



## Episode 5: Ian Michler on Canned Hunting and Making “Blood Lions”, Part 2

### Transcription

[www.africanfamilysafaris.com/podcast](http://www.africanfamilysafaris.com/podcast)

Released 27 May 2016

*This podcast is brought to you by [African Family Safaris](http://www.africanfamilysafaris.com). Richard Field has been a safari guide for 20 years, and in the Life on Safari podcast he talks with safari guides and conservationists about their day-to-day life in the bush. The hope is that through these remarkable conversations, wild Africa will creep under your skin.*

**2:33 Richard:** I wanted to ask, Ian, when the concept of making the movie came to you? When did you think that that would be necessary or a good idea?

**2:42 Ian:** Well, again I think this an important point as well Richard. Blood Lions is very much a team effort, a collaborative effort, and the idea or the inspiration behind this particular film does not belong to me. It belongs to our producer Pippa Hankinson. Now prior to Pippa approaching me, I had been involved in a number of attempts to make a film about canned hunting. I had always wanted to do it and in fact the cameraman, Nick Chevallier and our co-director, I've been seeing to Nick for 10 years, "Nick, we've got to get on to these facilities. You've got to come with me and record this footage." And somehow we didn't have the budget and we just couldn't get time together. I was always back in Botswana or East Africa or Nick was on some other assignment and we never got it together. Or I had been approached by other producers and either they didn't have the willingness to go through it because they suddenly realized how threatening this industry was and what they were up against. So Pippa Hankinson is the motivation behind the film. She went to visit one of these facilities and was horrified and decided to do something about it. In that process, she did her research and decided that I was the person she needed to get a hold of. I wasn't the second person she approached. That was Nick the cameraman because they had a link, a common friend. Pippa said to him, "Do you know this guy, Ian Michler?" And he said, "Well yeah, he happens to be a great friend of mine and I'm not sure that I would recommend him for anything else though. He's a a bit of a dodgy character." Pippa said, "Well let's just meet with him anyway and that's what happened". So, Pippa came to me and said she wants to do a film and would I be interested in helping her. Funny enough, I knew Pippa and I think you probably also know Pippa, Richard, from your days in the tourism industry because Pippa in the 90's, early 90's or mid-90's used to run one of those portfolio collections of lodges that you and I remember her from the early WTM [World Travel Market] days in London. She used to come on site visits to all those Wilderness Safaris camps where you and I worked together, guided together. At one stage, she had a very top end collection of top end lodges and that's how I know her. But we hadn't seen each other. She sold that business and we haven't seen each other for 15 years. And so we set about how to go about this and for me, there were two things really that I said to Pippa that I would like her to do with the movie. One was that we shift the debate from the extreme into the middle ground. So in other words, I felt and I'd learnt this through my writing on trophy hunting in general is that the best way to deal with this is actually to take the hunters or the canned hunters and the breeders on, in their own parameters.

We definitely need to film this. Sometime, the obvious approach is to film it from the extreme. Just from the animal rights or ethical view and just talk about how important it is. But I said, "No. If we want traction, if we want to change, we need to move it to the middle ground and we need to involve the scientific community and we need to involve people that will... the government and the hunters and everyone else will listen to." And she agreed completely and then we also agreed together that we would run a campaign on this. And then a few other things were said. I did not want to dumb the message down, so the idea of having celebrities in your documentary was for me not a good idea. It's great when you have celebrities that endorse something because they come to the conclusion that it's worthy, but I'm not sure about this tactic within the conservation world where you find a celebrity because you think it may gain you more credibility or coverage. I don't know. And that was when we agreed as well; we did not want to dumb the film down, by using celebrities who actually had no history with the issue.

