

DOES AFRICA NEED HUNTING?

DOES HUNTING HELP PROTECT AND PRESERVE ANIMAL POPULATIONS IN AFRICA? THIS LITERARY GUIDE, BORN OUT OF DECADES OF PRAGMATIC EXPERIENCE, LEADS YOU THROUGH A CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING THE FUTURE OF HUNTING IN AFRICA. IT DEALS WITH THREATS FROM BOTH OUTSIDE AND INSIDE THE HUNTING RANKS. AND, PROVIDES YOU WITH DECISIVE ARGUMENTS FOR THE NEXT TIME YOU HAVE TO EXPLAIN WHY YOU ARE TRAVELING TO AFRICA TO HUNT.



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PROFESSOR GRZIMEK'S LEGACY

Since professor Bernhard Grzimek published his bestselling book, "Serengeti Shall Not Die" in 1959 the fate of the animal kingdom in Africa has moved people emotionally around the world. At that time the Serengeti ecosystem with the great migration was in dire straits. Grzimek did not only propose more suitable boundaries for the national park, but also created his highly successful, "Help for Threatened Wildlife"-Foundation. Many Non-Governmental-Organizations followed this example and collect money to save Africa's wildlife. Millions of dollars and Euros thus flowed in the pockets of self-appointed rescuers of wildlife. As the long as the money goes to professional and reputable organizations like Frankfurt Zoological Society or the WWF the money mostly ends up in useful conservation projects. Other organizations in the animal rightist field use the money for themselves and for anti-use and anti-hunting propaganda and for publicity campaigns to make even more money.

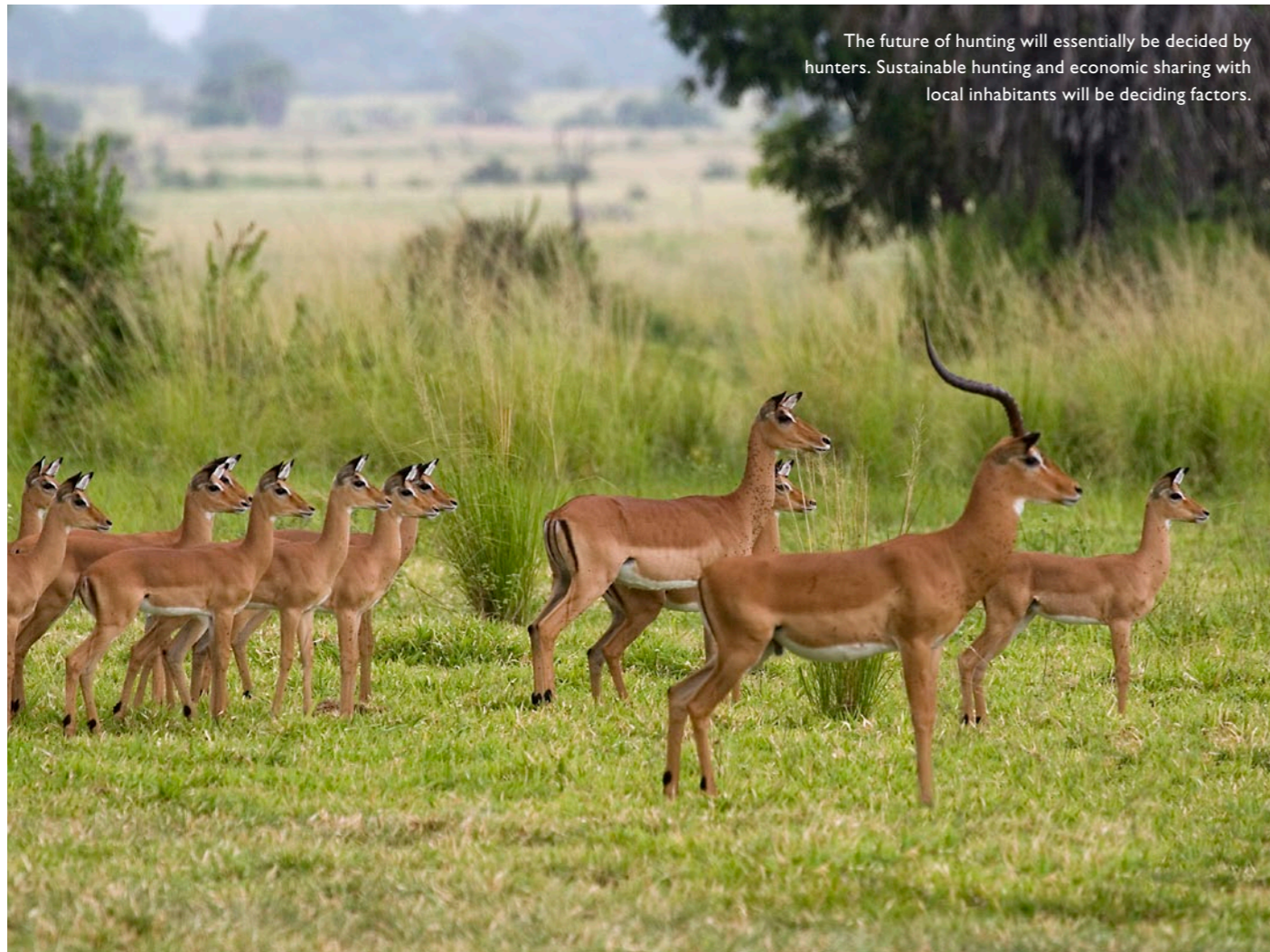
When people nowadays hear of elephants, lions, leopards or antelopes, they immediately recall the message that Africa's wildlife is on the road to extinction and that only donations can stop this. It seems to be humanity's duty to protect and ensure the survival of these species by donating cash.

