

24<sup>th</sup> January 2024

**Ms Taryn van Jaarsveld and Mr Simon Epsley,  
African Geographic**

**Ref: Article in African Geographic “2 super tuskers hunted in Tanzania” of 12 January 2024**

Let me start by first thanking you for your concern for the survival and wellbeing of African wildlife and the wilderness habitats it depends on. However, I need to point out that your efforts may have the opposite effects that intended.

I read your article on the “ **2 Super Tuskers hunted in Tanzania**” in the African Geographic, and found Simons comments together with your questions in your email, that you are either biased against hunting or poorly informed about the way the hunting industry works in Africa, especially in Tanzania.

It should be known that all hunting activity in Tanzania are conducted in accordance with The Wildlife Conservation Act and managed by the Tanzania Wildlife Authority (TAWA). Every hunter must be accompanied by qualified and licensed Professional Hunters and supervised by TAWA wildlife rangers, therefore, most of your email questions are best addressed to TAWA.

We will not release specific details that you are requesting of any hunts conducted, especially to anti-hunting publications like Africa Geographic. **You are not transparent or a balanced media** and have a reputation for always twisting the truth to fit your anti-hunting narratives, that only benefits your business interests. You support and promote only photo tourism yet will not even comment positively on any of the anti-poaching efforts that are funded largely by hunting revenue in the same reserves and to the benefit of the photo tourism camps you promote, who also operate in the Timbavati.

The spread of misinformation is a shameful activity. Your anti-hunting activism is causing the loss of thousands of square kilometres per year of wildlife habitat in Tanzania and the illegal slaughter of more wildlife annually than ever taken by hunting. I will try to explain this further to you even though I suspect (and hope I’m wrong), that you neither care nor wish to hear the truth.

The anti-hunting community are constantly fighting all legal hunting by demonizing hunting to discourage hunters from coming to Africa. You all author massive misinformation campaigns to deceive the world by blaming the decline of African wildlife on legal hunting, rather than blame **the real Armageddon of African Wildlife**, which is the **exploding human population combined with growing poverty and inequality that compels people to engage in poaching and other illegal activities for quick financial relief.**

The anti-hunting community intentionally refuses to distinguish between Conservation-Based Hunting, which is a selective, sustainable and a legal tool of conservation, and poaching, which is an illegal and devastating criminal act. **That is like saying withdrawing money from your personal bank account is the same as robbing a bank.**

We all still remember the **hysteria** generated by the anti-hunting groups and their partners in the liberal media when the Cecil the Lion story exploded in 2015. In reality, the Cecil affair only involved a minor legal infraction, but what was reported by the liberal media was pure dishonesty from which you all profited. **Millions of dollars were raised by the anti-hunting and animal rights organizations using emotionally-charged but false reports and fraudulent fund raising.** I can only call it fraud, because what else can you call it when one intentionally misinforms the public for the sake of financial gains?

It is a proven fact that this Cecil the Lion media frenzy discouraged thousands of hunters from travelling to Africa, resulting in a huge reduction in hunting revenue, driving hunting companies to operate at a loss in their less sought after hunting concessions (that previously were profitable before the Cecil hysteria) and forcing them to abandon them. The absence of hunting operators in vacated hunting concessions exposed the wildlife and habitat to decimation by poaching and other illegal activities, which in turn resulted in the loss of tens of thousands square kilometres of wilderness habitat to illegal use.

Yet the world's anti-hunting organizations continue to profit from and fundraise on a massive level, **without any concern or remorse** for the rampant destruction of African wildlife resources they actually cause, yet claim to be saving.

The Tanzania Tourist Hunting industry is 130 years old, and it has been well-regulated throughout its existence. **It is recognized as the only viable form of land use in game reserves and areas with wildlife outside the National Parks and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area.** The hunting industry plays **the main role** in funding the conservation of wildlife resources outside of National Parks in Tanzania.

Hunting concessions currently comprise of 260,677 sq km which is 29% of Tanzania's surface area, hence a much larger area than the 113,621 sq km that National Parks cover which is only 12% of Tanzania's surface area. As in all southern African countries, **most of the wildlife and wildlife habitat in Tanzania is found in the hunting areas, outside of the National Parks.**

When you consider that out of 21 National parks in Tanzania (where hunting is not permitted), **only 5 of those Parks get enough visitors to be profitable and struggle to adequately fund the remaining 16 National Parks, that do not receive enough visitors annually to fund their operational costs.** Therefore, the notion to substitute hunting with photographic safaris is **currently not a viable option nor in the foreseeable future. The removal of legal hunting will only result in the demise of all wildlife outside of the existing National Parks.**

I am proud to say that most hunting companies in Tanzania operate their own anti-poaching programs in cooperation with the TAWA at a huge annual cost, to safeguard all the natural resources and wildlife within their hunting concessions to safeguard their business interests.

