

# **CONTRIBUTIONS OF TROPHY HUNTING CONCESSIONS TO NORTHWEST CONSERVANCIES IN RELATION TO IMPACTS ON THE WILDLIFE RESOURCE BASE**

**August, 2002**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION:**

In recent weeks a controversy has arisen about the appropriateness of trophy hunting within the Erongo and Kunene Regions of Namibia. The movement seems to be driven by a "protectionist" approach that implies that animals in Northwestern Namibia cannot be sustainably harvested and that trophy hunting is in conflict with tourism in the area. A recent Namibian article (Thursday, July 25) reports on an event organized by the Save The Rhino Trust in Swakopmund during which a move to ban hunting in the Northwest was promoted. Thereafter, the Namibian (August 2) carried responses by the Torra and Ehirivopuka Conservancies and Garth Owen-Smith to this meeting.

This briefing note has been put together to provide more facts about: 1) the legal basis of trophy hunting; 2) the extent of trophy hunting in the Northwest; 3) the harvest rate of species being harvested; 4) the economic impacts that trophy hunting is generating for rural communities; and 5) the conservation benefits that trophy hunting is providing.

## **2.0 FACTS ABOUT TROPHY HUNTING IN THE NORTHWEST:**

### **2.1 Legal Basis of Trophy Hunting in The Northwest:**

In 1995, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) passed a policy document entitled "Wildlife Management, Utilisation and Tourism in Communal Areas". Shortly thereafter, in June 1996, the MET amended the Nature Conservation Ordinance of 1975 with Amendment No. 5 of 1996: Nature Conservation Amendment Act, 1996, which provides the legal basis for communities to form conservancies. This internationally acclaimed Policy and Act now confer equal rights to communal area conservancies as were provided to commercial area farmers in 1968. These include the rights to benefit from all game harvested within the conservancy through trophy hunting and/or live sales.

This policy and legislation are fully in line with the Namibian constitution that promotes the sustainable use of Namibia's natural resources.

### **2.2 Extent of Trophy Hunting Taking Place in Northwest Namibia:**

Trophy hunting in 2002 is taking place in four northwest communal area conservancies, including: Doros !Nawas, Ehirivopuka, #Khoadi //Hoas, and Torra Conservancies. These four conservancies have initiated trophy hunting contracts with professional hunters. Puros and Tsiseb Conservancies have also been granted hunting quotas by the MET but have yet to sign formal hunting agreements with safari operators.

The total landmass of the four conservancies that have trophy hunters is 1,304,200 hectares. Much of the land in these conservancies has been zoned to exclude trophy hunting and thereby minimize potential conflict with tourism operators. It is estimated that only about 5% of the total communal lands in the Erongo and Kunene Regions (9,352,100 hectares) is currently being used for trophy hunting.

It is also important to appreciate that trophy hunting only occurs during the winter months so effectively, this 5% is only used for trophy hunting for half of the year.

### 2.3 Harvest Rate of Key Species Being Harvested:

The major species (in addition to lesser numbers of other species) being harvested through trophy hunting concessions in the Northwest include huntable game species of oryx, kudu, and springbok, and the specially protected species of Hartmann's zebra and elephant. The total number of animals available on trophy hunting concession in the Northwest is as listed in Table 1 below: In comparison, the estimated game populations resident to the area are 25,000 gemsbok; 105,400 springbok; 3,600 kudu; and 15,000 Hartmann's zebra (draft findings of the recently undertaken 2002 game census for 20 existing and emerging conservancies in the Kunene and northern Erongo Regions). Elephant populations in the Northwest are estimated at 663.

**Table 1. Estimated populations versus actual trophy harvests numbers in Northwest Conservancies.**

Species	Minimum 2002 Population	Actual Trophy Numbers	Current Harvest rate (%)
Oryx	25,000	54	0.2%
Kudu	3,500	38	1.0%
Springbok	105,400	97	0.1%
Zebra	15,000	40	0.3%
Elephant	663	4	0.6%

The current harvest rates are well below well-established industry norms and Table 2 provides some additional information that shows, relative to potential harvest rates, just how insignificant the current harvest rates are. The one exception to this situation is the quota for elephant, which is currently at its optimal level of 4-5 trophy bulls per year for the entire Northwest population.