The basic assumption is that wildlife populations are endangered everywhere in Africa, and are in fact declining. The bunny huggers preach that every form of consumptive use is harmful, whether it's illegal poaching, subsistence use of game by the local people or legal regulated trophy hunting and hunting tourism. In public opinion the only acceptable form of use is so called non-consumptive use, e.g. tourists who ride around the national parks in mini-buses with their video cameras.

Perpetually running wildlife shows on television serve to reinforce this image in the mind of the public. Of course, everyone sitting in front of the home theater in his pajamas watching these shows considers himself a grand conservationist. The truth is, however, that it is completely irrelevant to the elephants, lions, and chimpanzees what the international television viewers think of them. Unfortunately, just having nice thoughts about animals doesn't help them much.

The big game hunter is, on the other hand, considered negative in public opinion. Those are the bad guys who like to kill endangered animals. Paradoxically, hunters are among the very few groups willing to pay good hard cash to ensure the survival of animal species. A photo-tourist certainly pays an entrance fee

All African game species must have value in order to be protected.



The future of hunting will essentially be decided by hunters. Sustainable hunting and economic sharing with local inhabitants will be deciding factors.

to the national parks. In many instances however, the entrance fee isn't even enough to cover the infrastructure costs of photographic tourism, not to mention covering the total operating expenses of the parks. For this reason most of Africa's national parks run high budget deficits.

Currently, it is a fact that large areas in Africa are nearly devoid of game animals, most commonly in West and Central Africa. Some species are tremendously reduced, or on the brink of extinction. Apart from special situations, such as civil war, the primary reason for the dramatic reduction in animal populations is a loss of habitat through an increase in human population. Poaching as a reason for a decrease in animal populations comes only second and is very regional. When poaching is indeed an issue it is almost always commercial poaching. The romantic image of the family father that poaches because he has hungry children to feed is an anachronism. Commercial meat poaching has always been going on. It is amazing that many game populations can stand such poaching pressure for an extended period of time. But if it goes on long enough at non-sustainable levels the populations will become extinct. Commercial trophy poaching is presently once again showing its ugly face and is on the increase, thereby endangering elephants and rhinos in Eastern, central and Southern Africa.

When one considers that hunters and adventurers, like Carl Georg Schillings in his book "With Flashlight and Rifle", feared over a hundred years ago that Africa's wild game would soon be fully extinct, it is clear that it has held its own despite immense pressures.

INTELLIGENT USE VERSES TOTAL PROTECTION

International conservation can claim many success stories. One example is the white rhino. At the beginning of the last century there were only about thirty of them remaining in South Africa. Today there are again over 20,000. The situation is similar with the crocodile. Thirty years ago all of the twenty-three subspecies were considered endangered. Today only seven of the subspecies are still considered threatened. These success stories were possible through a combination of effective measures against uncontrolled over use and sensible sustainable use. Use creates a material incentive to preserve natural resources with the goal of long term sustainable yield. The future of African game is therefore often reduced to the phrase, "Use it or Lose it".

