

# Safari hunting under siege

Dr Rolf Baldus and Andrew Cauldwell sparked a debate in the e-newsletter, *African Indaba*, by asking whether the hunting industry could prove it was above board and if the violators of ethical hunting standards were being rooted out? Roelof Bezuidenhout investigates.

**S**OME commentators contend that the growth of the safari-hunting industry in Africa currently exceeds the capacity to manage it well, throughout the region and that malpractices are making greater external control inevitable. For example, trophies that have not been bagged under certain conditions could, in future, be banned from import into the EU or the US.

These are some of the issues that have compelled Gerhard Damm, editor and publisher of the e-newsletter *African Indaba*, to initiate a debate about the future of safari hunting on the continent. Damm fears the next generation of hunters will have to go on arm-chair safaris and read old books to learn about hunting.

"An African safari is every hunter's dream and the funds they generate can have substantial economic benefits for Africa and a positive impact on the conservation of the continent's wildlife. But these attributes also put an enormous responsibility on all stakeholders in the hunting industry," he says.

## Africa's population doubled by 2025

According to Dr Rolf Baldus and Andrew Cauldwell, who have extensive knowledge of the hunting industry in Tanzania, Africa's population will have doubled by 2025. By then many wildlife areas and hunting grounds will have disappeared.

They opened the debate in *African Indaba* by pointing out that wildlife, as a land use system, already has to compete economically with other options such as growing crops, cattle, infrastructure and investment. Even where wildlife is the accepted land-use option, hunting has to compete with photographic tourism. This means hunting has to produce competitive revenues for landowners, the state and communities, in addition to its own upkeep.

## Urbanites are easily influenced

According to Baldus and Cauldwell, another problem is that urban populations, increasingly alienated from nature and natural processes, are easily misled by activist groups who earn millions of dollars with campaigns against hunting and sustainable use of wildlife. This money is not normally reinvested into conservation, but used for more campaigns. The more influential groups are able to convince politicians in the EU and the US to place more restrictions on the import of trophies from Africa.

It is not only the green movement and extreme animal-rights views that drive the anti-hunting agenda. Bad hunting practices and unsustainable trophy hunting also fan the flames of activists. All eyes will be closely trained on safari hunting in Africa, and questions will be raised concerning whether it complies with international leg-

islation and generally accepted ethical standards, and whether the hunting industry can prove it's above board and that the violators are the exception and are brought to book.

Hunting, says Baldus and Cauldwell, must prove that it contributes to the survival of wildlife and the conservation of wild lands.

Revenues must contribute to the protection of natural resources and to the well-being of people who live with these beasts that can be destructive and dangerous.

"While many forward-looking people in the industry recognise the need for change, others resist any reform that will bring new players to the industry.

"They fear losing their privileged status and that they'll have to compete with other wildlife-based individuals in wildlife administrations around Africa.

"Good game laws, international conventions and management plans for conservation areas do not help much if the violators can pay their way out," they write.

## Calls for a certification system

Baldus and Cauldwell believe it's high time for the trophy exporting countries and the safari outfitters operating in Africa to get their houses in order.

They argue a certification system for safari hunting could offer a partial solution to the problems.

"Certification is a well-established concept in the forestry industry, where approval is granted for forest products extracted on a sustainable basis," they say.

"A similar concept could enable the safari hunting industry to establish minimum common benchmarks that will not only consolidate the international acceptance of safari hunting, but assist in opening new and exciting hunting areas. It can also provide direction to the international safari hunting industry and guidance for the prospective tourist safari hunters.

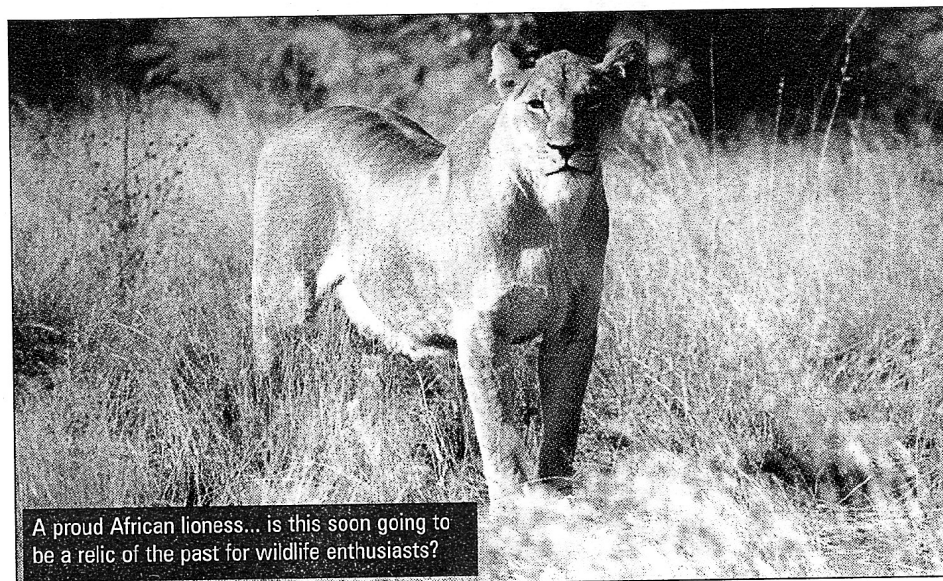
"A comprehensive certification programme should embrace the safari hunting industry in all of its forms, be it on game ranches or on wild lands.

"We suggest that a normative set of standards for hunting practices must be defined and that the initiative should come from within the hunting world.

"The issues include sustainable quotas, fair chase, sustainable management of the hunting areas and socially beneficial community support.

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