



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

"Hunting provides the principal incentive and revenue for conservation.  
Hence it is a force for conservation."

## World Conservation Force Bulletin

[www.conservationforce.org](http://www.conservationforce.org) June 2012

### Dr. James Teer, Founding Member of Conservation Force, Dies

By John J. Jackson, III

**D**r. James Teer has died. He was a founding board member of Conservation Force in 1997, but our working relationship started nearly a decade before that. He was one of the most distinguished conservationists in America in the last 60 years. You can't imagine what a privilege and what an honor it has been to work with him by my side and at my call all these years. For 15 years, he has been one of the core strategists as well as volunteer field project leaders of Conservation Force. He was a true gentleman and a distinguished scholar, devoted to Conservation Force and its mission.

Dr. Teer was Past President of The Wildlife Society (two years), the foremost organization of certified biologists and wildlife managers in the world. He was retired Chair of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries of Texas A&M University (nine years as Chair, 30 years total), held the *Caesar Kleberg Chair of Wildlife Ecology* and later was made Professor Emeritus. He was a Fulbright Scholar Lecturer, board member of the National Academy of Sciences (six years), board member of the National Audubon Society (six years) and National Wildlife Foundation, and board member of the Serengeti Research Institute (seven years). He served on faculties of different major universities for over 40 years. He also was the retired Executive Director of The Welder Wildlife Foundation (20 years). He received the most distinguished award of The Wildlife Society, the *Aldo Leopold Memorial Medal* for "distinguished service to conservation."

His most recent award was his induction into the Texas Wildlife and Fisheries *Hall of Fame* for "conservation education" in 2008. He was presented that award by Governor Rick Perry and US Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison. His list of awards and achievements would fill this Bulletin.



James Teer (left) and John J. Jackson, III at CITES CoP 12 in Chile in 2002.

More than an academician, Dr. Teer had a long list of field achievements. It was he who was contracted by US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) to do the African leopard status survey across all of Africa for its downlisting in the 1970s. Later, he marshaled the less successful jaguar survey and workshop in Brazil in the 1980s. It is because of his leopard study that the leopard was downlisted in sub-Saharan Africa and can be imported today. (It was downlisted only for import of safari hunting trophies, and all other purposes are prohibited.) There is no doubt that he was among the upper echelon of and intimately associated with the foremost ecologists and biologists of wildlife management in its heyday over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 60 years employed by conservation agencies, universities and foundations.

Dr. Teer guided thousands of post-graduate students across the globe – and he guided me too. He was a core member of Conservation Force's think tank, but also a soldier in the field. He mentored and inspired me.

Dr. Teer spearheaded Conservation Force's *ESA Enhancement Initiative*. That included traveling to Namibia and establishing the *Cheetah Compact* where US hunters agreed to contribute 1,000

US dollars for every cheetah taken, and over 100 ranches agreed to manage cheetah under prescribed sustainable use practices. I remember well his report from Namibia in the early 90s. He wrote, "I am delighted with the progress being made with the cheetah compact and our efforts in Namibia. Your idea for this compact was brilliant; it should have some impact on our Fish and Wildlife Service friends." Nearly a decade later in his autobiography, he describes the Cheetah Initiative as languishing because of the US trophy import restrictions and as an important failure in his life. He wrote, "The United States would not relent on their strict requirements.... I served on the board of Conservation Force, and I attempted to assist in the effort to relax restrictions, on the basis of managing wildlife to benefit people.... The matter of...importation into the United States languishes there." (The USFWS denied both Namibia's downlisting petition under the ESA and the trophy import permit applications filed under the enhancement provision of the ESA and its regulations despite unheralded support and a special quota established by CITES to facilitate the conservation-based hunting.)

Dr. Teer also served on the Advisory Board of the Cheetah Conservation Fund

and even longer on the Cat Specialist Group of IUCN.