Whether use is positive or not depends on sustainability. This term, which is often misused nowadays quite contrary to its original meaning, was introduced exactly 300 years ago in modern forestry by Hans Carl von Carlowitz in his textbook "Sylvicultura oeconomica". A century later, Georg Ludwig Hartig developed the concept of sustainability further. In a nutshell it means that the forest as a resource should be used as extensively as possible, however, in a manner that allows the same amount of use for following generations. Even shorter: one should never harvest more than grows back.

This thought has had a strong influence on the international conservation community for the last thirty years. The interna-

tionally used term "conservation" which was defined and applied by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in its World Conservation Strategy in 1980 includes mere protection as well as sustainable use of living resources. Sustainable use of natural resources and their protection are equally pillars of the Convention of Biological Diversity and consequently the "Rio Process", a combination of environmental and economical development. Those who hunt, and not the anti-use community, can therefore rightfully claim to stand as the basis of the convention. To the contrary, however, international discussions and negotiations are often lead by scientists and politicians who have a clear aversion to use of wild animals. The same feeling dominates the perception of hunting in the media.

HUNTING CAN BE THE BEST CONSERVATION

Hunting can be the best conservation. This is the reason that the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) created the Markhor Prize, which is awarded during the Conferences of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the most important environmental convention. It was awarded for the first time during the Conference of Parties in Bonn in 2008. It is designed to honor projects that support biological diversity through good hunting practices. The name alone says a lot about the prize. The rare Markhor wild goat was almost extinct in northwestern Pakistan until controlled hunting was reinstated. The large amounts of money paid by hunters provided local incentive to protect the species from uncontrolled hunting for a few kilograms of meat.

When the Prize was awarded in Bonn to the Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor in Tanzania and the bordering Niassa National Game Reserve in Mozambique, the CIC justified the choice of the recipients as follows: "In many African countries sustainable hunting and hunting tourism have led in recent decades to increased game populations and secured habitat diversity. Banning hunting has had the opposite effect. The Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor and the Niassa Reserve both follow the sustainable use agenda in order to benefit wildlife and rural people at the same time." The CIC called on the governments of Africa to share the revenues from hunting tourism with local communities and inhabitants, who live side by side with the game animals, and also to re-invest some into conservation. "Only through such investments does hunting become truly sustainable."

Ahmed Djoghlaif, the then Executive Secretary of the Convention of Biological Diversity, praised the newly created award: "The sustainable use of renewable biological resources is best suited for the long term preservation of habitat diversity... The CIC Markhor Award for outstanding achievement in conservation through sustainable use is unique in the fact that it honors individuals, institutions, and projects that combine both conservation goals with securing a basis for local economic development, and this through the utilization of principles of sustainable use including hunting."

Last year's prize went to Namibia and the country's conservancies. Their example shows that declining wildlife is not a law of nature. Good wildlife management and the creation of incentives by sustainable hunting can prevent this. Since Namibia has suitable legislation and favourable policies, wildlife numbers have grown exponentially – on private land and in communal conservancies alike.

Foreign Minister Ms. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaithe, who received the award, later wrote: "Namibia is a true example of how Government, the private sector and rural communities can work together to achieve results. We need to continue collectively to promote sustainable fair chase and ethical hunting as a conservation tool, because it contributes greatly to Namibia's GDP, employment creation, training possibilities and the social upliftment of rural people. Sustainable trophy hunting is the result of good conservation and wildlife management, and to continue to use this resource sustainably, we need foreign hunters, local hunting guides and operators to demonstrate responsible stewardship."

TOTAL PROTECTION IS OFTEN COUNTERPRODUCTIVE

The common division of modes of use in the categories of consumptive and non-consumptive is misleading. Even the presumed "non-consumptive" photo-tourism consumes habitat and in cases of mass tourism can severely damage natural areas. On the other hand, controlled hunting safaris, that are naturally considered "consumptive", usually have a far lower impact. In this regard hunting today deserves to be considered a form of "eco-tourism".

Despite the acceptance of sustainable hunting in principle by large wildlife conservation organizations, such as the WWF for instance, through both trophy hunting and local indigenous hunting, there are a large number of financially powerful animal welfare and animal rights organizations in both Western Europe the USA that completely reject any form of "consumptive" use, in particular hunting. Their primary interest is directed towards animals that create an emotional reaction in potential donors, such as seals (Namibia) and elephants, in order to collect as many donations as possible.

