



**NATURAL  
RESOURCES**  
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# Missing the Mark:

African trophy hunting fails to show consistent conservation benefits



**A report by the Democratic staff of the  
House Committee on Natural Resources**

**NOTE:** This report has not been officially adopted by the Committee on Natural Resources and may not necessarily reflect the views of its members. This version corrects an error from a previous version on page 19.

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## Executive Summary

Hunting of imperiled animals can save species from extinction. It is a claim that is counterintuitive to some and makes perfect sense to others. It is also the official position of the United States government, with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service claiming that “well-managed wildlife programs that include limited, sustainable sport hunting can and have provided significant long-term benefits to the populations of many species.”<sup>1</sup> However, the debate has reached a fever pitch since the 2015 death of Zimbabwe’s famed Cecil the Lion at the hands of American dentist and trophy hunting hobbyist, Walter Palmer. This report evaluates that claim as it pertains to prized species in popular hunting locations, and examines the conditions under which trophy hunting may contribute to conservation.

Many governments and a number of private and non-profit groups, including conservation organizations, have long viewed well-regulated hunting as an important conservation tool. Indeed, much of the North American system of wildlife management is based on the principle that most hunters want healthy populations of game animals so that they will always have something to hunt. In places like the United States, where laws against wildlife poaching are generally well respected and enforced and transparent mechanisms funnel taxes and fees generated by hunters to effective conservation programs, hunting has helped restore populations of some prized game species when quotas are based on sound science. In places where hunting is poorly managed, as is the case in some parts of Africa, the claim that trophy hunting provides conservation benefits is much harder to prove, especially for species with populations that have already been depleted.

By definition, trophy hunters hunt to bring home a trophy for display consisting of all or part of their kill. In order to help ensure trophy hunting does not contribute to the extinction of a species, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires that hunting trophies of wildlife listed as endangered or threatened may only be brought into the United States if their importation – and by extension, the hunt – enhances the survival of the species. This high threshold is an important and appropriate safeguard against extinction.

An analysis of five major threatened or endangered game species (African elephant, African lion, black rhinoceros, southern white rhinoceros, and leopard) in four African countries (Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe) found that trophy hunting is managed well in some areas and poorly in others. In many cases, the laws, institutions, and capacity necessary to make trophy hunting benefit conservation are lacking. The analysis also found that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) – the agency responsible for allowing or prohibiting protected species imports – could make significant improvements to its permitting process that would help ensure that only trophies which truly do enhance species survival are allowed into the country. The report makes the following recommendations:

- Ensure that trophy hunts benefit conservation.
- Close regulatory loopholes that harm protected species.
- Tighten trophy import permitting requirements.
- Increase fees for trophy imports to fund science and conservation.
- Allow only imports taken using fair chase hunting methods.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Questions and Answers (Black Rhino Permit). Last viewed May 17, 2016. Available online: <https://www.fws.gov/international/permits/black-rhino-import-permit.html#13>

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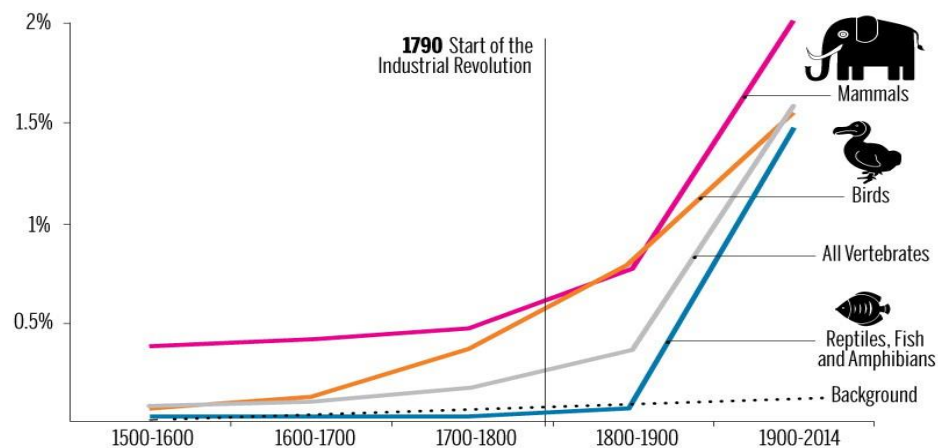
## CHAPTER 1: STATUS OF WILDLIFE POPULATIONS

Many scientists believe that Earth is now on the cusp of a sixth great extinction - the first one driven by humans. Particularly since the beginning of the industrial revolution, direct harvest, habitat loss through land conversion, and climate change driven by the burning of fossil fuels have put enormous pressure on species and have dramatically decreased biological diversity.<sup>2</sup>

Without question, loss and degradation of suitable habitat is the main driver of most species' decline. However, evidence shows that direct harvest of terrestrial species continues to pose a major threat, particularly in developing countries.<sup>3</sup> Poaching has skyrocketed in recent years, due mainly to the involvement of organized criminal syndicates that have taken advantage of the relatively large financial rewards and low penalties associated with wildlife trafficking.<sup>4</sup> Sub-Saharan Africa is the epicenter of the most recent wildlife poaching and trafficking crisis, with some populations of elephants, rhinoceros and other animals declining precipitously after showing signs of recovery in previous decades.

### VERTEBRATE SPECIES EXTINCTION RATES

Cumulative, recorded as "extinct" or "extinct in the wild"



SOURCE: Ceballos et al. *Sci. Adv.* 2015;1:e1400253 | GRAPHIC: Amanda Shendruk

MACLEAN'S

Available at: <http://www.macleans.ca/society/science/infographic-charting-the-worlds-sixth-mass-extinction/>

<sup>2</sup> Hunter, Philip. "The human impact on biological diversity. How species adapt to urban challenges sheds light on evolution and provides clues about conservation." *EMBO Reports* 8.4 (2007): 316-18. Web.

<<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1852758/>>.

<sup>3</sup> Lawson, Katherine, and Alex Vines. "Global Impacts of the Illegal Wildlife Trade: The Costs of Crime, Insecurity and Institutional Erosion." (2014). Web. 14 Feb. 2016.

<<https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Africa/0214Wildlife.pdf>>.

<sup>4</sup> "Annual Report 2014: Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime Annual Report 2014, version 1." *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, n.d. Web.

<[https://www.unodc.org/documents/Wildlife/WLFC\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2014.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/Wildlife/WLFC_Annual_Report_2014.pdf)>.

Poaching for profit remains the biggest driver of these declines, but trophy hunting also removes a significant number of animals from these rapidly declining populations. One prominent researcher recently stated that in some countries “trophy hunting appears to be the primary driver of lion population declines outside protected areas.”<sup>5</sup> While hunters claim that their presence deters poaching, illegal killing has soared to record levels despite the continued operation of trophy hunting lodges and outfitters. American trophy hunters import more trophies of protected species than do hunters from any other country,<sup>6</sup> and they may assume that hunting in other countries is regulated as closely as it is at home. This assumption could lead defenders of trophy hunting to dismiss suggestions that their activities may not be sustainable in certain places.

This report will focus on the four African countries from which the most hunting trophies are imported into the United States:

- **Zimbabwe**
- **Tanzania**
- **South Africa**
- **Namibia**

It will also focus primarily on five species that are prized by hunters and are listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA:



**African elephant** (*Loxodonta Africana*)



**Black rhinoceros** (*Diceros bicornis*) **and**  
**Southern white rhinoceros** (*Ceratotherium simum simum*)



**Leopard** (*Panthera pardus*)



**African lion** (*Panthera leo*)



<sup>5</sup> Vidal, John. "Trophy hunting just part of the story behind declining lion numbers in Africa." *The Guardian* 29 July 2015. Web. <<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jul/29/trophy-hunting-just-part-story-behind-declining-lion-numbers-africa>>.

<sup>6</sup> *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora*. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, n.d. Web. <<http://trade.cites.org/>>.

Species and populations of animals can often support some level of hunting if they do not face other threats that jeopardize their continued existence in the wild. The species discussed in this report, however, do face other threats, and have all been listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the ESA, or both for many years. This section describes the current population trends and drivers for the five wildlife species in question.



