

2015/06: Should crocodile safaris be allowed in the Northern Territory?

What they said...

'By doing this we can create the new Indigenous crocodile industry. Increasing our involvement in that industry means getting people into jobs, into better training, increased involvement in the contemporary form of crocodile management'
Indigenous landowner, Jida Gulpilil

'Crocs might not be the cutest or cuddliest of animals, but they don't deserve to be injured and killed for kicks'
Australian Wildlife Protection Council

The issue at a glance

On March 23, 2015, it was reported that an agreement had been reached within the federal Coalition to allow crocodile safaris in the Northern Territory.

The agreement was arrived at to placate the Nationals after the Liberal Environment Minister, Greg Hunt, announced that Australia would not allow the import or export of trophy animals. The Minister imposed a \$170,000 fine on bringing lion body parts into Australia for individuals and \$850,000 for corporations

The Nationals objected that this decision had been arrived at without consulting them. It was seen as indicating a potentially negative attitude toward Australian game hunters, a group which is a significant part of the Nationals' support base.

The issue is still not resolved. The Environment Minister is on record as opposed to crocodile safaris in the Northern Territory and a wide range of conservation groups share this position.

However, under an environmental agreement struck between the Abbott Government and the Northern Territory, it is understood it will be difficult for the minister to circumvent the new agreement.

Background

Recovery of Northern Territory saltwater crocodiles

Saltwater crocodiles (*Crocodylus porosus*) in the Northern Territory of Australia were protected in 1971, after a severe population decline resulting from 26 years of intense commercial hunting. By that time wild saltwater crocodiles were rarely sighted anywhere and they were commercially extinct in areas where they had once been abundant.

Since being protected the wild population has expanded some 20 times in abundance and 100 times in biomass.

Current commercial uses

Commercial use based on both ranching (collecting and selling wild eggs), and limited direct wild harvesting, is biologically sustainable and allows landowners to benefit financially from the increasing number of crocodiles on their lands.

Crocodile farming, based largely on ranching (collecting and selling wild eggs), generates some \$25 million per year in skin sales for the international high fashion industry and has extensive commercial flow-on effects in the community.

Tourism, based on wild and captive crocodiles, is the mainstay of the "Top End" tourist industry.

Tourism is the second largest industry and biggest employer of people. National and international documentaries and media attention on the NT's successful crocodile management program is arguably the primary vehicle through which Top End tourism is promoted against competing destinations.

Safety program

A public education program ensures residents and visitors are well-informed about 'crocodile safety'. An active problem crocodile program is dedicated to trying to keep crocodiles extinct in Darwin Harbour, where most people live, and to removing individual crocodiles that cause problems in remote communities.

Internet information

On March 28, 2015, The Northern Territory News ran an opinion piece by Maria Billias titled 'Crocodile safari hunts would provide an income stream for Aboriginal communities'

The comment criticises many of those opposing crocodile safaris for being out of touch and suggests that it has the capacity to assist Indigenous communities.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.ntnews.com.au/news/opinion/crocodile-safari-hunts-would-provide-an-income-stream-for-aboriginal-communities-writes-columnist-maria-billias/story-fnk0b216-1227282254435>

On March 27, 2015, Wide Open Spaces posted an article by David Smith titled 'Trophy Crocodile Hunting Back on Agenda in Australia'

The report considers the most recent agreement regarding the establishment of crocodile safari hunting in the Northern Territory and presents arguments both for and against the development.

The full text of the article can be found at <http://www.wideopenspaces.com/trophy-crocodile-hunting-back-agenda-australia-pics/>

On March 25, 2015, The Humane Society International (HSI) posted a media release criticising the federal government's apparent intention to allow crocodile hunting safaris in the Northern Territory.