The call for general and total protection has no scientific basis. Economically it is also not feasible; actually the opposite is true. Poor developing countries cannot afford to prohibit use of available natural resources. When wildlife has no economical value, it will give way to cornfields and cattle. Therefore the mostly ideological based anti-use campaigns actually do more damage to preserving wild animal populations than they help. It isn't mere coincidence that these campaigns are run by people and groups from rich industrialized nations that aren't met with the consequences of their own actions. A person who lives in a large European city can easily propagate to fully protect elephants and lions. It's not their fields that the elephants will trample, and it's not their children that the lions will eat.

For visiting hunters lions are an exciting and perhaps even “romantic” species. For the locals however lions present an obvious threat for both life and limb. Only when the local population has a direct benefit from large predators are they tolerated.



CONSERVATION “WITH” OR “WITHOUT” PEOPLE

Even outside protected areas killing wild game in almost all African countries is not allowed, except with a valid license. Exceptions are made for the protection of lives and property. Such regulations can be traced back to the colonial period. Nevertheless, no country anywhere has ever been able to deter forbidden or illegal use. Game has always been a natural resource that provides a large proportion of animal protein in local diets, particularly in areas where the tsetse fly makes raising cattle impossible. It is also no coincidence that the Kiswahili word “Nyama” means both “wild animal” and “meat”. The importance of wild game as a source of food in Africa is often overlooked.

Illegally hunting game and then selling both meat and trophies is part of the black market economy. This type of business is often run by small private entrepreneurs who are efficient, and implement modern technology. The resource is used free of charge which means the extraction of game is often wasteful. Contrary to traditional forms of hunting modern poaching takes more game out of populations than can naturally be reproduced. By forbidding traditional hunting and use the ownership of the game was transferred to the government, and previously legitimate users were pushed into illegality. The situation was made worse by the creation of countless protected areas from which the indigenous inhabitants were forced, mostly without compensation, to leave and settle elsewhere. These people, most of them poor, carry the cost of conservation without benefit.

Governments attempting this kind of conservation “against” the people (in Africa it is referred to as politics of “fences and

fines”) haven’t met acceptance anywhere. Most modern conservation programs attempt therefore to establish a concept of conservation “with” the people. This means that all involved parties are included in the decision making process and in benefit sharing mechanisms. The long standing conservation strategies based on “top down” decision making are being replaced with “bottom up” strategies of equal participation.

The first pragmatic community oriented conservation program in Africa was CAMPFIRE in Zimbabwe, which started in the 1980’s. Similar concepts were thereafter implemented in Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Namibia. Each of these placed hunting as the most important source of income. The most successful of these was Namibia. The government there gave leeway to the rural communities and avoided dominating the process, and most importantly allowed rural communities from the very beginning to retain the monetary proceeds from hunting. As a result the game populations have increased many times.

To which extent that community oriented economic strategies of game management can prevent species extinction in the face of rapid human population growth must yet be seen. No one should expect miracles. Experience over the last three decades, however, has shown that without such community programs the survival of game species outside of national parks isn’t possible. Opponents to such programs have yet to come up with a plausible alternative. Primarily they want to return to the outdated system of “fences and fines” because they are opposed to hunting for ideological reasons. Hunting is, however, in many cases an

In areas with heavy cattle grazing and uncontrolled land use there is little room remaining for wild animals.



Local rangers (here a photo from the Selous-Niassa Corridor in southern Tanzania) often find snares while patrolling, and regularly confiscate guns.

indispensable component of community oriented game management.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

In the face of increasing human population, continuing infrastructure problems, and need for developmental improvement in Africa the prospects for long term preservation of game animals and biodiversity is uncertain. Recently, the race to transform large tracts of land for use as industrial agriculture for production of both food and energy has been added to the list of issues.

It also can't be expected that community based sustainable use concepts will work wonders. Corruption, overly powerful state bureaucracies, unsuitable legal frameworks, and managerial deficits in

poor rural areas often make local participation and local control very difficult, and can hinder that revenues from resource use flow to local communities. Market distortion through taxes, subsidies, and agricultural politics, which all discriminate against wildlife use also deter the development of the game management economic sector.

The most secure guarantee for the acceptance of game management is to make it economically attractive to the local community. For peasants, farming and raising cattle are far more important than game management. Only when game management presents a benefit, or at least sensible compliment, to agriculture, or cattle grazing, is it able to survive in sustainable form outside of protected areas. Positive and competitive returns are

only achieved by a few forms of use, and experience has shown that the best return is through hunting tourism.

