



AFRICAN INDABA

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US Import Suspension for Elephant Hunting Trophies from Zimbabwe and Tanzania

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On 4th April 2014, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) announced a [suspension on imports of sport-hunted African elephant ivory](#) taken during calendar year 2014 in [Tanzania](#) and [Zimbabwe](#). In Tanzania, USF&WS cited catastrophic elephant population declines resulting from uncontrolled poaching, questionable management practices, a lack of effective law enforcement and weak governance. For Zimbabwe the Service relied on what was called “*available, though limited data which indicated [sic] a significant elephant population decline*”. Ironically, the Service mentioned in the same announcement that “*legal, well-regulated sport hunting, as part of a sound management program, can benefit the conservation of listed species by providing incentives to local communities to conserve the species and by putting much-needed revenue back into conservation*”.

Estimates of the elephant population in Zimbabwe (listed on CITES Appendix II) put the total number at over 100,000 individuals. [Professor Nigel Leader-Williams](#) in a letter to Science magazine pointed out already in 2011 that controlled hunting was beneficial for Zimbabwe’s elephants. “*Implementing trophy hunting has doubled the area of the country under wildlife management relative to the 13% in state protected areas, thanks to the inclusion of private lands*” Leader-Williams said. “*As a result, the area of suitable land*

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provide for the promotion of sustainable utilization of natural resources of Partner States and the taking of measures that would effectively protect the natural environment of Partner States of the East African Community Treaty. The Court also added that all these issues must be looked at from the common thread [of the] need to protect the Serengeti ecosystem for the sake of future generations and whether the road project has potential for causing irreparable damages.

Prosperity Humbug Kills Rhinos: Miersch Interviews Baldus

Michael Miersch (MM): You just came back from the Selous Game Reserve. What has changed since you worked there, from 1987 to 2005, as an advisor and wildlife warden?

Rolf Baldus (RB): The most striking change is the decline in the elephant population: from 70,000 in 2005 to about 13,000 today. Poaching is responsible for the reduction. This was possible because the effectiveness of the management in the reserve had fallen back to the level of the eighties. "Back to square one," you might say. A key reason: During my time there the Selous was allowed to retain half of the revenue from hunting and tourism. That money was used to finance the park management. When the Tanzanian government transitioned back to low-level funding from the state budget, the decline began.

MM: Many African countries report encouraging economic growth. The UN says that poverty is decreasing. What is the cause then for the current wave of poaching?

RB: Less poverty does not necessarily lead to better protection of endangered species. And among those people who do the dirty work in the bush, the wealth has certainly not arrived. The sharp increase in poaching has probably more to do with the growing wealth in Asia. The demand for luxury goods and prestige objects such as ivory and rhino horn has increased dramatically there.

MM: Is the situation similar to the ivory and rhino horn crisis of the early 90s, or are there significant differences?

RB: It is simply much worse. In the Selous up to 7,000 elephants have been poached yearly, in Africa between 20,000 and 30,000 according to the estimates. The delivery quantities and the individual shipments to Asia have become much larger. Increasingly, the bones of carnivores, pangolins, etc. are also being smuggled. The illegal transport of ivory and rhino horn to Asia has been perfected. Chinese living abroad are often involved, as we know from occasional seizures.

MM: Who are the poachers and where do they come from?

RB: This varies from country to country. In eastern Africa, the poachers often come from local villages. In central Africa, they come on horses and camels from distant Sudan. In civil war countries, poaching is perpetrated by the regular armies and the rebels alike. In South Africa it is sometimes veterinarians and other specialists who work with the latest technology. The average poacher is like a guerrilla: If he does not have the support of the local people, then he can do very little.

MM: What role is played by the demand for wildlife products in Asia?

RB: Effective demand creates its own supply. Prices have risen significantly in recent years. Despite some lip service and a bit of posturing, such as the senseless burning of a few tusks, the Asian countries largely responsible for the high demand have so far done very little to stop the illegal imports. At least now there is some negotiating going on.

MM: Why is the demand for ivory and rhino horn currently increasing?

RB: In Asia rhino horn is considered as medicine against many ailments, although its effectiveness has not been scientifically proven. It is a matter of belief. And in China, it is based on ancient traditions. Growing prosperity leads to better medical care, apparently also to growing consumption

of traditional medicine. China, incidentally, has in recent years imported many rhinos from South Africa. It will probably soon start producing rhino horn domestically. The horn grows back and can be 'harvested' from the live animal. There is no evidence of any desire to suppress the use of traditional Chinese medicine to protect endangered animals. Nevertheless, the attempt to educate about the relationship between traditional medicine and endangered species should be undertaken in Asia.