And so yeah, we assembled a great team of people. Bruce Young who became our storyteller. So we had this huge body of footage but we didn't really have a story. Well, we had a story but you know it's one thing for me to talk to you loosely over two hours like this, but it's another to get some guy to put it into a really compelling narrative, and that was Bruce was able to do as the script writer and then as the co-director. Nick of course did so much of the footage with us and then Jeremy Nathan, a great friend of mine who has 20 years in film experience, we brought him on board to get the film actually made and then the campaign team, Dr Andrew Venter from Wildlands and he brought Nicola and Lauren who ran our marketing and social media team on board as well. They played a significant role as partners and so yeah, it's been a very, very strong team that put this together. The other thing that's important Richard is that a lot of people that we've used in the film to tell the story are people that are well-known to you and I prior. I mean these are people who have high standing, huge reputations within the scientific world, within the eco-tourism world so I think the people like Colin Bell, Dereck Joubert, Ian McCallum, Dr Guy Balme. These are people who I wanted in the film because A, I trusted them, I knew them, but also because of their standing. And we brought in people like Karen Trendler, Paul Hart and a whole lot of others, the Minister of Tourism, TK Khama [Tshekedi Khama II] in Botswana with what they have achieved. And so those people were also a very important part of the film because they've huge, they've given us validation. They've spoken the truth and they've spoken from experience and the world has listened to them.

**9:41 Richard:** Absolutely. And I wanted to ask about a few of the hairy moments that you may have had during filming. Were there any that stand out specifically for you?

**9:53 Ian:** I mean I think one doesn't want to be dramatic or alarmist I guess, but these are unsavory characters involved in unsavory practices, there's no doubt about it. You're dealing with people who are dealing in brutality.

**10:17 Richard:** They don't have a lot of concern for life.

**10:20 Ian:** Yeah. Anyone who wants to confine 200 to 300 predators, an apex species like a lion, which requires space, which are territorial - if you have an understanding, just a basic understanding of the natural world, why would you want to take an apex species that requires territory and space, and confine them alongside other species and their own, in cages. That's brutal. That's completely brutal. And Dereck Joubert so wonderfully says in the film, he says, "Of all the great evils I can think of, caging a lion is one of them." and then he goes on to say, "But to then go and offer a safari hunt, to shoot them, it is just at another level." So I think the whole thing for me is about brutality. It's about a lack of understanding of how the natural world works. And it's about greed, it's about human greed, and it's about money. Making lots and lots of money. That's been one of the most appalling, dramatic realizations, that there are people out there who do this and they do it gleefully.

I've mentioned, I've spoken about the law suits. We've had quite a few of those. I've spoken about, yeah, in the early years, you'd get death threats. So you have people who pick up the phone from an unknown number and they threaten you. I was caught on one facility once whereby a breeder who wasn't open to the public. I managed to con my way on to his property by posing as an operator from Botswana, wanting to start a facility and I was looking to buy animals. He eventually let me on and I thought, "Wow, this is wonderful." I had my undercover camera and everything and I was filming away where he was. Meanwhile, you know where he was, he was sitting in his office on a closed-circuit system with cameras hidden in trees and he was watching me. I mean you learn quickly what these guys are about. And so there I was thinking, I got the prize cheese, you know and the guy's not here and I've got all these predators in front of me here and the next thing his pickup comes screaming down the dirt road, with a huge spray of dust and he draws the horn and he jumps out and he grabbed me. He grabbed me around the throat and he had a metal pipe in his hand which he picked up off the back of his pickup. He started swearing at me and I mean, so he had me by the throat and he was on top of me I had this huge big metal pipe...

**13:18 Richard:** And you're in the middle of nowhere here.

**13:21 Ian:** Yes, I'm in the middle of nowhere, I know I'm behind electrified gates. On my own, with this guy. So all I did was like what they do in the wild. You just behave submissively. You know what a wild dog does or another male lion does when you're in trouble, you just behave submissively. And that's what I did and I just apologized and I called him Oom [Uncle] I'm sorry" and I sort of said, "Well you just have wonderful lions." And I kept saying to myself, don't get kicked off here because I'm only on step 1 and I know that there's going to be all sorts of things in this property I need to take in. So he relented and didn't beat me with the pipe but certainly he roughed me up. He took away my camera and said I can only have it at the end and he continued to allow me but he didn't leave my side to go around the facility with him. But I was still able to spend an hour and on that property, I saw one of the most awful visions I have. I saw four black leopards. The black morph, four of them in a concrete enclosure which had a metal sliding opening facility on the roof of it. So I promise you Richard, imagine no more than about 2-3 meters by 2-3 meters and he has squashed all of these black leopards into this concrete enclosure and you would open this metal door at the top and that's where the feed would go in. And this is what people don't understand why actually for me, this is also an emotional topic because it is complete disconnect. Why are these leopards in this concrete enclosure? So what you have to do on these facilities is you've got to make sure you don't ask too many obvious questions. You got to ask dumb questions. You got to not be alarmed because otherwise, you will get nowhere. So now I'm trying to control my emotions and my rage, and you know he responded "No, no, these leopards come from Central Africa, which is true. The black morph typically is found in heavily, deeply forested areas and he says, "This facility, this enclosure is like being in a forest."