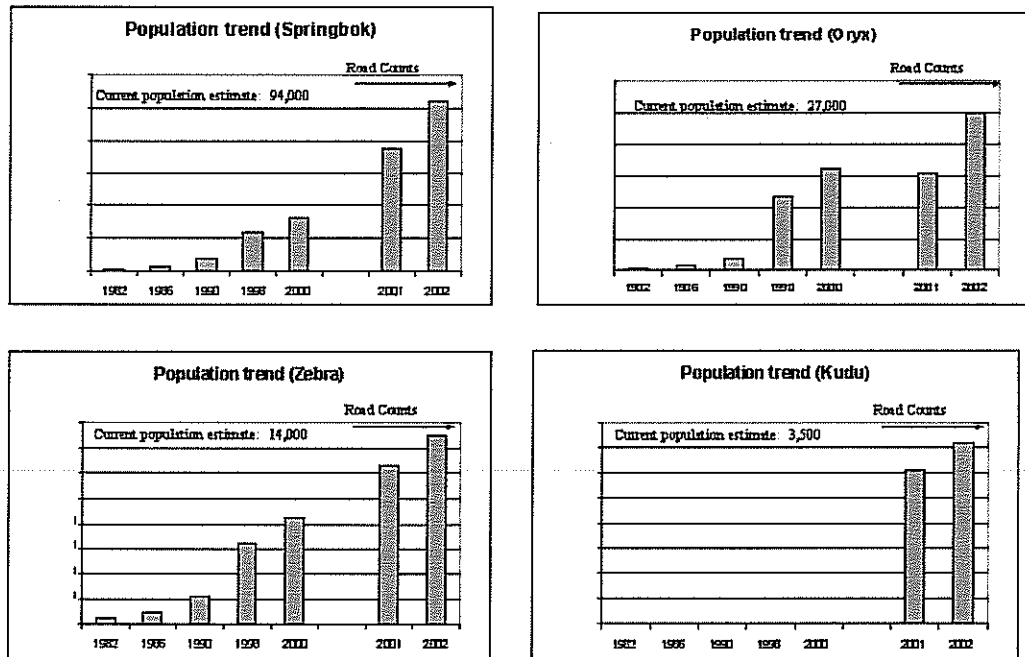
**Table 2. Estimated populations versus potential trophy harvests numbers and actual trophy harvest numbers for oryx, kudu, springbok, Hartmann's zebra, and elephant in Northwest Conservancies.**

Species	Minimum 2002 Population	Trophy Harvest Rate	Annual Popopulation Increase	Potential Trophy Harvest Numbers	Actual Trophy Harvest Numbers
Oryx	25,000	2%	3,750	500	54
Kudu	3,500	2%	540	72	38
Springbok	105,400	3%	21,080	3,162	97
Zebra	15,000	2%	2,250	300	40
Elephant	663	0.6%	33	4	4

The current trophy quota levels are also calibrated against the annual population growth rates for each of the species (see Table 2 and Annex 1). Again the number of trophies being harvested in the Northwest is well within the sustainable limitations of growing game populations, particularly as only surplus males and not females are hunted.

The Namibian article raises concern that hunting will impact upon the ability of species to survive in the arid Northwest. In this regard, it should be pointed out that more game exists in the Northwest today than has been present in the area for the past 30 years and population numbers are rapidly increasing (Figure 1). The greatest threat to the burgeoning Northwest wildlife populations is not hunting, but rather too many livestock and the recurring drought conditions that periodically lead to a loss of grazing and precipitous drops in game numbers across the region.

## WILDLIFE POPULATION TRENDS IN NORTH-WEST NAMIBIA



**Figure 1. Growth trends (1982-2002) for springbok, oryx, Hartmann's zebra and kudu in Northwestern Namibian registered and emerging conservancies.**

In short, given the rapidly escalating game populations in the Northwest, there is absolutely no biological reason why trophy hunting should be disallowed. In essence, the argument that was articulated in the Namibian article is more emotive than factual.

### 2.4 Economic Impacts of Trophy Hunting in Participating Northwest Conservancies:

It is interesting to note that the Namibian article mentions nothing about the importance of the benefits that hunting is generating to the more than 7,100 residents of the four conservancies supporting trophy hunting concessions. Rather, the article highlights the importance of tourism to Swakopmund tour operators who bring tourists into the communal areas to enjoy the burgeoning game populations and the wild, scenic splendors of the conservancies. In addition, the article states that tourism is the only viable option for the Northwest.

While tourism does indeed offer long-term development options for the Northwest, it has to date only returned very localized sources of revenue to community residents in the Northwest, with the vast majority of these benefits flowing from such well-recognized tourism operations as Wilderness Safaris and Country Lodges who have contractual arrangements with the Torra and Uibesen Conservancies, respectively. In contrast, most mobile operators continue to exploit the Northwest for self-gain, with little to no financial benefit being generated for conservancies or local communities.

