SA Wingshooters Association

Presentation on HUNTING

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Review of Aspects: Tourism, Hunting, Ranching and Ethics

There is significant confusion about the concepts of game reserves and ecotourism, game ranching and food production, professional hunting and recreational or cultural hunting, agronomy and wingshooting. Many of these activities are incompatible. For instance, to combine game viewing by overseas tourists with professional hunting in the same vicinity is a recipe for disaster. It can give rise to the type of international publicity which causes untold damage to the South African Tourism Industry. Unfortunately, the potential for such incidents — often involving well-meaning but uninformed people — is almost unlimited. Clearly, it is high time that critical aspects of the Industry must be addressed.

Unfortunately, the lack of knowledge about hunting and game ranching by persons on the periphery of the ‘Industry’, even by so-called experts, is such that there is no simple solution. For example, the lack of clear codes of conduct (such as quota limits) and particularly the absence of any form of centralised authority and extension services mean that any development and control programme will have to be accompanied by long term training and re-orientation by private associations.

Ten Recommendations

1. Establish a permanent working group of experts who have intimate knowledge and experience of hunting and game ranching which can indentify problems and make ongoing recommendations to authorities and the lawmakers.
2. The Department of Agriculture must accept stewardship for commercial game ranching (such as breeding and harvesting) as a legitimate form of agriculture, for recreational hunting and for the development of the wingshooting industry jointly with land managers, including the establishment of skills development programmes similar to that in the United Kingdom (e.g. gamekeepers) and rural community development projects.
3. In view of the demonstrable lack of capacity at provincial government level, the DEAT must accept centralised responsibility for professional hunting as a closely allied division of ecomanagement and tourism.
4. Recognise the economic pitfalls of trophy hunting and develop strict controls over trophy hunting on a national basis to ensure the principles of biodiversity maintenance.
5. Control very strictly the hunting of lions and spotted cats on a national basis.
6. Ban the bow hunting of elephant and rhino (in which the back-up of a big game rifle is needed).
6. Ban all canned bird shooting (captive bred and released just prior to shooting) on national basis.
7. Recognise the importance and general conservation value of wingshooting (example Scottish Grouse), and of gun-dogs for their role in conservation, sustainability studies and animal welfare.
8. Recognise the need for close cooperation with Agriculture (particularly agronomy and pasture management) to develop the Gamebird Industry to its full potential as earner of foreign currency and in poverty alleviation at rural level.
9. All hunting seasons and bag limits/quotas to be streamlined and centralised in consultation with the private sector.
10. Discontinue the system of hunting licences for gamebirds as unworkable and unimplementable (as obsolete as dog licences) which does not benefit the resource, adds an administrative burden and creates contempt for the law.
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Statements and Aspects of Hunting

Cultural Hunting

The size and characteristics of the national cultural or recreational hunting sector has not been researched adequately. Much of this is done on an informal basis, involving an estimated 200,000 local hunters. There should not be any illusions of the cultural nature of this hunting, in which father and sons (and not infrequently daughters) often take part together. To dismiss such hunting as ‘biltong hunting’ would be a grave mistake indeed. The total expenditure on cultural hunting is conservatively estimated at more than R2 billion per annum (including association membership fees, equipment purchase, transport, taxidermy, etc. and applicable VAT).

Cultural hunting thus constitutes the backbone and engine which drives the entire wildlife industry (excluding tourism to the national parks). This includes some 6,000 registered game ranchers, the game capture and live game sale industry, the harvesting of game meat for consumption and export and also the professional hunting industry. Namibia found this out to its dismay in the sixties/seventies when overseas hunters were focused on to the exclusion of local cultural hunters and which led to a serious implosion of the game industry in that country from which it took decades to recover.

Only by exception is trophy hunting focused upon in cultural hunting. The quarry is fully processed for private consumption and related utilisation. This is in line with general hunting practice in almost all other countries of the world. Alongside Wingshooting, cultural hunting is without doubt the most ethical form of hunting. The concept of ‘you shoot only which you can eat’ is very well established in South Africa and countries the world over.