## African elephant

Researchers have estimated that more than 20 million elephants roamed across Africa as recently as the early 1800s.<sup>7</sup> Since that time, though, overhunting, habitat loss, and poaching have reduced the overall population size to between 420,000 and 650,000 animals.<sup>8</sup>

Elephant population numbers in Tanzania (43,000<sup>9</sup>), Namibia (20,000<sup>10</sup>), South Africa (18,000<sup>11</sup>), and Zimbabwe (47,000<sup>12</sup>) are far below historical levels. In the cases of Tanzania and Zimbabwe, significant recent declines have been widely documented. The African elephant is currently listed as threatened under the ESA and has been subject to intense poaching pressure in recent years to fuel the black market ivory trade.



## White and black rhinoceros

It is estimated that Africa was home to more than one million rhinos less than two centuries ago, but overhunting by European colonizers and more recent episodes of poaching have severely depleted their numbers.<sup>13</sup> Two subspecies of white rhinoceros are recognized. Northern white rhinos are critically endangered, as only three individuals remain in captivity. They are listed as endangered under the ESA. The southern white rhino is mainly found in southern Africa, Kenya and Uganda. It is listed as threatened under the ESA due to its similar appearance to several species of endangered rhinos.<sup>14</sup> The 2010 population estimate for white rhino – the most recent available – was around 20,000, 99% of which are in South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and

<sup>7</sup> Smil, Vaclav. *Harvesting the Biosphere: What We Have Taken from Nature*. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2013. Print.

<sup>8</sup> UNEP, CITES, IUCN, TRAFFIC. *Elephants in the Dust - The African Elephant Crisis: A Rapid Response Assessment*. United Nations Environment Programme, GRID-Arendal. 2013. Web.

<sup>9</sup> "Tanzania elephant population declined by 60% in five years, census revealed." *The Guardian*. June 2, 2015. Web. <<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jun/02/tanzania-epicentre-of-elephant-poaching-census-reveals>>.

<sup>10</sup> "Namibian government responds to elephant hunting debate." *Africa Geographic*. June, 3, 2014. Web, <<http://africageographic.com/blog/namibian-government-responds-to-elephant-hunting-debate/>>.

<sup>11</sup> "South Africa to Resume Elephant Kills." *Los Angeles Times*. February 28, 2008. Available online: <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/feb/26/world/fg-elephants26>

<sup>12</sup> Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. *Enhancement finding for African elephants taken as sport-hunted trophies in Zimbabwe during 2014*. Fish and Wildlife Service. July 22, 2014. Web.

<sup>13</sup> "African Rhinos." *World Wildlife Fund*. World Wildlife Fund, n.d. Web.

<[http://wwf.panda.org/what\\_we\\_do/endangered\\_species/rhinoceros/african\\_rhinos/](http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/endangered_species/rhinoceros/african_rhinos/)>.

<sup>14</sup> Emslie, R. "Ceratotherium simum." *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. IUCN, n.d. Web. <<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/4185/0>>.

Kenya.<sup>15</sup> The most recent southern white rhino estimates for Namibia (469), South Africa (18,796), Zimbabwe (290), and Tanzania (zero) reflect both the legacy of overexploitation and the recent poaching crisis perpetuated by illegal trade in rhino horn.<sup>16</sup>

Black rhinos were once the most common species of rhinoceros in Africa, but their numbers have dwindled to fewer than 5,000 in the wild.<sup>17</sup> The black rhino is listed as endangered under the ESA.<sup>18</sup> Ninety-six percent of the wild population resides in just four countries: South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Kenya. Population estimates for Namibia (1,750), South Africa (1,915), Tanzania (113) and Zimbabwe (431) show just how close this species is to extinction.<sup>19</sup> As with white rhinos, intense poaching over the past several years has reversed recent conservation gains. The West African black rhino, one of four black rhino subspecies, was declared extinct in 2011.<sup>20</sup>



## Leopard

The leopard is a wide-ranging and adaptable species that faces many threats, including hunting and habitat loss. Leopards are listed as endangered under the ESA except for southern African populations, which are listed as threatened.<sup>21</sup> No historical population estimate exists, and current counts are very difficult to obtain. The often cited 1988 estimate of 700,000 in Africa is considered unreliable.<sup>22</sup> Leopards have been extirpated from more than one third of their historical range and the overall population of leopards in Africa is decreasing, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).<sup>23</sup>

Among our focus countries, Namibia's estimated population of roughly 14,000 leopards makes it one of the healthiest in Africa.<sup>24</sup> Estimates for Zimbabwe and Tanzania are widely considered to be unreliable, and a decade-old estimate of 4,250 leopards for South Africa showed a decline from previous surveys.<sup>25</sup> More recently, South Africa has announced that its leopard hunting

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<sup>15</sup> Emslie, R. "Ceratotherium simum." The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. IUCN, n.d. Web. <<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/4185/0>>.

<sup>16</sup> IUCN, Species Survival Commission, African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups, and TRAFFIC. *African and Asian Rhinoceroses – Status, Conservation and Trade. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora*. November 20, 2009. Web.

<sup>17</sup> IUCN, Species Survival Commission, African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups, and TRAFFIC. *African and Asian Rhinoceroses – Status, Conservation and Trade*. December 2012. Web.

<sup>18</sup> Emslie, R. "Diceros bicornis." The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. IUCN, n.d. Web. <<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/6557/0>>.

<sup>19</sup> Emslie, R. "Diceros bicornis." The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. IUCN, n.d. Web. <<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/6557/0>>.

<sup>20</sup> "Black Rhino." World Wildlife Fund. World Wildlife Fund, n.d. Web. <[http://wwf.panda.org/what\\_we\\_do/endangered\\_species/rhinoceros/african\\_rhinos/black\\_rhinoceros/](http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/endangered_species/rhinoceros/african_rhinos/black_rhinoceros/)>.

<sup>21</sup> Henschel, P. "Panthera pardus ." The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. IUCN, 2008. Web. <<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/15954/0>>.

<sup>22</sup> Henschel, P. "Panthera pardus ." The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. IUCN, 2008. Web. <<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/15954/0>>.

<sup>23</sup> IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Available online: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/15954/0>

<sup>24</sup> Stein, Andrew, et al. *Namibian National Leopard Survey 2011 Final Report*. Ministry of Environment and Tourism, MET Game Products Trust Fund, and Safari Club International Foundation. 2011. Web.

<sup>25</sup> Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, and Endangered Wildlife Trust. *Leopard population and habitat viability assessment 2005*. 2005. Web.

quota for 2016 is zero because of inadequate management of hunting practices and unreliable monitoring of populations.<sup>26</sup>



## African Lion

Although past numbers are unknown, the geographic range of African lions has shrunk by nearly 90% over the past century and numbers have declined precipitously over a relatively short period of time.<sup>27</sup> There are now fewer than 20,000 lions left in the wild.<sup>28</sup> The species was recently listed as threatened under the ESA for populations in southern and eastern Africa, and endangered for populations in northern and western Africa. Habitat loss and hunting (for pest control, poaching or bush meat) are the greatest threats to lion populations. Poorly managed trophy hunting has also been linked to population declines.<sup>29,30</sup>

Lion populations seem to have stabilized – at least temporarily – at low levels in Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.<sup>31</sup> However, most of South Africa’s lions are captive-bred animals used for canned hunting – where trophy animals are bred in captivity and “hunted” in small enclosures – and Tanzania’s lion population has dropped by 60% in just over a decade.<sup>32</sup>

### Summary

It is clear that there is little margin for error in managing these species. Habitat loss, poaching, and a legacy of uncontrolled hunting have pushed all of them to the brink of extinction. While populations in some areas have shown signs of stabilization or even recovery, strict controls on additional mortality are necessary to prevent further decline. With respect to trophy hunting, it is critical to ensure that the CITES non-detriment standard and the ESA enhancement standard are met for all trophies, as the ESA requires.

<sup>26</sup> Pinnock, D. “South Africa bans leopard trophy hunting for 2016.” Africa Geographic. Web.