The media release is titled 'Nationals put crocodile trophy ban back on the table despite lion trophy ban'

The full text of the release can be accessed at <http://www.hsi.org.au/go/to/1782/25-march-2015-nationals-put-crocodile-trophy-hunting-back-on-the.html#.VR5J3E0cTIV>

On March 24, 2015, the ABC ran a news report titled 'Northern Territory Cabinet ministers express support for crocodile safari hunting'

The article focuses on views on the issue from within the Northern Territory and presents a variety of opinions.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-24/nt-cabinet-ministers-show-support-for-crocodile-safari-hunting/6345566>

On March 23, 2015, the ABC ran a news report titled 'Crocodile trophy hunting back on agenda in Northern Territory after Coalition internal spat'

The report details an agreement within the federal Coalition government to allow the safari hunting of Northern Territory crocodiles.

The full text of the report can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-23/crocodile-trophy-hunting-northern-territory-coalition-spat/6340398>

On March 13, 2015, The Guardian ran a news report titled 'Australia bans hunting "trophies" from lions entering or leaving the country.'

The report details the Environment Minister, Greg Hunt, signing an order to prevent the importation of hunting trophies.

The full text of this report can be accessed at <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/mar/13/australia-bans-hunting-trophies-from-lions-entering-or-leaving-the-country>

On February 23, 2015, The Adelaide Advertiser ran an opinion piece by Nicolle Flint titled 'Glenn McGrath shouldn't have said sorry for safari hunting photos'

The piece uses comparisons with safaris in Africa to argue that crocodile safari hunting will both advantage Indigenous communities and act as an incentive for crocodile conservation.

The full text of the opinion piece can be found at <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/opinion/nicolle-flint-glenn-mcgrath-shouldnt-have-said-sorry-for-safari-hunting-photos/story-fni6unxq-1227236051097>

On August 22, 2014, The Conversation published a comment by Adam Britton, Senior Research Associate at Charles Darwin University and Andrew Campbell, Director, Research Institute for Environment and Livelihoods at Charles Darwin University. The comment is titled 'Open season on crocodiles is not the solution to attacks on people'

The comment can be accessed at <http://theconversation.com/open-season-on-crocodiles-is-not-the-solution-to-attacks-on-people-30722>

On March 27, 2014, the ABC ran a news report titled 'Crocodile safari hunting: Environment Minister Greg Hunt scuppers NT plan'

The report presents the federal environment minister's decision not to support crocodile safaris in the Northern Territory.

The full text of this article can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-27/croc-safari-hunting-ruled-out-environment-minister-greg-hunt/5349122>

On August 10, 2012, the ABC ran a news report titled 'Top End crocodile safari hunt push makes waves'

The piece considers a number of the arguments raised in opposition to crocodile safaris.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-08-10/crocodile-safari-hunt-indigenous-consult/4190268>

On July 15, 2012, The Independent published a news report by Kathy Marks titled 'Crocodiles back in trophy hunters' sights'

The report considers the 2012 proposal to introduce crocodile safaris and presents opinions for and against the proposition.

The full text of the article can be found at <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/nature/crocodiles-back-in-trophy-hunters-sights-7944463.html>

On June 14, 2012, the ABC ran a news report titled 'Territory renews push for safari crocodile hunts'

The item presents views from a number of stakeholders in favour of the plan.

It can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-06-14/renewed-push-for-safari-crocodile-hunts/4070398>

On June 14, 2012, The Adelaide Advertiser ran a news report titled 'Northern Territory ban on crocodile hunting may be lifted'

The report gives a number of differing views on the proposal to allow the safari-hunting of crocodiles.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/national/nt-welcomes-croc-hunting-move/story->

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In June 2012, the Northern Territory Government's Department of Land Resource Management released its Management Program for the Saltwater Crocodile in the Northern Territory of Australia, 2014-2015. The plan was originally published in 2009 and then a revised draft was issued for public comment.

The plan outlines in detail the manner in which crocodile safaris would be managed.

The full text of the Management Program can be accessed at http://www.lrm.nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/7417/croc_mngmt_program_2014-2015.pdf#search=%22safaris%22

On October 9, 2009, The Guardian ran a report of the federal government's decision not to sanction crocodile safari hunting in the Northern Territory.