Trophy hunting, in comparison, will generate between N\$900,000 to N\$1.1 million in benefits to the four North-West participating conservancies in 2002. These benefits are coming predominantly as cash revenues to the conservancy committees, with lesser amounts coming in the forms of wages and meat provided to communities from the trophy animals.

## **2.5 Conservation Benefits of Trophy Hunting:**

A key intent of the MET Conservancy legislation was to allow rural communities to benefit from the presence of wildlife on their lands, thereby providing these communities with the incentive to protect wildlife rather than poach it. Trophy hunting operations in conservancies have proven extremely effective in generating benefits, that have in turn, created a strong value and regard towards wildlife by local communities. Further, more than half of the revenues generated by the conservancy hunting concessions in the Northwest will go toward conservation activities, in terms of paying salaries of community game guards, monitoring wildlife populations, maintenance of wildlife water points, and reducing conflict between people and wildlife (including compensation of livestock killed by predators).

In addition to the conservation benefits these important hunting revenues are funding, portions of these revenues are also contributing to rural development initiatives undertaken on behalf of conservancy memberships.

## **3.0 ISSUES:**

There are indeed some pertinent issues that one needs to consider when weighing the optimal uses of wildlife resources in the Northwest. However, such issues should be considered and decided upon by conservancies, based upon the economic and conservation returns that each individual conservancy can derive from their natural resources – not outside interest groups who exploit the conservancies resources for self-gain but provide nothing in return. Key issues include:

### **3.1 Zoning of Conservancies:**

As mentioned above, most conservancies are being zoned to separate hunting from tourism. In this regard, the professional hunters are well aware and abide by the hunting zones. In contrast, the mobile tourists operators and individual tourists, do not follow the zoning regulations. The reasons are threefold: 1) mobile commercial tourist operators have free access to the communal areas without any legal or financial accountability to conservancies; 2) the operators take little interest and have no understanding of the conservancy management objectives, zones, or plans; and 3) MET tourism legislation does not yet provide legally registered conservancies with powers to regulate or engage with the mobile tourist operators.

### **3.2 Hunting of Elephants:**

In the long-run one can question whether elephant hunting in the Northwest is economically optimal for some of the western-most conservancies. The low density of elephants in many of the western conservancies such as Sorris Sorris, Doros !Nawas, Torra, and Purros means there are very limited numbers of trophy bulls to choose from. Given the low number of trophy bulls present and the relatively easy access tourist operators have to riverbeds and areas frequented by such animals, these bulls become well-known tourism attractions. Thus, each of these animals could be a valuable tourism asset to the conservancy that could repeatedly generate income year after year.

However, under present circumstances most conservancies are not deriving any tourism benefit from these animals, as mobile operators bring their tourists to the conservancies to see the desert elephants but return no revenues back to the conservancies. In contrast, a conservancy can receive up to N\$80,000 per trophy animal harvested, making the harvesting of such an animal a lucrative, but one-time windfall. Given this scenario, most conservancies will continue to seek elephant quotas from the MET, at least until conservancies start benefiting from the tourist revenues these animals are capable of generating. Thus, there is a need to strengthen tourism legislation to allow conservancies to regulate and benefit from the tourist operators who are conducting tourism activities in their areas.

#### **4.0 SUMMARY:**

The recent Namibian article has served to raise public awareness about trophy hunting in Northwest Namibia. However, the article does not look at the big picture conservation movement the Government of Namibia (through the Ministry of Environment and Tourism) has promoted through its conservancy legislation and the long-term benefits the formation of conservancies will have for Northwest wildlife populations. Instead, the article casts trophy hunting in a negative light and as a "win-lose" scenario for tourism operators, while at the same time, marginalizing the vested interests of rural community residents to decide whether they believe trophy hunting is valid as an enterprise for them or not. Sadly the article serves as a platform for outside interests who seem intent upon placing the welfare of high-profile species such as rhino and elephant above the needs and aspirations of the communal area residents. This is particularly unfair given that the residents have tolerated and protected these species, resulting in phenomenal wildlife increases in the last decade, but are only now beginning to reap the benefits of their presence.

There is no debate that tourism and trophy hunting activities have to be carried out in a coordinated and planned fashion. However, it is not appropriate for a few individual, self-interested people to attempt to close down trophy hunting. The income is extremely important for the welfare of the Northwest people and much of it is used to pay for conservation activities in the Conservancies.

