

Written evidence submitted by Fergus Flynn (AAB0060)

Response to some areas of the "Call for Evidence" by the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee relating to the Animals Abroad Bill.

I would like to make two initial points which I believe to be fundamental to the question of wildlife management/utilization in Africa:

Firstly, there is currently a shortage of animal protein on the African Continent. The managed cropping of surplus game animals can contribute significantly to protein intake, particularly in the rural areas. Related to this is the fact that those rural communities are unlikely to have an interest in protecting animals that don't have a demonstrable value to that same community (through hunting revenue) or if they cannot be consumed. Secondly, the vast majority of any population on the Continent will have participated in the slaughter and dressing out of chickens, for example. In the country which I am most familiar with, Zambia, 70% of the commercially produced birds are sold as live birds for "home" slaughter. Similarly, the vast majority of goats, sheep and cattle will be slaughtered through the informal sector and not through formal abattoirs. The whole attitude to slaughter and killing of animals in Africa is very different.

Will the Government's proposals on the export and import of hunting trophies effectively support the conservation of endangered species?

The answer is a resounding no. In South Africa, for example, fifty million acres are devoted to wildlife management, more than 5 times that of the National Parks protected areas. If hunting were to be banned, it is estimated that 90% of the 50-million-acre area would be lost - it simply would not be sustainable. It can be summed up simply by the phrase "no value, no future". In Namibia, 50% of its land is under formally recognised wildlife management areas. In Zambia's case, 30% of the total land mass is dedicated to National Parks and to Game Management areas which are devoted to hunting. It is through hunting that schools and clinics are constructed, small scale enterprises are created (e.g., honey-keeping, fish farming, chicken production etc) and wildlife and very importantly habitats are protected. In Zambia's case 15% of children under 5 are deemed malnourished. Any project or system which improves this situation must be regarded as critically important.

Habitat protection is inexorably tied in with wildlife protection and as we are all aware the planet is at a tipping point and unless we seriously address these issues of habitat protection and wildlife utilisation the planet may well not survive.

A major dam project being constructed now in Tanzania will only operate effectively as a hydroelectric scheme if the catchment area is protected. This is a wildlife area. If its protection status is removed, the inevitable outcome would be that of trees being cut down, land being cleared, cattle herders moving in and crops planted on the mainly fragile soils with habitat and wildlife lost forever. Reduced tree coverage at the micro- and macro-level does have a profound effect on local rainfall patterns.

In the forest setting, Forest elephants in the Congo Basin have been slaughtered in huge numbers in the last 10 years. It is estimated that 85-90% have been lost. That population plays a crucial role in "tree management" - take that natural gardener away and the whole ecosystem is out of balance. This ultimately affects you and I.

2. "Should there be different rules for trade in animal trophies depending on the setting in which animals are hunted"?

This is presumably in reference to so-called "canned" hunting. I believe the Government should work with big hunting organisations such as SCI which is American based. They promote ethical standards and guidelines for the whole industry. It is also worth remembering that hunting, fishing and the outdoors plays a huge role in American society. 101 million Americans are estimated to participate in some form of outdoor activity. In 2016 the deer industry alone was worth \$21 billion dollars and supported directly and indirectly 305,000 jobs. 11.4 million people hunted specifically for deer. Basically, driven by hunting, the Black bear which in 1900 faced extinction, today numbers just under a million with a sustainable and controlled take-off year after year. The Rocky Mountain Elk in 1900 was estimated to be 47000, today the population stands at a million. It is Americans that largely drive the African trophy hunting industry, but that is not to say that Europe cannot contribute equally. Unfortunately, many dedicated hunters who could contribute positively to huge areas of the African countryside have opted to stop travelling because of the negative press associated with hunting as well as the very cumbersome bureaucracy associated with getting their trophies back home.

This negative press and lack of understanding of the situation on the ground is leading to a desperate situation for those who live and rely on hunting revenue in Africa. A good example is Kenya where hunting was banned in 1977. At that time the elephant population stood at 180,000 plus. Today that figure is 28000 and yet in that time not a single elephant has been legally harvested by a hunter. Similarly with lion, there has not been a single animal shot as a harvested trophy. The population has dropped by 85% since the late 1970s. Of course, population growth, habitat destruction, animal/human conflict, poaching etc have all played their part, but the truth is that hunters cannot be blamed. The perception that hunters are cold blooded killers is, for the vast majority, unfair and unjust. The power of the media combined with a strong anti-hunting lobby and a lack of understanding of the true situation has had a very negative effect on what is happening and has happened on the ground.

