



03/04/2019

**Attention: Sphiwe – Communications Officer
The South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)**

Re: SAIIA Dispatches - March 2019

Dear Madam,

Thank you for our very productive and informative telephonic discussion of just a few minutes ago. I understand that once you have received this communication that you will direct it to an appropriate person for attention; and that that person will then telephone me so that we can determine just how we take this communication forward. I am very happy with this arrangement.

My name is Ron Thomson. I am currently the CEO of the True Green Alliance (TGA) and have been asked (by Mr Phillip Hattingh) to respond to your SAIIA Dispatches of March 2019 (see below).

QUOTE: South Africa kicks the can down the road on captive predator breeding

The world's leading lion scientists argue that captive predator breeding has no conservation value. Successful reintroduction from captivity into the wild among large felids is extremely rare. Nonetheless, the captive predator breeding industry in South Africa operates on the pretext that reintroduction to the wild is a viable strategy. **UNQUOTE**

XXXXX

The True Green Alliance is a non-government, non-profit organisation and a registered public benefit organisation that promotes *caring for the earth and sustainable living practices* throughout the societies and governments of southern Africa. It supports the sustainable use of living resources, and fosters the correct social and official government attitudes towards wildlife management.

TGA vision: To create a southern African (ultimately global) society that is properly informed about the principles and practices of wildlife management; that understands the wisdom of, and necessity for, the practice of sustainable utilisation of living resources (both wild and domesticated) for the benefit of mankind; that supports animal welfare; and that rejects animal rights - the doctrine of which seeks to abolish all animal uses by man.

My credentials: I have 59 years of experience in the field of wildlife management (ak.a. 'conservation') having begun my career as a game ranger in the Federal Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (in what was then known as the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland) aged 20, in 1959. Thirty-one of those years I was 'in service' managing both national parks and the wild animals that lived within them. And latterly (for the last 28 years) I have worked as an investigative wildlife journalist, writer and author. I have published 15 books, five of which are university-level wildlife management text books (two of which are still in active use today).

Three of my previous postings were (1) Provincial Game Warden-in-charge of the 14 600 square kilometre Hwange National Park in what is now Zimbabwe (Hwange is one of Africa's bigger and more prestigious game reserves); (2) Chief Nature Conservation Officer (Ciskei) in South Africa; and Director, the Bophuthatswana National Parks and Wildlife Management Board, in South Africa. I am a university trained Field Ecologist; was a member of the Institute of Biology (London) for 20 years; and was a Chartered Biologist for the European Union for 20 years. I have extensive big game hunting and big game capture experience - including the hunting of many stock-killing lions and the killing of six (some serial killer) man-eating lions.

I am no stranger, therefore, to the art and the craft of dangerous-big-game management; and I have adequate hands-on experience with wild lions - and about their management in the wild - to consider myself qualified to pass judgement on the Captive Breeding of Lions (CBL) Industry in South Africa.

In addition, I represented the TGA when carrying out an objective survey of the CBL Industry in South Africa last year. I spent the entire month of June (2018) inspecting lion farming properties throughout the Free State, the North West Province and the Limpopo Province. And I covered EVERY aspect of the business. I inspected facilities and lions, and I spoke with visiting overseas hunters. And I had ample time to discuss the business-end of the Industry with the people who KNOW the business backwards - the lion farmers themselves.

Amongst my many varied experiences, I worked as Professional Hunter for three full years - and for three years I attended the Hunting Safari Shows in America (such Dallas Safari Club and Safari Club International). And I received the Conservationist of the Year Trophy from SCI in 1992. But Professional Hunting was not my forte. Nevertheless, I am glad that I did it because now I have a first-hand perspective about the Professional Hunting Industry, too.

The Main Content of the article:

I have just completed reading the main content of your article and am shocked at its inaccuracies and bias. Please read the article yourself and compare it to my **objective** Report on the CBL Industry, entitled, "Searching for the Truth" **(SEE ATTACHMENT)**. You, Sir/Madam, have allowed yourself to be duped by the biggest confidence industry in the world – the International Animal Rights Brigade.

My comments (ref your pages 1/7):

A

1. You state: *"The World's leading lion scientists argue that captive predator breeding has no conservation value."* **Remember this statement has been broadcast all over the world as 'the opinion' of the South African Institute of International Affairs!** WHO are these leading lion scientists? What are their names? What experience do they have of captive lion breeding and captive lion management?
2. In your second introductory sentence on this page you state: *"Successful reintroduction from captivity into the wild among large felids is extremely rare"*. On what grounds do you make this statement. How many instances of introduction do you include in this assessment? How many failed? How many were successful?
3. Knowing something about wild lions and their behaviour, and having now experienced what happens in the CBL industry, I am convinced that fully adult captive bred lions can be EASILY returned to the wild **PROVIDED** there are no wild lions already occupying the land. If there are WILD lions occupying home ranges and territories on that land, NO lions (wild-captured or captive-bred), are likely to survive a new introduction. Lions are 'killing machines' and they will NOT tolerate a strange lion entering, let alone taking over their established home range and/or territory. They will fight to the death to retain their hard-won home ranges and their territories.
4. When a stretch of well-stocked-with-game country is free of ALL lions, however, the release of ADULT captive-bred lions will almost certainly result in a new lion population becoming established. I truly have no doubt about that happening; and only in exceptional circumstances will failure result.