**15:51 Richard:** If it wasn't so sad, you'd have a chuckle because it's...

**15:57 Ian:** So you're walking around this and meanwhile to my right I've got tigers. On that same facility, he had tigers and lions in the same cages and he was trying to get them to cross breed. And that was one of the most awful places I've ever visited and in fact, we tried to get him into Blood Lions. I tried to get back on Blood Lions but we'd learned by that stage that I mean he only I guess trusted very few people to come onto his facility. But I saw tigers and lions in the same cages there that he was trying to crossbreed. I saw, he had a facility and there were 12 tigers together. 12 in a small enclosure. He kept lions and cheetah right next door to each other. Now in the wild, anyone who has spent any time in the wild know that lions and cheetahs, they don't live next to each other. Cheetahs are petrified of lions. And here he was keeping 8 lions and an X number of cheetahs right next door to them. Those are the images and [indistinguishable] there's a complete lack of understanding of what this is about. I keep coming back to that word, ripple.

In the film, we encountered some unsavory characters and that was completely fortuitous. The one guy who gave us two minutes to get off his property, I had had an altercation with him 12 or 15 years ago. The same guy threatened me more aggressively 12 or 15 years ago and also threw me off his property. On that occasion, I was on my own. And when we went back, and I think I say to the cameraman, "This takes me back" because I remembered this facility. And he did the same thing, he behaved aggressively and gave us two minutes to get off his property, and then we had that incident where the canned hunter and breeder twigged on to the fact that we had hidden cameras or that we were probably going to shock him and he lost his temper.

**18:17 Richard:** And Rick, who is quite a significant character in the Blood Lions movie, tell us how you came across Rick.

**18:27 Ian:** So Rick is completely authentic. He's an American from Hawaii who is a hunter. And Pippa's sister lives in Hawaii and when we were raising money to have the film made, and this was one of the other things that we had decided prior to making the film is that it was a better idea to try to make the film ourselves and then sell it, rather than go to a big broadcaster who would give you money, but then they will change the movie to what they wanted. So we had to raise the money ourselves. And so we had a little promo clip, a promo video that we were showing to a select people and audiences to raise money and Pippa had sent it to her sister in Hawaii, and her neighbor was Rick. She called Rick over and said, "Look you're a hunter, what do you think of this?" and Rick was completely horrified and outraged from a hunting perspective. And so he said to Pippa's sister, "How can I help?" And so for a number of months, we had him as an option, amongst others, to do that operation and eventually we decided that it would be far better to use a genuine hunter and an American because they are the 50 percenters, more than 50% of all canned hunters are Americans. So we sent him a [e]mail and we said, Rick, "You want to be the guy in the hunt set-up?". He said "Fine, if this is how [he] can help, he [would]." And so he came and I don't think he regrets it now that he's safely back in Hawaii, but I think while he was here, and certainly during that incident, he had no idea.

**20:22 Richard:** Without wanting to give it away, that was a seriously hairy incident that they had when they were just about to set off for their hunt.

**20:32 Ian:** Yeah, absolutely. And what was fortuitous also about that was that I had made it very clear to them in the briefing beforehand that they weren't to get the lion and the hunter's party in sight. They mustn't be in line of sight and the reason for that was that we were fearful that if Rick had then decided, okay, I'm not going to shoot the lion, because remember we were never going to shoot the lion or the lioness, but if you get her in the line of sight and you then say so..., we were worried that the professional hunters or the operators were just going to shoot it anyway because we'd paid for it. They had the money and secondly, now if you don't shoot the lion, they've got to worry about feeding that lion. You know, that's not a natural system, so they've got to go out and feed it, or they would capture it again and move it to someone else before it kills their antelope that are running around the same enclosure. And so we'd made that decision and so that outburst of rage where the operator threatens to kill the cameraman was fortuitous because it allowed them the opportunity to call off the hunt at that particular stage. But Rick, yeah, I mean he came out of there, he didn't say too much for the rest of that evening.