The full text of this article can be accessed at <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/oct/02/crocodile-hunting-australia>

The Australian Wildlife Council's opposition statement to crocodile safaris can be accessed at <http://awpc.org.au/the-animals/crocodile/>

Arguments in favour of crocodile safaris in the Northern Territory

1. Crocodile safaris will create employment for Indigenous communities

One of the key arguments offered in support of allowing safari hunting of crocodiles in the Northern Territory is that the hunts would be run by Indigenous communities and would provide a valuable source of employment.

The Northern Territory National Party argues for authorising Indigenous communities to conduct between 25 and 50 trophy shoots a year, claiming this would provide them with much-needed cash.

On March 28, 2015, The Northern Territory News published an opinion piece by Maria Billias, in which she stated, 'The NT Government first touted the idea of limited safari hunting as an economic driver for indigenous communities seven years ago. These communities have been asking for safari hunting as an income stream for years. It's also the same people living in some of the worst conditions in Australia today who are faced with the prospect of their kids being taken by these man-eating reptiles on a daily basis.'

In 2012, Indigenous landowner Jida Gulpilil argued that safari hunting would provide jobs and boost tourism in remote areas where there is a lack of economic opportunity. He stated, 'By doing this we can create the new Indigenous crocodile industry. Increasing our involvement in that industry means getting people into jobs, into better training, increased involvement in the contemporary form of crocodile management.'

In 2014, Jida Gulpilil presented safari-hunting crocodiles as an Aboriginal right. He argued that governments should not deny Aboriginal communities the opportunity to develop a resource occurring on their traditional lands.

Mr Gulpilil stated, 'It's another feather in the Government's hat when you are talking about taking away the rights of Aboriginal people.'

For the Federal Government to come in under the Crown, lawlessly, and take away the rights of Aboriginal people...is unfair and it's unjust.' Mr Gulpilil has further stated, 'While white entrepreneurs have grown rich by farming crocodiles, we've only been getting a small slice of the pie.'

Safari hunting operations for buffalo and banteng on Aboriginal lands currently provide access fees of up to \$1,500 per buffalo and \$2,900 per banteng to Aboriginal landholders. Safari hunting of crocodiles is projected to provide access fees of \$5,000 to \$25,000 per crocodile to landholders (Indigenous and non-Indigenous), dependent upon the size of the animal.

Aboriginal guides would be part of the hunting party and may run the operation; while Aboriginal workers could clean, tan and mount the trophies for export. Mr Gulpilil believes hunters would pay between \$10,000 and \$50,000 for the total service.

Currently, Aboriginal landowners are permitted to kill crocodiles on their land. Aboriginal people are not bound by hunting regulations or seasons when taking animals for food or other traditional purposes. Supporters of the trophy-hunting program argue that it would allow the Indigenous population to gain greater financial benefit from these animals.

2. Northern Territory Saltwater Crocodiles are present in large numbers

In the Northern Territory the Salt-water Crocodile has been found in the following rivers: Mary, Adelaide, Daly, Moyle, Victoria/Baines, Finniss, Wildman, West Alligator, East Alligator, South Alligator, Liverpool, Blyth, Glyde, Habgood, Baralminar/Gobalpa, Goromuru, Cato and Peter John Rivers.

Prior to 1970, the Salt-water Crocodile was hunted in a manner that was shown to be unsustainable. In the Northern Territory, as few as 3000 Saltwater Crocodiles were present when hunting ceased. Since the species became protected, the Northern Territory population has increased to 30-40 000 in 1984 and 70-75 000 in 1994. In 2012 the estimated population was 80,000-100,000.

Within the Northern Territory Saltwater Crocodiles are a protected species, but are not listed as threatened.

Spotlight surveys over selected river systems within the Northern Territory provide indices of the density and size structure of crocodile populations and are the standard method of monitoring.