<http://africageographic.com/blog/south-africa-bans-leopard-trophy-hunting-2016/>

<sup>27</sup> Declining Lions. National Geographic. Available online: <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/big-cats-initiative/lion-decline-map/>

<sup>28</sup> “Panthera leo .” The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. IUCN, 2015. Web.

<<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/15951/0>>

Packer, C., et al. “Effects of Trophy Hunting on Lion and Leopard Populations in Tanzania.” *Conservation Biology* 25.1 (2011): 142-53. Web.

<<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1523-1739.2010.01576.x/abstract>>.

<sup>30</sup> Rosenblatt, Elias, et al. “Detecting declines of apex carnivores and evaluating their causes: An example with Zambian lions.” *Conservation Biology* 180 (2014): 176-86. Web.

<<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320714003875>>..

<sup>31</sup> IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Available online: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/15951/0>

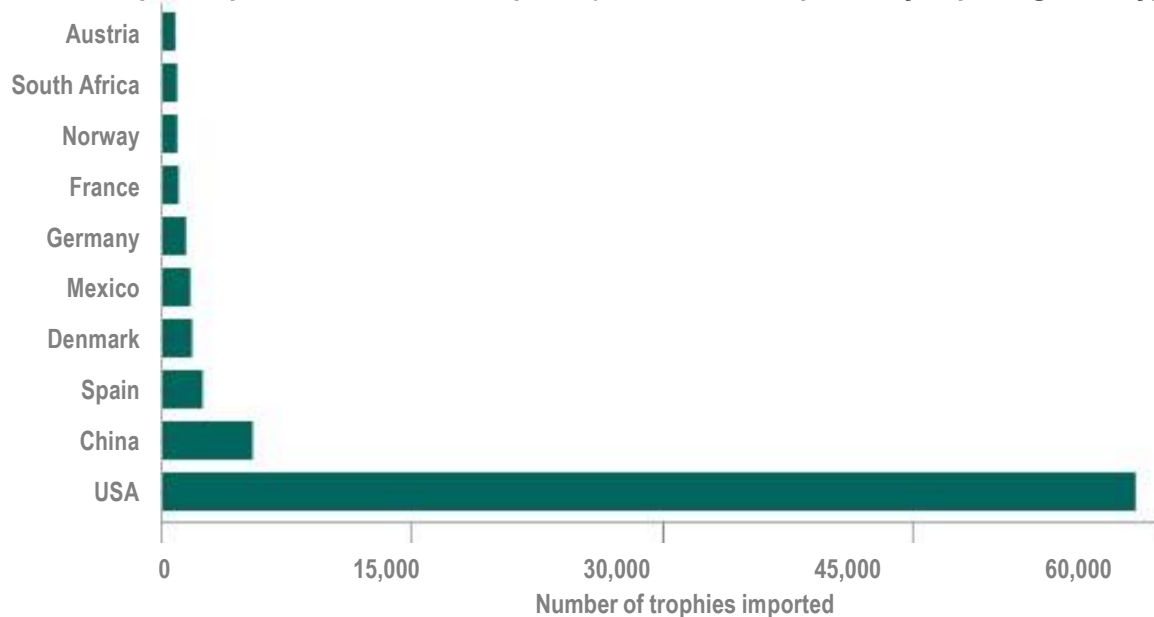
<sup>32</sup> The Hidden Consequences of Hunting Africa’s Lions. Los Angeles Times. August 22, 2015. Available online: <http://www.latimes.com/world/africa/la-fg-south-africa-lions-20150822-story.html>



## CHAPTER 2: IS TROPHY HUNTING HELPING OR HURTING?

Proponents of trophy hunting contend that it is a potential source of funding for wildlife conservation. Safari Club International (SCI), a non-profit group representing the interests of trophy hunters, believes that “lawful, ethical, vigilant hunters play an important role in public acceptance of sustainable hunting as a vital tool for modern wildlife conservation and management.”<sup>33</sup> They further contend that trophy hunting can create incentives for conserving habitat and ecosystems where hunted animals roam.<sup>34</sup> Critics counter that trophy hunting can be mismanaged and potentially contribute to declines in the populations of species, and that the same land used for trophy hunting can support lucrative photographic tourism.<sup>35</sup> The United States is the largest importer of animal trophies, highlighting our responsibility to ensure that Americans are not contributing to the decline of already imperiled wildlife (see Table 1).

Table 1. Top 10 Importers of Mammal Trophies (2008-2013, as reported by importing country)



Source: CITES Trade Database at <http://trade.cites.org/>

<sup>33</sup> Can Lion Trophy Hunting Support Conservation? National Geographic. July 29 2015. Available online: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/07/150729-lion-trophy-hunting-conservation-animals-cecil/>

<sup>34</sup> Duan Briggs, "Trophy Hunting may be a Key to Saving Wildlife," *ARC Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions*, March 25, 2015.

Biggs, Dr. Duan. "ARC Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions (CEED) Media Release." *ARC Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions*. N.p., 25 May 2015. Web.

<[http://ceed.edu.au/images/media\\_releases/CEED%20trophy%20hunting%2025March15.pdf](http://ceed.edu.au/images/media_releases/CEED%20trophy%20hunting%2025March15.pdf)>.

<sup>35</sup> Packer, C., et al. "Effects of Trophy Hunting on Lion and Leopard Populations in Tanzania." *Conservation Biology* 25.1 (2011): 142-53. Web. <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1523-1739.2010.01576.x/abstract>>.

The individuals applying for trophy import permits do not fit the profile of the average American hunter. These excursions require the purchase of round trip airfare to Africa, lodging, the services of guides and professional hunters, and other services. The individuals who applied most frequently for U.S. trophy import permits related to the species and countries in this report between 2009 and 2014 include an auto distributor worth \$3.2 billion,<sup>36</sup> an oil and gas company CEO who reportedly made almost \$10 million in 2014,<sup>37</sup> the wife of an owner of multiple companies and a trophy collector,<sup>38</sup> a winner of the Dallas Safari Club's Big Game Award in 2012 for successful hunts of an African elephant, buffalo, lion and leopard,<sup>39</sup> and the CEO of a food manufacturing company.<sup>40</sup>

The *New York Times* recently published estimates of the market values of selected animal trophies (see Table 2).<sup>41</sup>

**Table 2. Estimated Market Value for "Big 5" trophies in 2015**

	Trophy Value (in current US dollars)
Lion	\$8,500 to \$50,000
Elephant	\$25,000 to \$60,000
White Rhinoceros	\$125,000 and up
Leopard	\$15,000 to \$35,000
Buffalo	\$12,500 to \$17,000

<sup>36</sup> "Forbes 400: #164 Dan Friedkin." *Forbes*. Forbes, n.d. Web. <<http://time.com/3976344/cecil-lion-zimbabwe-walter-palmer/http://www.forbes.com/profile/dan-friedkin/>>.

<sup>37</sup> <http://www1.salary.com/Dan-O-Dinges-Salary-Bonus-Stock-Options-for-CABOT-OIL-GAS-CORP.html>

<sup>38</sup> White, Tyler. "Texas oilman, hunter showcases extravagant trophy room of African animals in Nat Geo." *My San Antonio* 5 Aug. 2015. Web. <<http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local/article/Texas-oil-man-hunter-showcases-extravagant-6424004.php>>.

<sup>39</sup> "Africa Big Game Award." *Dallas Safari Club*. Dallas Safari Club, n.d. Web. <<https://www.biggame.org/awards/africa-big-game-award/>>.

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.johannafoods.com/news.htm>

<sup>41</sup> "The Big Five: Africa's Most Sought-After Trophy Animals." *The New York Times* 10 Aug. 2015. Web. <[http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/08/10/world/africa/africa-big-game-hunting.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/08/10/world/africa/africa-big-game-hunting.html?_r=0)>.

