

DALLAS SAFARI CLUB UPDATE

DSC Efforts Change USFWS Enforcement, CITES Permitting Processes



For more than a year, Dallas Safari Club (DSC) representatives have been meeting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with concerns about the increasing number of trophy confiscations – trophies taken by legal and ethical means. These seizures often occur after months of waiting, and long after the paperwork has been filed.

DSC Executive Director and B&C Professional Member Ben Carter, DSC Board Member and Political Action Committee Chairman Lance Phillips, Conservation Force's John Jackson and DSC's advocate Glenn LeMunyon began meeting with the leaders of the Service to start a dialogue regarding the confiscations that are for purely clerical reasons beyond the hunter's control, or because of issues created by the Service itself in requiring "shipping year" quota numbers that simply do not exist in the host countries.

These meetings have been ongoing and attended by staff from both Reps. Pete Sessions (R-TX, 29th District) and "Judge" John Carter (R-TX, 31st District). John Jackson provided the much-needed historical background of legal precedents in CITES permitting as it related to the Service and the individual hunter.

These initial meetings were followed by a meeting with Rep. Sessions, Jeff Crane of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, John Jackson, Glenn LeMunyon, Ben Carter, Lance Phillips, DSC President Richard Cheatham, Charly Seale of the Exotic Wildlife Association and the Service at the

annual convention in January. This meeting discussed the issues regarding exotic species, specifically the scimitar-horned oryx, addax and dama gazelle, but also focused on confiscations of legally taken trophies.

When confronted with detailed cases of confiscations because of a single number being transposed on a form, or a tag not being placed in a precise manner or place on a hide, it became evident that there were no reasonable answers to the inquiries.

Also at issue was the demand by the Service for a separate quota number for the year a trophy was shipped. All host nations are assigned a quota number by CITES for animals taken in a given year. Each animal is supposed to be listed as a certain number taken off that country's existing quota (e.g. 36th in a quota of 250), but the Service chose also to require a quota number for the year the animal was actually shipped, which no host nation keeps track of and is not a CITES requirement. This extra quota requirement was the grounds for numerous confiscations, particularly of leopards.

Following this fact-finding session, Rep. Sessions had direct meetings with the head of USFWS Chief Enforcement Office as did Glenn LeMunyon. John Jackson of Conservation Force also had numerous conversations and exchanges with the Service. The end result being that the requirement for the "shipping year quota" has been dropped.

In addition, the Service initially responded to concerns that the hunter had no recourse to correct errors made by the

expediter when shipping the trophies to the U.S., stating that they would allow a hunter to pay to have his entire trophy shipment returned to the host nation so the offending permit could be remedied or re-issued. While some were quick to laud this as a great achievement and claim credit for this concession, DSC was not satisfied with this remedy as it still placed an unnecessary burden upon the hunter to re-ship the trophy! This, all with the hope that things would be corrected and shipped back—while possibly un-tanned skins are potentially going to ruin. DSC argued that in this day of internet, faxes and overnight shipping, that most clerical errors could be remedied within days and that if they could not, then only the offending trophy should have to be sent back, not the entire shipment. USFWS has now relented and agreed to much of what we have presented to them as a common sense approach to these issues.

Sincere thanks must go to Rep. Sessions and staffer Robert Cousins for continuing to monitor this on near-daily basis; to Glenn LeMunyon for initiating a "Strive for Zero" policy (as in zero confiscations); and to John Jackson for applying his vast knowledge of the CITES process and educating those at the Service on their own policy history and obligations. ■