The current survey and monitoring data provides a measure of the population trend at the sampling sites and by extrapolation a demonstration of the trend for the total population. The principal purpose of monitoring the wild population is to provide an objective means through which any serious general or local decline, due to any cause, can be detected

in sufficient time to effect remedial action.

Supporters of safari hunting of crocodiles argue that crocodile numbers are now so large that regulated hunting could take place without putting the species at risk.

3. The numbers of Saltwater Crocodiles to be hunted for trophies will be strictly limited

It has been proposed that up to 50 crocodiles would be trophy hunted each year. The 50 trophy animals would come out of a quota of 600 culled every year, under a management program aimed at thinning the population and removing 'problem animals'.

It has been claimed that the total number of animals being culled would not alter and so there would be no additional strain placed on crocodile numbers. Indigenous landowner Jida Gulpilil has stated, 'All we want to do is change the person who pulls the trigger.'

The animals to be hunted must be at least 3.5 metres long. This would restrict hunting to adult males and protect adult females who may be bearing eggs.

The management program states that the Northern Territory Government will seek to maintain the presence of a visible crocodile population and large iconic (generally more than 4.5 m) individuals through the creation of zones where harvesting of life cycle stages other than eggs is restricted.

While these guidelines do not set a maximum size limit on crocodiles that can be taken by safari hunting, it is expected that the harvest restrictions and restrictions imposed by landholders, will provide protection for a significant proportion of the very large crocodiles in the Northern Territory population.

Landholders will receive notification from the Director of Parks and Wildlife that they have secured the rights for crocodile safari hunting on their land for a specified number of animals.

The landholder would then advise their selected safari operator who will be required to apply for an individual safari-hunting permit for each safari hunt.

Permits to take wildlife will not be ongoing; they will be issued for a specified period. Safari operators will have to negotiate with the landholder for access to the land for which the safari permit has been granted.

4. Crocodile safaris will further boost tourism

It has been claimed that crocodile safaris would expand the tourist appeal of the Northern Territory.

Due to diminished numbers, crocodiles are generally unable to be hunted in other parts of the world. Being able to offer tourists the chance to participate in a crocodile hunt would give the Northern Territory a unique advantage in attracting big game tourists.

In 2012, the Territory's Chief Minister, Paul Henderson, stated, 'Those 50 trophies will certainly have exponential value in the international marketplace in terms of promoting tourism here in the territory. Come to the Territory and bag a croc.'

Nathan Askew, an American professional hunter who runs big game and crocodile hunting safaris in Africa, has stressed the attractiveness of crocodile hunting to the international tourist market. Mr Askew stated, 'It is a desirable species to hunt. It's an exciting hunt.'

The Northern Territory's Primary Industry and Fisheries Minister and Deputy Chief Minister, Willem Westra van Holthe, has also stressed the tourism advantages of the proposal.

The Minister has stated, 'If we can have a management plan that contains crocodile safari hunting, it means that we'll be able to market the Territory in another sense, worldwide, globally, and have people come into the Northern Territory, work with Indigenous people to go out and safari hunt these huge crocodiles.'

5. Crocodile safari hunting could have environmental benefits

It has been suggested that part of the revenue raised through the safari hunting of crocodiles could be used for environmental purposes.

Nathan Askew, an American professional hunter who runs big game and crocodile hunting safaris in Africa, has argued that the money raised from trophy hunting enterprises could be used to further conservation and management efforts, as has been done in Africa.

There are those who argue that if the economic value of an animal is increased then the desire to conserve it also increases. Professor Grahame Webb, who runs the Crocodylus Park in Darwin, which houses crocodiles for tourists to see, has claimed that anything that added to crocodiles' value added to the incentives to conserve the creatures.

The same point has been made by Nathan Askew, who has stated, 'It's kind of a weird thing, when you think about having to kill something to save it. But that's exactly what it is. We're the custodians of this earth, and managing populations of animals in the most effective way, which, a lot of times, boils down to the most financially viable way, is our responsibility.'

