

...ps - for the best wildlife safari experience!



Image ©Dex Kotze

africa
GEOGRAPHIC
MAGAZINE

SELLING OUT



WHY LEGALISING TRADE IN HORN WILL HASTEN THE DEMISE OF RHINOS



by

DEX KOTZE

28 November, 2014

Last week the number of South African rhinos poached for their horn

40



9



24



11



since January surpassed the 2013 total of 1,004. At the time of publishing the number was 1,030. With this news more weight will be put behind the arguments in favour of legalising trade in rhino horn, a strategy that some claim will reduce demand by flooding the market with stockpiled and farmed horn. It is a solution the government appears intent on implementing despite potentially disastrous results and lack of evidence that the enormous financial benefits to the rhino owners who are campaigning for legalisation will filter down into anti-poaching efforts where they are needed most – our under-funded national parks. In this account of the situation, conservationist Dex Kotze reveals how global conservation authorities appear to be opening avenues for trade while South Africa cannot even meet 1% of the potential demand for rhino-horn – Ed.



©Dex Kotze

outh Africa is home to roughly 83% of the world's rhino population and, at time of writing, has lost 3,700 rhinos since the escalation of poaching in 2008. With

S this year's death toll already over a thousand, it seems likely that the total number of rhinos slaughtered for their horns in 2014 will be in excess of 1,150. An estimated 20,000 white rhinos exist today and fewer than 4,800 black rhinos survive in the wild.

Although recent comments from the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) suggest that South Africa is seeing success in curbing rhino poaching, the numbers clearly contradict that. The DEA's absence from the London Wildlife Conference earlier in 2014, and President Zuma's failure to attend a plenary session on combating wildlife crime in Washington in August, whilst attending the US-Africa summit, strengthens opinion that the government has already adopted a stance in favour of rhino horn trade. In fact the **DEA recently stated**, 'There's very little we can do about the belief in the use of rhino horn that exists in other countries. Legalisation would be a more medium-term solution.' But the department has not considered the potential long-term effects of such a decision.

The exponential growth of Asian economies, coupled with the proliferation of China's presence on the African continent (China-Africa trade reached \$198 billion in 2012) may be a component of the government's obeisance to China. But a species on the brink of catastrophe can ill afford miscalculated decisions and hidden agendas.



©Dex Kotze

South Africa needs a two third majority vote of all 180 CITES members to legalise trade

By their own account, South Africa's government intends to apply for legalised trade in horn when it hosts the next conference of the parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 2016. Legalised trade can only be approved if two thirds of all CITES members agree, and it is doubtful that majority will be obtained. But even if a two-thirds majority agrees, it will take more than six years to create the necessary structures to facilitate legalised trade. At the current rate of poaching we could lose another 6,000 to 7,000 rhinos during that period, so one has to question the wisdom and motivation of this strategy from a conservation perspective.

South Africa is too corrupt to manage trade in rhino horn

South Africa's poor record of governance and corruption at the highest level under President Zuma is a major obstacle for legalised trade to work. Stockpiles of rhino horn worth millions have already been **stolen from government offices** where safe custody, security alarms and electric fences were blatantly absent.

The government and pro-trade lobby's concept of a "transparent" central selling organisation (CSO) regulating rhino horn trade is a pipe dream that could never work. Motivations using comparisons to the CSO of the global diamond industry are naïvely ironic. Illicit diamond trading continues throughout the world, blood diamonds still enter the market, and criminal syndicates in South Africa are targeting jewellery stores on a weekly basis – indicating a healthy black market for diamonds. If the imposition of controls by the massively-resourced diamond industry has not curbed illegal activity, why would anybody think that this system would work with regard to rhino horn?

In addition CITES has proved to be totally ineffectual in controlling illegal trade in wildlife, despite ongoing efforts and the imposition of controls, again calling into question the efficacy of the proposed model.



©Dex Kotze

South Africa could not even hope to meet demand

Perhaps the greatest concern would be South Africa's inability to meet demand if rhino horn trade is legalised. By conservative calculations, the shortfall would be over 365 tons a year. Proponents of trade conveniently ignore the dynamics of China's gargantuan population, and Asia's newfound conspicuous consumption and desire for status and prestige. Legalising rhino horn has the potential to create a demand that far outweighs supply. A simple extrapolation of known facts about the markets that are currently creating the demand for rhino horn creates more alarming questions than answers:

There are about 8,000 US Dollar billionaires in China today, a figure that is expected to grow to 15,000 in the next eight years. By 2022 China will have more billionaires than the UK, France, Switzerland and Russia combined. China has roughly 120 million affluent people. By 2020 this group will grow to 280 million, their spending power growing fivefold to \$3.1 trillion, equal to 35% of China's total consumption. Presently there are 250 million middle class consumers in China. **By 2022 China's middle class will swell to 630 million** generating just under half of total Chinese private consumption.