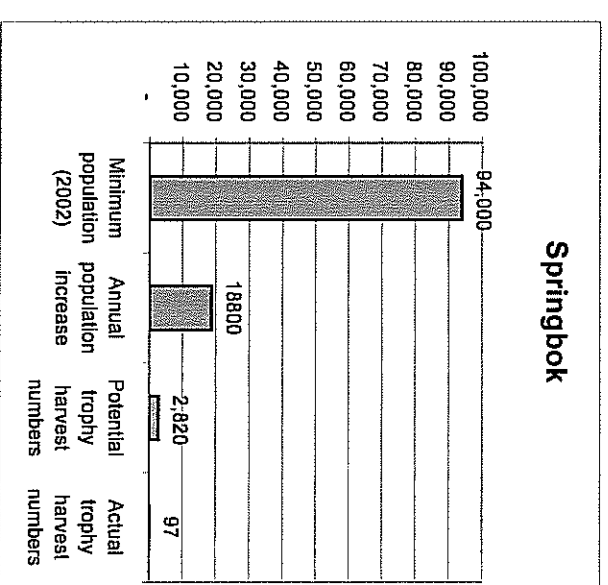
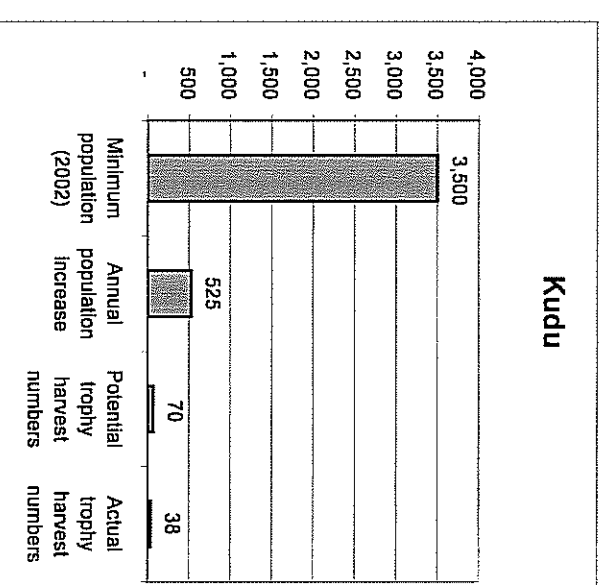
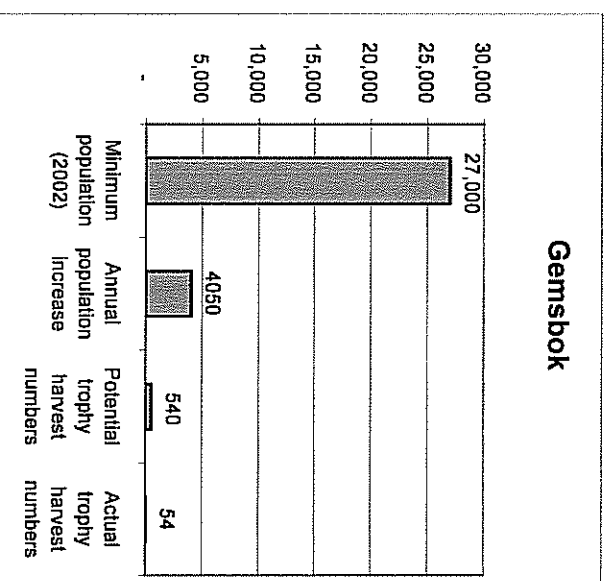
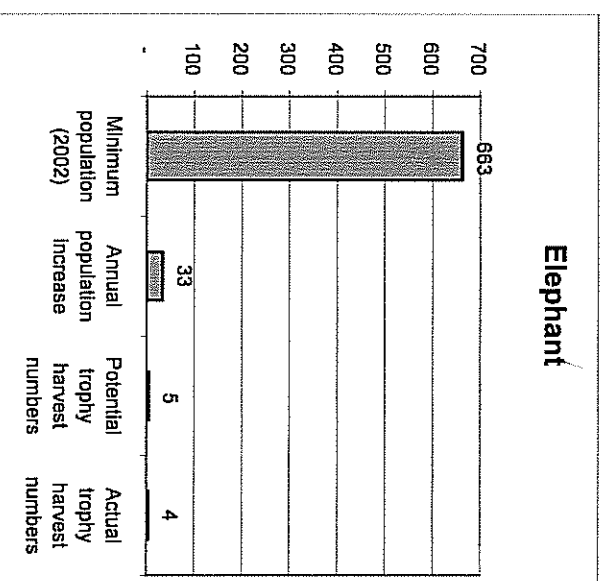
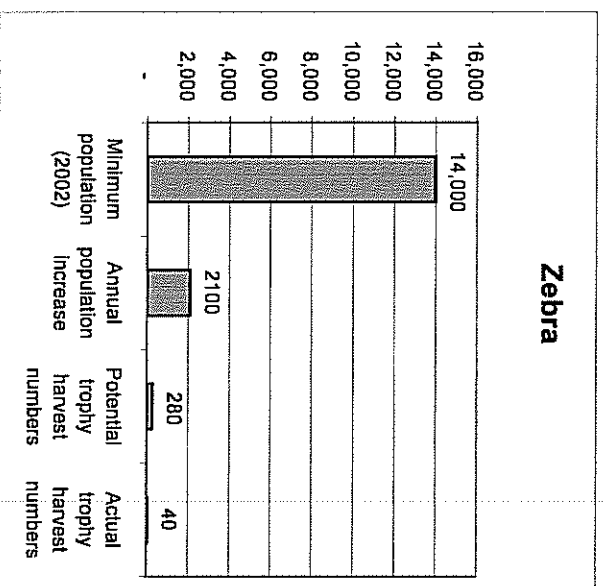
Very few of the individuals at the Swakopmund meeting have made an effort to negotiate contractual or benefit-sharing arrangements with the community residents.

