Parks Board) highlights the problem. The "trophies" have been exported to Vietnam. The outfitter who was involved in the controversial hunt is quite wrong with his published post-hunt statement that "*[my] two Vietnamese clients could now do 'anything' with the horns. They can put them on the wall or sell them or make them into dagger handles – whatever they want.*" As matter of fact the CITES regulations DO NOT allow that at all. Any parts of the trophy can be only used as just that – as personal hunting trophies – and no sale is allowed! Of course it would also fall into the moral responsibility of the outfitter to make sure that his clients are true bona-fide hunters, and not draw on, as the outfitter in question, the cheap excuse "*that is the job of the authorities when they receive the application and decide whether to issue the permit.*"

The blistering attacks launched on the Kruger National Park authorities by some notorious animal rights groups are just

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For hunter-conservationists and all people who are interested in the conservation, management and the sustainable use of Africa's wild natural resources.

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## End of the Road for Canned Lion Shooting

Gerhard R Damm

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, Judge van der Merwe, Free State High Court, Bloemfontein, concurred with the government that the breeding of lions in captivity with the sole purpose of canned shooting did not aid their protection. The former minister of environmental affairs and tourism was taken to court by lion breeders with respect to the promulgated TOPs regulations according to which, a lion which has been bred in captivity, must be self-sustaining for 24 months (in other words, hunt for prey), before it can be hunted. The judge dismissed the lion breeders' case with costs. The lion breeders had sought the 2 years restriction be changed to "a few days". Van der Merwe said in his verdict that lion farmers are just worried about money and the economic losses they allegedly suffer if the semi-tame lions must first spend 2 years roaming free before they can be hunted.

Albi Modise, spokesperson for the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, said the SA government welcomed the verdict. Modise confirmed that the South African Hunting Industry makes a substantial and positive contribution to conservation management and the country's economy and added that "*we need a clean hunting industry, free from unacceptable behavior which could damage the country's image.*"

The judge writes in paragraph 71 of the 81 page decision (download at <http://sapredators.co.za/docs/Uitspraak.pdf>) that "*it is not disputed that the hunting of lions bred in captivity has damaged the reputation of the Republic of South Africa immensely. It is clear on the evidence and also not disputed that very many people all over the world find the notion of hunting a lion bred and raised in captivity, often by hand, and totally dependent on humans for its survival, abhorrent and repulsive. I find this view to be objectively reasonable and justifiable, to say the least.*" In paragraph 73 the judge refers to Conservation Force Chairman John J Jackson III: "*Today the killing of captive-bred African lion behind high fences as well as 'put & take' hunting of lion are not considered acceptable hunting practices by the greater hunting community. Hunting behind high fences, however, can offer the discerning hunter a true fair chase experience if the hunted game animals are naturally interacting members of wild sustainable game populations within ecologically functional systems that meet the spatial and temporal requirements of the species populations.*" Readers of African Indaba will remember that we and almost the entire South African hunting community always took strong opposition towards canned shooting.

"*It will close down our business,*" Carel van Heerden, chairperson of the South African Predator Breeders Association, said following the ruling. According to him, their legal team will apply for leave to appeal the verdict. He reiterated that the association did not agree with the set period of 24 months because it was "*not scientifically based but rather grabbed from the air.*"

The ruling comes more than a decade after a BBC documentary showed a lioness being shot in a small enclosure in South Africa in front of her cubs, leading to international criticism.

## July CITES Briefing on Rhino

Edited Version of the IUCN, TRAFFIC and WWF Briefing for the 58th Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee

At the 14th Meeting of CITES in June 2007, IUCN and TRAFFIC provided Parties with a report on the status, conservation and trade in African and Asian rhinoceroses. In addition, TRAFFIC provided a separate report on rhinoceros-related crimes in Africa, with an overview of poaching, seizure and stockpile data for the period 2000-2005. The CITES Parties responded amongst other things by requiring range States to declare their stocks of rhinoceros. IUCN/SSC's African Rhino (AfRSG) and TRAFFIC were mandated to produce another report on the status, conservation and trade of African and Asian Rhinoceroses prior to the 15th CITES Meeting 2010.

While overall numbers of white and black rhino have increased, it is of major concern that rhinoceros poaching in southern Africa increased substantially in 2008, with additional concerns relating to sport hunting of white rhinoceroses in South Africa. 2008 will probably represent the highest level of illegal rhinoceros killing in at least 15 years. For example, in South Africa and Zimbabwe alone, a minimum total of 162 rhinoceroses were illegally killed in 2008 and another 62 have been poached during the first six months of 2009. Both of these figures may increase as further information becomes available. Comparing the 224 confirmed illegal rhinoceros deaths for these two rhinoceros range States alone, with the total of 252 illegal rhinoceros deaths for all African range States for the period 2000-2005, it is clear that there has been a serious escalation in illegal off-take. In summary, between 2000-2005, 3.5 rhinoceroses were illegally killed each month in all of Africa, but currently in South Africa and Zimbabwe alone, 12.4 rhinoceroses are being poached each month or between two and three rhinoceroses every week.

Illegal rhinoceros horn trade to destinations in Asia is driving this killing, with growing evidence of the ongoing involvement of Vietnamese, Chinese and Thai nationals. Viet Nam was not a major destination for illegal commerce in rhinoceros horn until about five years ago. It is believed that rhinoceros horns illegally leaving southern Africa are moving into or through Thailand, Viet Nam and China, a situation which requires a heightened degree of law enforcement attention and effort.

