



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

**Ivory Bill Team
Nobel House
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London
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15 November 2018

Dear Ivory Bill Team,

The United Kingdom 'Ivory Bill 2018'

Correspondence Reference:

- A. DEFRA 'Ivory Policy Team' letter to IWB, dated 13 November 2018
- B. IWB Letter to DEFRA, "*The United Kingdom 'Ivory Bill 2018,'*" dated 16 August 2018
- C. IWB Letter to DEFRA, "*The United Kingdom Ivory Consultation,'*" dated 24 April 2018
- D. IWB submission to the "*The United Kingdom Ivory Consultation,'*" dated 2 November 2017

Thank you for your letter (Correspondence Reference A). However, I feel I need to respond and point out the contradictions and anomalies contained within your reply:

1. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) is not a conservation body, but a convention that orchestrates trade in endangered species:

"CITES deals with international trade, it is not there to deal with the conservation of species in situ – there is a great deal of misunderstanding about that," John Sellar, formerly chief of enforcement for CITES^[1]

2. Therefore, CITES' motivation (and message) is often confused. CITES is about trade and the notion of 'sustainable utilisation' – a term that is often misused, abused and manipulated for commercial gain (not conservation per se).
3. With regard to the elephant population crisis, the Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI)^[2] 'solution' is to implement the CITES African Elephant Action Plan (agreed at CITES, CoP15, March 2010^[3]), where "*Each EPI country is developing a National Elephant Action Plan (NEAP), to establish priorities and raise funds.*" However, the EPI reported October 2018^[4] that Botswana is yet to submit its NEAP some 8 years on.



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This illustrates how impotent CITES is and seemingly how CITES is disregarded with impunity.

4. It should be noted that CITES reiterates and promotes the concept of 'consumptive' ('sustainable') utilisation within its 2010 African Elephant Action Plan:

*"Activity 7.1.5. Assess and promote, as appropriate, **consumptive** [ie. trophy hunting] and non-consumptive use of elephants and the sharing of benefits accrued with affected communities"* - African Elephant Action Plan (page 15, Activity 7.1.5)^[3]

5. One only has to refer to the wildlife/animal exploitation and risks to the wild species' conservation posed by such consumptive 'sustainable utilisation' of the captive big cat breeding industry - 'canned' hunting and the 'lion bone trade.' This abhorrent industry within South Africa^[5] (and elsewhere) debunks the delusion that the term 'sustainable utilisation' always has a recognisable conservation imperative, as the banner term 'sustainable utilisation' is used to excuse this industry's exploitation of iconic wildlife species, without a shred of any conservation imperative^[5] whatsoever:

"Captive breeding of lions for hunting has long been a blemish on South Africa's wildlife and tourism landscape.....There is generally no conservation value in the captive lion breeding industry in South Africa" - Report of the Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs on the Colloquium on Captive Lion Breeding for Hunting in South Africa: harming or promoting the conservation image of the country, held on 21 and 22 August 2018, dated 8 November 2018^[5]

6. South Africa's 'sustainable utilisation' (sic) of big cat breeding has enjoyed many years of CITES' endorsement for 'canned' lion hunting and a side-line 'lion bone trade' of exported 'canned' hunted lion skeletons to Asia (South Africa alone 'legally' exported 1,200 skeletons – 11 tonnes of bones – between 2008 and 2011). The 'lion bone trade' was further endorsed as a stand-alone commercial endeavour by CITES at CoP17, October 2016 – condemning captive lions to slaughter in inhumane abattoirs in addition to a 'canned' hunter's bullet:

"Annual export quotas for trade in bones, bone pieces, bone products, claws, skeletons, skulls and teeth for commercial purposes, derived from captive



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breeding operations in South Africa will be established and communicated annually to the CITES Secretariat” – CITES CoP17^[6]

But this industry is an anathema to conservation on every level. How can CITES be looked upon as having any credible conservation imperative when it endorses such abhorrent abuse of wildlife for purely commercial trade purposes^{[7],[8],[9],[10]}?