Fees for hunting animals for trophies vary considerably and are based on an animal's rarity, the effort required to hunt it, and its popularity for hunting (see Table 3). Walter Palmer reportedly paid more than \$50,000 to his guides for his lion hunting trip. The recent auction of the right to hunt a black rhinoceros in Namibia cost \$350,000.<sup>42</sup>

**Table 3. Sample Trophy Fees for Select Animals from an Outfitter in Zimbabwe in 2016**

	Trophy Value (in current US dollars)
Lion	\$19,500
Lioness	\$8,450
Elephant	\$38,000
Leopard	\$15,000
Buffalo	\$13,250
Crocodile	\$6,450
Hippopotamus	\$7,950

**Source:** Africa Sky Hunting Outfitters at <http://www.africanskyhunting.co.za/pricelist.html>

It is clear that this is a lucrative industry and that those involved have the means to contribute significantly to the conservation of the species they hunt, as well as the wherewithal to ensure that they are acting responsibly and not promoting practices that are detrimental to wildlife. However, as the tragic death of Cecil the Lion showed us, trophy hunters do not always play by the rules, and the trophy hunting industry needs to be regulated and held accountable for there to be any hope of a consistent conservation benefit.

### **Necessary Safeguards**

In order for trophy hunting to fulfill its purported conservation potential, several conditions must exist. First, countries must establish strong conservation laws and enforce them rigorously and consistently. Second, management under these laws must be rooted in sound science and demonstrate that it is adequate to protect wildlife. Third, trophy hunting programs must operate transparently and demonstrate wildlife conservation benefits. Specifically with respect to species

<sup>42</sup> Merchant, Nomaan, and Michael Graczyk. "Http://www.dallasnews.com/news/metro/20140111-permit-to-hunt-black-rhino-auctioned-for-350000.ece." *The Dallas Morning News* 11 Jan. 2014. Web.

listed under the ESA, a trophy may only be imported into the United States if permitting that import would “enhance the propagation or survival of the affected species.”<sup>43</sup>

The United States uses ESA to implement CITES. The four African countries profiled in this report are also CITES signatories and have enacted implementing legislation. CITES lists and categorizes wildlife and plant species based on the extent to which they might be threatened by trade, and regulates the international trade of wildlife and wildlife parts through a series of permits. It requires that exporting and importing countries make a finding that the trade in a listed species is not detrimental to that species’ survival; this is a lower standard than the ESA requirement for an enhancement finding. A hunter attempting to import a trophy of an animal listed under Appendix I (the most protective category) of CITES into the United States is required to obtain an import permit from FWS and export permit from the range country for the wildlife or wildlife parts. Table 4 shows ESA and CITES requirements.

**Table 4. Required Findings for Permitted Wildlife Imports and Exports**

	Wildlife category	Permit requirements
<b>Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)</b>	Appendix I	Import permit, export permit, and non-detriment finding
	Appendix II	Export permit and non-detriment finding
<b>Endangered Species Act (ESA)</b>	Endangered	Import permit and enhancement finding
	Threatened	Import permit and enhancement finding OR 4(d) rule

The ESA enhancement standard may be met in a number of ways, including evidence that the hunt promotes protection of wildlife habitat, funding for law enforcement or other conservation efforts, and development of science that feeds into these efforts. It cannot be met by showing the economic benefits hunting may provide to communities. If hunting is sustainable and contributes to conservation, those benefits will accrue and be greater over time, as enhancement of threatened and endangered populations is a necessary condition for ensuring sustainability. It is important to understand that while community based natural resource management (CBNRM) programs designed to support hunting and conservation can help make trophy hunting more sustainable, their mere existence does not guarantee that a trophy will meet the enhancement standard.<sup>44</sup>

In theory, trophy hunting supports conservation programs in Africa through several mechanisms. A portion of the fees taken for hunting animals can be used by governments to fund conservation activities that benefit species. Revenue generated from trophy hunting can also be used to maintain rangelands and local populations of hunted animals, both of which have conservation

<sup>43</sup> Endangered Species Act of 1973. §10(a)(1)(A). Available online: <http://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/Endangered%20Species%20Act%20Of%201973.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> Leader-Williams, Nigel; and Hutton, Jon M.. Does extractive use provide opportunities to offset conflicts between people and wildlife?. Cambridge University Press, 2005. Cambridge Books Online. Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511614774.010>

implications. Older research has described countries dependent on trophy hunting revenue to fund the operational costs of government wildlife management authorities, counter-poaching enforcement activities, and development assistance to local communities. In Zimbabwe, for example, CBNRM efforts through the Communal Areas Management Plan for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) program attempt to alter local people's perception of wildlife from a nuisance or threat to a viable source of economic profit. Translating theory to practice has proven challenging, however, and a number of factors can impact whether or not efforts to ensure trophy hunting enhance the conservation of ESA listed species.

## Potential Pitfalls

Claiming that trophy hunting benefits imperiled species is significantly easier than finding evidence to substantiate it. If a country lacks the political will to strengthen and implement its conservation laws, or lacks the resources necessary to conduct populations surveys, prevent poaching, or protect and restore habitat, then killing additional animals through trophy hunting will only make the situation worse.

Significant discussion in the academic literature centers on the use of trophy hunting revenues as a means to finance conservation efforts. Several African countries have established programs that seek to link wildlife-related markets with conservation conditions. Although research indicates that the success of such efforts is often dependent on several factors, including wildlife management practices and access to benefits at the local level, researchers have also found that trophy hunting revenue has the potential to play an important role in financially supporting conservation programs.<sup>45</sup>

However, trophy hunting accompanied by poor habitat management can be detrimental to conservation efforts.<sup>46</sup> Wholesome countries are undeniably able to generate revenue from trophy hunting, species conservation outcomes depend on the way trophy hunting and wildlife management are governed.<sup>47</sup> Some analysts note that corruption within governments or organizations can prevent trophy hunting revenues from funding conservation activities and can even lead to the mismanagement of hunted populations.<sup>48</sup>

**“Some note that corruption within governments or organizations can prevent trophy hunting revenues from funding conservation activities and can lead to the mismanagement of hunted populations.”**

<sup>45</sup> Lindsey, P.A., et al. "Economic and conservation significance of the trophy hunting industry in sub-Saharan Africa." *Biological Conservation* 134.4: 455-469. Web. <<http://www.africanwildlifeconservationfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Economic-and-conservation-significance.pdf>>.

<sup>46</sup> Crosmar, W.G., S. D. Côté, and H. Fritz. "The assessment of the role of trophy hunting in wildlife conservation." *Animal Conservation* 18.2 (2015): 136-37. Web. <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/acv.12205/epdf>>.

<sup>47</sup> Nelson, Fred, Peter Lindsey, and Guy Balme. "Trophy hunting and lion conservation: a question of governance?" *Oryx* 47.4: 501-09. Web.

<<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=9016211&fileId=S003060531200035>>.

<sup>48</sup> Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Listing Two Lion Species, 80 Fed Reg. 246(December 23, 2015). *Federal Register*. Web.

Trophy hunting can also undermine wildlife conservation if it results in alterations to ecosystems, such as habitat fragmentation, the introduction of exotic species, or targeted reduction of predators of trophy animals.<sup>49</sup> Scientists report that trophy hunting can affect a specific, localized population of a given species in many ways: by reducing the number of animals in the population, by reducing the population's reproductive capacity, and by altering the ecosystem where the species resides.<sup>50</sup> If quota levels are not based on scientific information, or are fixed in a way that ignores changes in the population's size and behavior, trophy hunting could have negative consequences for the population's health.<sup>51</sup> High rates of trophy hunting could also combine with other factors, such as poaching, to cause wildlife population declines.

The degree to which the trophy hunting industry is well regulated and responsible also has important conservation implications. Tourist hunters require the services of experts who know the local terrain and local laws in order to conduct a legal hunt that maximizes the chances of success. Professional hunters are good at what they do; clients frequently have to do little more than pull the trigger. Taking home a trophy is almost guaranteed. Some companies will even refund a portion of an unsuccessful hunter's fees.<sup>52</sup> By contrast, the success rates for hunting whitetail deer in the United States – a species that has been restored to the point of near ubiquity in some places – is below 50%.<sup>53</sup> The expectation of coming home from Africa with a trophy has led to rash behavior, including the son of a former presidential candidate demanding to be given a trophy from a rhinoceros he failed to kill.<sup>54</sup> These expectations can put pressure on guides and professional hunters to take shortcuts. The use of tactics such as baiting and drugging target animals, hunting in small enclosures, and using vehicles and artificial lighting to aid in hunts has been widely reported.