©Dex Kotze

**Demand would be 370 tons
per annum. South Africa
can yield only 3.6 tons**

If just 5% of the Asian demand markets consume a mere 5 grams of rhino horn per person per annum the demand for rhino horn would

amount to more than 370 tons per year. And yet, according to a study by the DEA using the known number of rhino on private land and the predicted rate of horn accumulation, “harvesting” of horn in South Africa will yield a **maximum of 3.6 tons per annum**, at approximately 3.5 kg per rhino every three years – not nearly sufficient in a market of such enormity. There is little chance that Kruger National Park would harvest their 8,500 rhinos for fear of losing revenue from nearly 1.5 million tourists that flock to the world-renowned park annually. This means few rhino are available to meet the demand, and the sale of South Africa’s existing 20-ton stockpile would vanish into the market immediately, putting immense pressure on available rhinos and increase the likelihood of their being poached.

Romantic barefoot luxury
on a **secluded** African island

Idyllically located on a tiny private island in the jewel-like Quirimbas Archipelago off the northern coast of Mozambique, Anantara Medjumbe Island Resort & Spa offers a paradise escape that is naturally exclusive. Discover breathtaking serenity, far removed from worldly cares, where total tranquility is assured at an adults-only hideaway that is perfect for romance and a dream honeymoon.

Honeymoon and Extended Stay offers available until 22 December 2015. Call +27 11 658 0633 or email medjumbe@anantara.com for enquiries and reservations. www.medjumbe.anantara.com

Anantara
MEDJUMBE ISLAND
RESORT & SPA

APEC is committed to conserving wildlife resources and facilitating trade in legally harvested wildlife

In a **joint ministerial statement** by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) released on 8 November 2014, it was made abundantly clear that APEC is committed to “facilitate trade in

legally harvested wildlife.” On 10 November, Mr. John Scanlon, the Secretary-general of CITES, released a **statement** saying:

’CITES welcomes the statement made by Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministers of the APEC economies renewing their commitment to combating wildlife trafficking and to sharing information, intelligence, experiences and best practices in the region to fight illicit transnational wildlife trade, as well as recognising legal trade in certain circumstances and the need to strengthen efforts to improve the livelihoods of rural communities.’

CITES has proven ineffective in controlling illegal trade

It is inappropriate for CITES to commend APEC’s ministerial statement and deplorable that neither APEC nor CITES make any attempt to exclude rhinos and elephants from the definition of “legally harvested wildlife”. Considering CITES’ ineffectiveness in controlling illegal trade, this announcement is doubly concerning. CITES has listed 19 nations as being part of the **Gang of 19**, countries that are implicitly involved in illegal wildlife trafficking networks. Of the seven Asian countries listed in the Gang, five are members of APEC. CITES has had very little success in convincing members of the Gang of 19 to comply with measures to combat wildlife trafficking.



©Dex Kotze

The ivory example

One need only consider the detrimental effect of the legal sale of ivory to recognise the folly of trade legalisation. CITES approved two once-off sales of ivory in 1999 and again in 2008. At the last sale, about 106 tons of ivory was sold to Japan and China at a mere \$157 per kg. Notwithstanding these stockpiles entering China legally, the poaching of African elephants continued relentlessly. Recent scientific reports have determined that 100,000 elephants were killed between 2010 and 2012. Estimates are that fewer than 400 000 elephants survive in Africa today.

In the online black market in China, **raw ivory trades** for up to \$3,700 per kilogram and worked ivory as high as \$10,700 per kilogram. In a **recent report** compiled by the Environmental Investigation Agency, it is claimed that officials travelling with Chinese President Xi Jinping to Tanzania in 2013 went on a buying spree of illegal ivory, causing prices of ivory in Tanzanian markets to double overnight. The ivory was **loaded in diplomatic bags**, immune from custom checks.



