



HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

AFRICA

25 July 2017

The Honorable O.C.Z. Muchinguri
Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate
11th Floor Kaguvi Building
Cnr 4th Street/Central Avenue
P Bag 7753 Causeway, Harare
Zimbabwe
Fax 253 4 256673
Email: ministry@environment.gov.zw

Dear Minister Muchinguri,

I am writing you to ask you to take action regarding reports of irregularities in the recent killing of Xanda, the son of Cecil the lion, by a trophy hunter in the Ngamo Forest Area, 2 km from the border with Hwange National Park.

It is our understanding that, in Zimbabwe, male lions of any age known to be heading prides or known to be part of a coalition heading prides with dependent cubs (18 months old or less) should not be hunted. We base this understanding on a document entitled "The Definition of a Hunttable Male Lion,"¹ which is available on the home page of the Zimbabwe Parks & Wildlife Management Authority website,² which states, "Hunttable male lions are defined as those male lions whose off-take has no negative impact on the sustainability of local lion population dynamics. Research has shown that these are typically lions six years of age or more that have completed at least one breeding cycle. To reduce risks of infanticide, males of any age known to be heading prides or known to be part of a coalition heading prides with dependent cubs (18 months old or less) should not be hunted. Based on these considerations, a hunttable male lion is at least six years of age and is not known to head a pride or be part of a coalition heading a pride with dependent cubs." (emphasis added)

The Zimbabwe Professional Hunters and Guides Association (ZPHGA) has confirmed that they have the same understanding, having stated in a 22 July Facebook post, with regard to the killing of Xanda, that, "Before entertaining the thought of hunting this cat, and knowing the history of this area, both the Senior Ranger for ZNPWMA in the area, and the field representative for Hwange's lion research project were contacted by the professional hunter. Both confirmed that the lion, previously with a pride in the park, had been ousted by a coalition and had taken up residence in the adjacent forestry concession for the past 6 months. They furthermore confirmed that the lion in question did not have any dependent cubs ..."³ (emphasis added)

However, according to a 24 July statement from scientists from the University of Oxford's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCru), in response to the ZPHGA statement, Xanda was "a territorial pride male in a pride of three females with at least seven dependent cubs of between 1 and 1.5

¹ http://www.zimparks.org/images/conservation_uploads/Hunttable%20male%20lion.pdf

² <http://www.zimparks.org/>

³ <https://www.facebook.com/ZPHGA/>

years old. These cubs are too young to survive on their own and will certainly be vulnerable to infanticide.”⁴ Oxford’s WildCru scientists have been studying lions in Hwange National Park for nearly two decades, and fitted a research collar on Xanda in July 2015. His movements were continuously tracked until his killing.

The University of Oxford scientist also disputed the ZPHGA’s claims, stating “the professional hunter was said to have been told by our field staff that ‘the lion had previously been with a pride in the park’ and ‘confirmed that the lion in question did not have any dependent cubs’. In fact, he was informed that this lion, whose range spanned the park boundary, was a pride male associated with a pride and dependent cubs, and that hunting him would be detrimental to the population. It is regrettable that the ZPHGA misrepresented this information which has created, in some quarters, an incorrect impression.”⁵

In light of these irregularities we urge the Government of Zimbabwe to:

1. investigate the killing of Xanda to confirm that the relevant regulations and policies were followed and make the findings publicly known;
2. confirm publicly that it is the policy of the Government of Zimbabwe that “males of any age known to be heading prides or known to be part of a coalition heading prides with dependent cubs (18 months old or less) should not be hunted;”
3. not issue an export permit for the trophy of Xanda if any irregularities are found;
4. prosecute any people involved in illegal acts with regard to the killing of Xanda if evidence of such is found; and
5. establish a 5 km no-hunting zone around Hwange National Park to prevent further killings of research animals, as urged by lion scientists at the University of Oxford, and which of interest to photo-tourism operators in Hwange as well, according to the scientists.

Sincerely,



Audrey Delsink
HSI-Africa: Executive Director

Cc: Mr. Craig Hoover, Chief, Management Authority, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Dr. Rosemarie Gnam, Chief, Scientific Authority, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mr. Koen Doens, Director for East and Southern Africa and ACP coordination, DG DEVCO, European Commission
Mr. Roberto Ridolfi, Director for Planet and Prosperity, DG DEVCO, European Commission
Ms. Chantal Marijnissen, Head of Unit on Environment, Natural Resources, Water, DG DEVCO, European Commission

⁴ <https://www.wildcru.org/news/xanda/>

⁵ <https://www.wildcru.org/news/xanda/>