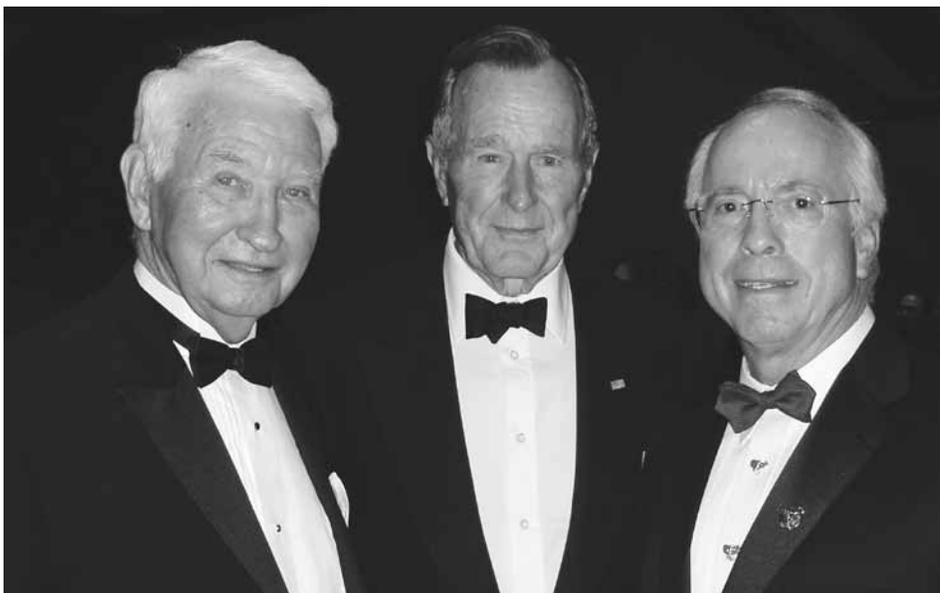
He also established the *Black-Faced Impala Initiative* in Namibia, where US hunters contributed \$500 for each black-faced impala taken. He traveled to Maputo and interior Mozambique to document and initiate Conservation Force's initiative to import those elephant. He met with the USFWS in Washington, DC, before going and expertly documented the benefits that they said would constitute enhancements for issuance of elephant trophy imports. It was a decade later, but before his death, that we found out through litigation that the reports were wholly ignored and never included in the decision-making. He was as frustrated as I at the "maladministration" of the ESA by the International Section of the USFWS (District Court Judge's description).

When the ESA enhancement policy change was proposed by the Department of Interior in 2002, Dr. Teer personally circulated a letter and accumulated the signatures of nearly 350 of America's top scientific leaders in support of the select issuance of import permits for endangered listed species when warranted. Unfortunately, the Administration did not allow the published proposal to be implemented or follow the recommendations and many promises of the Department of Interior and USFWS.

Dr. Teer monitored Conservation Force's *Ranching for Restoration* Program to restore barasingha and Eld's deer in Asia, a program funded by Texas ranches that are captive-breeding those species. With his relationship with the leadership of The Wildlife Society of India, he was able to establish the most productive projects for the survival of the species to have ever existed. Dr. Teer was a champion of developing nation programs and sovereign dignity and respect.

Dr. Teer was at my side at CITES Conferences of the Parties, World Congresses of IUCN and special events around the world. Together as a team, we attended the initial meeting of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP) hosted by Boone & Crockett, of which Dr. Teer was a professional member. Together, we attended the initial meeting of the Future of Texas Hunting, the initiation of the North American Sustainable Use Specialist Group of IUCN that Dr. Teer chaired for half a decade, and so much more.

