



CAT ACTION TREASURY

A nonprofit fund for conservation of wild cats in their natural habitats

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Not all African lion populations are declining, but the overall trend for the species is a decline of 43% over the past three generations (Bauer et al, 2015a) that is projected to continue into the future (Bauer et al, 2015b). This rate is close to the 50% guideline for a marked decline in Resolution Conf. 9.25 (Rev. CoP16, Annex 5), and the Red List assessment (Bauer et al, 2015a) notes that “Since our sample subpopulations were all monitored, we suspect an even greater average rate of decline for unmonitored unfenced subpopulations across much of Africa, since lack of monitoring could suggest lack of conservation effort.” As discussed below, there is “demonstrable potential international demand for the species that may be detrimental to its survival in the wild,” and thus the African lion is affected by trade.

An additional issue not addressed in the proposal is the threat that “look-alike” trade in captive-bred lion specimens, principally bones, poses to other Appendix I big cats, principally the tiger. As described in SC65 Doc. 38 Annex 1 pp 50-52, in China there is a large trade in wine suggestively marketed as tiger (sold from operations with large tiger captive breeding facilities in bottles that resemble or carry images of tigers), but the ingredient listed is *Panthera leo*. One such wine was subject to DNA analysis, but the contents were too degraded in the manufacturing process to allow definitive species identification (Nowell and Xu, 2007). It is very difficult to distinguish even distinctive bones like leg bones and skulls of lions and tigers (Nowell, 1993, Williams et al, 2015a), and virtually impossible once processed.

The lion’s current listing on Appendix II poses a serious law enforcement challenge for countries which prohibit the import of tiger derivatives. Such products may be legally exported without requiring an import permit. In recent years a large export trade has sprung up from South Africa, with the export to Asian countries of substantial quantities of lion bone derived from captive breeding trophy hunting operations (SC65 Doc. 38 Annex 1 and Williams et al, 2015b). It is unknown for what purposes these lion bones are being used, and whether they are being sold on to consumers as lion or tiger products.

The use of lion bone as a “covert substitute” (see Broad and Burgess 2016) for tiger bone perpetuates the use of tiger bone, when Parties have clearly called (in Resolution Conf. 12.5 Rev. CoP16) for such use to be “eventually eliminated.” Moreover, trade in lion parts and derivatives was recognized as a serious emerging threat to the African lion in the IUCN regional conservation strategies (IUCN 2006a,b) and the recent IUCN Red List assessment. The intermingling of lion and tiger bone trade threatens both species (Williams, 2015) and other Asian big cats.

Appendix I listing would not protect wild lions from commercial trade in their parts and derivatives, as commercially captive-bred specimens of Appendix I species are treated under the Convention as specimens of Appendix II. This threat can only be addressed through an annotation to the listing, whichever Appendix the Parties determine is most suitable for the African lion at COP17. The annotation could be modeled after that for the southern white rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum* and could read “for the exclusive purpose of allowing international trade in live animals to appropriate and acceptable destinations and WILD hunting trophies.”



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