



"Embracing Innovation to Conserve the World's Animal Kingdom."

**The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR**

16 September 2015

Dear Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP,

Conference of Parties to CITES

The seventeenth regular meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES⁽¹⁾ (CoP17) is scheduled to be held in South Africa, September 24 to October 5, 2016.

I believe the responsibility for the United Kingdom's CITES representation (as the UK's management authority) is designated as the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (Defra).

My question to you as the Secretary of State (Defra) is what will the UK be seeking to achieve at the next Conference of the Parties to CITES autumn 2016?

In particular, what will the UK be doing to ensure the CITES Appendix I listing (without any country's population exempted to Appendix II) of the African elephant and white rhino? Plus is the UK considering seeking to add the African lion to CITES Appendix I? All these species are endangered with the potential for extinction (please reference Appendix 1 to this letter for current understanding of relevant CITES listing and population status for the subject species).

I have noted that in March 2015, Australia⁽²⁾ introduced stricter domestic measures to treat African lions as though they are listed on Appendix I of CITES. I am wondering if the UK will

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follow suit and show that the UK wishes to support the protection of wild African lion populations.

As the founder of International Wildlife Bond (IWB), I am of course concerned for the world's Animal Kingdom and wish to see all possible measures taken to offer protection, including CITES provisions for threatened and endangered species.

Thank you for your kind attention and I will await your/Defra's response in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Alan Wiggins

Founder of International Wildlife Bond (IWB)

References:

- (1) Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora, <https://cites.org/eng>
- (2) Species+ - <http://www.speciesplus.net/>

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Appendix 1

At the moment, CITES Appendix I protection for the subject species (African elephant, white rhino and African lion) is as follows⁽¹⁾:

1.0 African elephant (*Loxodonta Africana*)

Included in CITES Appendix I, except the populations of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, which are included in Appendix II.

The World Wildlife Fund⁽²⁾ has stated - *"Despite a ban on the international trade in ivory, African elephants are still being poached in large numbers. Since 1979, African elephants have lost over 50% of their range and this, along with massive poaching for ivory and trophies over the decades, has seen the population drop significantly. Back in the early part of the 20th century, there may have been as many as 3-5 million African elephants. But there are now around 500,000."*

2.0 White rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*)

Populations in South Africa and Swaziland exempted from CITES Appendix I protection.

White rhino species numbers are now estimated at just 20,000⁽³⁾:

Southern white - Ceratotherium simum simum, population 20,405

Northern white- Ceratotherium simum cottoni, population 4

3.0 African lion (*Panthera leo*)

Panthera Leo populations are not currently listed under CITES Appendix I, only the Asiatic and Indian Lion (*Panthera leo persica*) are currently under Appendix I protection.

According to WILD CRU⁽⁴⁾ *"Lions are in crisis. Because lions are uniquely visible to tourists there is a false impression that they are not endangered. The opposite is true: they are disappearing in plain sight. From an estimated population of 200,000 across Africa a century ago, and 30,000 a decade ago, as few as 20,000 lions may now roam free in the entire continent. Their numbers have been devastated by loss of habitat and wild prey, poaching,*

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conflict with farming communities, unsustainable legal hunting, and emerging threats including the use of lion bones in traditional Asian medicine. Lions are being killed daily in Africa"

The number of lions in South Africa is 'confused' by lions held in 'canned' hunting farms. According to government and private sectors sources⁽⁵⁾, it is thought there are about 200 farms and breeding facilities holding somewhere between 6,000 and 8,000 predators in captivity. The vast majority held, possibly as many as 7,000 of these, are lions. Other species held include cheetah and leopard as well as a host of exotic animals such as tiger, jaguar and puma.

According to the International Union of Conservation of Nature⁽⁶⁾, lions are listed as 'Vulnerable.' Over the last decade, there have been numerous attempts at establishing a continent-wide population and these studies vary between 20,000 and 35,000 animals. The numbers aside, nearly all agree that lions have vanished from over 80% of their historic range, and they now only occur in 28 African states. Because of the rapid decline in habitat and numbers, there are many that believe lions should be afforded greater protection by upgrading their status to that of Endangered (and protected under CITES Appendix I).

In the United States (US) the African lion has been proposed as an addition to the Endangered Species Act list, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has yet to 'finalise' the designation (and the process can take over a year to complete). "Cecil's Law" is the moniker of a bill introduced by a group of U.S. Senators in July 2015, named in honour of Cecil the lion. The "Conserving Ecosystem by Ceasing the Importations of Large (CECIL) Animal Trophies Act," has the intent to extend current U.S. import and export restrictions on animal trophies to include species that have been proposed for listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Current U.S. law only provides protection for species whose status on the list has been finalised by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The CECIL Act would ensure that species under consideration for protection are also covered by trophy import restrictions by default. The adoption of CECIL's law would be a welcome step in the right direction and a statement of intent. I wonder what the current status is in the UK regarding the African lion?

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Appendix References

- (1) Species+ - <http://www.speciesplus.net/>
- (2) World Wildlife Fund - <http://www.worldwildlife.org/species/elephant>
- (3) Save the rhino - <https://www.savetherhino.org/>
- (4) Wild CRU – Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, Department of Zoology, University of Oxford, www.wildcru.org
- (5) Blood Lions - <http://www.bloodlions.org>
- (6) Union of Conservation of Nature - <http://www.iucn.org/>

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