Conservation Force and the whole community were so very lucky to have this giant at their service. It was a privilege for me. It was an honor. Dr. Teer deeply believed in the mission of Conservation Force and continued to serve us long and hard after his health caused him to resign from practically everything else. He gave us counsel



*James Teer (l) and John J. Jackson III with Past President of The United States George H.W. Bush at a Tanzania Gala Dinner in Gaylord, Texas, co-hosted by Conservation Force, Dallas Safari Club and the Tanzania Foundation in 2006.*



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## *World Conservation Force Bulletin*

**EDITOR/WRITER**

John J. Jackson, III

**PUBLISHER**

Barbara Crown

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3240 South I-10 Service Road West, Suite 200  
Metairie, LA 70001  
Tel. 504-837-1233 Fax 504-837-1145  
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and the use of his good name until the end. He was always there for me and Conservation Force and you.

Dr. Teer built an office behind his home in College Town, Texas, for his Conservation Force work. He was 86 at his death and had been embarrassed about his deteriorating health. He wanted to do more for Conservation Force in field projects but just was not physically able to do so. Nevertheless, he was part of the management and "think tank" of Conservation Force until the end.

In the early years he inspired me. He wrote, "I am always ready to assist you in whatever way you think has merit." (1996) "I am impressed with the purpose and goals of your organization. For whatever purposes you can use me, I will be pleased to assist...." (1997) In 2002, after we attended CITES in Santiago together, he wrote, "I marvel at your energy and commitment." Then in 2006 he still wrote "I...continue to admire you for your bold and successful force in conservation affairs...." "I want you to know that I admire and respect both of you for your tenacity and hard work." In 2009, he confessed to not telling me of his Parkinson's disease "because I just wanted to continue with you.... I intend to continue working in conservation and, with your agreement, continue as a Board Member with Conservation Force."

The most remarkable demonstration of support was his last postal letter to me. He said that if he had his life to live over again he would do what I was doing instead of spending it in academia. He could not have made a more inspiring endorsement to keep Conservation Force in motion after his passing.

*John and Chrissie, I have always admired your strong dedication to conservation needs in the developing world. I wish I had put my work into the field rather than a university. You just don't give up, despite some tough going from time to time with this or that endangered species. I do not know a single person in conservation that can match your dedication and perseverance. Thank you. With kindest wishes and respect for your work. - James G. Teer, April 16, 2010*

Dr. Teer was a hunter. In his autobiography he wrote, "Conservation was the center of my life, but it was not the source of my identity." "[I] grew up in a culture of hunting and fishing...[and] saw no dichotomy between protecting and utilizing the natural world. The two were one and the same in the practice of conservation and natural resource management, serving the needs of both wildlife and people...."

Dr. Teer knew that wildlife management was people management. In his autobiography he wrote, "I learned

early that people had to be considered in plans for the natural world, or else conservation efforts would likely fail." In 2003 at the 3rd International Wildlife Management Congress that he had chaired earlier, he wrote, "History tells us that conservation will succeed to the extent that we serve the human condition. Failing to do so is a sure way for failure." He certainly knew how to keep Chrissie and me working for the natural world.

Would Dr. Teer have done what Chrissie and I do instead of spending life in academia as he did, or was he really Professor James Teer as well as a dear friend in the end, spurring us to continue on without him after his passage? Was he not inspiring two students of his greatness with a pretense of remorse? He was a force within the force (Conservation Force). He will long continue to be an inspiration to me.

Thank you, Jim. We will continue the good fight in your honor and memory. ■

### *Taking a day off to go fishing in the Mississippi River Delta.*



## Canadian Wood Bison Downlisted! Trophies Now Importable

**D**r. James Teer did not live to see it, but the wood bison was downlisted to threatened on May 3, 2012. It was reclassified from "endangered" to "threatened" by US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the downlisting is effective as of June 4, 2012. That means:

- 1.) It is importable
- 2.) No import permit is necessary

- 3.) You still need an Appendix II CITES export permit from Canada, which is a mere formality.

The *Final Rule* was due February, 2012, and we noticed the intent to sue again, but did not file because the USFWS assured us they would finally make the determination in May, as they did.

The wood bison is larger than the plains bison of the United States, substantially larger, and has a different appearance. In fact, it is "the largest native extant terrestrial mammal in North America" according to the *Final Rule*. The average weight of a mature bull of eight years of age is 2,006 pounds!