If exporting countries adhere to science-based quotas, and importing countries – particularly the United States – are thorough in implementing CITES and evaluating permit applications to ensure that only legal, sustainable trophies are allowed, the trophy hunting industry will have to adhere to high conservation standards. However, if quotas are set arbitrarily and permitting is lax, then there will be no incentive to prove that trophy hunts make things better for imperiled species.

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<sup>49</sup> Loveridge, Andrew J., Jonathan C. Reynolds and E.J. Milner-Gulland. "Does Sport Hunting Benefit Conservation?" Key Topics in Conservation Biology 1st Edition. Ed. David Macdonald and Katrina Service. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. 222-238. Print.

<sup>50</sup> Crosmary, W.G., S. D. Côté, and H. Fritz. "Does trophy hunting matter to long-term population trends in African herbivores of different dietary guilds?" *Animal Conservation* 18.2 (2015): 117-30. Web. <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/acv.12144/abstract>>.

<sup>51</sup> Lindsey, P.A., et al. "Economic and conservation significance of the trophy hunting industry in sub-Saharan Africa." *Biological Conservation* 134.4: 455-69. Web. <<http://www.africanwildlifeconservationfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Economic-and-conservation-significance.pdf>>.

<sup>52</sup> "7 day Lion and Plains Game Hunting." *Africa Sky Hunting*. Africa Sky Hunting, n.d. Web. <<http://www.africanskyhunting.co.za/packages/7daylionplainsgame.html>>.

<sup>53</sup> Dougherty, Craig. "Deer Hunting: A Success Story." *Outdoor Life* 2 Oct. 2013. Web. <<http://www.outdoorlife.com/blogs/big-buck-zone/2013/10/deer-hunting-success-story>>.

<sup>54</sup> Berger, Sebastien. "Ross Perot's son in dispute over ownership of rhino's head." *The Telegraph* 7 Nov. 2009. Web. <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/southafrica/6517637/Ross-Perots-son-in-dispute-over-ownership-of-rhinos-head.html>>.

## The Evidence, or Lack Thereof

To determine whether or not trophy hunting is living up to its billing as a conservation tool, we conducted comprehensive reviews of the academic literature, conservation programs in the four target countries, and the FWS import permitting program. In assessing the flow of trophy hunting revenue to conservation efforts, we found many troubling examples of funds either being diverted from their purpose or not being dedicated to conservation in the first place.



Several reports, including one from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2013, outline the failure of Tanzanian authorities to manage land and wildlife effectively, and show little evidence that trophy hunting is contributing positively to wildlife conservation.<sup>55</sup> In addition, the country has recently caved to pressure to allow non-sporting methods of hunting, including baiting lions and leopards.<sup>56</sup> As mentioned earlier, Zimbabwe has attempted to use trophy hunting as a conservation tool, but has had limited success. Despite significant support from international NGOs and foreign governments, including the United States, the CAMPFIRE program has been poorly administered and the government has been incapable of delivering the promised improvements in wildlife conservation or community development.<sup>57</sup>

Namibia seems to be the exception to the rule. Its communal conservancy model has worked to fund conservation efforts and increase some wildlife populations through selective trophy

<sup>55</sup> United States Agency for International Development. *Tanzania Wildlife Management Areas Evaluation – Final Evaluation Report*. USAID. July 15, 2013. Web. <[http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pdacy083.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacy083.pdf)>.

<sup>56</sup> "Tanzanian Hunting Laws." *Tanzania Professional Hunters Association*. Tanzania Professional Hunters Association, n.d. Web. <<http://tzpha.com/tzlaws.html>>.

<sup>57</sup> Frost, Peter G.H., and Ivan Bond. "The CAMPFIRE programme in Zimbabwe: Payments for wildlife services." *Ecological Economics* 65.4 (2008): 776-87. Web. <<http://archives.cerium.ca/IMG/pdf/CampfireArticle.pdf>>.

hunting.<sup>58</sup> In addition to the revenue generated by conservancies, Namibia has auctioned off some permits for special hunts, including one for an aging endangered black rhinoceros in 2014. While controversial, this practice is based on sound science and generates significant funding for wildlife conservation and research.<sup>59</sup> The 2014 black rhino permit from Namibia was sold to an American hunter for \$350,000; FWS issued an import permit for the trophy after finding that it would enhance survival of the species. The proceeds were deposited into Namibia's Game Products Trust Fund and will be used to help implement the country's successful Black Rhinoceros Conservation Strategy.

On the whole, though, the evidence shows that trophy hunting is having negative impacts across sub-Saharan Africa. According to scientists, unsustainably high rates of trophy hunting have caused population declines in African lions and possibly African leopards.<sup>60</sup> Many hunting areas are also fenced, which fragments the habitat into small blocks and alters species migrations.<sup>61</sup> Some scientists contend that an increase in tuskless elephants in parts of Africa is due to selective hunting and poaching of elephants with large tusks.<sup>62</sup> Hunting and poaching of wild elephants in general are currently outpacing the reproductive rate of the species, causing an unsustainable loss of elephants annually.<sup>63</sup> While poaching for ivory is certainly a bigger driver of decline, it would be exceedingly difficult to prove – as the ESA requires – that removing additional animals from a vulnerable and dwindling population would benefit the species.

**“According to scientists, unsustainably high rates of trophy hunting have caused population declines in African lions and possibly African leopards.”**

Conservation programs' effectiveness depends on the ability of government institutions to implement and enforce them. Unfortunately, the best measures of governance and corruption show significant deficits for two of the four studied countries. Tanzania ranks in the bottom third of all countries with respect to government corruption, and reports have shown inconsistent and arbitrary application of wildlife laws.<sup>64</sup> Freedom House notes that “corruption remains a serious problem, and is pervasive in all aspects of political and commercial life, but especially in the

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<sup>58</sup> [The World Bank. \*Implementation Completion and Results on a Grant in the Amount of US\\$ 7.1 Million to the Republic of Namibia for an Integrated Community-based Ecosystem Management Project\*. Report No. ICR2045. November 29, 2011. Web.](#)

<sup>59</sup> ["Black Rhino Import Permit from Namibia." U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service International Affairs. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, n.d. Web. <<http://www.fws.gov/international/permits/black-rhino-import-permit.html>>.](#)

<sup>60</sup> Packer, Craig, et al. "Sport Hunting, Predator Control and Conservation of Large Carnivores." PLoS ONE (2009). Web. <<http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0005941>>.

<sup>61</sup> Lindsey, Peter A., L. G. Frank, R. Alexander, A. Mathieson, and S. S. Romanach. "Trophy Hunting and Conservation in Africa: Problems and One Potential Solution." *Conservation Biology* 21.3 (2007): 880-83. Web. <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1523-1739.2006.00594.x/abstract>>.

<sup>62</sup> Whitehouse, Anna M. "Tusklessness in the elephant population of the Addo Elephant National Park, South Africa." *Journal of Zoology* 257.2 (2002): 249-54. Web. <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1017/S0952836902000845/abstract>>.

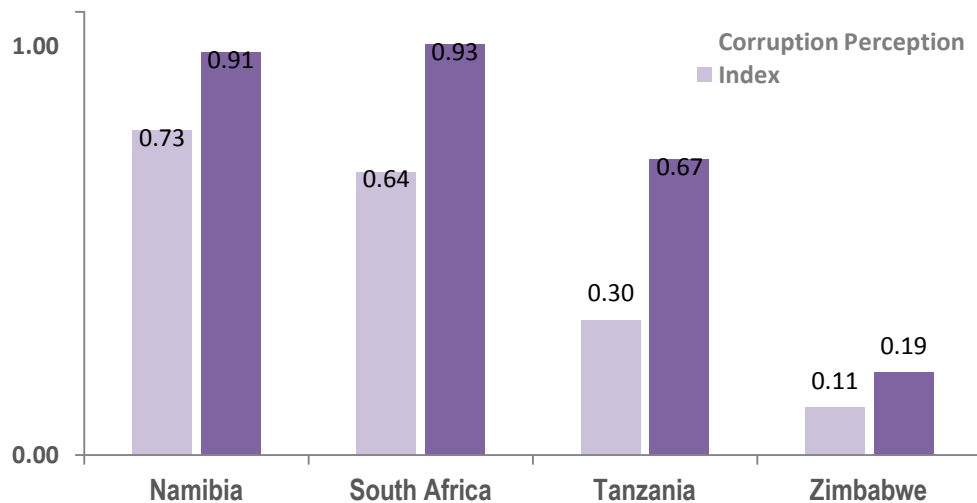
<sup>63</sup> "Elephant poaching rates virtually unchanged in 2014." *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora*, 23 Mar. 2015. Web. <[https://cites.org/eng/mike\\_figures2014](https://cites.org/eng/mike_figures2014)>.