**21:57 Richard:** When did you understand what had actually happened on the farm?

**22:02 Ian:** So... it's quite interesting. That same operator, I had tried on two previous occasions on the phone and he probably doesn't know this today that I was the guy who phoned him, but I don't know, given a number of months before that set up, I had spoken to him on two different occasions, trying to convince him to let us on to the property for a face-to-face open interview. Because I'd said to Pippa the producer, and remember I was the consultant for the project and I said to Pippa, one of the things that wears you down when doing a project like this is this constant surveillance. You're on edge all the time because you try not to give yourself away, but you're

trying to gain as much information, and you're also having to use cover and sort of telling these half truths and sometimes even lies as to why you're there, because otherwise, you won't get the information. So it's this constant state of being on edge. I kept saying to Pippa, "You know what, let's just try, I'm going to try and get a straight face-to-face interview where we don't have to go in there on edge. We could say this is who we are, we are a camera crew, we're doing a movie on canned hunting and predator breeding, and you're involved, tell us why. You know, let's have it face-to-face open." And so I twice tried Mr Duminy to accept that, and on both occasions, he entered into a pretty lengthy discussion with me but on both occasions he said, "Look, if I'm prepared to send an application to the head of the South African Predator Association, tell him who we are, why we're doing this and they have access to the footage afterwards to see the film, then we will grant them permission." Which we knew actually that A, we couldn't allow that to happen. You can't allow them to have editorial input into something like that. But secondly, by that stage, we had already interviewed Professor Potgieter who was the head of the South African Predator Association and we had already had a legal interaction with him where he had said, "No, we can't use [his] interview." And he'd cottoned on, and with the Professional Hunter's Association CEO, they'd said, "Well hang on, these guys are the same. We've got to be very wary of them."

So we knew that we weren't going to get permission. Well, I just said alright, I've giving you two chances. You've turned them down. Now, you've given me no option. We're going to have to do it our way. And so, we set up the hunt. So what happened was I sent the contact details to Rick sitting in Hawaii, and I say, right [e]mail this guy and ask him if this is if what you want to do and Rick would do that and he'd send me the response. And then I will send him back and say, right, ask him to do this, ask him to do that, tell him no, tell him yes. And one of the things that I said to Rick is be very, very sure to reinforce that you're going to bring your own cameramen and sound guy; which is common in hunting that you have someone film your hunt. You know I guess it's part of the same way that we film our ecotourism safaris. People want a record of what they're doing. So that was not unusual but I guess though, that property will probably never allow anyone unknown to them on again with a camera. So yeah, that's what we did. We set them up and in they went. I was not in the room at the time because we were worried that if I was part of the team, that they would recognize me. So I was on the outside of that farm with Pippa, the producer, in a car and I had established the whole sort of security procedure where I had got a very good connection of mine in the police to be on standby, in Mafikeng. I had a policeman on standby on his cell phone and I told him exactly where we were, what we were doing, the property's name and he knew the whole circumstances and we had established with Rick and Nick who were in on the property that there should be no communication between us, other than if it was urgent and that that would take place over a quick SMS if they needed assistance.

Because my fear, when I was doing a lot of this on my own, 10 or 15 years earlier and even while we were filming, was that once you got on to these properties Richard, you go behind huge electrified fences. And they lock these gates on you and then get into trouble, and you can't get out of there. And you've got all these weapons all around and there are lions all around, so not the most friendly environment to be trapped.

**27:12 Richard:** You can disappear quickly.

**27:15 Ian:** Yeah, exactly. I mean there have been in fact there have been some very public cases of workers or staff being [indistinguishable] to the lions in these facilities. Anyway, so we were on the outskirts but we never received an SMS signal from the guys and so Pippa and I were patrolling the border fence and in fact what we were doing is we were looking we were looking at the different exits and entry points on the property and suddenly we got this phone call from the guys, from Nick saying, "Hey, we're out." We were like, "What do you mean you're out? No, where on the property already? Where are you going? Where are you?" They said, "No, we're hot footing it out of here." "What do you mean?" "No, as fast as we can go, we're heading as far away

as we can go." "Why? What's happened?" They gave us a name of some town and they said just come to this town and we'll tell you the story. So we obviously knew something had happened so we turned around and hot footed it, and they were ahead of us. They were actually ahead of us. They had come out another entrance and as Rick says on the film, the further away you got, the better you felt.