Hunting associations are very well established in SA and play a major role in the education and training of cultural hunters. The SA Hunters and Conservation Society has currently some 20,000 members, while the Confederation of Hunters Associations of SA has some 15,000 members. Inexplicably, not one person from these associations were appointed to serve of the ‘Panel of Experts’!

Recommendation:
Because cultural hunting is almost exclusively done on privately owned land in which game animals are ranched alongside domestic farm animals and other forms of agriculture, or on dedicated commercial game ranches, it is recommended that the national Department of Agriculture should accept the stewardship for Cultural Hunting.

Professional Hunting

By contrast with cultural hunting, professional (or trophy hunting, as it is sometimes called) is not concerned with ‘shooting only what you can eat’. Instead, the collection of trophy-sized game animals is the primary target. Because an African Safari, even one of just ten days or two weeks, is a very expensive affair, many overseas hunters do this as a once in a lifetime experience. And because competition amongst the some 3,600 professional hunters is very fierce, such a safari becomes a race to collect as many species of trophy size or almost trophy size as is possible in the time available. This leads to a wide range of malpractices, such as shooting from vehicles, put-and-take ‘canned game’, the baiting and calling of predators, the shooting of non-game species such as hyaena, jackals and even smaller spotted cats and more recently even the use of dogs (such as blue tick dogs) to hunt leopard. From a biodiversity point of view, the breeding by game ranchers of trophy sized animals by crossing with imported animals from countries such as Zambia (for instance Zambian sable or Western roan) or Namibia (for instance black-faced impala or Kalihari springbok) is one of the worst results of this trophy hunting.

Curiously, the self same visiting trophy hunters do not hunt in this way back home. Instead they hunt very much like...
Presenting a critical discussion on hunting, focusing on ethical considerations and the role of professional hunters, especially in Africa. Trophy hunting involves shooting animals for a reward, primarily conducted by professional hunters, which is perceived as unethical due to its commercial nature.

Gerhard Damm, a professional hunter, reviews certain unacceptable aspects of hunting, emphasizing the need for control. He mentions that wild lions are harvested sparingly, stating that only 10 truly wild male lions can be harvested annually. Many web pages offer lion ‘hunts’ for male and/or female lions, often with ‘price on request’ terms, indicating canned shooting operations.

Stewart Dorrington, president of PHASA, criticizes canned shooting operators. Decent hunters in South Africa support the cause, hoping for a day where these practices are outlawed. Professional hunters like Damm and Dorrington hunt ethically, highlighting the importance of such professionals in maintaining biodiversity.

Recommendations for the provincial authorities:
1. Accept centralised stewardship for Professional Hunting as an urgent matter, considering PHASA as a statutory professional body.
2. Accept centralised responsibility for professional hunting as a closely allied division of ecomanagement and tourism.
3. Recognise the economic pitfalls of trophy hunting and develop strict controls over trophy hunting on a national basis to ensure biodiversity maintenance.
4. Control very strictly the hunting of lions and spotted cats on a national basis.
5. Ban the bow hunting of elephant and rhino (where the back-up of a big game rifle is needed).
Commercial Game Ranching

Since the change in law which recognised the private ownership of wild animals which can be demonstrated to be under the owner's control (game fences) or which can be identified (electronic ID), the game ranching industry has exploded and has largely replaced extensive cattle ranching as an agricultural practice. Vast areas of Limpopo, North-West and other Provinces, previously under cattle, have been replaced by game ranching amounting to an estimated R20 billion capital investment. Vast amounts of money were spent at live game auctions for new entrants to the field, fuelled by a strong and growing demand by hunters.

But this industry is showing signs of slow-down and appears to be starting to reach saturation level, which means that the sale of live game as a means of income for game farmers are becoming less and less lucrative. In addition, from recent reports the number of overseas trophy hunters entering Johannesburg Airport in 2005 has declined by 30% compared to the same period in the previous year!

