

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Twenty-eighth meeting of the Animals Committee
Tel Aviv (Israel), 30 August-3 September 2015

Periodic Review of species included in Appendices I and II [Resolution Conf. 14.8 (Rev. CoP16)]

PERIODIC REVIEW OF *PANTHERA LEO*

This information document has been submitted by Kenya, in relation to agenda item 20.3.1*.

* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

Periodic Review of *Panthera leo*

Summary

Africa's lions are in precipitous decline. Threatened by “indiscriminate killing in defence of life and livestock, habitat loss, prey base depletion, bushmeat trade and poorly regulated sport hunting”¹, their numbers are estimated to have fallen by more than 50% across much of Africa in the past 30 years. They now occupy as little as 8% of their historic range.

The plight of African lions has prompted a number of international actions, including: the adoption of a resolution by the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) in November 2014, aimed at improving cross-border collaboration regarding lion conservation²; limitations placed on lion product imports (including trophies) by the Australian government, introduced in March 2015³; the establishment by the European Commission of an import permit requirement for trophies of African lions⁴. The African lion has been proposed for listing as ‘Threatened’ under the US Endangered Species Act⁵.

In view of the declining status of lion populations across much of Africa, and the increasing threat posed to the conservation of lions by international trade in the animals or their parts and products (see Annex A), Kenya recommends that members of the Animals Committee support a recommendation under the Periodic Review of the Appendices that the African lion be transferred from Appendix II to Appendix I at the next Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17).

Panthera leo and CITES

The African lion (*Panthera leo leo*) was listed on Appendix II in 1977, and the Asiatic lion (*Panthera leo persica*) was included in Appendix I in the same year.

The African lion was excluded from the Periodic Review of the *Felidae* at the 23rd meeting of the Animals Committee in 2008, following the submission of a proposal (subsequently withdrawn) to include the species in Appendix I by Kenya at the CoP13 in 2004. The Animals Committee reinstated the African lion in the Periodic Review at its 25th meeting in 2011, and agreed that this review should be considered a “high priority”. Kenya and Namibia volunteered to conduct the review.

Since this process was initiated, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) Cat Specialist Group has re-assessed the Red List status of the African lion. At its 27th meeting in 2014, the Animals Committee requested that Kenya and Namibia take this new information into account in their review, and report back to its 28th meeting.

Biological assessment

In its 2015 assessment of the status of *Panthera leo*⁶, the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group concluded that:

- Based on the latest scientific studies, the Cat Classification Task Force of the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group has provisionally proposed a new classification for Asian and African lions, splitting all lions into two subspecies, *P. l. leo* of Asia and West, Central and North Africa, and *P. l. melanochaita* from South and East Africa.
- Based on the assessment of 47 well monitored lion populations, *P. leo* has experienced an estimated population reduction of approximately 42% over the past 21 years (approximately three lion generations, 1993-2014).
- Regionally, a 60% or greater decline across much of Africa is inferred, with the exception of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe;

¹ <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/15951/0>

² <http://www.cms.int/en/document/conservation-and-management-african-lion-panthera-leo>

³ <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/wildlife-trade/cites/stricter-measures/african-lion>

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/legislation_en.htm

⁵ https://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/pdf/African_Lion_News_Release10-27-14.pdf

⁶ <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/15951/0>, op. cit.

- In West Africa, the lion subpopulation is currently estimated at just above 400 animals (<250 mature individuals). This subpopulation continues to decline, and meets the IUCN Red List criteria for Critically Endangered⁷;
- Although IUCN continues to list the species as Vulnerable, the assessment notes that **‘sample Lion subpopulations increased by 11% in four southern African countries (Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe) and in India, while an observed decline of 60% in sample subpopulations outside these countries is inferred for the remainder of its African range. In other words, in the majority of its range the Lion meets the A2 criterion for Endangered with the inferred rate of decline over 50% in three generations, but this trend is numerically mitigated by a small number of subpopulations in a restricted geographical range’**; and
- Extant lion range is estimated at 1,654,375 km², or 8% of historical range. Lions have been recently extirpated from 12 African countries and possible recent extirpation is suspected in another four. Little is known about lion populations in Angola, Central African Republic and South Sudan but drastic declines are feared, especially for the latter two countries.

The assessment does not attempt to put a figure on the current population of lions across the African continent but, in its assessment, the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group states that it has **‘greater confidence in the estimate of fewer than 20,000 Lions in Africa than in a number over 30,000’**.

These findings indicate that across most of its range the African lion now meets the biological criteria for listing in Appendix I under Resolution CITES Conf. 9.24, Annex I, Paragraph C (i)⁸: the species has experienced **‘A marked decline in the population size in the wild, which has been observed as ongoing’**.

Trade criteria

Data from the CITES-WCMC database on trade in lions and parts and products derived from them for the ten-year period 2003-2012 is summarised in Annex A to this document. The data reveal the following:

- Over the period, an annual average of nearly 3,000 lion items were declared to have been exported by 56 Parties, 12 of which are range States;
- Allowing for annual variation, there is an increasing trend in exports of specimens derived from both wild and captive-bred lions through the period 2003-2012 despite the declining continental population, with total exports, and exports from wild lions, more than three times higher in 2012 compared to 2003;
- The declared exports of bones, skulls, and skeletons derived from wild lions also show an increasing trend through the period 2003-2012, with total declared specimens in 2012 more than ten times those in 2003; and
- There were significant increases in exports of lion specimens declared for commercial purposes.