7. Hence, CITES’ priorities are not by default aligned with any recognisable conservation imperatives, or not at least until the inevitable and foreseeable consequence of CITES’ actions are evidenced within a looming species crisis. Arguably, CITES has perpetuated the elephant poaching crisis by sanctioning the release and trade of ivory stockpiles since CITES’ own 1989 ban on such trade (refer to Correspondence Reference D, paragraph 2.0).
8. The CITES representatives of the signatory parties are often known to collaborate and barter to promote trade rather than any other imperative, as evidenced at CITES Conference of Parties (CoP17 – October 2016)^[5] with the failure (despite the evidence) to remove Appendix I exemptions of African elephant populations of Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa - with the commendable exception of Botswana, the three remaining countries argued *“that their elephant populations are doing well and they want to renew the trade in ivory at some point in the future^[11].”* However, this ambition does not recognise the continent-wide predicament of African elephants, but advances the ‘hope’ of a resumption in the international trade in ivory and stimulated demand that can be exploited at a macro level as an income generation scheme, an open affront to CITES’ stipulated aim to close off any such ivory trade:

“RECOMMENDS that all Parties and non-Parties in whose jurisdiction there is a legal domestic market for ivory that is contributing to poaching or illegal trade, take all necessary legislative, regulatory and enforcement measures to close their domestic markets for commercial trade in raw and worked ivory as a matter of urgency” – “Draft Decision and Amendments to Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP16) on Trade in Elephant Specimens,” Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), CoP17 Com. II. 6, 5 October 2016^[12]



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9. Some signatory countries to CITES act with impunity in blatant breach of CITES, with open trading of modern ivory in the Lao Democratic People’s Republic (LDPR)^[13], Vietnam^[14] and Japan^[15] - seemingly without fear of being reprimanded by fellow CITES signatories or the CITES Secretariat because each signatory has their own share of malpractice and/or ‘deals’ with other signatories it would rather not air in such an open forum. In conclusion, CITES is not fit for purpose in terms of any delusion that it serves a greater conservation purpose other than to perhaps act to serve some notion of responsibility when species extinction threats loom large.
10. Therefore, any reference to the notion that CITES provides some kind of panacea for wildlife conservation by the oft repeated mantra (see below) is at best a thinly coated veil to cover the often poorly regulated and disingenuous nature of trophy hunting in reality:

“well-manged and sustainable trophy hunting is consistent with and contributes to species conservation, as it provides both livelihood opportunities for rural communities and incentives for habitat conservation, and generates benefits which can be invested for conservation purposes” – Correspondence Reference A

11. In terms of elephant conservation let’s explore that ‘sustainable’ hunting mantra and how it serves the species in practice:
 - a. The Great Elephant Census^[16] made clear, that at the current rate of attrition (some 30,000 elephants per year), on a continent wide basis the African (and Asian) elephant population is unable to reproduce at rates to counter that attrition. Therefore, how can any elephant *“harvested”* (sic) as a hunting trophy within that attrition be seen as ‘sustainable’ in any true sense of the word?
 - b. It is agreed, that habitat loss is also an overwhelming factor in the species’ decline and there is no indication that the elephant attrition rate is dropping^[16]. So, how can the burden of trophy hunting killing of more elephants possibly be helping enhance the species survival? If there is any intent to help the species’ survival, the first thing that needs to happen is to end the delusion of *“well managed trophy hunting”* of elephants being ‘sustainable’ at this time;



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- c. If indeed *“well-manged and sustainable trophy hunting”* conferred the implied value to elephants that encourages communities to tolerate elephants, then why is there so much human-elephant conflict (regardless of habitat loss)? If elephants were indeed so valued as per the hunting mantra (because of the elephants’ potential trophy value (sic)), then there would not be any human-wildlife conflict, but sadly there is^[16]. In reality, there is less than 3%^[17] trickle-down of trophy hunting income to local communities. The other 97% of the hunting income goes into others’ pockets with little evidence that any part of that residual 97% is dedicated to conservation of the species in any form other than minimal (if any) appeasement to ‘communities’ in a token effort to facilitate tolerance of elephants and an attempt to excuse the trophy hunting attrition;
- d. Elephants are a migratory species^[18], wandering between ranges/countries. Therefore, how can any given range state/country dictate a ‘sustainable’ quota for trophy hunting when the elephant herd sizes in country vary day to day and lack categorical accuracy? How can any given country ‘claim’ to have sole domain to ‘sustainable utilisation’ over a migratory species in peril^[16]?
- e. Botswana^[19] is currently proposing the potential culling (by generating trophy hunting income) of ‘surplus’ elephants – based upon Botswana being home to migratory herds and the regrettable human-wildlife conflict this has generated. The question is where is the joined-up thinking of endeavours on the one hand to save elephants from the poachers’ guns, only to then claim it’s acceptable to allow paying trophy hunters to kill the same elephants because there is a migratory build up in one range state? The option to translocate herds from Botswana is not without its logistical problems, with some elephants being ‘moved’ to Mozambique, but with rampant elephant poaching and corruption evident with Mozambique^[20] there does not appear to be a coherent, safe and non-consumptive approach that bodes well for African elephant conservation;
- f. The main difference between ‘legal’ trophy hunting of an elephant and the illicit poaching of an elephant is who gets the income – it could be argued that poachers from a ‘community’ somewhere still profit and have a ‘livelihood’