There are currently some 6,000 registered game ranchers (plus an estimated 4,000 mixed game and cattle farmers or non-commercial game farmers). As mentioned above, live game sales are slowing down. Professional Trophy Hunting, which only ensures the offtake of a small percentage of male animals together with Cultural Hunting are not able to consume the balance of animals on offer. The harvesting of game animals for local and overseas markets is becoming an major industry and is experiencing strong growth in the face of demand for ‘Mad-Cow-Free-Beef’ and meat with low residues in Europe. In 2001 one single harvested and exported 65,000 head of game, generating a turnover of about R28 million, according to reports. The large scale harvesting of game animals is obviously incompatible with wildlife tourism and even less with provincial structures and is an decidedly integral part of Agriculture.

Linked to land reform programmes, the wildlife industry can make a significant contribution to rural development and poverty relief. In addition, international food hygiene specifications and health requirements require a dynamic national Department of Agriculture and national Veterinary Services if this export industry is to expand.

**Recommendation:**
The Department of Agriculture, with its strong existing links to landowners, integrated agricultural extension services and world renowned veterinary services, should take active control of Commercial Game Ranching as a matter of priority.
Wingshooting is the segment of natural resource utilisation which has been most neglected in South Africa. The potential of Wingshooting is massive, as overseas statistics below indicate:

In the United Kingdom, the gamebirds industry provides **26,000 jobs** and produces a turnover of more than **R5,0 billion per annum**! In North America more than 30 million gamebirds are shot annually and **wingshooters outnumber other hunters by 15 to one**. It has developed into a massive industry in American and European countries and at the same time has secured the conservation of gamebird species and their habitat in those countries.

By contrast, the utilization of gamebirds in South Africa amount to little more than a leisure outdoor activity. Despite the fact that gamebirds are indicator species of the quality of the habitat, there are no official or formal gamebird conservation programmes. Moreover, the deliberate poisoning of gamebirds for food (using agricultural pesticides such as monochrotophos and aldicarb) has taken on epidemic proportions.

Gamebirds such as guineafowl, francolin, ducks, geese and pigeons, can be regarded as one of the most underestimated natural resources of South Africa. The increasing awareness of this, together with the realization of a virtually untapped natural resource with a significant potential to penetrate the overseas sporting market, has led to a renewed interest in gamebirds as an earner of foreign currency. Gamebird conservation is compatible with virtually all forms of agriculture in South Africa, be it crop or domestic stock ranching. Gamebird utilisation is also the ideal integrated system for optimal use of biodiversity and natural resources, and to provide additional protein and income in communal farming communities. At the same time it motivates the rangeland owners and local communities to implement sound conservation and management practices.

The SA Wingshooters Association’s programme of Natural Resource-based Rural Community Development (RCD) has played a pivotal role in the development and marketing of more than twelve annual Community Shoots in which an estimated R0,5 million is raised each year for the respective local communities. Based on an estimated multiplication factor of ten, this constitutes an economic effect of R5,0 million per annum for rural communities. A number of new RCD projects are under development in several Provinces. It is a modest start but the potential is very large!

Unfortunately the development of this resource is hampered by the failure of Central Government and Provincial authorities
to recognise **Wingshooting as a natural resource utilisation which is distinctly separate from hunting**, resulting in an almost complete neglect of the development and conservation of the resource.

In addition, there is an urgent need for the co-ordination and streamlining of gamebird conservation and hunting regulations on a national basis, the practical implementation of aspects such as bag limits, hunting licences, community and charity shoots, and the urgent need to discuss the implications of animal anti-cruelty measures and codes of conduct. Other issues to be addressed include the malicious poisoning of wildlife and a coordinated international gamebird marketing programme, based on SA Wingshooters’ National Gamebird Utilization database and access provided for South Africa by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) to their 120,000 Wingshooting members.

The SA Wingshooters Association has on several occasions formally requested a joint meeting of our National Council with the Interprovincial Working Group and also with various Provincial Governments individually. This has proved to be a fruitless excersize. In the face of the urgent need for poverty alleviation and the availability of substantial funding from overseas governments, SA Wingshooters is willing and able to develop and run the projects to demonstrate success. But its needs a willing Government partner and the removal of outdated legal structures.