**28:42 Richard:** Ian, look, I really appreciate this. I just wanted to finish up by asking about the lions themselves. How many lions do you they think are currently in captivity in South Africa at the moment?

**28:54 Ian:** You know Richard, it's horrific if you think about it but there are probably about 6 to 8.... No, okay, let me rephrase that. We know from official sources that the figures being bandied about are between 6,000 and 8,000 predators in captivity on about 200 facilities. So if you speak to the Predator Association, if you speak to the Professional Hunter's Association, if you speak to the Department of Environment, that's the general figures that get thrown out there. Between 6,000 and 8,000 predators. A vast majority are lions. So, we reckon, of that, probably 6,000 to maybe 7,000 are lions, but there are also quite a few tigers. I've seen hundreds of tigers I don't know, 500, 800 tigers, or maybe a thousand and then there are cheetahs, there are wild dogs, there are leopards and there are exotics as well. I mean you've got jaguars, and pumas, mountain lions - they're all here on the farms in South Africa. I've seen wolves, gray wolves in the Free State. And then of course all number of small cats as well. But my gut feel is that there are probably more. I sense that there are probably more and the reason I say that is because there is no official statistic, because to breed predators in South Africa, you're still really only need the two meters high double electrified fence and you need to submit some sort of a management plan. That's all. You need no understanding of lions, no ecology degree, no veterinary background. Nothing. You just need to submit what you do, why, and you have to build a two meter fence. You don't need to tell people how many lions you have in your facility. So, the South African Predator Association is the only body that represent these people, and it's voluntary. You don't have to be a member and even if you are a member of SAPA, you don't have to tell them how many predators you have, and the other thing is that people also don't have to date that information. So my suspicion is that we may have over 8,000, 9,000, possibly closer to 10,000 predators. Because if you look at the number of lions killed in canned hunts annually and we know that the 2013 statistic was about 850 and we've had comments from certain canned hunters themselves that it's probably closer to a thousand. Now let's say you're shooting 800 full adult male lions annually in canned hunts as a percentage of 6,000 to 7,000. My gut feel is that actually, if you look at that, you have to assume that the number of adult lions is higher than that. I also look at the number of cubs that I see on some of these facilities.

But for all intents and purposes, in the film, we used the figures we've been given, so 6,000 to 8,000 predators on about 200 facilities and over 800 lions shot annually every year in canned hunts. And remember for your listeners Richard, what's interesting is if you look at the wild lion population, South Africa has a region of about 2,700 to 3,000 lions in the wild and those wild lions is divided into what we call true wild, which is about 1600 or so and those at Kruger Park Kgalagadi (Transfrontier Park) sort of free-ranging population and then the lower amount which are what we call managed wild lions. I mean isn't this perverse hey? In South Africa, we have 3 categories of lions. We have wild lions, we have managed lions, and we have captive lions. I'm comfortable from a conservation perspective about the managed population because the managed population are those lions which are on private property but have come from the wild and they're a proper conservation program. The reason we refer to them as managed is just because they probably are too small or they're isolated and the conservation community is deeply concerned about their genetic integrity. So that's monitored strongly. And so that's a success story; that part of lion conservation in South Africa is successful. We've grown. We don't have 1,600 wild lions; we have 3,000 wild lions. But 1,400 or so are what we call managed. It's the 6,000 to 8,000 canned or captive ones that are the problem.

**33:56 Richard:** And what's going to happen to those lions? Let me ask you a different question first. What's the response been to Blood Lions so far and are things changing? Do you see a potential for change?

**34:11 Ian:** Well, yes. We've had a very, very successful campaign to date. I've already spoken about the professional hunters voting over 60% of their membership to support the aims and objectives of Blood Lions and we've touched on the way the tourism industry, the wider tourism industry is coming on board to try and stop petting and walking with lions. And we're also actively involved in a political level where your very own government became the first government in the world to act in a very positive, strong way. Greg Hunt, bless him, I know that he's not popular for some of your environmental groups but certainly here in South Africa and to lion lovers around the world, your ministry and Greg Hunt and Jason Wood, the Member of Parliament who started the bill, became the first country to ban the importation of lion trophies. And I also have to mention Donalea Patman who runs the Forever Wildlife NGO. Donalea has also been hugely instrumental. She's based in Melbourne. Hugely instrumental and supportive of Blood Lions in getting that legislation passed.

