

News From And About Africa

African Leopard & US Fish & Wildlife Service

The deadline for comments to assist the US Fish & Wildlife Service with its decision on whether to up-list leopard to 'Endangered' was January 31st. It will take another year or more before a decision is rendered and action taken. Hunters taking leopard hunts in 2017 should not have any problems importing them into the US. South Africa will not have a leopard quota again this season announced by South Africa's Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA), therefore there will not be any leopard hunting in South Africa in 2017. The DEA Scientific Authority considered input from the Scientific Steering Committee for Leopard Monitoring, comprising government institutions, NGOs, representatives of industry and academic institutions, but suggested the possibility of introducing a precautionary hunting quota in 2018. The Professional Hunters' Association of South Africa (PHASA) objected to the DEA's decision in a statement issued January 20th, stating that there is currently 'no reliable scientific evidence to substantiate the zero quota for the second consecutive year.

African Lion, Tanzania & the European Union

Hunters from the EU are now able to import lion trophies from Tanzania. In November 2016 the EU's Scientific Review Group (SRG) issued a positive finding for African lion from Tanzania. A group of three SRG experts traveled to Tanzania in August 2016 to assess the sustainability and management of lion trophy hunting. The SRG experts concluded that despite challenges, hunting is well-regulated in Tanzania. The continued functioning and success of Tanzania Wildlife Authority (TAWA) relies heavily on income derived from the hunting sector and significant revenue goes to the Districts and procedures are in place for sharing benefits with the local communities. The team also evaluated whether the areas would be better served by devoting them to photo tourism and concluded that the concessions are more suitable for hunting. Human-wildlife conflict was identified as a major issue affecting lions - not hunting. Lions are a key species to attract hunters, and lion hunters spend an average \$100,000 US. Lion hunting targets only male lions six years or older and is strictly monitored (TAWA observers accompany hunters, and hunt evaluation forms, photos, and samples be submitted to TAWA; including anonymous skull inspection and measurement, x-raying of tooth cavities, and ageing of all lions hunted by independent experts. The SRG field group concluded that not only is Tanzania's lion population not threatened but current trophy hunting in Tanzania is no threat to the species either.

African Elephant, Tanzania & the European Union

The EU Scientific Review Group (SRG) has not yet changed its June 2016 negative opinion on Tanzanian elephant, but some important conclusions that may lead to a positive finding in the near future were made by a group of 3 SRG experts who traveled to Tanzania in August 2016. The team analyzed quota management and control procedures and was satisfied with the elephant status information received. They concluded that the overall population appeared stable for the last two years after a significant decline. A few populations nevertheless remain seriously threatened, and more research is needed to understand the influence of migration on fluctuations in local populations. The current maximum hunting quota represents less than 0.2% of the population. This is sustainable. Hunting was not the

by Gerhard Damm

cause of the decline, and the hunting safari industry makes a significant contribution to the conservation of elephants in and around the Selous, by providing incentives for habitat conservation and valuable income for supporting anti-poaching measures.

Anti Poaching Technology Platform

Responding to the elephant poaching crisis illustrated in 2016's Great Elephant Census (GEC), philanthropist Paul G. Allen and his team of technologists and conservation experts are partnering with park managers across Africa to provide a new technology platform to better protect elephants and other wildlife. The Domain Awareness System (DAS) is a tool that aggregates the positions of radios, vehicles, aircraft and animal sensors to provide users with a real-time dashboard that depicts the wildlife being protected, the people and resources protecting them, and the potential illegal activity threatening them. The visualization and analysis capabilities of DAS allow park managers to make immediate tactical decisions to then efficiently deploy resources for interdiction and active management. The system has been installed at six sites since November 2016. Working with Save the Elephants, African Parks Network, Wildlife Conservation Society, and the Singita Grumeti Fund as well as the Lewa Conservancy and Northern Rangelands Trust, a total of 15 locations are expected to adopt the system this year. When fully operational by the end of 2017, the system will cover more than 90,000 square miles. The SMART Partnership, a consortium of conservation NGOs, government partners, and technology companies, is working with Paul Allen's team to integrate DAS with SMART software used in nearly 500 sites across 46 countries to measure, evaluate and adaptively improve the effectiveness of wildlife law enforcement patrols and site-based conservation activities.

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Botswana & South Africa

In early April 12 white rhinos left South Africa for Botswana. The rhinos made their trip by truck, plane and helicopter from a game park on South Africa's east coast to Botswana's Okavango Delta. The 12 white rhinos are part of a larger group of 100 rhinos that are being moved from South Africa due to the high risk of poaching. A first batch of 25 rhinos was transferred several months ago. The relocation was carried out by the 'Rhinos without Borders' team. The NGO now hope to expand the resettlement project to other southern African countries. Rhinos without Borders estimates that it costs \$45,000 to relocate a single rhino, which includes support for rhino monitoring teams and anti-poaching patrols when they reach their new home. (Source: AllAfrica.com)

Kenya

Between 1985 and 2012, tree cover in hirola habitat increased by 251 percent. This increasing encroachment by trees is likely to blame for the decline in hirola populations—the world's most endangered antelope—researchers say in a new study. Decline in elephant and cattle numbers in the region, an increase in browsing livestock, and increased drier conditions could have resulted in increasing tree cover. Once widespread across open grasslands along the Kenya-Somalia border, fewer than 500 hirola (*Beatragus hunteri*) remain in the wild in Africa today.

Liberia

The Wildlife Management Department with the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) of Liberia is serious about moving to sustainable use of its vast natural resources and building tourism around that.

by Gerhard Damm

Liberia has the second-largest rainforest in West Africa after Congo. The government wants to move Liberia away from timber operations, and plans to convert large portions of the country's rainforest into national parks and to develop community hunting areas, which would be available for regulated hunting programs operated by safari operators.

South Africa

The South African Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) published in Gazette Notice 74 the Draft Regulations for Domestic Trade in Rhino Horn which will allow for the legal trade of rhino horn in South Africa on the preconditions of TOPS compliance by both the seller and buyer, as well as the provision for a foreign national to export two horns for personal purposes. The draft regulations fail to mention the period of time to which the provision applies - is it per year or once a lifetime, or something else.

South Africa

Five people, including a police officer, were arrested at the Paul Kruger Gate, when they tried to enter the park posing as tourists. Six people, including a SANParks employee, were arrested at the Phalaborwa Gate in Limpopo. They were found in possession of a rifle, another firearm, ammunition, and poaching equipment. Another alleged rhino poachers was shot and died; his accomplice was arrested. Another 10 suspected poachers were in different parts of the park. Several .458 rifles with silencers, ammunition, an axe, fresh rhino horns, and other poaching equipment were recovered. (Source AllAfrica.com).

South Africa

The Kruger National Park's Meerkat wide range surveillance technology developed by South Africa's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) uses a radar system to detect movement and plots the movement on a map. An electronic optical surveillance system is then used to identify the exact location of potential poachers. The Meerkat implementing partner Peace Parks Foundation, said the aim of the system was to have day and night surveillance. The system is designed to fold up and fit in the back of a truck, and can be unloaded by a small team. On February 14, the system detected three separate groups of poachers. (Source: AllAfrica.com)

Compiled by Gerhard R Damm