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based on killing elephants. Whether a given elephant is killed by a poacher, or a trophy hunter, an elephant still dies and adds to the unsustainable attrition^[16] – there is too much leeway given to the notion that trophy hunting quotas are set based on accurate, independently verifiable science and such trophy hunting attrition is somehow exempted from further independent scrutiny;

- g. More often than not the poacher and the trophy hunter seek the same prize, a dead elephant that is adorned with large tusks – it’s a myth that trophy hunters only seek to kill the ‘old, weak or sick’ and thereby are ‘doing the herd a favour’ by removing the perceived burden of the ‘old, weak or sick’ from a herd. If trophy hunters only sought such trophies, then why do the likes of Safari Club International (SCI) award glory and accolades on members who have chalked up the biggest and best hunting trophies in any given season and not hold in great esteem hunting members who compassionately took the oldest, or sickest trophy animals?
- h. To reiterate (Correspondence Reference C) trophy hunting is used as a ‘legal’ mask to supply the same demand for wildlife commodities that poachers seek to make a profit from – namely ‘pseudo-hunting’ is used as a ‘legal’ way to obtain wildlife commodities via trophy hunting mechanisms. There is no acknowledgement of this in your response (Correspondence Reference A), that trophy hunting is open to abuse^{[21],[22],[23],[24]} that stimulates demand and thus encourages illicit poaching and exploitation of a target species.

Conclusions

The point is taken that hunting trophies can only be imported into the EU and United Kingdom for personal use (in theory) and it remains a crime to sell raw ivory within the United Kingdom. But when faced with the reality that trophy hunting can be abused to obtain wildlife commodities and the lack of conclusive conservation imperatives associated with CITES and/or trophy hunting ethos, then why would the United Kingdom continue to accept a complicit role in this needless attrition and the burden of trying to police the potential onward transfer of any hunting trophy (ie. tusks) so imported?

The United Kingdom can decide of its own volition, that the trophy hunting of elephants (and many other so targeted species for that matter) do not in reality contribute to conservation



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of the wild species and declare imports of such trophies indefinitely suspended – this has happened in France, The Netherlands, Australia and to some extent in the United States with regard to ‘canned’ lion hunting trophy import restrictions.

There is an urgent need for a paradigm shift away from reliance on the tired mantra of *“well-regulated and sustainable trophy hunting”* having any higher purpose other than to perpetuate income for some whilst simultaneously depleting the target species’ gene pool of vulnerable, threatened and endangered species.

There is no reason why the United Kingdom’s Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) cannot set sustainability criteria independently from any exporting nation’s claims that its hunting quota is somehow above reproach (and not just based on sustaining income from hunting).

So, I am encouraged by your indication that *“The Government takes conservation of endangered species seriously. We are currently looking carefully at the issue of trophy hunting and associated imports to ensure that trophy imports to the UK do not impact on the sustainability of endangered species.”* I trust this review is urgent and ongoing.

It is duly noted that the Early Day Motion (EDM) 1829 tabled by Zac Goldsmith (13 November 2018)^[25], *“Trophy Hunting”* shares much the same sentiment that trophy hunting has a negative impact in terms of true conservation and this EDM calls for a review of trophy hunting imports into the United Kingdom as a matter of urgency:

“That this House notes with concern that hundreds of hunting trophies have been imported into the UK in recent years, including from species threatened with extinction such as elephants, lions, hippopotamuses, leopards and rhinoceroses; further notes that trophy hunting is having a negative effect on wildlife through the loss of significant numbers of healthy individuals that are key to the survival of rapidly declining populations, that unsustainable rates of trophy hunting have caused some populations of Africa's big cats to decline, and that hunting and poaching of elephants is outpacing their rate of reproduction; considers that trophy hunting is cruel, immoral, archaic and unjustifiable, and can act as a cover for illegal poaching; further considers that a global end to trophy hunting is desirable, and that nature tourism is a humane and more effective means of conserving wildlife and supporting local communities; and calls on the Government to commit to halting imports of hunting trophies as a matter of urgency” – EDM 1829^[25], 13 November 2018



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I will await the suggested consultation on other *"ivory bearing species"* as soon as practicable after the Ivory Bill's Royal Assent.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. A. Wiggins', written over a light blue background.

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