

## Environment Minister Hunt gets it wrong on ‘canned’ hunting

Australia’s Environment Minister Greg Hunt is poised to announce this week a trade ban on the importation of African lion hunting trophies<sup>i</sup>. But rather than help stamp out unethical ‘canned’ hunting of lions, the Minister’s ban on the importation of *sustainable and legally obtained* hunting trophies will according to a recent report decrease incentives to preserve lions, encourage unsustainable illegal poaching and deprive economically depressed rural communities in Africa of much needed income<sup>ii</sup>.

In a speech on ‘canned hunting’ to the Australian Parliament on 27 May 2014 member for La Trobe, Jason Wood MP said *“there is a huge deception taking place”*. He’s right, there is a huge deception taking place. But the deception taking place is by Mr Wood, Environment Minister Greg Hunt and the Australian Department of the Environment.



Source: <http://jasonwood.com.au/issues/canned-hunting/>

In early 2014 Mr Wood was approached by a constituent Donalea Patman, an animal rights activist. Ms Patman lobbied Mr Wood to do something about ‘canned hunting’ of African lions. Mr Wood in turn made representations to Environment Minister Greg Hunt to make changes to Australian legislation to ban the importation of hunting trophies, not just trophies from ‘canned hunting’ mind you, but **ALL** trophies, including those ethically and lawfully obtained.

Mr Wood, armed with African lion import data from the Department of the Environment provided via the Parliamentary Library, went on in his speech to state... **13** Hippopotamus “hunt trophies” were imported so far in 2014, and since 2010, **144** African lion “body parts” had been imported.

Mr Wood went even further on his website stating that in the 5 years 2010-2014, we as a nation had let the following hunting trophies to be imported: **144** Lions, **34** Grey Wolves; **3** Southern White Rhinoceros, **56** Vervet Monkeys, **10** Nile Crocodile, **23** Estuarine Crocodile, **109** Hartmann’s Zebra, **6** Wildcat, **129** Hippopotamus, **5** American/Canadian Lynx, **90** Chacma Baboon, **18** Cougar/Mountain lion, **7** Puma/Cougar, **148** American Black Bear, **46** Brown Bear, **4** Grizzly Bear and **7** Polar Bear.  
<http://jasonwood.com.au/issues/canned-hunting/>

**Ethical hunters fully support moves to eliminate the unethical practice of ‘canned hunting’.**

HOWEVER neither Jason Wood, Minister Hunt, the Department of the Environment nor the Parliamentary Library research staff bothered to take the time to investigate and differentiate unethical ‘canned’ hunting from ethical and lawful ‘fair chase’ hunting.

Mr Wood’s speech made it perfectly clear his intention was to ban not only ‘canned hunting’ but also ethical trophy hunting:

***“In conclusion, canned hunting and trophy hunting are awful and disgusting, cowardly practices and must be stopped.”***

## Errors in Australia’s wildlife import data

Mr Wood’s campaign to ban the importation of all hunting trophies was aided and abetted by inaccurate wildlife import data and misleading comments in documents prepared by the Department of the Environment and the Parliamentary Library.

These documents, obtained by my office under Freedom of Information, revealed considerable *qualitative* and *quantitative* errors as well as inconsistencies with the import data supplied in a brief from the Department to Minister Hunt.

For example, the documents contained addition errors (circled in the table below) in the purported “hunting trophy” import data for Vervet Monkey, Hippopotamus, Chacma Baboon, Puma/Cougar as well as African Lion.

It is important to keep in mind the inaccurate import data had also been previously submitted in Australia’s Annual Reports to CITES (the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species) for inclusion in the CITES Trade Database: <http://trade.cites.org/>

Inexplicably the table of import data for African lion labelled “**hunting trophies**” in the Client Advice prepared for Mr Wood is labelled “**specimens**” in the Department’s brief to Minister Hunt.