## Annex 1

### Comparative trophy hunting figures for five species in the North West of Namibia (2002).

These graphs show the actual trophy hunting quotas relative to:

- (i) the population estimate,
- (ii) the annual population increase (i.e. due to breeding), and
- (iii) the potential trophy harvest levels that would sustainable trophy quality.



## John Mendelsohn (RAISON)

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From: "Greg Stuart-Hill" <gregshill@bigpond.com.au>  
To: "John Mendelsohn (RAISON)" <mendelso@iafrica.com.na>  
Subject: RE: off-take of game  
Date sent: Fri, 7 May 2004 15:49:09 +0800

Hi John

As usual I cant find that particular model and doc - the change over from my LIFE desktop to my laptop did not proceed very well, actually it's a total mess - I'm forever full of excuses. There was one that covered the North west and another that covered Nyae Nyae.

However, in the interim attached is a doc that takes a look at Trophy hunting (only) and in this there are projections regarding "trophy offtakes". I will look round for the full model which includes (meat/live capture offtake projections). If can't find this, I will regenerate the model.

The most important issue with regard to the meat/live capture offtake projections is that whilst there potentially huge offtakes numbers the game density is low and terrain hard which makes practical utilization of these 'quotas' extremely difficult and in many cases not cost effective. Another key issue (in the north-west and to some extent in Nyae Nyae) is scale - most officials treat all conservancies as if they were the same size - so when issuing/agreeing quotas they give all areas approximately the same number of animals (with the result that large conservancies often have quotas that are far too low and small conservancies have quotas that are approaching maximum). The same applies when MET is considering game introductions - all get roughly the same with the result that it's a drop in the ocean for large conservancies (e.g. Nyae Nyae) but over stocked in small conservancies (e.g. Uulwalhudhi). - I am getting sidetracked, sorry!

We have also been looking at the economics of these offtakes (through linear programming) what is the best means of using the quotas - trophy, won use, live sale, venison sale. Trophy hunting comes out top in all cases! Then the tussle between the other utilization options begins and factors such as the red line, ease of access for capture harvest vehicles, distance to market, etc comes into play - I will also search and send this doc if it will be of any use. If not then tell me and I wont bother (what Ive told





you above is in fact the executive summary.

Yes found out that the letter winged kite does occur in our area - being looking out for it but no success. I gather it is most active at night?

Sorry John for the usual complications, will follow up but thought that its best if I respond in the interim. Just very hectic and must rush for a meeting with Jo.

Keep well  
Greg

-----Original Message-----

From: John Mendelsohn (RAISON) [<mailto:mendelso@iafrica.com.na>]

Sent: 06 May 2004 07:26 PM

To: [gregshill@bigpond.com.au](mailto:gregshill@bigpond.com.au)

Subject: off-take of game

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Dear Greg

Apparently you have done some estimates of what annual off-take rates would be viable in the north-west for species such as springbok, oryx etc. Would it be possible to see these estimates?

Many thanks, and hope all is well with you.

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