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PRESS RELEASE: For immediate release

Virtual Panel Discussion on the Future of South Africa's Captive Lion Breeding Industry held on World Wildlife Day (3rd March 2021)

Minister Barbara Creecy kicks the lion can further down the road.

“Minister Barbara Creecy’s indecision pushes the industry further underground into illegal territories and puts the welfare of thousands of captive lions in jeopardy”, says Dr Louise de Waal (Director of Blood Lions).

Only last weekend, a man was arrested in [Krugersdorp in the possession of 27 lion skeletons](#) without valid permits - packed and ready for export.

Despite the set timeline on the outcome of the High-Level Panel’s deliberations, the Minister’s decision on the future of South Africa’s lion breeding industry is still pending. This prompted leading experts in the fields of science, conservation, welfare and tourism to convene a virtual panel discussion last week on World Wildlife Day.

The belief that captive lions are bred for conservation purposes was categorically rejected by Dr Paul Funston (Director of Panthera’s Lion programme). “One of the main reasons is that wild lion populations are generally not bolstered by augmenting animals from elsewhere into the population, as we need to address the challenges that those particular populations face in order to ensure the recovery of those populations.”

Lord Michael Ashcroft (author of “Unfair Game”) invested US\$1 million into an undercover operation into South Africa’s captive lion breeding industry. During the virtual panel discussion moderated by Jeremy Maggs, Ashcroft spoke of the unimaginable cruelty and abuse he and his team witnessed in this industry.

Prof Werner Scholtz (Professor of Global Environmental Law - University of Southampton) expressed his concern that the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) uses Section 24 of South Africa’s Constitution as a basis for commodification in the consumptive use of wildlife, “like you would conserve and use a can of peaches”.

South Africa’s High Court set a ground-breaking precedent in 2019 in the ruling of the National Council of SPCAs vs the Minister of DEFF making “the treatment of lions in captivity an environmental issue under the auspices of Section 24... and therefore explicitly affirmed the importance of the animal welfare aspect embodied in Section 24”, Prof Scholtz explained.

The recognition of the intrinsic value of animals and the importance of animal welfare under Section 24 through this court ruling has tremendous implications for the captive lion breeding industry, as it rejects the notion of justifying the commodification of wildlife through Section 24.

Keira Powers (Director Southern Africa Tourism Services Association (SATSA) board) explained how the tourism industry has extended the value and life of lions through voluntourism and cub petting and ‘walking with lions’ activities. Powers believes domestic and international tourists can play a significant role in bringing an end to this industry by making sure bookings for such activities dry up completely.

Ian Michler (Director of Blood Lions) strongly reiterated that there is no conservation nor educational value in the breeding of captive predators. “The industry reflects badly on Brand South Africa and may even be destroying jobs by using paying international volunteers”, Michler said.

The panel called on the Minister to issue a moratorium on the breeding and export of lions and its derivatives, while an independent third-party audit of the industry is carried out, a phase out plan to end this industry is developed, and amendments to existing legislations are implemented to make the commercial captive breeding of lions and other big cats illegal.

ENDS

Full panel discussion recording: <https://youtu.be/HExr4VeP6mU>

More information

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- **Blood Lions** is an award-winning documentary feature film and global campaign that works to bring an end to predator breeding and “canned” hunting industries in South Africa.
www.bloodlions.org



Picture credit: Blood Lions

Panellist Bios:



Keira Powers

Keira is a Director on the board of the Southern Africa Tourism Services Association (SATSA) and Chair of the Board Committee on Animal Interactions in Tourism. The latter conducted a 2-year study into the presence and use of captive wildlife in tourism in South Africa. As such, she is co-author of "A Guide and Tool to Evaluating Captive Wildlife Attractions & Activities", published in October 2019.



Dr Paul Funston

Paul is Director of Panthera's lion programme and an internationally recognized large carnivore biologist. For 25 years, his research focussed specifically on lions and influenced as such conservation policy in many African countries. Recent Panthera research showed the direct impact of the legal trade in lion body parts on wild lion populations.



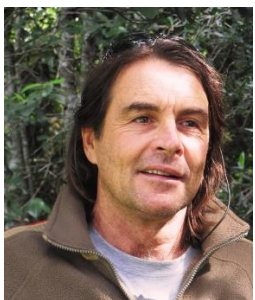
Prof Werner Scholtz

Werner has recently been appointed as the Head of School and Professor of Global Environmental Law in the Law School at the University of Southampton (UK). He specialises in global environmental law and his current research focuses on the consequences of the increasing importance of animal welfare for international wildlife law. He also researched the interpretation of "sustainable use of natural resources" in Section 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.



Lord Michael Ashcroft

Lord Ashcroft is an international businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. He is a regular visitor to South Africa, and this inspired him to write the book "Unfair Game: An Exposé of South Africa's captive-bred lion industry." He hopes that South Africa will take the brave decision to halt 'Lion farming' once and for all.



Ian Michler

Ian is the lead character and Director of Blood Lions. For the last 25 years, he documented many of the conservation challenges facing Africa and in particular those on predator breeding and trophy hunting. He is currently enrolled at Stellenbosch University, where he is a part-time student for a Masters in Sustainable Development.



Dr Louise de Waal

Louise is the campaign manager and Director of Blood Lions. She has an academic and research background in environmental management. She has been involved in exposing the exploitative industries associated with the commercial captive breeding and keeping of lions and other big cats in South Africa for many years and recently published a joint peer-reviewed paper on the zoonosis and African lions.