Probably the most contentious species is the rhino. It must be remembered that the species has faced extinction for many years. Hunting of old individuals that had passed their reproductive age went a long way towards ensuring its survival. Those protecting the species could see an economic return. They had an incentive to ensure their survival over and above a purely conservation goal. Importantly its horn can be harvested regularly and the sale of horn on a sustainable basis could ensure the survival of the species. South Africa currently has 90 tons of rhino horn in storage which is "unsaleable". The market demands 5 tons/year. That means there is 18 years of stock. The stalemate continues and meanwhile poachers and traders continue unabated with more sophisticated techniques and anti poaching gets ever more expensive. Can one realistically ask rhino breeders to continue to protect their herds with no revenue base? In general, when one looks at any huntable species, the rancher, the protector will continue to look after these animals as long as they have a value. The results are staggering. There is an excellent example to be found in Mozambique, where in 1996 a group of hunters went about conserving an area. At that time there were 44 Sable antelope and 200 buffalo to mention but two species. Today there are over 2000 Sable and 10000 buffalo all due to hunting revenue. There has also been significant investment into the local community in terms of health services, schools and protection of habitat. They have introduced lion back into the area and they are thriving and multiplying. One day they will harvest maybe 1% of that population. Is it fair to deny a hunter the right to harvest an old

male lion beyond breeding age after decades of protection? It is also worth remembering that the natural way in which old males die is either by being killed by another male or through starvation, which can take many weeks or months. A modern bullet accurately placed leads to instantaneous death-which is preferable? Of course, there are highly publicized incidents of lions being wounded and well-known lions being harvested which is totally unacceptable but it should be remembered that these Governments get revenue from legitimately harvested lions and they are often desperate for funds. This has been exacerbated by Covid and reduced international travel. Africa has paid a very high price in terms of lost revenue over the last 2 years. The other point which is worth remembering is that the harvesting of cats (I can only speak for Zambia) is done much more scientifically than was the case sometimes historically. The cats are monitored by camera traps and only old males past breeding age are harvested with the authorisation of the Game Department.

I include a quote from a recent magazine article, "Trophy hunting though controversial to many, is recognised by the IUCN on the basis of strong scientific support, as a conservation tool that "can" and does positively contribute to conservation, and local livelihoods in the face of intense competing pressures on wildlife habitats and widespread poaching"

In that same magazine it is quoted that 133 leading scientists and community leaders warned in a letter to the journal Science that without implementing viable alternatives to protect habitats and generate revenue to local communities, it would imperil biodiversity. What is apparent in all these examples is the lack of objective bridge builders to reduce conflict and ultimately to allow decision makers to implement sustainable policies. Those involved, whether individuals or groups should not be targeted derided or undermined for their views when the aim is a noble one-the protection and survival of species and habitat alike.

In conclusion, I fully appreciate that the whole subject of trophy hunting is an emotive one but it is crucial in my opinion that Western society does not impose their values on another society. It is after all Africa's resource and it should be Africans that ultimately determine its future including the use of all its natural resources. Secondly if the hunting industry is largely driven by rich Western individuals, why is that wrong? The individuals involved enjoy and savour the whole bush experience, the space, rich ecologies, the local people and are willing to pay over the odds for that experience with a significant proportion of the funds staying in the area in which the hunt was conducted, what is wrong with that?

There is an increased sensitivity to the subject of not displaying trophies publicly which is very good. I firmly believe that responsible hunting/conservation organizations should be allowed to thrive and continue to play a major role in the sustained protection of huge areas which, without their wildlife, could be lost forever. In all parts of Africa where wildlife occurs, hunters are welcomed and respected. We need to listen to Africa and Africans. They are ones who will determine whether habitats and ecosystems survive in their present form or not. We need to think about future generations for our children and the children of Africa. Hunting paradoxically can play an important part in ensuring Africa remains a unique and spectacular Continent contributing hugely in the long term to the survival of the globe.

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