



3rd August 2025

OPEN LETTER

Kind Attention:

**Dr Dion George**

Minister: Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

South Africa

Email: [MinisterG@dfpe.gov.za](mailto:MinisterG@dfpe.gov.za)

**Dear Minister Dion George**

We write with urgency and conviction to appeal for an end to trophy hunting in South Africa.

The recent *Daily Maverick* exposé by Don Pinnock, detailing the grotesque and brutal practices of trophy hunters, lays bare a moral crisis that demands your immediate attention: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2025-06-09-how-the-worlds-top-trophy-hunters-are-killing-off-leopards>

It defies belief that South Africa, a country so rich in natural heritage, would permit foreign nationals to come onto our soil and kill our wild citizens, only to hang them as trophies on their walls back home. In doing so, we are not only enabling a morally bankrupt 'sport', but are also complicit in the erosion of our country's biodiversity and the spiritual inheritance we owe to future generations.

The situation becomes even more harrowing when one considers the ongoing use of gin traps. These medieval devices continue to inflict unspeakable suffering on wildlife. Conservationist Bool Smuts and his team at the **Landmark Leopard and Predator Project** continue to remove countless gin traps around South Africa, as they are called out by farmers to relocate or euthanize the wild animals caught in these horrific jaws of agony.

Dr Smuts's accounts (below) of two leopards he could not save in July 2025 are very hard to read—and should be impossible to ignore:

*"We were asked to rescue a leopard caught in a gin trap north-west of Calvinia. We arrived at 9pm. His visceral and guttural cries of agony pierced the freezing night long before we reached him. He had begun to eat himself free. We could not save him. His*

*elbow joint was dislocated and the turgor of his skin showed he had been trapped for at least 48 hours.”*

*“A leopard cub weighing around 13kg had been caught in two gin traps set on either side of a sheep carcass near Heidelberg. One front foot and one back foot were caught. In his panic and pain, he fractured both legs. His injuries such that we were not able to save him. We had to end his suffering.”*

It is obscene that we can go about our daily lives in comfort while our wild citizens, born of the soil of Africa, lie in agony—trapped, broken, terrified—because of our callous inhumanity.

Minister, you have the rare opportunity to give your tenure lasting meaning—not only in the eyes of conservationists and future generations, but in the lives of the very beings whose fate rests in our hands. We urge you to bring this chapter of violence to a close. For the sake of our wildlife, and in honour of the heritage we hope to preserve for our children, please ban trophy hunting in South Africa, and arrange for the total eradication of gin traps and snares.

Sincerely,

Louise van der Merwe

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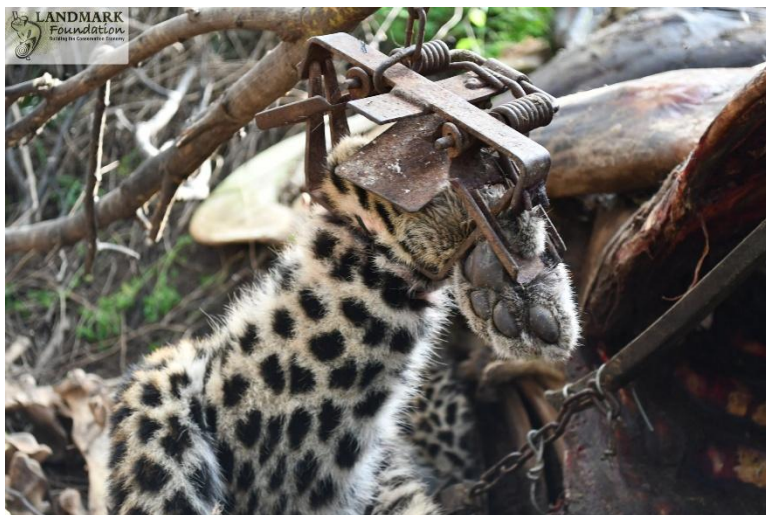


Photo: Courtesy Dr Bool Smuts, [The Landmark Leopard and Predator Project](#)