For those interested, the *Final Rule*

discusses the status of every herd and can be found at 77 FR 26191-26211 and on Conservation Force's website under *Updates and Alerts* at <http://www.conservationforce.org/news.html>. It can also be found at <http://www.regulations.gov> under Docket No. FWS-R9-IA-2008-0123 and at <http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/endangered/index.htm>.

This is the culmination of 12 years of work. It commenced in 1999 when the Yukon authorities authorized nonresident hunting after their population recovered. Even before that, it was downlisted from Appendix I to II of CITES to facilitate trophy trade in September 1997. That is when our first efforts began. It grew from one population in Canada of 300 in 1978 to totaling 4,414 bison in 2008. "At this point there are more than 4,000 disease-free wood bison in 7 herds and an additional 4,000 animals in Wood Bison National Park," according to the USFWS. It was originally listed as endangered in the 1969 Endangered Species Conservation Act and just carried over into the ESA of today in 1973.

Conservation interest prevailed upon Conservation Force to file the first test import permit applications in 2000. Those applications languished unprocessed until our recent suits when they were denied, and then the denial was overturned by the Court. Also, the USFWS had long promised to begin a downlisting on its own. As years passed, yours truly prevailed upon Canadian interests that if it was ever to be downlisted they would have to file their own petition. When they filed it, a series of notices of intent to sue and suits were necessary to keep it moving forward to the very end. For a number of reasons, the USFWS only downlisted instead of delisting it completely. The USFWS again, as it did originally, states it will itself "propose to delist wood bison if and when appropriate." When

it becomes appropriate, I don't suggest waiting on the USFWS to initiate the complete downlisting.

According to the USFWS, a number of commenters to the proposed downlisting "argued that listing under the Act (ESA) provides no conservation benefits...and may in fact be impeding conservation...." The Service responded that "we cannot and did not base the decision to reclassify the wood bison... on the efficacy of this action to conserve the species." This rings like the same statement in the polar bear listing *Final Rule*. The ESA needs a Congressional fix for the ESA to be rational.

The USFWS "recognize(d) that regulated hunting is an important component of Canada's recovery plan for the species," but then said that was not a consideration in the downlisting determination. In fact, Canadian officials have asked for the downlisting all along and made it clear that the ESA listing was obstructing its conservation strategy, but the USFWS has turned a deaf ear to that plea in this instance as in the polar bear case that is also being litigated. What happened to the clause in the listing section of the ESA that in the case of foreign species the programs of the foreign nation should be taken into account in



delisting determinations?

The USFWS recognized that "Canada uses hunting of wood bison as a management tool for population control and to minimize the chances that disease will spread from one population to another," (to keep them apart). It "found no evidence that hunting, as it is currently managed, is a threat to the species." This was important because unregulated hunting, it said, was the initial cause of the bison's decline. The hunting keeps the purebred wood bison separate from the growing number of plains bison that are being commercially farmed. It also keeps the diseased herds separated from those that are disease-free. Both hybridization with plains bison and disease (bovine brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis) are reasons the bison remain threatened. It is ironic that these functions of hunting were not recognized as enhancement in the import permit cases that were overturned by the Federal Court. In fact, a number of conclusions in the downlisting contradict the import permit application denials that the Court has already overturned.

The USFWS also considered climate change separately as a separate habitat-related issue in its decision process. Contrary to claims of one protectionist commenter, it found that forecasted climate change will improve the bison's status over the next 100 years because its habitat will improve, i.e. increase in insects and tree disease outbreaks will increase the forest "susceptibility to fire" and beetles may kill trees, both of which would create openings that benefit the bison.

We still have wood bison motions and appeals pending in various District and Appellate Courts. It will take time to unravel them, but the principle mission has been accomplished. Help support the program and the native, First Nation people of Canada. Get yourself a giant bison. ■

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