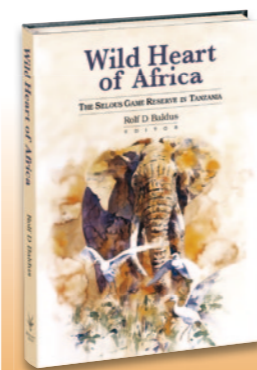
Without a strong economic incentive through use of natural resources, both inside and outside of protected areas, the long term prospect of preservation of biodiversity in Africa is dire. Consequently the phrase "Use it or Lose it" has its justification, even if it isn't the solution in every instance.

Africa's wildlife and the people who live along side those animals need hunting. Hunting tourism is a form of use that brings a particularly high economic return through very limited disturbance. Hunting tourism must however be sustainable and the return has to flow into conservation schemes that preserve habitat and also benefit local communities. In many places this is the case, but unfortunately not everywhere. Hunters around the world are diligently working on establishing the principle of sustainable hunting throughout Africa despite the various challenges. The new hunting journal "Hunter's Path" is committed to these principles. It is important to campaign for this form of trophy hunting throughout the international hunting community. ■



Above: A newly discovered poacher's camp. The meat is smoked and then transported to markets, where it is sold.

Below: Wild animals seen from the perspective of national park visitors have little in common with animals in real wilderness. Additionally, so called eco-tourism has a damaging effect through the development of previously wild areas.



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PROMOTING QUALITY HUNTING

When one speaks of hunting tourism in Africa it isn't hard to find negative examples. In many areas sustainability isn't certain. Sometimes too many game animals are killed, as licenses are obtained through bribery of local officials. There are also cases where the outfitter gives the local game warden an extra monetary tip in camp, so that he looks the other way when a less desirable trophy is tossed into the bush so another larger one may be shot.

A particularly sad chapter in this story is the lucrative distribution of hunting territories in some countries. In one east African country hunting territories were awarded directly by the Director of the Conservation Department for a price of 5.000 Euros a year, whether or not the actual market value at auction would have been twenty- or even thirty times higher. Just a little common sense explains the real reason for such practices. It is also not unusual for hunting territories to be granted to politicians, or to close relatives of bureaucrats responsible for hunting issues. In situations like this there usually isn't enough money to re-invest in conservation or for investment the local community either. When economic returns simply trickle away in this fashion there is no basis to justify hunting tourism.

As a final example let us examine South Africa. There are currently more than 10,000 game farms there, and because of income generated by hunting the overall game populations have increased by many times. Even species that were almost extinct, such as the white rhino, or the bontebok, are now found in great numbers. This was achieved by giving landowners proprietary rights over game animals and hunting. In many dry areas this generates far more income than farming, and in a less harmful manner to the environment. There is no question, the game farms are a unique success story for both game animals and habitat diversity. This also shows that hunting can help bring animals off the endangered species list. However, the necessary commercialization of hunting has its dark side. Many farms are far too small and it is hard to speak of "hunting" free roaming game in this situation. And then there

is the so called practice of "put and take" hunting. This is when an animal is placed in a small fenced area so a shooter can come and kill it a couple days later. Recently, a 63 inch kudu was harvested in this fashion, and for his efforts the game farmer made 30% profit in the span of just a few days. Also, some game animals are artificially bred to create species that don't exist in nature, such as black impalas. Recently, some game farmers have even allowed shady characters from Vietnam to "hunt" white rhino, even though it is very clear that they are only interested in the horn, and in this manner are obviously getting around the international rhino horn trade embargo. Internationally the image of hunting though has suffered the most through "canned hunting". This is when animals are killed in tiny fenced areas, particularly lions. Despite the best efforts of the South African officials to ban the killing of specially raised lions, currently more the 3,000 lions are waiting for their execution.

Sometimes you get the impression that hunting operations and hunting guests are enthusiastically sawing on the very branch on which they sit. Short term thinking with the goal of immediate profit limits sustainability. And, the desire for large trophies often clouds rational thinking. The worst enemy hunters have isn't anti-hunters rather it is sometimes hunters themselves.

This makes it imperative that ethical hunters and hunting publications take a strong stance against criminal actions and all forms of unethical hunting. Demand drives the market for unethical hunting. The CIC is engaged politically worldwide for sustainable hunting to be accepted as the basis for conservation. In cooperation with large international United Nations organizations, such as the World Food Program, the CIC is working on refining hunting regulations and hunting methods in both Africa and Asia. Another example is the development of certification for hunting tourism and remodeling the CIC measurement formulas and their use to deter abuse.