

by Rolf D. Baldus

How Born Free Foundation Handles the Truth - And All Fall For It



Hunting opponents continuously spread the myth that sustainable conservation hunting in Africa is driving the African lion towards extermination. This vociferous campaign in the media and internet frequently operates with incorrect numbers and reports.

Any trickery seems to be good enough if it serves the objective of eliminating hunting. Printed media and television programs constantly fall for these unfounded tirades and spread the propaganda of hunting opponents.

The British animal rights organization Born Free Foundation (BFF) recently delivered again a tell-tale story of how to stretch the truth in order to serve their own interests. In February 2016 BFF made sensationalist claims about the “amazing discovery” of a previously unknown lion population in a remote northwestern region of Ethiopia. The objective was obvious – as evidenced by a BFF tweet on 2nd February which said ... potentially bringing in additional funding and international pressure ... – let the donation tills ring! Born Free Foundation is blatantly against all sustainable hunting and makes no bones about this fact! Landrover – very popular amongst hunters around the world – is one of the main sponsors of BFF as reported in African Indaba Vol 12 # 6 (see also BFF tweet of 29th January “The #LandRoverDefender is part of Born Free’s DNA...” – @willtravers).

Newspapers around the world fell for the BFF plot and reprinted this seemingly sexy story. Der Spiegel (Germany) headlined “Researchers discover unknown lion population”, Neue Zürcher Zeitung (Switzerland) documented a “unknown lion population”. BBC reported that BFF “had obtained camera trap images and identified lion tracks in the Alataash area close to the border with Sudan. The area is thought to have lost all its lions in the 20th Century because of hunting and habitat destruction”. WILDCRU, the self-proclaimed “first university-based conservation research unit in Europe” claimed that WildCRU researchers discovered new Ethiopian lion population. The Russian “Sputnik News” did not want to left behind and speculated that perhaps the last lions of Ethiopia were found with this “unique discovery”. Even the “New Scientist” headlined “Hidden population of up to 200 lions found in remote Ethiopia”. This so-called news was spread on Twitter (<http://bbc.in/1WX8xQw>) and with video footage on Youtube.

The reality on the ground is rather profane. This lion population is known for years. The big cats are listed in the official mammal list of Alitash National Park, are mentioned in a seven-year-old travel guide as well as in an official UN document (RAMSAR documentation from 2003 on Dinder National Park in

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Sudan). Alitash and Dinder are a known single lion habitat. Even Wikipedia mentions these lions!

Reportedly the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) is rather incensed about the fairy-tale talk of Born Free.