In an article run in The Adelaide Advertiser on February 23, 2015, Nicolle Flint argued that safari hunting in Africa had environmental advantages that could be replicated in Australia.

Ms Flint stated, 'We're not just talking about the estimated US\$200 million-plus a year it contributes to nations such as Zimbabwe, Ethiopia or the Central African Republic. We're also talking about the direct financial contribution hunting makes to conservation.'

Namibia, for example, charges up to US\$350,000 to hunt a single black rhino. They permit three to five carefully selected old, male rhinos to be hunted each year. These males are past their breeding age and are a danger to female and young rhinos. The money raised goes directly to conserving the species, which is endangered.'

Flint further argued, 'Landholders in countries like Namibia value game animals for the income and employment

generated by trophy-hunting tourism. Native animal numbers have stabilised and even increased because a significant financial reason exists to protect them.'

Arguments against crocodile safaris in the Northern Territory

1. The safari hunting of crocodiles is likely to result in cruelty to these animals

There are a number of groups, including animal welfare lobbyists, who are concerned that the crocodiles hunted as trophies would not be killed humanely.

The Australian Wildlife Protection Council has stated, 'If the NT crocodile safari plan goes ahead, the lives of 50 saltwater crocodiles would basically be sold to the highest bidder for "thrill kills", every year.

By allowing amateur hunters to slaughter crocs - there is a very real risk that crocs will be maimed and suffer terribly before dying. This is a cruel fate for these magnificent reptiles that - like any other animal - can experience joy, fear and suffering. There are genuine reports of crocs at Kakadu National Park being baited and trapped by hooks, and left for many hours so "safari" hunters can shoot them! Crocs might not be the cutest or cuddliest of animals, but they don't deserve to be injured and killed for kicks.'

A spokesperson for the RSPCA said the animal-welfare organisation had a long-standing opposition to crocodile safari hunting. The spokesperson stated, '[There is] potential for cruelty and the extreme difficulty in enforcing animal welfare legislation in remote areas.'

The spokesperson further noted, 'RSPCA believes that any wildlife management program must be humane, justified, supported by scientific evidence and have clearly stated aims.

Safari hunting proposals fail to meet any of these requirements: there is no conservation benefit to be derived from safari hunting; it does not provide a means of controlling problem crocodiles; and animal welfare standards cannot be guaranteed.'

Many animal welfare groups have expressed concern that animal welfare standards will not be effectively monitored.

In June 2012, the Humane Society International (HSI) noted, 'The proposed means by which to address welfare concerns are impractical and unenforceable, especially as it is proposed that only between 10 and 20% of hunts will be accompanied by NT Parks staff in the first year of operation, with monitoring potentially decreasing thereafter.

It is therefore inevitable that without monitoring considerable cruelty will occur, which is no basis for a modern commercial enterprise.'

In 2014, when rejecting a similar proposal, the federal Environment Minister, Greg Hunt, stated, 'My view is that there was a risk of cruel and inhumane treatment, which was, in my view, inappropriate.

There have been a series of ministers, both on the Coalition side and on the other side, that have periodically rejected this.'

2. Allowing safari hunting in Australia would be inconsistent with this country's opposition to the practice internationally

On March 13, 2015, it was announced that the federal government banning the import and export of hunting 'trophies' made from the body parts of lions, in an attempt to help curb the organised hunting of Africa's wildlife.

Greg Hunt, the federal Environment Minister, announced he had signed an order to prevent the import of the gruesome hunting trophies, effective immediately.

The trophies are often derived from an artificial type of slaughter, mostly taking place in South Africa, called 'canned' hunting. Captive-bred lions are put into enclosures where tourists pay thousands of dollars to shoot them with guns or crossbows.

In response to anger within the National Party that it had not been consulted before this action was taken, the Coalition appears to have reached a consensus that would allow safari-hunting of crocodiles within the Northern Territory.

Critics of the crocodile hunting proposal have argued that the action makes a nonsense of Australia's stance against 'canned' hunting. They claim it is inconsistent to support safari hunting at home, while attempting to limit it overseas.

