

“Working within CITES for the protection and conservation of species in international trade”

September 12, 2007

Acting Chief  
Division of Scientific Authority  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 750  
Arlington, VA 22203

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing on behalf of the North American Regional Bureau of the Species Survival Network (SSN), the SSN Trophy Hunting Working Group, and the undersigned Member organizations of the SSN, to comment on whether the United States should take a reservation on amendments to Appendices I and II adopted by the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP14) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Comments from the public were requested in the *Federal Register*, Volume 72, No. 155, on 13 August 2007.

SSN urges the United States not to take reservations on amendments to the Appendices adopted at CITES CoP14. Although CITES Article XXIII allows Parties to take such reservations, the United States has never done so. Reservations show lack of good-faith and undermine the negotiation process at CoPs that is critical to the ultimate success of CITES. Not taking reservations sets a valuable example to other Parties.

With specific regard to Proposal 3, Uganda’s successful proposal to establish an annual export quota of 28 leopards (*Panthera pardus*) as sport-hunted trophies, although we do not advocate that the United States take a reservation to the quota, we do urge the United States to utilize domestic measures under the Endangered Species Act to not allow imports of leopards from Uganda because there is no scientific basis for this export quota. As noted by the United States in the *Federal Register*, Volume 72, No. 105, 1 June 2007, page 30619:

*“Although a quota of 50 is considered by Uganda as precautionary, the proposal does not provide any supporting biological information for this figure. Therefore, it cannot be determined whether the population can be sustained under the proposed quota figure.”*

In a letter we sent to you on 17 May 2007 regarding leopard quotas to be discussed at CoP14, we provided evidence that both Uganda and Mozambique used a model for estimating leopard population sizes that has been discredited in the scientific literature. This model for estimating leopard populations in sub-Saharan Africa is based on habitat availability and rainfall (Martin and de Meulenaer 1988). The Martin and de Meulenaer (1988) model has been discredited as a scientific basis for estimating leopard populations and should not be utilized to set annual export quotas.

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group, 2002) states,

*“based on estimates of density and geographic range (Nowell and Jackson, 1996), the leopard's total effective population size is estimated at greater than 50,000 mature breeding individuals, but with a **declining trend** due to persecution and degradation of its habitat and prey base.”*

In stark contrast, the Martin and de Meulenaer (1988) model provides an indirect estimate of 714,000 leopards, which felid experts have said is “generally considered to be an overestimate” (Nowell and Jackson, 1996). Indeed, according to Nowell and Jackson (1996), the model has been criticized for

*“failure to account adequately for persecution and reduction of wild prey as factors lowering leopard density” and the questionable “universality of the correlation of leopard density and rainfall.... a variable representing prey density should be incorporated into the regression linking leopard density to rainfall”, and “while the link between herbivore density and rainfall may be generally valid, a herbivore biomass increase does not necessarily equate to increased leopard prey biomass. The herbivore biomass could be in the form of very large species (elephant, buffalo, hippopotamus) or herd-forming species (zebra and wildebeest), which provide little food for leopards.”*

Nowell and Jackson (1996) also provide information on how the model grossly overestimates the actual numbers of leopards as determined by field studies:

*“The rainfall/density regression used by Martin and de Meulenaer (1988) suggest that Zaire would hold some 33% of sub-Saharan African leopards, a figure resulting from presumed very high densities in tropical rain forest (up to 40 leopards, including young and transients, per 100 km<sup>2</sup>). However, Baily (1993) is among several authorities who have argued that since terrestrial mammalian prey biomass is lower in rain forest than in savannah environments, as the bulk of productivity is locked up in the tree canopy, therefore leopard density should be correspondingly lower... D. Jenny (in litt. 1994) provides a preliminary estimate of five adult leopards in his 80 km<sup>2</sup> study area in Tai NP, or 6.25 leopards per 100 km<sup>2</sup>. J. Hart (in litt. 1994) offers a preliminary estimate of one adult leopard per 8-12 km<sup>2</sup> in Zaire's Ituri forest, or 8.3-12.5 leopards per 100 km<sup>2</sup>. These estimates are considerably lower than the 40 leopards per 100 km<sup>2</sup> suggested by Martin and de Meulenaer's rainfall/density regression.”*

Regarding the Martin and de Meulenaer (1988) model, Norton (1990) warned,

*“Results of ecological studies on leopards in the Cape Province, South Africa, carried out by the Chief Directorate: Nature and Environmental Conservation, suggest that some of the assumptions on which the population estimates are based are highly suspect, and that the population figures may be unrealistically high. The recommendations for leopard conservation and management should therefore be viewed with caution, especially hunting quotas based on a proportional offtake from the “estimated total” population.”*

Similarly, we urge the United States to utilize domestic measures to not allow imports of more than 60 leopards from Mozambique because there is no scientific basis for the increased

export quota of 120 leopards agreed at CoP14. As noted by the United States in the *Federal Register*, Volume 72, No. 105, 1 June 2007, page 30613:

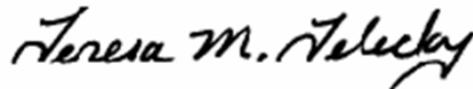
*Mozambique's request does not provide enough biological information about the population of leopards or their prey in Mozambique to determine whether the population can be sustained under the proposed quota figure.*

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



Adam M. Roberts  
Coordinator  
North American Regional Bureau



Teresa M. Telecky, Ph.D.  
Chair  
Trophy Hunting Working Group

On behalf of the following SSN Member organizations:

Animal Alliance of Canada  
Animal Protection Institute  
Animal Welfare Institute  
Animals Asia Foundation  
Born Free Foundation  
Born Free USA  
Care for the Wild International  
Cetacean Society International  
Co-Habitat  
David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation  
Fast Forward Foundation  
Humane Society of the United States  
Humane Society International  
Humane Society International-Australia  
International Primate Protection League  
Pro Wildlife  
Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals  
Wildlife Trust of India  
World Society for the Protection of Animals  
Zoocheck Canada, Inc.