



# Clarion calls for the wild

Ian McCallum has a diverse range of skills and talents – medical doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, wilderness guide, author and poet. Scott Ramsay spent a few hours in his company

**Ian McCallum's love** for the African wilderness and wildlife is clear to see. He has travelled to most parts of the continent from his base in Cape Town.

He is an eloquent and effective advocate of the protection of the wilderness and the restoration of relationships between humans and animals, and with the planet itself.

Ian's Ecological Intelligence is a highly readable book that will challenge and inspire readers who are concerned about the state of the Earth. His poems in the anthologies *Wild Gifts* and *Untamed* are clarion calls for a

renewed reverence for wildlife and wild places. **The wildlife and wilderness areas of Africa are under immense pressure, despite the best intentions of some concerned governments and citizen groups. What needs to be done to ensure they are sustained and nurtured?**

The critical level will be the number of people who are genuinely concerned about the future of wild animals. The greatest danger is the indifference that so many people have for wildlife and wild areas – the attitude that “it’s got nothing to do with me”.

For example, why should somebody in New York City or Beijing worry about the rhino? Rhinos may go extinct, but so did the dodo. Isn't this just part of the cycle of life? There's a terrible sense that there's nothing that any of us can do as individuals.

This is the biggest challenge. It comes down to the question: what are we – the privileged ones – going to do about it?

We are the ones who are privileged to have had contact with elephants and rhino and lions in a way that most people will never have. We are the ones who must speak up for

the wild places and animals.

It depends on an acknowledgement of what I call “web-of-life” thinking. Everything is connected. Wild creatures are part of our identity.

**What about the so-called “sustainable utilisation” model, including trophy hunting, as a way to create jobs and increase revenue flows to wildlife areas?**

This is quite contentious. We have to be very careful of the sustainable utilisation model, which turns all living things, other than human beings, into objects: Objects for our use, objects which have a monetary value and that therefore are exchangeable on economic terms.

There is another school of thought, that some things – surely – are just simply not for sale. And what is it going to take for us to reach that level of ethics and say, “I’m sorry, this is not for sale. This is priceless.”

Is your mother for sale? Is your daughter for sale? Are you going to put an economic value on child trafficking? Oh, no, we’re talking human beings here. Some will argue this is a different issue. I’m saying no, it’s not a different issue. It’s part of the same continuum.

Do you really give a stuff about your fellow man? Then show me that you actually give a stuff about the animals and the natural state of the planet.

Does your mother have an economic value? No. Would you die for her or your

sister? Surely. There are some things worth dying for.

There are different kinds of hunting, of course. Hunting a gemsbok or kudu to feed your family and friends is one thing, but trophy hunting of elephants, rhinos, lions or leopards is a continued act of dominance where the hunter stands on top of his or her prize with a high-powered rifle, where the animal didn't have a snowball's hope in hell, and pretending that you have shot it in self-defence or that this is some statement of your personal prowess. This is a mind-set that is heavily cushioned and fed by the sheer amount of money that comes pouring into this industry.

The economics of trophy hunting don't always match up to what the hunters claim. I'm afraid the reality and some of the statistics don't always match. The amount of money that goes back into conservation or communities is not as much as hunters say.

**What do you say to the trophy hunting operator, who is adamant that trophy hunting is a valuable part of the conservation matrix?**

Sometimes you have to kill wild animals, yes, because the highly managed game reserves of today mostly have fences, and can only sustain certain numbers of animals. Why not give those same trophy hunters a quota, and then they can come in to hunt, and get

a replica on their way out? Give them the best fibreglass replica of the animal they are allowed to shot.

But that dead animal stays here in Africa. Nothing leaves here, okay? You can take a photograph of your animal, but there will not be a photograph of you standing in triumph over this animal. You've come for the hunt and for the chase.

We need to encourage a new breed of hunters. The message needs to be: “You are welcome to come and track that animal, but you must identify the track first, and then you have to follow it on foot, and find the animal by yourself.”

There will be no use of vehicles, or shooting from the back of vehicles. Let's regenerate an honourable hunting ethos. Let's go back to how it all began.

**The issue of sustainable utilisation is highlighted by the current crisis surrounding rhino poaching, and the potential legalising of the sale of horn into Asia. What's your view?**

How can you justify the selling of rhino horn for a use which is nothing but sheer superstition? Isn't this intrinsically wrong? Don't you think education is the key here?

Why underestimate the intelligence of Chinese and Vietnamese people, where the so-called market is? We've got to be very careful about turning the Chinese people into the enemy. Our enemy is right here in SA and,



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