Humane Society International (HSI) director, Michael Kennedy, has stated, 'A fortnight ago, HSI applauded the Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt's announcement that imports and exports of lion trophies from canned hunting operations would be banned. Coming off the back of such a principled stance, this deal struck by the Nationals and excluding the Environment Minister is cynical and out of touch with Australians' views on trophy hunting.'

Mr Kennedy added, 'With the recent ban on the importation of lion trophies from canned hunting, Australia has established itself as an international leader in the conservation of species subject to hunting. This announcement contradicts our international image and stance.'

Critics claim that actions such as the approval of safari-hunting of crocodiles in the Northern Territory dramatically undermine Australia's international standing as an environmentally-aware nation and leave Australia open to accusations that it appeals one standard within its own borders and another when judging the actions of its international neighbours.

This accusation has already been made in relation to Australia's criticism of Japan's whale hunting.

3. Allowing crocodile safari hunting could harm environmental tourism

Eco-tourism has been highly successful in the Northern Territory. International tourists predominate among those tourists who visit areas outside Darwin.

Tourism research data supplied by the 2011 Destination Visitor Survey for the Northern Territory indicates that those travelling further afield in the region tended to be older and / or do not have children. Kakadu and Litchfield National Parks were the primary drawcards outside Darwin, with Litchfield most likely to be visited in a day trip, while Kakadu was often explored via an overnight visit. 66 percent of those planning to stay in the Northern Territory for a longer period

intended to visit Kakadu National Park.

Seeing wildlife (specifically crocodiles) and landscapes were key motivators for travelling further afield in the Top End. 60 percent of those planning to stay for a longer period specified wanting to see the crocodiles as a motivation. One of the visitor observations quoted is 'Kakadu, beautiful waterfalls and wildlife in its natural habitat.'

Eco-tourism in the Northern Territory has made a feature of bringing tourists in close proximity to crocodiles. Just under an hour's drive from Darwin, at the Adelaide River, a number of cruises operate, all specialising in luring Saltwater Crocodiles out of the water.

Crocodiles naturally jump from the water to catch food. Chunks of meat are dangled off the side of the boats, which are open, and the crocodiles often get so close that tourists feel the spray of water as the animals jump. Such experiences are said to be undermined by promoting tourism that centres on hunting and killing these animals.

Wildlife campaigner, Bob Irwin, has stated, 'Can you imagine a boatload of tourists seeing some big white hunter shooting an animal that they came to photograph?'

Terri Irwin, the widow of former TV personality Steve Irwin, said she supported the ban on crocodile hunting. Mrs Irwin stated, 'Trophy hunting has been demonstrated to fail everywhere it exists, depleting wildlife numbers legally, as well as increasing illegal poaching.'

4. Crocodile safaris would offer few benefits to Indigenous communities

It has been claimed that the employment benefits from crocodile safaris have been exaggerated.

Bob Irwin, father of the late 'Crocodile Hunter' Steve Irwin has queried, 'How many people does it take to kill a crocodile? Two, at the most. Why not encourage tourists to go out on safari with a camera rather than a gun? There's a lot more financial benefit to be had from live crocodiles.'

The same point has been made by Alexia Wellbelove, a spokesperson for Humane Society International. Ms Wellbelove has claimed there are no significant economic benefits for Indigenous communities and a real risk of destroying other tourism brands.

Ms Wellbelove stated, '(It) rewards very few or benefits very few people.

We believe very strongly that there is far more potential in the remote areas of the Top End in ecotourism than there are for elitist safari hunting activities.'

Eco-tourism Australia has also expressed its opposition to the hunting proposal. This view has been put by a spokesperson for Eco-tourism Australia, Kym Cheatham. Ms Cheatham has indicated that the group does not believe that killing animals for entertainment will attract visitors or that crocodile hunting will be a sustainable new industry for Indigenous communities.

