

CoP13 Prop. 6 (Kenya) Transfer from Appendix II to Appendix I of the African lion (*Panthera leo*)

SSN VIEW: SUPPORT ADOPTION OF PROPOSAL

- The African lion meets the biological criteria in Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP12), Annex 1, paragraph C(i) for listing on Appendix I: there is a decline in the number of individuals in the wild which has been observed as ongoing or as having occurred in the recent past.
- The current population of free-ranging African lions is an estimated 23,000 (16,500-30,000) individuals; this is 45-70% lower than the previous 1996 estimate of 30,000 – 100,000 individuals.
- The species is listed as Vulnerable by IUCN on the basis of criterion C2a(i), meaning it faces “a high risk of extinction in the wild,” with an estimated population of less than 10,000 mature breeding individuals, there is a continuing decline in numbers of mature individuals, and no subpopulation contains more than 1,000 mature breeding individuals. The IUCN categorization has been corroborated by a recent inventory of free-ranging African lions by the African Lion Working Group.
- African lion specimens in international trade include hunting trophies (up to 728 per year in recent years), skins (up to 274 per year in recent years), and skulls (up to 200 per year in recent years).
- Trophy hunting quotas are set at unsustainable levels in some areas and some quotas are difficult to enforce. Recent evidence (Whitman et al., 2004) indicates that trophy hunting - which targets males - has add-on effects that affect its sustainability, including disruption of breeding cycles and the breakdown of social systems, resulting in more frequent pride takeovers, increased infanticide by new males, and in some cases, localised extinction.
- Listing the African lion on Appendix I would encourage exporting Parties to allow the Conference of the Parties to approve export quotas for hunting trophies, in accordance with Resolution Conf. 9.21, as is done for cheetah, leopard, and other Appendix I species; this would encourage quotas based on sound scientific advice, using the latest information on lion populations, to ensure that exports are not detrimental to the survival of the species.
- Listing the lion on Appendix I would also encourage importing Parties, prior to issuing an import permit, to ensure that trade in lion trophies will not be detrimental to the survival of the species, in accordance with Article III (3)(a).

EVIDENCE OF A DECLINE THAT IS ONGOING OR THAT OCCURRED IN THE RECENT PAST

One hundred years ago, African lions existed in all suitable habitats in sub-Saharan Africa. Today, this once common species has become increasingly rare outside of protected areas and populations are highly fragmented. Lions now occur in only 89 locations, 45% of which contain 70 or fewer animals. Half of all lions are found in just five populations: the Selous Game Reserve of Tanzania, the Serengeti-Maasai Mara ecosystem of Tanzania and Kenya, the Kruger ecosystem of South Africa, the Kafue National Park/Luangua Valley/Lower Zambezi National Park of Zambia, and the Okavango Delta of Botswana. All populations within West and Central Africa are small and isolated, and decreasing even in some protected areas.

The best information available on free-ranging African lions is a recently published continental inventory (Bauer and Van Der Merwe 2004), which indicates that the total population is an estimated 23,000 (16,500 – 30,000) animals, compared with an estimated 30,000 – 100,000 animals less than a decade ago (Nowell and Jackson 1996). Although methodological differences make direct comparison of these figures impossible, the great divergence between the two estimates strongly suggests a marked and ongoing decline of this species on a continental scale. Applying the upper and lower ranges of both estimates indicates a potential continent-wide population decline of 45 – 70%. In addition to this overall decline, many individual populations have also been substantially reduced. Such localised declines have occurred in every region. For example, the Hwange National Park population in Zimbabwe has declined from 500 (Nowell and Jackson 1996), to just 120 (Bauer and Van Der Merwe 2004).

IUCN classifies the lion as Vulnerable on the basis of criterion C2a(i), meaning the species faces “a high risk of extinction in the wild” with an estimated population of less than 10,000 mature breeding individuals, a continuing decline in the breeding population, and no sub-population contains more than 1,000 breeding adults. The IUCN categorisation has been upheld by a recent inventory of free-ranging African lions (Bauer and Van Der Merwe 2004).