**Table 1. Annual numbers of African lion (*Panthera leo*) hunting trophies imported into Australia each year since 2010**

Trophy type	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Body mounts	1		9	2		10
Bones			6			6
Cape		1				1
Claws			54		18	72
Head mounts		2				2
Hunting trophy	1	4		6	1	12
Shoulder cape		3				3
Skins	1	2	3	5	1	12
Skulls	1	6	7	6	2	22
Taxidermied animal			1			1
Whole animal					1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>144</b>

Source: Parliamentary Library Client Advice to Jason Wood MP, 19 March 2014; FoI Ref. 070714: <http://www.environment.gov.au/about-us/freedom-information/foi-disclosure-log>

Table 1. Annual numbers of African lion (*Panthera leo*) specimens imported into Australia each year since 2010

Specimen type	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Body mounts	1		9	2		10
Bones			6			6
Cape		1				1
Claws			54		18	72
Head mounts		2				2
Hunting trophy	1	4		6	1	12
Shoulder cape		3				3
Skins	1	2	3	5	1	12
Skulls	1	6	7	6	2	22
Taxidermied animal			1			1
Whole animal					1	1
Total	4	18	80	19	23	144

Source: Departmental Brief to Minister Hunt, June 2014; FoI Ref. 070714:  
<http://www.environment.gov.au/about-us/freedom-information/foi-disclosure-log>

Our attempts to reconcile these and other anomalies included extensive interrogation of the online CITES Trade Database ( <http://trade.cites.org/> ) using the broadest possible combinations of all relevant trade terms, as well as a request to the UNEP WCMC (United Nations Environment Program, World Conservation Monitoring Centre) in the U.K. to review the Australian data for lion imports.

Neither of these attempts to reconcile the Department's data was successful. Clearly, something was, and still is, terribly wrong with the Australian wildlife trade data.

I brought these errors in the wildlife import data to the attention of Minister Hunt in a letter on 28 November 2014. In his reply on 5 January 2015 Minister Hunt acknowledged the errors. The Minister also mentioned he had instructed the Department to undertake a review of the data to identify the source of and reasons for the discrepancies (Attachment A).

The Department subsequently prepared revised information (Attachment B). Comparison of the revised hunting trophy import data for 2010-2013 with the data originally provided by the Department (Attachment C) shows the following:

- Original Information reported **47 species** of "hunting trophies"  
 Revised Information revealed true hunting trophies from **30 species**
- Original Information reported a grand total of **939** "hunting trophies"  
 Revised Information reported a grand total of **287** true hunting trophies
- Original information included **23 species** which the Revised Information showed were not hunting trophies  
 Revised Information included **6 species** which the Original Information indicated were not hunting trophies
- Original information reported **121** African lion "hunting trophies"  
 Revised information revealed **18** African lion true hunting trophies.

## Misleading comments and omission of CITES expert information

In addition to the numerical data errors, important technical information and expert comment from the CITES Animals Committee, contained in the CITES 2014 *Periodic Review of the Status of African Lion Across its Range*, posted on the CITES website on 28 March 2014, is mysteriously missing from the Department's brief to the Minister.

For example, the Department's ministerial brief, prepared 3 months *after* the CITES Periodic Review was published, states:

***“In accordance with CITES Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev CoP16), the African lion meets the criteria for listing as Appendix I.”***

Source: Ministerial Brief PDR: MS14-001382, key point 6 (a)(i) page 3.

***“There is evidence that African lion meets the biological criteria for an Appendix I listing in accordance with Resolution Conf 9.24 (Rev. CoP16)”***

Source: Attachment C: 'Option for a Stricter Domestic Measure for the African Lion' to the Ministerial Brief PDR: MS14-001382, page 1.

In contrast to these statements in the brief, the CITES Periodic Review (page 17) states unambiguously that the African lion correctly belongs on CITES Appendix II:

***“The species [African lion, Panthera leo] meets criterion B of Annex 2a of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) for inclusion in Appendix II.”***

Source: CITES Periodic Review of the Status of African Lion Across its Range.  
<http://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/ac/27/E-AC27-24-03-03.pdf>

Furthermore, supplemental information accompanying the Periodic Review states (page 2):