The greatest benefit of hunting is not only the revenue hunting generates combined with the protection of the priceless wildlife resource and habitat inside the hunting concession, these benefits provide **the strongest possible land use justification to remain reserved for wildlife rather than succumb to the pressure for more farmland and livestock keeping.**

It is important to understand that in “trophy hunting” the aim is to harvesting of older male animals past prime reproduction, and avoids any negative impact on population growth or genetic diversity, in order to maintain healthy populations of wildlife while generating needed revenue to conserve the wildlife resources.

If it is not already clear: **now and in the forceable future, African wildlife cannot survive outside National Parks without a thriving a hunting industry and the hunting revenues it generates combined with private antipoaching activities conducted by hunting companies,** but I suspect you know all this but choose to ignore it.

The annual quotas of game set by TAWA for hunting is normally between 0.5% to 2% of the population - depending on the species except Elephant, which most southern African countries consider 0.75% of the population of Elephant as sustainable annual offtake. In Tanzania the CITES quota is only 50 elephant per year out of a population of over 60,0000, that is a **very minimal quota of only 0.08% of a stable and growing population,** and is distributed to **all** the different hunting zones in Tanzania and not to specific hunting blocks.

You seem **outraged** about the 2 legally hunted very old and past breeding bull elephant, taken last year, that brought great financial benefit to both the Government and local communities. Perhaps you should be more **sympathetic** for the **17 people killed and 36 injured by Elephant** in the last 8 years in Longido District alone (including children), and most of them in 3 concession, mine and in the 2 neighbouring concessions (where the 2 Elephant were hunted).

Please note that due to the strict legal minimum size for hunting Elephant in Tanzania, **only 29 elephants** were harvested by trophy hunters from July 2018 to December 2023, but during the same period of time, **240 Tanzanians were killed by Elephant. Anybody who finds this irrelevant is unconscionable and has no moral authority to criticize Tanzania's National conservation policy and efforts.**

You seem to think there is **sinister wrongdoing** in disposing of Elephant carcass by burning or burying it; however, in this part of Tanzania **it is actually a very responsible conservation act to prevent pastoral people from poisoning the carcass,** which if you had done your research, is commonly practiced in order to kill Lion, Leopard and Hyena that frequently prey on their livestock. In most cases throughout Africa, the elephant meat from legally hunted elephant is provided to local communities, where it is a valuable and needed source of protein. Unfortunately, in this specific area of Tanzania, local communities do not eat Elephant meat, otherwise it would have all been donated to the local villages.

I want you to consider the following questions now with total honesty:

**Who is the senseless killer here? Is it us, the hunters who selectively hunt old male animals and raise the money to protect all wildlife and their critical habitats outside National Parks? Or is it you ( the *African Geographic* together with the hordes of Animal rights organizations) that reap financial benefit by misinforming the public and demonize safari hunting and ridicule hunters in order to destroy our market, in full knowledge that this results in the merciless slaughter of thousands more animals and the loss of tens of thousands of square kilometres of pristine wilderness?**

**If you truly cared about wildlife** and its conservation across the entire continent of Africa, you would demonstrate more understanding that most of the African wildlife exists outside of National Parks and is solely protected using revenue generated by hunters and hunting companies.

Yes, there will always be two sides to any argument. However, from my side **there is no real argument if we all have the same interest**, that is the long-term wellbeing of wildlife, whether we are pro-legal hunting or anti-legal hunting. **It's time to work together for a common cause and put aside our various prejudices.**

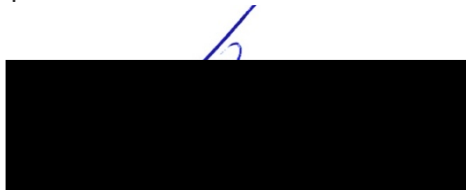
We can all agree that the exploding human population and abject poverty across Africa, is creating the most dangerous time for conservation and the survival of wildlife in African history.

Never have we been more financially weak, more desperate, more vulnerable to poaching than now. Never has it been more critical to take action to stem the wanton depletion of our precious natural resource we have inherited to safeguard for future generations. We have so much work to do, so much to improve, so much to achieve and too much at stake. African wildlife needs genuine partners to support them through all viable means, not destructive antagonists with a one-sided narrative.

In truth, **I believe** we both want the same thing, which is to protect all wilderness areas so that wildlife and its habitat can thrive. The truth remains (whether you want to acknowledge this or not), that **without hunting we will end up losing all the wildlife outside of National Parks.**

I honestly believe in my heart you do not want this.

Your loyal partner in Conservation

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Michel Mantheakis  
Chairman – Tanzania Hunting Operators Association