But the point being is that if we can't get our own government to act, then we're going to take the campaign internationally and we will get governments like Australia, ban. And that's what happened. We've got France as well. Now, this year, we're trying to get Finland, Germany, Spain, Italy to ban the importation of lion trophies as well. In the US, we have had huge traction with US Fish and Wildlife, about 3 or 4 months ago have now issued a statement that from now on, anyone importing lion trophies into the US would have to prove that their lion is part of a bonafide conservation program and of course no one accepts any of these captive bred facilities as part of conservation, so that's going to be impossible. So that's been a huge breakthrough for us as well. So yeah, the campaign is getting traction in various levels, in fact in all levels and we are having success.

**36:37 Richard:** Wonderful!

**36:40 Ian:** But I think hats off to Australia, you guys took the lead and Richard, you were at one of my screenings in I think Sydney. Yeah, so those public screenings go a long way to spreading the message in Oz. Your media in Australia was very, very proactive by jumping on the issue and there was a lot of good coverage in your dailies and on some of your big networks. I mean this is a good opportunity to thank the Australia government, to thank Donalea Patman for the love of wildlife and the Australian people for being so supportive of what is clearly a terribly unethical and horrific industry.

**37:29 Richard:** Yeah, there's been a huge reaction in Australia and as you say, it's drawn a lot of attention and absolutely, congrats to Greg Hunt for making that decision. It was a landmark decision and it sort of, I have to say, went against the grain of some of the other environmental decisions that are taking place in Australia at the moment. But aside from that, good on him. And I think none of this would have happened without you and the rest of the team doing what you're doing, so full hats off to you guys.

So I wanted to just finish up and I'm really grateful for all the time that you've been willing to spend, but is the aim to stop canned hunting all together and if so, what's going to happen to the lions that are currently sitting in cages throughout South Africa?

**38:23 Ian:** Yes. The primary aim, if you go onto our website, is a very simple one. It is to stop all exploitive breeding practices and to bring an end to canned hunting of lions and other predators. Of course as you have likely brought up, what will then happen to all these predators and these lions if we are successful? I think there are two aspects to this Richard. One is that because we are concerned about what may happen to the lions, I don't think that is a good enough or strong enough argument to say we shouldn't do anything, and I think the best way to judge that is to look

at the growth in my time. So, when I started investigating this industry in the mid to late 1990s, I reckon there was probably no more than 800 to maybe 1,000 predators in captivity. When I did that report for the then minister Marthinus Van Schalkwyk in 2005, I estimated 3,000 to 3,500 predators and by the way, that figure stuck for many years in journalism around the world. It is always quoted, 3500. But we now know that there's now between 6,000 and possibly 8,000 predators. So you can see the growth and if we do nothing, who knows, by the end of 2020, we might have 12,000 to 15,000 in captivity. So that in itself is good reason to act.

But I think the other point to remember here is that if the government does something, if they're every going to put a timeline on a final date for implementation, so if they're going to close down the facilities or canned hunting is going to stop, I don't think it will be a same day announcement. It would be, alright, by the end of the year 2018, in December 2018, this is all going to end. You can bet your bottom dollar Richard that between now and then, every lion that is worth a dime to those breeders and hunters will be sold in some form or another. So you will get discounted canned hunting. Or buy one get two sort of thing. Or they'll halve the prices or any variety of hunt will take place. They'll also ship them off in bones and so you'll have a booming lion bone trade. They'll sell them to breeders and collectors in the Middle East and the Far East. So any form of revenue, they will try to gain.

And so come the period, we will probably only be left with a few hundred of these animals and genetically, the welfare experts will tell you that some of them have to be put down, euthanized. We have quite a few facilities, proper sanctuaries. And for your listeners, a proper sanctuary is one that does not trade in these animal, it does not breed these animals, and it has no interaction with these animals and it provides the best possible conditions under which these animals can see out their lives. So you get some sanctuaries that don't breed, that don't trade, and they don't interact, but the animals are still kept under totally horrible old style zoo conditions. The true sanctuary, the one that appears in the film offer their animals large, wide, the proper bush, shade, and so hopefully some of them would be able to take up the slack.