Ms Cheatham has stated, 'While there may be a perception that it can bring some economic benefits to Indigenous communities, we believe there are other ways that a government can actually build Indigenous tourism in the communities and provide that economic impact without resorting to the killing of animals for entertainment.'

5. Crocodile safari hunting would not promote human safety

Concern has been expressed that removing 50 large crocodiles a year might unbalance crocodile populations and make them more dangerous to human beings.

Bob Irwin, father of the late 'Crocodile Hunter' Steve Irwin, has stated, 'They're proposing to take out 50 really big adult alpha males, but these are the ones that control the river system and keep the younger crocs in check.

If you remove them, those younger crocs, which are still quite large, will start fighting among themselves, like angry teenagers. They'll be testing their predatory skills, and I'm concerned about what may happen.'

Irwin has also argued that crocodile numbers, if not distorted by hunting, will regulate themselves through natural processes. Irwin has stated, '[N]ature is an amazing thing. It takes care of the whole of the ecosystem. And if there's an instance where there's too many crocodiles in one river system, nature will take care of that. We don't really need to interfere. As humans are the greatest predators on the planet, I don't think we have a right to interfere. As long as there's no risk to people, I think these animals should be left alone.'

The safaris have been explicitly not linked to the crocodile culling programs which occur each year to keep Saltwater Crocodiles out of the Darwin area and to remove 'problem' crocodiles from more remote areas. Therefore, as the Humane Society International(HIS) has stated, 'This is not intended as a means of controlling nuisance crocodiles, but a means by which to attract money from tourists wishing to obtain trophies from their hunting expeditions.'

Further implications

The fate of this proposal to allow crocodile safaris in the Northern Territory is not clear. It does not have the approval of the Environment Minister, whose sanction is generally necessary for this development to be approved.

Since 2009 a succession of Northern Territory Crocodile Management plans, incorporating crocodile safaris, have had that element of the plan rejected by a series of federal Environment Ministers.

There is clearly a significant pressure group within the Northern Territory that wants this development to proceed. The consensus within the environment movement and, up to this point, within the Department of the Environment has been that it should not.

On the face of it, the proposal is a small one. The number of crocodiles to be killed has never been more than 50 and that number is to come out of the 600 crocodiles killed annually for management purposes.

However, a number of the arguments offered do not hold together. It has been claimed that the crocodiles to be hunted will not be those 'rogue' crocodiles killed each year within the 600 quota. Does this mean that crocodiles deemed a threat

to human populations will remain alive because more than the quota have already been taken by safari hunters? This seems unlikely. On this argument alone, the number to be taken seems likely to expand.

It has also been noted that very few of these safaris will be under the direct supervision of Northern Territory Parks staff. Thus there is the clear capacity for a larger number of crocodiles than that sanctioned to be hunted.

It is also the case that for this 'industry' to make any significant difference to the Indigenous communities it is supposed to assist, large prices will have to be charged per animal hunted. One price quoted is \$50,000. In Africa, where large game animals are becoming rare, safari hunters will pay up to \$350,000. Where hunting is linked to profit, the scope for corruption exists. This has happened all over the world.

A ban on the commercial hunting of Saltwater Crocodiles is what has allowed them to reach their current numbers within the Northern Territory. Prior to this ban, they had been hunted to the brink of extinction. Opponents of crocodile safaris are concerned about the long-term consequences of allowing such safaris to begin in a new form. If Australia becomes the last recourse of the crocodile hunter, this does not bode well for the species.

Newspaper items used in the compilation of this issue outline

H/SUN, February 25, 2015, page 26, comment by Nicolle Flint, 'McGrath apology shoots down debate on hunting'.
<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/opinion/glenn-mcgrath-apology-shoots-down-debate-on-hunting/story-fni0ffsx-1227237657902>

AGE, February 24, 2015, page 10, news item (photo) by A Dow, 'Glenn McGrath hunting photos spark death threats'.
<http://www.smh.com.au/national/glenn-mcgrath-african-hunting-photos-spark-death-threats-20150223-13mba4.html>