

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 30, 2015

Department of the Interior
The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Department of the Interior
Director Daniel M. Ashe
Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street NW, Room
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell and Director Daniel M. Ashe,

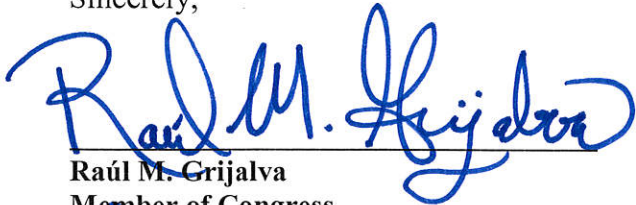
We urge you to finalize the proposed rule listing the African lion as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Along with countless Americans, we are outraged to learn that a trophy hunter from the United States shot and killed an iconic African lion (“Cecil”) after using bait to lure him out of Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe. In the wake of this tragic event it is now more imperative than ever that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service immediately finalize its proposed rule to list African lions as threatened. As a conservation leader, the United States must send a clear message that we will not tolerate hunts in countries without a sustainable, science-based lion management plan, or in circumstances that do not benefit the conservation of the species.


Giving African lions the ESA protection they deserve will improve conservation of the species in several ways. First, it would outlaw the trade of African lions or lion parts by people subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, except under limited circumstances. Second, it would require the Fish and Wildlife Service to certify that sport-hunted lion trophies could only be imported into the United States from countries with sound conservation plans that enhance the survival of the species in the wild. Third, it would make the African lion eligible for funding for conservation and recovery efforts under the ESA.

Walter James Palmer, a Minnesota dentist who was previously sanctioned for false statements about the poaching of a black bear, shot Cecil with a crossbow after paying local guides \$50,000 to lure the lion out of protected parkland by dragging a dead animal behind a car. The bow shot did not kill Cecil, and Mr. Palmer and his guides tracked the lion for 40 hours before ultimately killing him with a gun, beheading, and skinning him. Cecil was a well-known and beloved lion, and wore a GPS collar as part of an Oxford University study. His outrageous slaughter was therefore quickly noticed and widely reported.

The actions of Walter James Palmer are a good reminder of the perils the African lion faces. The number of African lions has declined by almost 50 percent in the past three decades, with fewer than 40,000 individuals existing today. Moreover, the African lion occupies only 22 percent of its historic range. The best available science supports a listing of threatened for the African lion as the species is facing extinction throughout a significant portion of its range. We urge the Service to expeditiously finalize the proposed rule to provide necessary protections to lions and save this iconic species from extinction.

Sincerely,

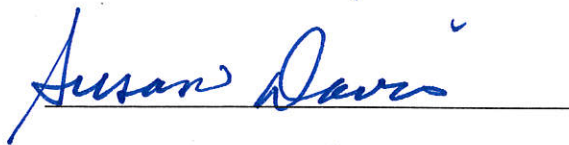

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

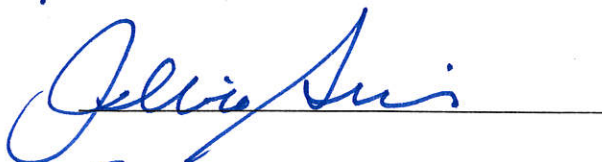

Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress

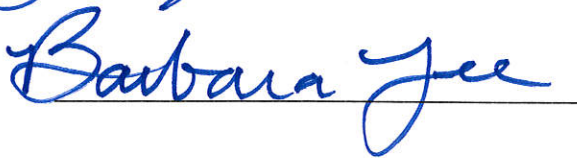






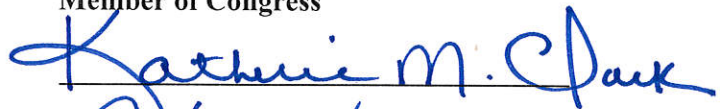


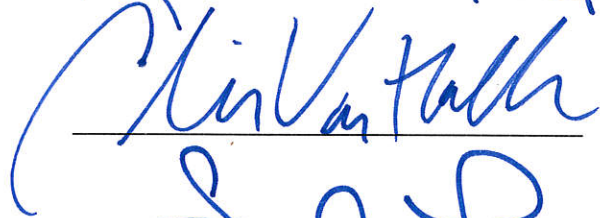


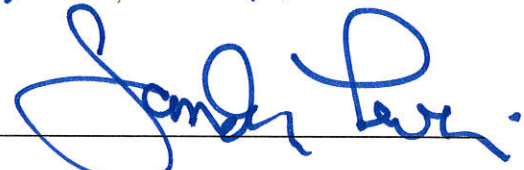


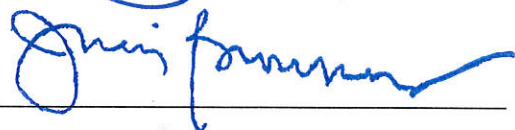


Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

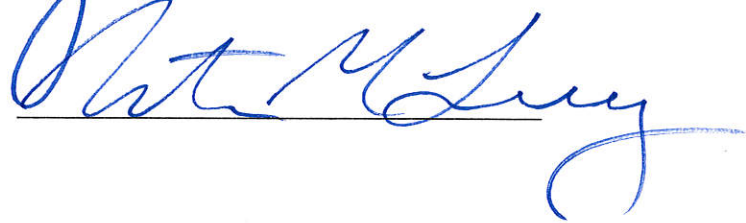












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