<sup>64</sup> Benjaminsen, Tor A., et al. "Wildlife Management in Tanzania: State Control, Rent Seeking and Community Resistance." *Development and Change* 44.5 (2013): 1087-109. Web. <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/dech.12055/pdf>>.



energy and natural resources sectors.<sup>65,66</sup> Zimbabwe consistently ranks as one of the most corrupt countries in the world according to Transparency International, and the Ibrahim Index of African Governance ranks the country 44<sup>th</sup> out of 54 countries.<sup>67,68</sup> This is largely a result of the disastrous policies of Zimbabwean dictator Robert Mugabe. To cite just one impact on environmental quality, Mugabe's sweeping and sudden land use "reforms" in 2000 devastated the country's economy and led to an explosion of wildlife poaching.<sup>69</sup>

**Table 5. Corruption and Governance Indicators for Study Countries**  
(1.00 = Least corrupt/Best governed)



Source: Mo Ibrahim Foundation Index of African Governance 2015: <http://mo.ibrahim.foundation/iiag/data-portal/>  
Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2015: <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015#map-container>

Even in countries where corruption is relatively less prevalent, though, serious concerns linger about the ability of government officials to manage wildlife populations sustainably. Wildlife management in South Africa is generally better funded than in many other places on the continent, but the country's wildlife population has been hit hard by poaching in recent years, particularly with respect to its white rhino population.<sup>70</sup> While trophy hunting industry proponents assert that the presence of hunting operations deters poaching, there is no evidence of

<sup>65</sup> "Table of Results: Corruption Perceptions Index 2015." Transparency International. Transparency International, n.d. Web. <<https://www.transparency.org/cpi2015#results-table>>.

<sup>66</sup> "Tanzania - Freedom in the World." *Freedom House*. Freedom House, n.d. Web. <<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/tanzania>>.

<sup>67</sup> "Table of Results: Corruption Perceptions Index 2015." Transparency International. Transparency International, n.d. Web. <<https://www.transparency.org/cpi2015#results-table>>.

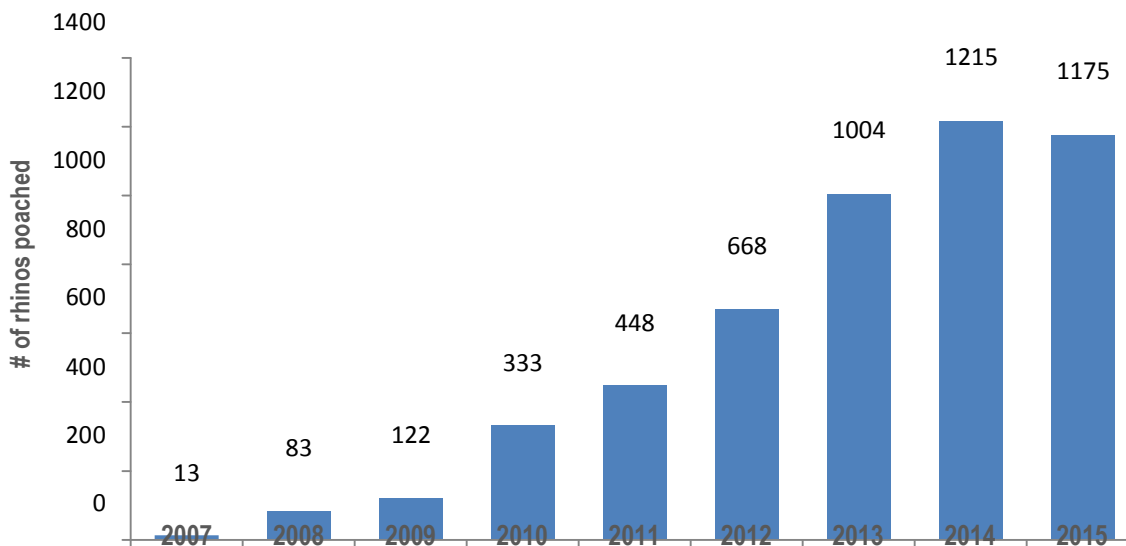
<sup>68</sup> "Overall Governance: Africa." Ibrahim Index of African Governance. Mo Ibrahim Foundation, n.d. Web. <<http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org/iiag/data-portal/>>.

<sup>69</sup> Jenkins, Nash. "Who's Really Responsible for the Killing of Zimbabwe's Lions and Other Wildlife?" *Time* 29 July 2015. Web. <<http://time.com/3976344/cecil-lion-zimbabwe-walter-palmer/>>.

<sup>70</sup> McKenzie, David, and Brent Swails. "Rhino wars: Inside South Africa's losing battle to end poaching." *CNN* 22 Feb. 2015. Web. <<http://www.cnn.com/2015/09/22/africa/south-africa-rhino-poaching/>>.

such an effect. Rhino poaching has soared during the last decade even as the South African government has encouraged trophy hunting (see Figure 5).

**Table 6. Number of Rhinos Poached in South Africa, by year**



Source: [https://www.savetherhino.org/rhino\\_info/poaching\\_statistics](https://www.savetherhino.org/rhino_info/poaching_statistics)

South Africa has recently come under increasing fire for allowing the practice of canned hunting, described earlier in this report. South Africa has also fallen victim in recent years to a phenomenon known as “pseudo-hunting,” whereby individuals associated with wildlife trafficking rings participate in legally permitted hunts for white rhino with the intention of selling the trophy for profit.<sup>71</sup>

While it does not have authority to manage wildlife populations in other countries directly, FWS does have the ability – and the responsibility – under the ESA to ensure that trade by U.S. citizens in threatened and endangered species enhances the survival of those species. FWS made headlines in 2014 when it made negative enhancement findings for African elephant trophies from Zimbabwe and Tanzania, basing its decision on questionable management practices, uncontrolled poaching, and evidence of population decline.<sup>72</sup> While these particular bans remain in effect, our review found that FWS has been reluctant to use its ESA authority with respect to trophy imports in other cases where the enhancement standard is clearly not being met.

The ESA gives FWS the authority to require an import permit for any species listed as threatened or endangered under the Act, including those species treated as threatened or endangered due to being similar in appearance to a listed species. Import permits are rarely issued for endangered species, but are frequently issued for threatened species. In addition, FWS has employed special

<sup>71</sup> IUCN Species Survival Commission, African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups, and TRAFFIC. African and Asian Rhinoceroses – Status, Conservation and Trade. IUCN. January 2007. Web.

<sup>72</sup> Service Suspends Import of Elephant Trophies from Tanzania and Zimbabwe. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. April 4, 2014. Available online: <http://www.fws.gov/news/ShowNews.cfm?ID=2E6FF2A2-E10F-82BC-DAE08807810E3C6B>

rules authorized under section 4(d) of the ESA to exempt many imports of ESA listed trophies from these permitting requirements. By not requiring a permit, FWS does not collect data that could be useful in determining whether the trophy imports should have been allowed under the ESA, such as information on the permit applicant, the hunting guides and outfitters, and the hunt itself.

**Table 7. Trophy imports into the United States from four African countries (2010-2014)**

	Number of trophies for which FWS <i>could have</i> required ESA import permit	Number of trophies for which FWS <i>actually</i> required ESA import permit
Black Rhinoceros	1	1
Leopard	1,469	0
Elephant (Tanzania)	106	106
Elephant (Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe)	922	0
Southern White Rhinoceros*	N/A	N/A
Lion**	N/A	N/A
Total	2498	107

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

\* Southern White Rhinoceros listed as threatened due to similarity of appearance in July, 2014

\*\*Lion listed as threatened in December, 2015.