1. Remains of two elephants poached recently in Kariba, Zimbabwe. ©Saving the Wild
2. A graphic visual account of the brutal methods used by poachers to remove a rhino's horn. ©Catherine Corrett

The domestic Chinese ivory market is the most important driver of poaching and trafficking and unless it is addressed on a global scale, elephant poaching will continue. Like ivory stockpiles, selling South Africa's 20 tons of stockpiled horn alone would have a calamitous effect on rhinos in the wild.

South Africa's current path seems set to leave no legacy for future generations and our policymakers are failing in their duties as

guardians of our wildlife. The time has come for South Africa's Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, to converse with conservationists and business leaders who oppose her department's single-minded approach, an approach that will inspire an upsurge in demand and effectively destroy what has been achieved in terms of demand reduction. **AG**



The Glen Volkswagen encompasses the Volkswagen meaning – the people's car, by offering you the latest range of Volkswagen models, including People Movers and Commercial Vehicles to suit every South African lifestyle.

Whether you are looking for something a little more rugged or whether style and grace is more up your alley, we have a Volkswagen to suit your needs.



Das Auto.

The Glen Volkswagen

2 Amanda Road, Gleneagles
Tel: 010 596 7861

www.theglenvw.co.za

CLICK BELOW FOR MORE



64
CommentsAfrica Geographic
Magazine Login ▾Sort by
Best ▾Share Favorite 

Join the discussion...



Tracey R · 12 hours ago

An interesting site called "Breaking the brand" is showing how education can potentially help efforts by reducing the demand for rhino horn - according to their visitor stats, this seems to be of great interest to people in Vietnam, who are concerned that rhino horn is being poisoned & they're not informed.

<http://breakingthebrand.org/>

Regardless of whether horn infusions go right through the horn, or are more localised, which rhino-horn consumer would like to play Russian roulette & potentially get some of the poison? So I think the threat of this poison is a good thing...

I attended a very interesting talk by Julian Rademeyer, when he was presented with the Marjan-Marsh Award in London earlier this month; his book "Killing for profit" shows how corruption at the highest levels has been going on in SA / southern Africa for decades - so much money is directed at anti-poaching, but with the financial incentives of demand, there will always be poor people willing to risk their lives for financial gain (to support their families, for example) and smugglers with the money & power to throw more money at poachers - but by breaking the DEMAND cycle, we stand a better chance of actually having some rhinos still left alive in the wild by the end of the next decade... so EDUCATION is key - getting the consumers to realise that the stuff is useless in a medicinal sense, highlighting the risk of poisoning (even exaggerating it - to achieve the right outcome).

After this conclusion, which is supported by many experts, it would devalue every effort if the trade in rhino horn were to be legalised!

Is there a petition we can sign to encourage CITES members to NOT support South Africa in this endeavour?

1 | · Reply · Share ›



Toto • 14 hours ago

May I as an avid wildlife lover put forward a suggestion to curb this in human practice, either inject or place deadly poison in the horn, it should not affect the animal itself, hopefully once these people who use rhino horn start popping off they won't buy it. Alternately dehorn the animal fit it with a prosthetic horn, making it known that all Rhinos have been dehorned.

1  |  • Reply • Share ›



Ken Watkins > Toto • 14 hours ago

Toto,

If you kept up to date with this subject you may know that poisoning horns does not work as the poison does not migrate throughout the horn

As for de-horning that does not work either, this has been proven time and time again, search for the unbiased info.

 |  • Reply • Share ›



Denise Huxham > Ken Watkins • 13 hours ago

Ken,

it would be far more convincing, and helpful, if you did not rage. supply information that will prove your point, don't make it personal. Denise Huxham

4  |  • Reply • Share ›



Simon Espley > Denise Huxham
• 13 hours ago

Well said Denise, but I suspect you're wasting your breath.

1  |  • Reply • Share ›



Ken Watkins > Denise Huxham
• 13 hours ago

Denise,

The facts are contained in the freely available media, given that the author of this

"piece" cannot reveal his sources, then I fail to see why you think I should. I am just a little more aware!

□ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Simon Espley > Ken Watkins
• 13 hours ago

The sources are all in the feature - as clearly marked links

1 □ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Janine Olivier Scorer > Denise Huxham
• 12 hours ago

Sorry moved this reply to below Ken Watkins

□ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Janine Olivier Scorer > Ken Watkins
• 12 hours ago

This method does work, it has worked for us, unfortunately the DEA and SANParks of South Africa purposely went all out to discredit this method in the hopes that people would stop doing it, the reason for this is that in light of them wanting to open trade on rhino horn they did not want the Asian markets to think horn from South Africa is tainted, as they then would not be able to sell their stock piles. Unfortunate thought process, as this is the one thing that can buy time for the rhino. The Asians not wanting tainted rhino horn by any ones understanding is first prize for the Rhino "is it not?" If you have any doubt about it not working go to the Rhino Rescue Projects web page and you may ask them all the questions. Their latest methods are so improved compared to when the pilot project was launched it is worth the time of day for the sake of our Rhino.