**Recommendations**

1. Because Wingshooting is in the first instance an integral part of agronomy and pasture management and thus most closely aligned with the farming comunity in SA — in terms of established farming activites as well as land reform programmes — it is imperative that the national Department of Agriculture accept stewardship of Wingshooting as a distinctly separate form of rural land use and agriculture which has, except for the use of firearms, no similarity to hunting. In particular, it must facilitate the development of the wingshooting industry jointly with land managers, including the establishment of skills development programmes similar to that in the United Kingdom (e.g. gamekeepers) and rural community development projects.

2. Recognise the importance and general conservation value of wingshooting (example Scottish grouse), and of gundogs for their role in conservation, sustainability studies and animal welfare.

3. Recognise the need for close cooperation with Agriculture (particularly agronomy and pasture management) to develop the Gamebird Industry to its full potential as earner of foreign currency and in poverty alleviation at rural level.

4. All hunting seasons and bag limits/quotas to be streamlined and centralised in consultation with the private sector.

5. Ban all canned bird shooting (captive bred and released just prior to shooting) on national basis (see Addenda).

6. Discontinue the system of hunting licences for gamebirds as unworkable and unimplementable (as obsolete as dog licences) which does not benefit the resource, adds an administrative burden and creates contempt for the law.
CONCLUSION

In this presentation, an overview was provided of important aspects of the Hunting and allied industries and major anomalies and issues were highlighted. Prominent was the absence of stewardship by national government and the assumption of responsibility. It is shown why cultural hunting, commercial game ranching and wingshooting should find a home with the Department of Agriculture and Professional Hunting with the DEAT.

Several critically important recommendations were made about specific segments and activities. Of prime importance is the wide diversity of interests, lack of understanding by national government of the various parts of a complex system and the urgent need for a review of legislation.

Recommendation:
That a permanent working group of experts be established who have intimate knowledge and experience of hunting, commercial game ranching and wingshooting and which can identify problems and make ongoing recommendations to authorities and the lawmakers on changes to the legislation and on wise implementation of the legislation.
ADDENDA
REPORT: CANNED LION

Clip 1: The lion is in a fenced camp (the corner posts can be seen). There is no pride. It is uneasy but not afraid of the hunters who are in plain sight. It is right up against the fence (2), which prevents it fleeing.

Clip 3: The lion moves off a short distance, where it is shot (next to the fence) and wounded. The lion charges the hunters, who fire shots and miss. Note the game fence posts in the background.

Clip 5: The lion hits the client, who is almost shot by the other hunters and onlookers. More shots are going off in a dangerous cross-fire situation. The lion hits the ground while spectators try to flee.

Clip 7: The lion is by now badly wounded and lopes off, to be dispatched by a hunter. The video is distributed with the name of the proud professional hunters, against whom no action is taken.
The Ethical Perspective

The concept of ‘put-and-take’ originated in Europe. Captive-bred birds of the same species as the indigenous birds are released in suitable habitat to boost the wild population. In its original and ethical form, the captive bred birds are gradually released in the wild in areas specifically managed for gamebirds by means of acclimatising pens. This process takes place over several months prior to the shoots. The birds are adapted to the environment and behave like wild birds, offering ethical hunting in the spirit of the ‘Fair Chase’. The birds which survive, being adapted to the environment, breed themselves or interbreed with the wild birds, thereby boosting the wild population.

This is a cumbersome process, and in order to make it more cost effective, batches of birds are released from cages directly in front of the hunters, sometimes screened from the hunters by vegetation. The final and most despicable variation is to throw the birds up into the air by hand, one by one, offering sure targets for the so-called ‘sportsmen’ waiting in line below.

This is nothing more than live target practice or ‘canned hunting’ in the worst sense. It is used to offer ‘English Pheasant Shoots’ in South Africa and can certainly not be called hunting or ‘fair chase’. It constitutes animal cruelty because wounded birds are rarely followed up and because battery-bred birds are used. These unfortunate birds have never flown before and have no hope of surviving in the veld. Those that escape the shooters’ guns will certainly die from starvation or, if they are lucky, be taken by predators. Such practices are indefensible in a civilised society.