### South Africa

South Africa is the source of most horns leaving Africa, and the current trade involves rhinoceros horns from neighboring countries, including Zimbabwe and Mozambique. An increasing proportion of horns entering illegal trade have come from poached rhinoceroses, as well as through abuse of trophy-hunted white rhinoceroses and domestic acquisition of horns from the private sector. In June 2009, an armed robbery occurred at a government store within Addo National Park, indicating a further escalation in tactics and modus operandi of illegal horn traders. A number of positive actions have been taken by the South African government, including the introduction of Threatened or Protected Species Regulations, a moratorium on internal rhino horn sales, the imposition of a strengthened con-

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trol framework for the country's sport hunting policy for white rhinoceros in February 2009 (including limiting each hunter to only one rhino a year); and a series of arrests of individuals engaged in illicit rhinoceros killing and trade. In fact South Africa's law enforcement should be commended for their focused and innovative attention to this serious conservation challenge.

Additional measures, however, are needed, such as the implementation of a precautionary annual national white rhinoceros hunting quota (whether it involves foreign nationals or local citizens), so that all hunts can be tracked within an accountable and transparent system irrespective of whether or not application is being made to export the trophies. South Africa should also be encouraged to implement tighter controls on the issuance of rhinoceros horn trophy export permits and establish a policy whereby sport-hunted trophies are only allowed to be exported to countries which have policies in place to register and track the ownership of such trophies and otherwise ensure that they will not be used for commercial purposes. Nationals from any country failing to demonstrate such policies should be precluded from engaging in sport hunting of rhinoceros in South Africa.

#### Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, the proportion of mortalities due to illegal killing has been alarmingly high with 79% of recorded black and white rhinoceros mortalities from January 2003 to June 2006 being attributed to poaching and snaring. Rhinoceros numbers in Zimbabwe are declining, with official statistics indicating that black rhinoceros numbers declined slightly from the end of 2005 to the end of 2007. AfRSG is working together with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority to review numbers and trends. Indications are that both white and black rhinoceros numbers have continued to decline through 2008, and the implication of this is that poaching losses are likely to have been higher than originally thought, assuming a conservative net underlying annual population growth rate including natural mortalities since 2002. Recorded losses in the Lowveld Conservancies alone over this period number 70 rhinoceroses and reported losses have also been high in the Midlands. TRAFFIC showed that the rate for illegal rhinoceros horn recovery in Zimbabwe from 2000-2005 was <=13 %. This was very low compared with other range States. TRAFFIC also noted that Zimbabwe was (along with South Africa) the African range State with the greatest estimated net minimum flow of illegal horns out of the country over the period 2000-2005 and the situation has not improved since then.

This picture of increasing poaching, declining numbers and low levels of effective law enforcement by the Zimbabwean authorities increasingly threatens the success of more than a decade's work of bringing rhinoceros populations in Zimbabwe back up to healthy levels. The relevant Zimbabwean authorities urgently need to review the status and security of rhinoceroses in Zimbabwe and establish the current situation with regard to poaching levels; law enforcement effectiveness; prosecution success; illegal trade levels; the status and trends in Zimbabwe rhinoceros numbers; and the probable impact of poaching on individual rhinoceros populations and the country's overall population through demographic analysis.

AfRSG and TRAFFIC are involved in a process working with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority to review rhinoceros monitoring, numbers and trends and rhinoceros law enforcement issues as part of the CITES mandated CoP15 reporting process, and as part of the process of revising the Zimbabwe National Rhino Strategy. AfRSG and TRAFFIC have received exemplary cooperation from the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority in this regard.

CITES Decision 14.88 calls upon all African and Asian rhinoceros range States and Parties that have stocks of rhinoceros horns or rhinoceros horn derivatives to declare the status of their stocks before CoP15 and the reporting format was circulated to all Parties in March 2009. Decision 14.89 further invites TRAFFIC to review information on rhinoceros horn stocks in range States; to assess the trade routes by which horns enter and flow to illegal markets; to identify priority countries in which there has been a recent significant increase in poaching levels, where discrepancies exist in reported horn stockpiles, where volumes of horn stockpiles are unknown or where insufficient cross border collaboration to combat illegal rhinoceros horn trade has been reported. It should be noted that at the time of this writing, only five Parties (China, Germany, Japan, New Zealand and the United Kingdom) have submitted rhinoceros horn stock declarations to the CITES Secretariat for transmission to TRAFFIC. It is worth noting that no rhinoceros range States in either Africa or Asia have yet complied with this decision.

IUCN and TRAFFIC have begun initial work gathering data and information from a variety of sources on the trade in South Africa, including permits issued for legal export of trophies and information on trade to Asia. A workshop has been conducted in Zimbabwe in preparation for the analysis to be conducted by IUCN and TRAFFIC as mandated under CITES Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP 14). It is critical that Parties at CoP15 are provided with an accurate and up-to-date picture of the status, conservation and trade in African and Asian rhinoceroses, so that firm international action can be taken to arrest this immediate threat to rhinoceros populations worldwide.

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## Professional Hunters' Association of South Africa: Outcome of Rhino Workshop

- A workshop organized by SANParks and EWT and attended by experts and interested parties, including PHASA, was held in June on the problem of Rhino Poaching in South and Southern Africa.
- Concern was expressed about the alleged role of professional hunters in recent Vietnamese rhino hunting activities. There was a need to set the record straight as far as PHA-

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