1 □ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Ken Watkins > Janine Olivier Scorer



• 11 hours ago

Janine,

I am surprised you did not mention "Save the Rhino" in your list of conspirators.

They seem to agree with me as well

<http://www.savetherhino.org/rh...>

□ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Janine Olivier Scorer > Ken Watkins

• 11 hours ago

Ken I only concern myself with main players not hangers on.

FYI Save the Rhino are pro-trade and pro-hunting - even when it comes to endangered species like rhinos. So of course they would not support an initiative that threatens future profits.

□ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Toto > Ken Watkins • 13 hours ago

Oh excuse me Ken I didn't know I was so stupid & that you are Einstein, all I am trying to do is think of solutions not get into a debate with you regards keeping up to date, I still think poisoning is not a bad idea as if you drill a hole at the tip down to the base the whole horn is poisoned any which way you look at it.

□ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Lorinda Hern > Toto • 12 hours ago

Toto, your idea is not nearly as far-fetched as Ken makes it sound. We have been working on techniques to devalue (i.e. "poison") horns for four years now. There have been challenges and teething problems (as is to be expected with any kind of pioneering work) but our latest test results (using a technique that involves

drilling vertically down the length of the horn - as per your suggestion :) have been tremendously encouraging, and did indeed result in much of the horn material being contaminated. Ultimately, the true measure of any poaching intervention should be results, right? In terms of results: two of the hardest-hit state owned reserves in KZN have not lost a single animal to poaching since having these procedures performed more than 12 months ago. So please keep making suggestions - it's out-of-the-box ideas that will ultimately save the rhino (despite what you-know-who says :)

3  |  • Reply • Share ›



Toto > Lorinda Hern • 8 hours ago

Thank you Lorinda for acknowledging I can at least give a solution or a suggestion that may work, this idiot (you know who) likes to come across as knowing all the answers thank you for proving him wrong. He needs to come down a peg or two as well as his high horse.

1  |  • Reply • Share ›



Ken Watkins > Toto • 8 hours ago

Toto
I thought you had gone, shame you came back with more totally insulting comments which as usual contain nothing relevant to the discussion

 |  • Reply • Share ›



Toto > Ken Watkins • 7 hours ago

Oh no I thought I would just let you rant on, but Lorinda's comment gave me new incentive to take you on, I now will not let this ride, for in actual fact you really know sweet bloody blow all. Pea brain

I

□ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Andrew > Lorinda Hern • 7 hours ago

I wish you well Lorna, but I don't think you have any credibility left. You clearly sold a lemon before, and failed. I do admire your efforts, but I take exception to you marketing something that was not tested, and quite frankly did not work. I don't get it - you all believe in trying the same thing and expecting a different result.

□ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Ken Watkins > Andrew • 7 hours ago

Andrew,
Well said quite frankly self promotion seems the likeliest answer

□ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Ken Watkins > Lorinda Hern • 8 hours ago

Lorinda,
Would you be kind enough to tell us who you are and where you have been "working on" poison techniques. I would be interested to read your published papers on this subject.

□ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Simon Espley > Ken Watkins
• 7 hours ago

Oh boy Ken, best you Google "Lorinda Hern rhino horn infusion".

1 □ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Ken Watkins > Simon Espley • 7 hours ago

Simon,
I have just done what you suggested, I can find nothing to indicate any scientific

reports, so this has hardly answered my question,. why is it that I find it nit exactly surprising!