It is even more despicable from a conservation point of view. Captive bred birds, especially exotic species, contribute nothing to wild game bird populations and also do nothing to motivate landowners to conserve the natural game bird habitat. Indigenous wild game birds can only be produced on natural habitat, and this motivates private landowners to conserve that habitat. A healthy habitat not only sustains game birds, but also countless other creatures. Thus, the ethical and sustainable utilization of indigenous wild game birds have ensured the conservation of natural habit and the survival of countless animals, forming the backbone of the justification of our sport.

— Editor, “Wingshooter”

The Scientific Perspective

The use of exotic captive bred birds will be disastrous for the conservation of our indigenous wild birds. Wild birds can only be produced on natural habitat, and the use of captive bred birds removes the incentive for landowners to maintain and develop natural habitats.

This has become abundantly clear in England where the use of captive bred pheasants has removed the incentive for maintaining the natural habitat, resulting in a near-disastrous decrease of the indigenous partridge populations.

In contrast, the indigenous Scottish grouse, which cannot be bred in captivity, is thriving through natural habitat development and has become one of the most sought after and expensive gamebirds in the world. Another example is the Ducks Unlimited programme in America where their policy of maintaining and developing habitat for indigenous waterfowl has led not only to a tremendous increase in the duck and geese populations but also to all other wild animals depending on the wetland habitats.

In South Africa, our indigenous gamebirds have been under tremendous pressure from habitat destruction, monocultures, exotic plants and poisons. They are still seen as a pest by most landowners and it is only in recent years that we have managed to convince some farmers of the value of indigenous gamebirds and thereby provided them with an incentive to preserve natural habitat. This habitat development will not only benefit all wild animal species but will also lead to the development of our gamebird industry as a whole by offering an exclusive variety of gamebird species in a fair chase. In contrast, the use of exotic, captive bred birds will contribute nothing to the environment and will only lead to the enrichment of certain individuals. It is also doubtful if overseas hunters will be attracted to buy expensive airfares to come and hunt the same bird in the same manner when they can do it much cheaper in their own countries. We would urge the landowners in the Mpumalanga highlands to rather concentrate their efforts on developing their property for the highly sought after greywing and redwing partridges, which not only will attract more overseas hunters but which would also benefit the conservation of our endangered wattled crane and the whitewinged flufftail.

Throughout the world, the primary cause of a species’ decline has been habitat destruction and not hunting pressure. Thus, contrary to popular opinion, the use of captive bred gamebirds will invariably lead to increased pressure on our indigenous gamebirds.

— Dr PJ Viljoen

Policy of SA Wingshooters

Because the captive-bred pheasants cannot survive in shootable numbers in the veld after release, they are taken from cages and thrown up by hand into the air (usually on a hill-side) to be shot by the guns waiting below. SA Wingshooters says this is indefensible in a civilised society. The shooting of captive-bred and released guineafowl is even more damaging, because semi-domesticated guineafowl strains are used which cannot breed efficiently in the wild and which then interbreed with wild guineafowl and cause a population crash of the wild guineafowl flocks.

The only exclusion from this ‘ban’ is gundog training events and Field Trials (limited use under strict supervision). Finally, the abhorrent practice of canned bird shooting is severely damaging to the public image of hunting and can be equated to canned lion shooting. The SA Wingshooters Association will take disciplinary action against members who participate in such shoots.
**Turning non-hunters into anti hunters...**

Copy of text from ‘Wingshooter’ magazine:

“Alongside is one of the most horrifying photos ever to be sent to SA Wingshooters. It was downloaded from the Internet by one of our members and shows the kind of senseless slaughter by ‘hunters’ who are little better than mindless animals.

It is the kind of sick event that can cause people to close down all hunting. There is some confusion over the identity of those responsible because there seems to be more than one safari operator using the same name. Wingshooter members who are professional hunters or involved with the provincial conservation authorities reading this are requested to try to identify them and hand the evidence over to the authorities!”