MM: For years the dispute among conservationists is whether a total ban on hunting is the better protection tool, or whether legal hunting better removes the foundation for poaching. What has proven to be more effective in practice?

RB: Serious conservationists agree that controlled and sustainable hunting, where the income is invested in the conservation of the resource and in the local community, is helpful. This has been proven as effective conservation. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) has recently presented a policy document in which this is clearly stated. In Germany our conservation policies function in the same manner. A total ban on hunting would be counterproductive for the protection of endangered species and would be very costly to landowners and farmers. Why should it be different in Africa? Kenya banned hunting 35 years ago and has since lost three quarters of its wildlife populations. That is not exactly a success story. Hunting bans are only demanded by animal rights activists. They however only say what they think should not be done. They do not have an answer to the question of what effective conservation should look like.

MM: There are still thousands of elephants, but what is the outlook for the two African rhino species? Are they at the brink of extinction?

RB: The black rhino will probably become extinct in several more countries. This species has been, by the way, strictly protected for three decades, apparently without success. This hardly speaks for total protection. The white rhino was as good as extinct a hundred years ago. A clever combination of protection and hunting, on both public and private property in South Africa, has saved the species. There are currently more than 20,000 rhinos in that country. About 5% of them were poached last year, ca. the same number that are reproduced each year. I am confident that the South Africans will get the problem under control.

MM: Some economists recommend allowing legal ivory trade to dry up the black market. Others say precisely this would heat up the black market? In South Africa there are even rhino farms that want to sell the coveted horn legally in Asia. Are such concepts realistic?

RB: Long-term solutions must endure within the framework of market economics. In the long run conservationists can't win by working against the market. Without sustainable use and trade charismatic species cannot be preserved for the future. Why should private farmers breed rhinos in South Africa, if they cannot sell the horn on a permanent basis? Momentarily, however, there are more pressing issues in the foreground: Stopping poaching and preventing illegal trade.

MM: What measures must be urgently taken to curb poaching in the Selous Reserve and elsewhere?

RB: The many international conferences have raised awareness in the realm of global politics that international coordination and control instruments are essential. Both the export and import countries must be convinced to finally adopt effective measures. What needs to be done is known. It just has to finally get done. Examples: Locally train and equip the game scouts, and improve leadership. And demonstrate zero tolerance for apprehended poachers and smugglers, even when they are very important people. Corruption is a problem everywhere, seemingly holding our best intentions hostage. And it shouldn't be forgotten that all of this costs a lot of money over the long haul. Unfortunately, the summit meetings usually don't take this up.

MM: What role could Germany play?

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RB: I am very pleased that Germany is providing eight million Euros next year for engagement in the Selous. What is needed additionally is an immediate action program to stop the poaching that is going on there as we speak.

Note: Michael Miersch is a leading German environmental journalist. Interview was translated from German by Chris Eberhart of "[Hunters' Path](#)" and published with friendly permission of Michael Miersch and "[Die Achse des Guten](#)". The interview can be found in German [here](#).

Dual Tragedy in Pondo Camp, Musalangu GMA, Zambia

Robert Muir of [Frankfurt Zoological Society \(FZS\)](#) reported that on 24 May a female resident in Fulaza village in Musalangu GMA was killed in her field by an elephant. [Lusaka Times also reported the incident](#) with photos. [Zambia Wildlife Authority \(ZAWA\)](#) officers were called to assist at the scene and they helped with the repatriation of the body to Fulaza. There the villagers blamed the ZAWA officers for the women's death. Eventually a riot broke out at the Pondo ZAWA camp. The rioters torched the radio shack and then razed 6 village game scout houses to the ground. ZAWA equipment and personal belongings were looted. ZAWA staff from Mano Sector and Mpika and Chama Police subsequently arrested 11 rioters. ZAWA Pondo Camp is located in Fulaza village, a sub sector of Chikwa hunting block. It accounts for 2,000 km² that form part of the Musalangu GMA covering a total of 17,000 km² which border North Luangwa NP. It is one of 27 ZAWA base camps and supported by FZS as part of the regional resource protection strategy. Musalangu GMA acts as an important buffer zone for the National Park which harbors Zambia's only black rhino population.

Emergency funds of US\$15,000 are immediately required to replace equipment loss and rebuild temporary infrastructure at the scout camp. Permanent infrastructure could be built for an additional \$12,600. The [International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation CIC](#) has already confirmed emergency assistance of US\$ 2,000 which is being matched dollar for dollar by an American hunter. This hunter further confirmed that he will similarly match all other donations. **For information on how to best donate please contact P J Fouche p.j.fouchesafaris@prodigy.net**



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