All form and no substance indeed!

 |  • Reply • Share ›



Andrew > Ken Watkins • 7 hours ago

Allow me to help - you may have missed two Carte Blanche episodes where they exposed a supplier who claimed to magic potion that would poison rhino horn. Experts disagreed. Seems that studies by SAN Parks scientists on horn recovered from these rhinos showed no sign of it going further than nail varnish does into your fingernail. Seems that the supplier did not do their homework - as rhino horn is the same density as perspex - the magic stuff did do as promised. There was the benefit of the bluff though. The poachers were bluffed into feeling the horn was worthless - which worked for a while - and the rhino owners were bluffed into a false sense of security.

 |  • Reply • Share ›



Lorinda Hern > Andrew • 5 hours ago

Which Carte Blanche insert would you suggest Ken watch, Andrew...?
The initial witch hunt (in search of a R230 million donation we didn't solicit nor ever received a cent of) or the follow-up insert with which they frantically tried to distance themselves from the first story (of which any trace has since removed from their website and social media pages)...? Either way, the ordeal was actually a blessing for RRP - before, we were hamstrung by legislation that severely hampered our research into improved horn devaluation techniques. In the wake of the broadcast(s) we were finally granted the necessary permits to take this research forward at a pace that might yet

make a meaningful difference to South
[Africa's beleaguered rhino population - that](#)

[see more](#)

1  |  • [Reply](#) • [Share](#) ›



andrew > Lorinda Hern • 4 hours ago

Wow, did we watch the same programme. Irrespective of whether you believe it was a witch hunt or not, you are missing one vital point and that is that you sold a lemon. In layman terms its called a con. If you sell something that doesn't work. You admitted that there is anecdotal evidence that it works - well there is factual evidence that it doesn't. Thank goodness it was exposed - as you quite rightly say. Carte Blanche did the second episode as they realised the sensitivity of the issue about the dutch lottery money, but it still showed the reality that your product doesn't work - no matter how much you wish it would.

 |  • [Reply](#) • [Share](#) ›



Ken Watkins > Simon Espley • 7 hours ago

Simon,

Thanks I will take a look if load shedding allows!

 |  • [Reply](#) • [Share](#) ›



Ken Watkins > Toto • 13 hours ago

Toto,

It is hardly my fault that you do not keep up, but there are so many ludicrous statements made.

Why do you not tell the scientists conducting the research into the "poisoning" of horns about your wonderful new theory, rather than make statements on a subject you

clearly know little about

□ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Toto > Ken Watkins • 13 hours ago

Ken you must hate people & life very much,seems like most others on this forum dislike you as well,if you read my first article you will see just a "SUGGESTION" so why are you attacking me, I never claimed to be an expert unlike you,your sarcasim too is lost on me I really couldn't care less for you or your theories so old man go take a nap it's way past your nap time.

1 □ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Ken Watkins > Toto • 12 hours ago

Toto,
How kind of you to understand me so well, I am not yet at the stage where I need a nap in the afternoon as I am usually trying to stop the spread of nonsense, which is unfortunately all too commonplace nowadays

□ | □ • Reply • Share ›



Toto > Ken Watkins • 12 hours ago

The strangest thing is I don't understand you at all,you are attacking readers all over this forum,for reasons only known to you .You seem to be craving attention,or make the rest of our comments irrelevant ,so I suggest to No make that am telling you if you are craving attention run around naked in your retirement village,that will give you the attention you seek,till you are put in a straight jacket.This case is now closed for me .

□ | □ • Reply • Share ›





Ken Watkins > Toto · 11 hours ago

Toto,
I am glad your case is closed your comments remind me of global warming supporter or a member of the ANC

□ | □ · Reply · Share ›



Ken Watkins · 14 hours ago

The usual load of nonsense, why do you need to publish all the tired old stories without any basis in facts?

The only truth in your statement is that the south African government is corrupt.

No doubt you were one of those people who encouraged the removal of the fence between Kruger and Mozambique!

1 □ | □ · Reply · Share ›



Simon Espley > Ken Watkins · 14 hours ago

Thanks Ken, would be interested in your version of the true facts - could you reply in more detail? Not interested in the bluster, just the facts, thanks

6 □ | □ · Reply · Share ›



Ken Watkins > Simon Espley · 13 hours ago

Simon,
I am not like you I do not bluster,
You quote some ludicrous figures for Elephant poaching, but as usual fail to say where these reports are or who undertook them.
Strange that the in depth Elephant count taking place throughout Africa is indicating increasing numbers, this is certainly true in Kidepo where the count revealed no poached bodies and a dramatic increase in numbers. I only know this because I was there!

□ | □ · Reply · Share ›



THE LONG RUN




Africa Geographic Magazine is your weekly celebration of African wildlife, people and travel. For content inspired by our community please visit

[Africa Geographic blog.](#)

©Africa Geographic

General Enquiries

 (+27) 21 762 6884

 hello@africageographic.com

[Magazine Contributions](#)