B

1. I think there is something that we ought clear-up BEFORE we go any further. The CBL Industry makes no pretence about captive-bred lions contributing to the 'conservation value' of wild lion populations. This is an animal rightist's red-herring bait that everybody seems to fall for. The captive-breeding of lions is just what the term says (and intimates) it is: It is the breeding of lions in captivity for the purpose of 'making money'. The lion farmers that I visited exhibited a great love for their

lions but you cannot get away from the fact that the farmers breed lions in captivity in order to 'make a living' (to 'make money') – which means killing them, one way or another. And whereas the lion farmers don't necessarily want the CBL Industry to detract from the well-being of WILD lion populations, they also don't focus on creating conditions that will benefit wild lions. That is something they leave to the game rangers of Kruger National Park! THAT is what SANParks pays its own employees to do!

2. The captive breeding of lions has more in common with domestic livestock breeding in agriculture than it has with maintaining lion populations in the wild. In fact, there is very little difference between breeding a lion for the lion bone trade in Asia - or for hunting - (both of which make money for the lion farmer), and breeding a Brahman ox for slaughter in an abattoir, for the production and packaging of meat for humans to eat (which makes money for the domestic-stock-farmer). If we can get that matter sorted out in our minds - and removed from the equation - it will destroy many of the animal rightists' fabricated arguments.

***NB:** The TGA considers that ALL animals are 'products of the land'; that domesticated animals are TAME 'products of the land' and that wild animals are WILD 'products of the land' - both of which can and should be used wisely and sustainably for the benefit of mankind. Captive-bred lion farming should be viewed in this light!*

3. Captive-bred lions do, however, provide an incidental benefit to wild lion management (which the animal rightists here call "conservation value") and that is: captive-bred lions CAN be used to re-establish a wild lion population wherever the endemic population has been totally exterminated (such as by poisoning). So there are 'conservation value benefits' hidden away - that are inherent - in the FACT of the CBL Industry's existence.
4. So, there is no 'pretext' or 'subterfuge' in the statement that 'reintroduction to the wild is a viable strategy'. It IS a viable strategy. But it is not a major issue with the lion farmers of the CBL Industry. They KNOW that adult lion reintroductions back into the wild can be successful but that fact has nothing to do with the execution of their business!

C

1. We all know that wild lions are being poached all over Africa; but not, seemingly, so much in South Africa. In South Africa the lions that are being (occasionally) poached are the big captive-bred males on the lion farms; and the front part of their faces, and their paws, are recovered by the poachers, for use in the local traditional medicine market. This is something that the Lion Farmers have to sort out. If anything, it helps to stop the poaching of wild lions in Kruger National Park. Lion poaching in South Africa, therefore, does not threaten the wild lion population in any way.
2. There is some logic in the idea that if captive-bred lions can supply the lion bone trade in East Asia, then wild lions will not be poached in Africa. There is actually probably more accuracy in saying that there is no link at all between poaching and

the lion bone trade. The East Asian market 'likes' South African captive-bred lion bones because they come from disease-free animals – which is more than you can say about the lions of Kruger National Park (which are all contaminated with highly infectious Bovine-TB). And the lion farmers don't want wild lion specimens to be laundered through their legal markets. They want to keep their market-carasses disease-free.

3. I don't follow your argument that because wild lions are "not imperilled by captive predator breeding in South Africa" *that does not mean other lion populations are safe*. Because (as you say) the captive breeding of lions in South does NOT 'imperil' wild lion populations, surely all the pro-and-con arguments about captive bred lions having no "conservation value" - and being a danger to wildlife populations - must fall away? Also, under these circumstances, whether or not 'other' wild lion populations are 'safe or not safe', that fact can have nothing to do with the CBL Industry. So let's drop the animal rightists' subterfuge! Captive bred lions - plain and simple - do not 'imperil' wild lion populations in any way at all!

D

1. There are lots of people who don't like the idea of lions being hunted, or slaughtered for their bones, but there are just as many people who don't want to watch a beast being slaughtered in an abattoir either – even though they will still enjoy a good rump steak on the braai (barbecue) in the evening. These are personal preference choices that cannot, and must not, be used to determine the legalities – what is right and what is wrong – in any of the animal production businesses. Many people, however, are gullible. They are easily persuaded to other people's points of view. They don't want to be shamed when cornered by an animal rightist who wants all his demands recognised and adhered to. And our parliamentarians are the last people on earth who are going to admit that they will condone the killing of a lion 'for money'. In all respects, they are simply not qualified to enter this debate! So they are the very last people who should be charged with making a rational decision on the CBL Industry.
2. A great deal has been made of the presumption that the CBL Industry is damaging "Brand South Africa". I attended the parliamentary colloquium in Cape Town and I participated in the CBL debate. Besides the fact that the Chairman was biased in favour of the animal rightists' cause – and made that very plain – and the fact that half the invited participants were very rabidly animal rightist in orientation - I believe the meeting was handled very badly. There was one shining light, however, and that was a statement made by Dr Petrus de Kock (General Manager: Research. BRAND SOUTH AFRICA). He stated very clearly that those people who believed that the CBL Industry had damaged "BRAND SOUTH AFRICA", very obviously had no idea just WHAT affected, and DID NOT affect, the country's reputation. And he made it very plain that the CBL had had no effect whatsoever on BRAND SOUTH AFRICA.