***“Panthera leo Does Not Meet the Biological Criteria for Appendix I Resolution Conference 9.24 (rev. CoP16) includes the biological criteria for listing a species in the CITES Appendices. After thorough review of the periodic literature and best available information by governments, scientists and the CITES WCMC database, all of which is summarised or referenced in Doc. 24.3.3, Namibia concludes that Panthera leo does not meet the biological criteria for Appendix I and is appropriately listed in Appendix II.”***

Source: 'Supplemental Information on the Status of Panthera leo':  
<http://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/ac/27/E-AC27-Inf-15.pdf>

Australian hunters can legitimately ask *why* the Department failed to mention in their ministerial brief the finding of the CITES Periodic Review that...the African lion does **not** meet the biological criteria for Appendix I and is appropriately listed in Appendix II.

## Summary and Conclusions

Documents obtained under Freedom of Information and feedback from allies in Canberra indicate Environment Minister Greg Hunt is not only determined to, but *will* proceed to implement 'stricter domestic measures' to ban the importation of all African lion hunting trophies.

Indeed, the Minister signalled this intention by his hand written comment on his draft letter to Jason Wood on 26 June 2014 *“Needs to be clear I will move on lions – have begun the process”*.

Apparently it matters little to Minister Hunt that his 'stricter domestic measures' will prevent the importation of lion trophies obtained through ethical, lawful and sustainable free-range hunting.

Why *would* it matter... the Minister is on record that he is strongly opposed to hunting. In an interview that aired on the Channel Seven News on October 6 last year he said "*This is about a permanent ban on the importation of lion parts and lion trophies into Australia*".

Clearly Australia's Minister for the Environment has no understanding or appreciation that well-managed sustainable trophy hunting is recognised by CITES and the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) for its value and contribution to conservation<sup>iii</sup>.

Perhaps even more worrying are the actions by the Australian Department of the Environment to misrepresent the *true* nature and extent of the importation of hunting trophies into Australia.

The errors uncovered during this investigation raise serious questions about the Department's procedures and treatment of 'hunting trophies'. They also raise doubt about the accuracy of **all** Australian wildlife trade data previously submitted to CITES.

## Where to from here

Australia's 900,000 hunters have every reason to be very angry with Minister Hunt and should contact their Federal MP to let their feelings be known.

Hunters should also understand that Mr Hunt will not stop at banning lion imports. So watch out if you plan to import a hunting trophy from New Zealand – Himalayan Tahr could be next on Minister Hunt's hit list.

I will continue to investigate this issue to make sure the errors in the CITES trade database caused by the Department's failures are corrected.

I will also continue investigating opportunities for removing previously imposed inappropriate restrictions on the importation of lawfully obtained hunting trophies from other CITES listed species.

Robert Borsak MLC  
Shooters and Fishers Party



10 March 2015

## Attachments

Attachment A: Letter from Minister Hunt

Attachment B: Revised information on importation of hunting trophies

Attachment C: Comparison of Original and Revised wildlife import data

## References

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<sup>i</sup> Proposal to take stricter domestic measures to regulate the import and export of specimens of African lion.  
<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/wildlife-trade/comment/stricter-measures-import-export-african-lion>

<sup>ii</sup> Unexpected and undesired conservation outcomes of wildlife trade bans—An emerging problem for stakeholders?  
[http://ac.els-cdn.com/S2351989415000074/1-s2.0-S2351989415000074-main.pdf?\\_tid=6ec3c28c-c5dc-11e4-b0e7-00000aab0f6c&acdnat=1425851307\\_89ccd3bdf7e5805aa581c62ba082d824](http://ac.els-cdn.com/S2351989415000074/1-s2.0-S2351989415000074-main.pdf?_tid=6ec3c28c-c5dc-11e4-b0e7-00000aab0f6c&acdnat=1425851307_89ccd3bdf7e5805aa581c62ba082d824)

<sup>iii</sup> IUCN SSC Guiding Principles on Trophy Hunting as a Tool for Creating Conservation Incentives.  
[http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn\\_ssc\\_guiding\\_principles\\_on\\_trophy\\_hunting\\_ver1\\_09aug2012.pdf](http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn_ssc_guiding_principles_on_trophy_hunting_ver1_09aug2012.pdf)