Even when it does require an ESA import permit, FWS does not collect all of the relevant information it could collect to make enhancement findings. In most cases no data is collected about the guides or professional hunters, amounts paid for services, permits, and fees, or the method used to kill the animal. Yet some guides and professional hunters are known to repeatedly violate wildlife protection laws—sometimes being arrested or even convicted multiple times for wildlife-related crimes over several years.<sup>73,74,75,76,77</sup> FWS trophy permit applications

<sup>73</sup> “The Madness of Modern-Day Poaching.” Outside Online. March, 2014. Web.

<<http://www.outsideonline.com/1922121/madness-modern-day-poaching>>

<sup>74</sup> “Criminal Nature: The Global Security Implications of the Illegal Wildlife Trade.” International Fund for Animal Welfare. June, 2013. Web. <[http://www.ifaw.org/sites/default/files/ifaw-criminal-nature-2013-low-res\\_0.pdf](http://www.ifaw.org/sites/default/files/ifaw-criminal-nature-2013-low-res_0.pdf)>

do state clearly that violations of the Lacey Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, or the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act preclude anyone from getting a permit. In December of 2015, FWS announced it would enforce to the limit of its authority prohibitions on previous offenders at the federal and state level, which is an important step.<sup>78</sup> While existing regulations – even as interpreted in the December 2015 Director’s Order – state that FWS must consider violations of laws other than those listed above, such violations do not preclude issuance of an import permit. Nothing prohibits such an individual from importing an ESA listed trophy for which FWS does not require a permit.

Determinations by FWS that the importation of an endangered or threatened species will enhance the survival of the species typically rely on the assumption that the funds generated by the trophy hunt will be used effectively for conservation efforts. Unfortunately, among the countries that were the focus of this investigation, only one of the positive enhancement findings relied on information about whether population increases did or did not occur or population decreases did not occur as a direct result of the additional funds (the black rhino in Namibia). In that case, the funding from the hunt directly enhanced the survival of the species and because the rhino was past its reproductive age, its absence gave younger males a chance to mate with the females.<sup>79</sup>

Enhancement findings and non-detriment findings are not required to be updated on a regular basis. Typically, FWS decides when an update will happen. The result is inconsistent assessments and a shortage of current data to aid in evaluating trophy import permit applications. In some cases it is possible, if not likely, that permits are issued even when conditions on the ground are drastically different than those described in the most recent enhancement or non-detriment findings. For example:

- The non-detriment finding covering leopards in South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe is less than one page long and was issued in 1982. The average lifespan of a leopard in the wild is 12-15 years, yet FWS has not reassessed the value of trophy hunting to leopard species conservation in more than three decades.<sup>80</sup> Earlier this year South Africa banned the export of leopard trophies after the country made a negative non-detriment finding under CITES, saying that poor management and a lack of monitoring make the export of hunting trophies a threat to the survival of the species.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> African Arguments, October 29, 2012, Rhino Poaching - Organised Crime and Economic Opportunity Driving Trade [analysis], BYLINE: Keith Somerville.

<sup>76</sup> "Mules Hunting Rhinos?" Sinister Scam Unfolds in South Africa. Planetsave. June 22, 2011. Web. <<http://planetsave.com/2011/06/22/mules-hunting-rhinos-sinister-scam-unfolds-in-south-africa/>>

<sup>77</sup> "South African Hunter Fined for Over Illegally Killing Rhino for Vietnamese Client." Saving rhinos. Jan, 20, 2011. Web. <<http://www.savingrhinos.org/2011/01/20/south-african-hunter-fined-over-illegally-killing-rhino-for-vietnamese-client>>

<sup>78</sup> Director’s Order No. 212. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. December 9, 2015. Web. <<http://www.fws.gov/policy/do212.html>>

<sup>79</sup> Memorandum from "Chief, Branch of Permits, Division of Management Authority. Subject: Enhancement from the Import of Black Rhino Trophy from Namibia (PRT-229051). To: File. Earliest possible date is after September 2012.

<sup>80</sup> "Mammals: Leopard." *San Diego Zoo Animals*. San Diego Zoo, n.d. Web. <<http://animals.sandiegozoo.org/animals/leopard>>

<sup>81</sup> Pinnock, Don. "Leopard trophy hunting 'banned' for 2016." *Conservation Action Trust*. N.p., 26 Jan. 2016. Web. <<http://conservationaction.co.za/media-articles/leopard-trophy-hunting-banned-for-2016/>>

- The southern white rhinoceros is treated as a threatened species under the ESA due to its similarity of appearance with other listed rhinoceros species. The similarity of appearance listing is designed to help reduce illegal poaching and trafficking of rhino horn and allows FWS to make an enhancement finding and require permits for trophy imports. However, FWS has not taken these steps and does not currently have plans to evaluate the species for ESA listing, even though poaching is having a severe impact on the species. The southern white rhinoceros is also listed under CITES Appendix I outside of South Africa, which means a non-detriment finding is required for trophy importation. The most recent finding for Namibia (the only other country from which FWS has recently permitted southern white rhino imports) was made in 2002.

The sporadic preparation of enhancement findings and liberal employment of exemptions from ESA permitting requirements significantly reduce the amount of information FWS has to make informed decisions. Continuing to allow trophy imports for species which have not been recently assessed and which are known to be subject to intense poaching pressure could exacerbate an already dire situation. Many scientific studies on the topic contain disclaimers that point out the inadequacy of the available data.<sup>82</sup> As a result, it is difficult to confidently conclude that any particular trophy import would enhance the survival of a species.

In addition to the fact that enhancement findings are updated infrequently and often based upon limited information, the information that does exist is in some cases provided by parties with potential conflicts of interest. Groups that are not affiliated with FWS, the host country government or academia – including Safari Club International, the largest advocacy organization representing big game trophy hunters – frequently generate data used by FWS in its enhancement decisions.<sup>85</sup> It is often the case that no other entities are generating that data and FWS does not have the resources to generate it themselves or ground-truth it. Some of these NGOs spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to generate data about the impact of trophy hunting on a species.<sup>84,85</sup> At the same time, they may be spending significant resources to influence legislation and legislators<sup>86,87</sup> while contributing to the campaigns of members of Congress directly.<sup>88,89</sup> FWS determinations do not disclose the sources of the data aside from identifying the authors without naming their affiliation(s). The determinations do not disclose whether the data has been

<sup>82</sup> Crosmary, W.G., S. D. Côté, and H. Fritz. "The assessment of the role of trophy hunting in wildlife conservation." *Animal Conservation* 18.2 (2015): 136-37. Web. <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/acv.12205/epdf>>.

<sup>83</sup> U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Personal Interview, 11, Dec. 2015

<sup>84</sup> Jackson, John J. "The Role of Conservation Force in African Lion Conservation: Challenges and Solutions for the Conservation of Lions and Other Large Carnivores in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Conservation Force*. Conservation Force, n.d. Web.

<sup>85</sup> United States. Cong. House. Committee on Science, Space and Technology, Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight. *Hearing on The Science of How Hunting Assists Species Conservation and Management*. June 19, 2012. 1<sup>st</sup> sess. Washington (statement of Dr. Al Maki, Vice-President, Safari Club International).

<sup>86</sup> "Safari Club International - Profile for 2014 Election Cycle." *OpenSecrets.org*. Center for Responsive Politics, n.d. Web. <<https://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/summary.php?id=D000000757&cycle=2014>>.

<sup>87</sup> "Safari Club International - Lobbying Totals, 1998-2014." *OpenSecrets.org*. Center for Responsive Politics, n.d. Web. <<https://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/lobby.php?id=D000000757>>.

<sup>88</sup> "Safari Club International - Profile for 2014 Election Cycle." *OpenSecrets.org*. Center for Responsive Politics, n.d. Web. <<https://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/summary.php?id=D000000757&cycle=2014>>.