SSN notes that a third study (Chardonnet 2002) suggests lion populations may be larger. However, this informal survey, does not represent the best available information and should not be substituted for the more recent, comprehensive and peer-reviewed inventory by Bauer and Van Der Merwe (2002). The Chardonnet survey was based on informed opinion and not on actual census, was not peer-reviewed and was not intended to be comprehensive or authoritative, and should be used only to supplement other inventories, rather than replace them. SSN notes, however, that like Bauer and Van Der Merwe, Chardonnet provides a lion population estimate significantly lower than the 1996 estimate by Nowell and Jackson and thus provides evidence that a decline has occurred.

LISTING CRITERIA

The African lion meets the criteria for listing in Appendix I established in Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP12). Specifically, the lion satisfies Annex 1, Criterion C (i), because “a decline in the number of individuals in the wild...has been observed as ongoing or as having occurred in the past (but with a potential to resume).” As evidenced by the IUCN categorisation as Vulnerable and the recent inventory by Bauer and Van Der Merwe (2004), the best information available on lion populations confirms that there has been a significant observed decline in the number of individuals in the wild and every indication is that the decline is ongoing.

Removal for live display Additionally, it has been suggested that the small and isolated (geographically separate) lion populations in West and Central Africa also qualify for Appendix I listing, on the basis of Criterion A (i) and (ii): these geographically separate populations are small and are characterised by an observed, inferred or projected decline in the number of individuals or the area and quality of habitat, and each sub-population is very small. Recent authors have suggested that these populations should be categorised as regionally Endangered by IUCN (Bauer and Van Der Merwe 2004).

CURRENT THREATS

African lions face many threats in the wild, including habitat loss and degradation, reduction in their natural prey base, disease impacts, human-wildlife conflict and **unsustainable levels of trophy hunting**. SSN believes that action should be taken to address each of these threats in an appropriate context. CITES provides the appropriate mechanism for addressing the threat posed by international trade in lion trophies.

Research indicates that trophy-hunting quotas are set at unsustainable levels in some areas; and that quotas are often poorly enforced. Researchers (Creel and Creel 1997) found that while the 1992 level of lion hunting in Selous Game Reserve, Tanzania, was sustainable, it would not be so if the lion hunting quota for the reserve was filled; only 28 percent of the quota was filled. Similarly, Whitman et al. (2004) found that Tanzania's hunting quotas were too high, arbitrarily set and difficult to enforce. Other researchers (Macdonald and Loveridge 2003) found that lion hunting quotas in areas bordering Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe, had to be radically cut in order to allow the lion population in the Park to survive.

Additionally, recent research indicates that preferential targeting of the largest males by trophy hunters causes add-on effects that must be taken into account when setting hunting quotas. These effects include serious disruption to breeding cycles and social systems, resulting in increased infanticide and a corresponding reduction in female reproductive success. Because of the mobility of males, trophy hunting near protected areas may also create population sinks that reduce populations even within the protected area. This threat, in addition to mortalities from the persecution of lions as problem animals (e.g. following livestock predation), is believed to be having significant negative impacts on lion populations. The Kenyan Proposal would enable CITES Parties to address the threat posed by international demand for lion trophies, consistent with the objectives and purposes of the Convention.

An Appendix I listing will not prevent trophy hunting from taking place, but may assist in ensuring stricter regulation of this activity, encouraging more detailed research into the wild status of lions, and the sustainability of lion trophy hunting. Such a listing may also encourage lion range States to seek approval by the Conference of the Parties for scientifically-based export quotas under Resolution Conf. 9.21 as occurs for other Appendix I species. Currently, only one exporting Party, Ethiopia, has voluntarily reported to the CITES Secretariat its national export quota of lion trophies. Appendix I listing would also encourage importing Parties, prior to issuing an import permit, to ensure that trade in lion trophies will not be detrimental to the survival of the species, in accordance with Article III (3)(a).

CONCLUSION

Based on the best information available, the African lion clearly satisfies the criteria for inclusion in Appendix I. SSN also reminds Parties that Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP 12) states: “...by virtue of the precautionary principle, in cases of uncertainty, the Parties shall act in the best interest of the conservation of the species when considering proposals for amendment of Appendices I and II.” **An Appendix I listing is undoubtedly in the best interest of the conservation of the African lion.**

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