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**REPORT: KILLING SPREES**

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132 Mountain reedbuck in 3 days = R100,000 earned by PH

The ‘professional hunter’ which sells killing sprees like these to clients in Europe, is operating with impunity. According to the brochure of Ed’s Safaris of Honeydew, SA, a group of six guns shot the following animals in 3 days of hunting on 5-7 Mar 2004.

- Steenbuck: 1
- Zebra: 1
- Blesbuck: 35
- Oryx: 3
- Ostrich: 2
- Nyala: 1
- Impala: 1
- Gnu: 1
- White-tailed gnu: 1
- Springbuck: 169
- Mountain reedbuck: 132
- Vaal rhebuck: 1

Total: 348 animals... on a “harvesting permit”?
SA Wingshooters — A Profile

The Southern African Wingshooters Association was first formed by Frank Poretti, Barry Kraut and Alister McLean in 1981. It was re-launched by Raoul van der Westhuizen and Costa Halkias during the early nineties in South Africa to ensure that the voice of the wingshooting fraternity was heard at a time when new gun control measures were first mooted and nature conservation responsibilities were being re-allocated at central and provincial government levels.

One of the association’s main objectives is the recruitment and development of new bird shooting venues for members. In 2002 the Association launched a database of shooting venues ‘The National Gamebird Database’ and announced a programme to manage such shooting venues and to interact with landowners to develop the habitats.

SA Wingshooters is accredited by the South African Police Services as a Hunting Association (reg no. 9000002) in terms of the Firearms Control Act 60 of 2000 and is a member of the Hunters’ Forum, which meets monthly with senior representatives of the Central Firearms Registry to discuss the implementation of the Act, to identify problems and issues in the licensing and re-licensing of firearms and to represent the interests of hunters and wingshooters i.r.o. the Act.

The Association published the first-of-its-kind handbook WINGSHOOTING and the ‘Manual for Dedicated Hunters’ (from material provided by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation).

SA Wingshooters has revived the National Gamebird Survey, which is conducted by Dr PJ (Slang) Viljoen and which annually undertakes a national gamebird population survey and monitors the malicious poisoning of gamebirds with agricultural pesticides.

SA Wingshooters’ Rural Community Development (RCD) programme is involved in the development and marketing of more than twelve annual Community Shoots in which an estimated R0,5 million is raised each year for the respective local communities. Based on an estimated multiplication factor of ten, this constitutes an economic effect of R5 million per annum for rural communities. A number of new RCD projects are under development in several provinces.

The Association is also the national controlling body for the international clay target shooting sport of COMPAK.
Profile of the Presenter

In 1971 Dr Raoul van der Westhuizen was appointed Director of the SA Nature Foundation, the SA representative of the World Wildlife Fund. Working closely with the Foundation's president, Dr Anton Rupert and the chairman, Dr JG van der Horst (then chairman of Old Mutual), he raised more than a million rand (1970's value) for nature conservation projects which included the establishment of some ten national parks and nature reserves. He launched the ‘Buy an Acre of Karoo’ fundraising campaign which established the Karoo National Park and which was described by David Ogilvy as ‘an absolutely magnificent fundraising campaign’. The project involved the participation of some 300,000 schoolchildren in the Karoo stamps campaign. He later joined the secretariat of Dr Rupert as co-ordinator for group affairs and was subsequently appointed to the Board of Rembrandt Tobacco as Director for Public Affairs.

He was later appointed Marketing Secretary of Rothmans International and special assistant to Dr Rupert, based in London. He returned to South Africa in 1980. During the 80s, he ran the Advisory Bureau for Development, a communications and marketing consultancy which advised and assisted major companies in marketing in the public sector during the 1980s. The Bureau's clients included Barlow Rand, Old Mutual, PFV, CNA Gallo, Alexander Forbes, Nedbank, Avis, Investec, LTA, Anglovaal, Safmarine and others.

He co-founded the SA Wingshooters Association in 1996. From a zero-funds base he built an integrated communication and recruitment programme for the association, comprising a special founders’ club, a glossy magazine, a web site with online database, an e-zine and a full colour handbook. The web site currently registers some 100,000 hits per month (in conventional terms) and the association is the SA’s only national wingshooting association.

He is currently the Executive Director of SA Wingshooters.