3. There is great naiveté in the paragraph on page 2/7 which states: *“The captive-breeding industry is lucrative. Lion ‘encounter’ operations buy or rent cubs from breeders. Some conduct questionable research on the cats. Unsuspecting tourists pet, feed, cuddle lion cubs (for a price) and they walk with the big cats, mostly for the sake of a selfie. Some even pay for the privilege of volunteering at these facilities, falsely believing that they are contributing to conservation.” And: “Once the cubs have exceeded their economic utility, they are often sold into the canned hunting industry and thereafter into the Asian bone trade.”* **It is naive because the animal rightists - who have clearly influenced SAIIA - KNOW that none of these activities have anything to do with the CBL Industry.**
4. The CBL Industry comprises lion farmers who breed and rear lions; who slaughter lions for the Far Eastern Lion Bone trade; and who breed captive-bred adult lions to be hunted. All this is done openly, legally and humanely. Eco-tourism is not part of the CBL Industry. The members of SAPA (The South African Predator Association) – who regulate the CBL Industry - disapprove of: cub-petting by tourists; the tourism practice of “Walking with Lions”; and the fraudulent activity of getting overseas visitors to come to South Africa at their own expense, and to pay for the privilege of rearing young lions (which they are told, falsely, are being reared for release back to the wild). And the practice of ‘canned lion hunting’ - the shooting of lions through fences or inside small enclosures - has been banned in South Africa altogether for several years. So any and all of those statements (referred to in para D.3 above) – which have been attributed to the CBL Industry - are false. People who practice these activities are NOT members of the CBL Industry; and SAPA would be happy to help you (or anybody else) to close them down.
5. The hunting part of the industry is undergoing constant improvement. The trend is now to hunt adult captive bred lions - using the inevitable ‘put-and-take’ system of hunting - inside lion-proof fenced enclosures that encompass natural wildlife habitats of a size not less than 1000 hectares (some are as big as 10 000 hectares); and which contain strong populations of a variety of indigenous game animals – which the lions start killing and eating within hours of being released. Once they are released, the lions have to catch and to eat their own prey. They are never fed.
6. In South Africa, lions may be hunted ONLY by way of the ‘walk-and-stalk’ method of hunting. The hunter - using an experienced tracker - has to follow the tracks of the lion until he catches up with his quarry. The average distance the hunter walks to find his lion is between 15 and 20 kilometres. No vehicles may be used in the hunting. No lion may be shot from a vehicle. No dogs may be used to bay up the lion. No ‘calling devices’ may be used to entice the lion to come towards the hunter. Lions may not be shot at night in the light of a bright spotlight. And lions may not be shot over baits. All in all, this method (walk-and-stalk) of hunting a lion – even a captive bred lion – is more exciting; more taxing; more dangerous; and it requires more hunting expertise, than hunting lions over a bait from a hide (which is the way that hunters normally kill their lions elsewhere in Africa.) So, all those people who

abhor the idea of hunting a captive-bred lion are uninformed if they believe it is just “a walk in the park”.

7. You will gather, therefore, that much of the opposition to the CBL Industry lies in the imaginations of those who don't like 'the idea' of what they believe is going on.
8. When the true nature of the CBL Industry is known, explained and understood - and when THE FACTS can be seen to contradict THE FICTION - there is not much left for the opposition to complain about. There is still much that needs to be done to refine, and fine-tune, many CBL activities; but there is no good reason why the industry should be condemned and destroyed.

CONCLUSION: I believe, therefore, that it is very foolhardy for the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) to identify with the animal rightist NGOs in any of these arguments. The animal rightists are doing this to 'fraudulently make money' and no responsible and intelligent person will want to be dragged into an involvement with such people. Their tactic is to tell a blatant lie (or several blatant lies) in their propaganda apparatus – which they use to solicit money from a well-primed and gullible public. If they earn one cent from the first hand-out they receive (based on a lie), that makes their conduct 'common fraud'. And, according to the American RICO Act (Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organisations Act), if they carry out this fraudulent act twice (i.e. more than once) that second act is called 'racketeering'.... and racketeering qualifies their whole show as being part of 'organised crime'. This, of course, with respect to the animal rightists' propaganda operations, has still to be tested in a court of law. But I would suggest that your organisation conduct itself with more circumspection when dealing with these nefarious people. Many of the lion farmers are very rich people, and you never know when they will decide to take one of these issues to court.

I trust that you will accept my bona fides; and that you will understand why I don't support people who want nothing less than to stop ALL 'animal uses' by man. Responsible and intelligent people, the world-over, understand, accept and support the sustainable use of our living resources for the survival of mankind. I am one of them. I hope you are, too!

With kind regards

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