But you know the most important thing Richard is that really what we have to do is we got to stop the breeding. Because if you stop the breeding today, you know as a field guide, that a lion lives on average let's say 12 to 14 years. So at the outside, we've got a 15 year problem, and then they'll all die a natural death, if we stop the breeding today. So that's number one; stop the breeding and then we will deal with everything else from there on then.

I'm not saying that lions or other predators shouldn't be bred under captive conditions under any circumstances. No. But if we are going to have to breed, then I want the proper conservation communities, the legitimate lion scientists and ecologists coming to us to say, "Right guys, because of A, B and C and because of this research undertaken an X amount of time, we are going to need to do this." Or, you know, "The situation is now dire, we need to breed." That's a whole different issue because that will be run with the proper scientific purposes. It would be peer-reviewed, it would be well funded and there will be a beginning, middle and an end to the program. So under conservation scientific purposes, yes, no problem, but for commercial exploitation, we need to stop the breeding today and then there's a timeline on the solution.

**43:49 Richard:** And Ian, what can people do to help? The people who are listening to the podcast, what can they do to assist you in the work that you're doing?

**43:59 Ian:** I think the first thing is when you visit South Africa, please do not visit any of our lion farms and facilities. Don't go near the places. Don't get talked into believing that cuddling a cub, petting a cub, walking with lions has anything to do with conservation. That will be a huge significant step. Secondly, if you're a volunteer, a young Australian gap student, wanting to come and volunteer your services, do not volunteer on one of these facilities. Do your homework properly. Go to the Blood Lions website as a starter. Get hold of us if you're not sure. But offer your services to a genuine, legitimate conservation agency. There are many of them that require your help. So that would also be of huge assistance. Thirdly, if you have seen the film or you are

listening to this podcast, then tell your friends. Tell them what you've learned. Tell them what you've heard and that in itself makes a significant contribution. Beyond that, I would say write to the facilities in South Africa. Write to the South African Tourism Board. If you come to South Africa for example and you've seen or you've heard stories, display your disgust and let the authorities in this country know that it's damaging our reputation. That also helps significantly.

You know we've just had a major decision made against rhino trade at the end of last week that came out and inside sources, people in the know, are suggesting that one of the reasons is that the government were actually very worried about the negative connotation of losing face as the host country and that's completely valid. I think no country wants to have the rest of the world think of them negatively. So if you're a tourist to South Africa or you're an operator in South Africa and you don't like what you see or hear, write to our authorities, the tourism offices and tell them. Tell them about your disgust. Tell them that you won't visit again until this has changed. You know all of those levels make significant contributions. Go on to the social media sites. One of the reasons the Blood Lions campaign has been so successful and has got so much traction is because we've got 35,000 Facebook followers. When we do tweets, we have millions of people that get involved and the governments or the decision makers take notice of that. If there's no background noise, well then we don't have to worry about it. But if there is, then politicians say, well let's do something. So on a number of levels, there are things that people can do. But I'm going to say again, Australia has already done a significant amount because you've been supported your minister who has made a vital decision. It's a visionary decision in the history of lion conservation, in the history of these industries, that is a pivotal moment when Australia banned the importation.

**47:30 Richard:** Wonderful. Ian, on behalf of everyone who cares about animals in general and wildlife specifically, and lions even more specifically, I want to say a big thank you to you and the rest of the team at Blood Lions for everything that you've done, and onwards and upwards and I really want to say thanks again for all the time that you've been willing to spend participating in the podcast. I really appreciate it and we look forward to chatting to you again soon about some other interesting conservation issues that are very meaningful for you.

**48:10 Ian:** Great. Thank you Richard. Thank you for your interest in this topic and thank you so much for your support in giving me this platform. I truly appreciate that and I wish you huge success with this podcast because I think it's a wonderful idea and I look forward to talking again and seeing you over here again soon.

**48:32 Richard:** Yeah, it won't be too long. It won't be too long, that's for sure. Alright, thanks Ian.

**48:37 Ian:** Thanks Richard. Okay, bye now.

*For more information, see the show notes or contact us at [www.africanfamilysafaris.com/contact](http://www.africanfamilysafaris.com/contact).*