<sup>89</sup> "Safari Club International - SPENDING BY CYCLE - Party Split by Cycle." *OpenSecrets.org*. Center for Responsive Politics, n.d. Web.

peer reviewed. Indeed, a recent assessment of lion population status across Africa found no scientific merit in any of the SCI-funded “surveys” that had been conducted in various range states.<sup>90,91</sup> A determination that a hunting trophy import will enhance the survival of the species would be more credible if it disclosed the data sources and whether it has been peer reviewed.

### **Summary**

On paper, all four countries examined in this report have equally strong frameworks for ensuring that trophy hunts benefit species conservation. Unfortunately, the implementation of these frameworks has in many cases been marred by corruption and has not produced the advertised and desired results. Even in countries with better execution of wildlife conservation plans, significant questions remain about whether or not trophy hunting is sustainable. The only way to answer these questions is to produce and analyze more and better data, and the U.S. government has an important role to play in that endeavor. The recent decision by FWS to ban imports of African elephant trophies from Tanzania and Zimbabwe is a promising development. However, the agency is not making full use of its significant authority to ensure that American trophy hunters are not making a bad situation worse for African wildlife.

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<sup>90</sup> "Panthera leo ." The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. IUCN, 2015. Web.  
<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/15951/0>

<sup>91</sup> Bauer, H., K. Nowell, P. Henschel, P. Funston, G. Chapron, L. Hunter, D.W. Macdonald & C. Packer. 2015. Lion (Panthera leo) populations are declining rapidly across Africa, except in intensively managed areas. PNAS.  
[www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1500664112](http://www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1500664112)

## CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our analysis shows that trophy hunting cannot be assumed to have a conservation benefit on the strength of a guarantee that hunters' fees will flow to communities or wildlife agencies. Additional oversight is necessary to ensure that importing trophies of ESA listed species is in fact helping those species survive in the wild. The following recommendations would provide the necessary accountability and certainty that the ESA requires.

### **Ensure that trophy hunting enhances conservation.**

The ESA generally prohibits the importation of listed species or their parts into the United States. The only exceptions allowed are for scientific purposes or to enhance the propagation or survival of the affected species. While the recent negative enhancement findings for African elephants from Zimbabwe and Tanzania are encouraging, it is clear that in the case of many trophies hunted in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia, FWS has allowed imports without verifying that those imports do in fact enhance species conservation. Given FWS' limited resources, as well as the incomplete information available to hunters about the biological implications of their particular hunt, the responsibility for supplying this information should fall on the countries that promote trophy hunting to American tourists.

FWS should require any country that wishes to make trophies eligible for U.S. import to submit annual reports on any threatened or endangered species under consideration. These reports should include up-to-date population surveys, an analysis of threats to the species, documentation of dedicated revenue streams from hunting to conservation work, and evidence that trophy hunting is part of a science-based and effective conservation strategy. FWS should assess the validity of the information submitted, request supplemental information as necessary, and either make, renew, or update enhancement findings for each species, as appropriate.

FWS should also make a more direct evidentiary connection between the trophy import and the enhancement finding, and assess potential impacts at the appropriate level of detail given what is known about the ecology of the species and differences among populations in different regions of the country. Enhancement and non-detriment findings should clearly cite the sources of information used to produce the finding and require disclosure of study methodologies and funding sources. FWS should penalize countries or outside groups that knowingly submit false information.

### **Close regulatory loopholes that harm imperiled species.**

Implementation of the ESA species enhancement requirement is arbitrary, confusing, and not based on sound science. FWS should rescind regulations that allow trophy imports to meet lesser conservation standards and require enhancement findings and import permits for all trophies of listed species, including those treated as threatened or endangered due to similarity of appearance. FWS' recent African lion listing shows that the agency can require import permits for species listed in CITES Appendix II and as threatened under the ESA, rather than restricting permits to species listed under Appendix I or as endangered under the ESA. FWS should apply that standard consistently. Given the astronomically high rates of southern white rhino poaching in South Africa, FWS should immediately commence a status review for that species to

determine if it warrants a stand-alone ESA listing. FWS should use its existing authority under Section 4(b)(7) of the ESA to issue, for any species proposed to be listed, an emergency rule prohibiting the importation of trophies until a final listing decision is made and a 4(d) rule with more rigorous enhancement finding criteria can be developed.

### **Tighten trophy import permitting requirements.**

Trophy import permit applications are an excellent opportunity to gather relevant information about the structure and practices of the hunting industry in host countries. That data is not currently collected or compiled. FWS should require that ESA trophy import permit applications filed by hunters include documentation regarding the details of the hunt, including hunting method(s), information on the payee and the amounts paid for guide services, permits, and fees, and whether the guide is licensed by the host country. In its enhancement findings, FWS should consider the percentage of guides that are licensed and the terms of the licensure, including any best practices and sanctions for failing to follow them.

FWS should expand upon its recent commitment to deny trophy import permits to people who have been convicted of wildlife violations by revising its regulations to specify that the threshold to forbid an import permit is any violation of state, federal, or international wildlife law or regulation. The agency should require permit applicants to provide that information under penalty of law. The agency should issue clear guidance indicating the type of violations that merit disqualification for receiving an import permit.

### **Increase fees for trophy imports to fund science and conservation.**

Many permitting program challenges directly result from insufficient resources. FWS currently charges \$100 for a permit to import a trophy of an ESA listed animal. The fees raise approximately \$400,000 per year for FWS, a fraction of the \$5 million it costs to run the permitting program.<sup>92</sup> While trophy import permits do not comprise the entire cost of the program, they are a significant proportion. Taxpayers are covering 92% of all permit fees, which means they are subsidizing the hobby of people wealthy enough to afford the other trophy hunting-related expenses outlined in this report.

Even with higher standards in place, ensuring compliance with conservation requirements for trophy hunts and imports will be difficult without some system of accountability. FWS has already signaled that it will increase trophy import permit fees to cover the cost of the permitting program. Fees should be increased significantly to also cover the cost of more frequent enhancement findings and the cost of conservation officers within countries exporting trophies to the United States. These officers could be based in U.S. embassies and act as observers of randomly selected trophy hunts. They could also conduct compliance checks and double as general wildlife conservation attachés to offer assistance with poaching and trafficking countermeasures.

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<sup>92</sup> U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Personal Interview, 11, Dec. 2015



## **Allow only imports taken using fair chase hunting methods.**

“Fair chase” hunting is generally defined as the ethical, sportsmanlike, and lawful pursuit of free-ranging wild game in a manner that does not give the hunter an improper advantage.<sup>93</sup> Most hunters and hunting organizations in North America support fair chase hunting as part of a general code of conduct. Unfortunately, many of the practices commonplace on African trophy hunts do not qualify as fair chase. Baiting, drugging, and fencing of target animals, or hunting from vehicles or in or around protected areas, each occur (either legally or illegally) in some or all of the countries profiled in this report. Such tactics do not benefit species conservation, and they contribute to the poor reputation and negative media attention trophy hunters have acquired.

As a first step, FWS should develop a fair chase standard and require trophy import permit applicants to certify that the hunt was conducted using fair chase methods. FWS should also seek adoption of a resolution at this year’s CITES Conference of the Parties laying out best management practices and standards for fair chase hunting that must be met in order for countries to receive quotas for CITES listed species. FWS should consider, in its enhancement and non-detriment findings, whether host country laws or guide licensure organizations set their own fair chase standards.

## **Conclusion**

The United States has proven that well-regulated hunting can help conserve wildlife, even for threatened or endangered populations. However, our past has shown that poorly regulated hunting can decimate wildlife populations and lead to the collapse of ecosystems and the disappearance of hunting opportunities. We have a responsibility to set an example for the rest of the world and make absolutely certain that Americans are not contributing to the decline of species already facing extinction or severe population loss. Hunting is a valuable part of American culture, but as the outrage over the death of Cecil the Lion shows, it will only remain so if hunters verifiably contribute to conservation.

<sup>93</sup> “Rules of Fair Chase.” Pope and Young Club. Last visited March 28, 2016. Web. < <https://pope-young.org/fairchase/>>.