Trade data available for 2013 is incomplete but confirms that heavy trade in lion specimens continues.

Although the report entitled ‘Bones of Contention: An Assessment of the South African Trade in African Lion Bones and Other Body Parts’⁹ jointly published by the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit at the University of Oxford and TRAFFIC in July 2015, concludes that the lion bone trade in South Africa has a “negligible impact” on wild populations as the animals involved are mostly captive-bred and the bones are by-products of trophy-hunted animals, the Animals Committee should bear in mind that this report deals only with South Africa and does not address the decline in wild lions across the continent. The report in fact recommends investigation of “the trade in Lion products (especially bones) in other African countries besides South Africa to determine: (a) the extent to which the products are available through legitimate and illegitimate sources, (b) the origin of the products (wild or captive bred), and (c) whether there are negative impacts on regional wild lion populations across Lion range States in Africa.”

⁷ <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/68933833/0>

⁸ <https://cites.org/eng/res/09/09-24R16.php>

⁹ www.traffic.org/species-reports/traffic_species_mammals83.pdf

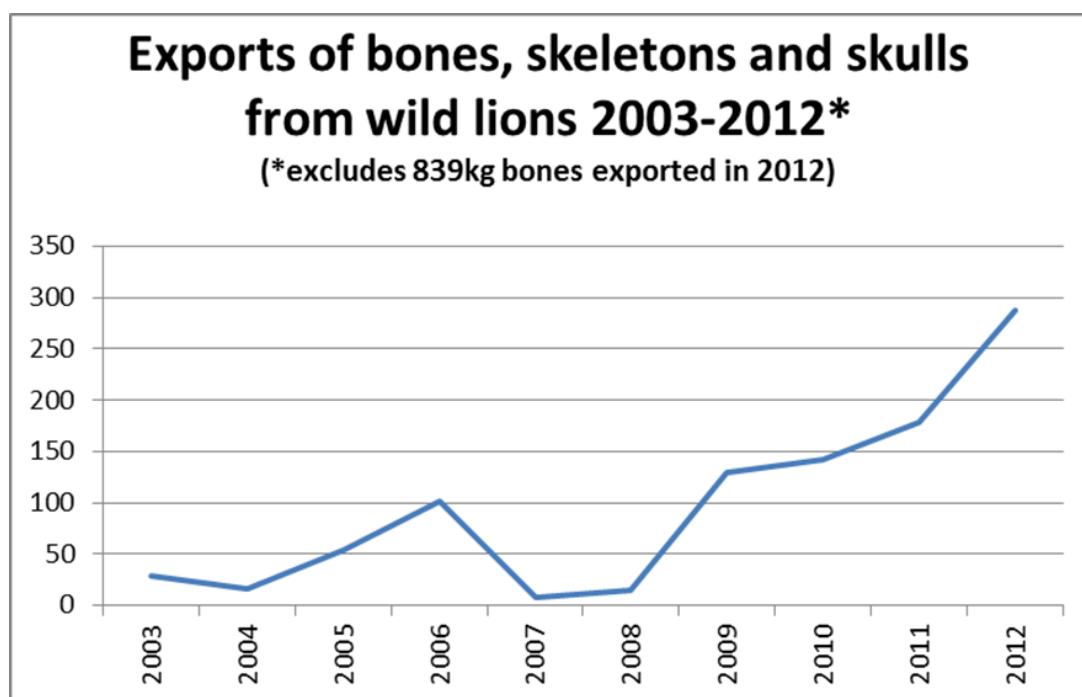
Conclusion

The 2015 IUCN Red List assessment of the African lion indicates that, across the majority of its range, the species has experienced and continues to experience a marked decline in the population size in the wild associated with a decrease in area and quality of habitat and increased exploitation. The species is affected by trade, and while uncertainties may still exist with regard to the impacts of trade on wild populations, given the marked population declines a precautionary approach is warranted.

Across much of its range, the African lion meets the criteria for a CITES Appendix I listing by virtue of an observed marked decline in its wild population, the fact that it is in trade, and that trade may be having a detrimental impact on the status of the species. International trade, although not the only factor affecting the conservation of African lions, is having a compounding and detrimental impact on the species which is likely to contribute to regional extinctions. Recognising that the review of African lions under the Periodic Review was deemed a 'high priority' in 2011, the Animals Committee should therefore conclude the Periodic Review of the species by adopting a recommendation that the species as a whole should be listed in Appendix I.

Panthera leo Trade Data

Gross lion specimen exports 2003-2012											
	Source code(s)	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Wild	W	1194	466	2350	711	698	585	1096	1376	2374	3969
Captive Bred	C,D,F,R	510	839	455	931	957	1096	1510	1887	3998	1765
Total		1714	1356	2812	1664	1678	1709	2637	3349	6394	5765



CITES trade statistics derived from the CITES Trade Database, UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Cambridge, UK: Search conducted 5 June 2015.