

Lions bred for the bullet

The cat's out of the bag with the screening of *Blood Lions* at the film festival, writes Fred Kockott

GOING undercover to make a documentary has its risks, especially regarding litigation and personal safety. But sometimes it's worth the risk, says executive producer of *Blood Lions*, Andrew Venter.

Blood Lions is a documentary that premiered at this year's Durban International Film Festival. The movie blows the lid on how vague legislation in South Africa has allowed the practice of "canned lion hunting" to become a multi-million rand industry largely governed by private property holders.

"I'll kill you. I warn you. Don't take a photo of me," said a Benko Safari operator captured on hidden camera confronting the *Blood Lions* film crew. The crew were hounded out of the safari lodge, but they had what they wanted. Soon, audiences around the world will view the altercation and all that led up to it.

At the first schools' screening of *Blood Lions* to pupils in Durban this week, a child, asked: "Isn't what you did, filming people without permission, using hidden cameras, illegal?"

The film-makers responded that they had needed to go undercover to expose the dark side of captive-bred lion hunting. "Nearly all these lions you have seen here in this movie, even the cute cuddly cubs, end up being shot for a price," said *Blood Lions* narrator and journalist, Ian Michler.

He said more than 7 000 lions – more than double the

number of wild lions in South Africa – had been bred for one purpose only, the bullet.

The film follows Michler into lion breeding territory, speaking to trophy hunters, operators, breeders, lion ecologists, conservationists, and animal welfare experts. It also documents the two-day trip of America hunter, Rick Swazey, after he selected, on the internet, a lion to kill at Benko Safaris. He had been sent pictures of 14 lions to choose from, ranging in cost from \$5 400 (R65 000) for a female to \$48 000 for a big black-maned lion. Swazey was granted permission to video his kill, but owner of the lodge, Ben Duminy clearly became suspicious of the intentions of the cameraman, *Blood Lions*' co-director, Nic Chevallier.

"Is this for a newspaper or TV?" Duminy asks on camera, confronting Chevallier and slapping down his camera.

Michler said this scene, and all the other glimpses they had got into the operations of Benko Safaris were indications of a typical "canned lion hunting" business, albeit marketed under guise of professional hunting. "There is no element of fair chase – the kill is guaranteed, and the packaging of this as a wildlife hunt is pure farce," said Michler.

The chairman of the SA Predators Association, Pieter Potgieter, spoke on behalf of the owner of Benko Safaris. Potgieter said to describe the lion hunts taking place on Benko Lodge as canned hunt-



ing was a "very wrong assumption". "These people are beating that canned lion hunting drum when we have long moved beyond that situation. Canned hunting is illegal, and my members do not engage it," said Potgieter.

He said he deplored the use of hidden cameras to tell the *Blood Lions* story. "We are often victims of these techniques. Even *Carte Blanche* did it. We think it is a low-level form of journalism."

The president and the chief executive of the Professional Hunters Association of South Africa, (Phasa) Herman Meyerdricks, and Adri Kitshoff flew to Durban to view the documentary on Thursday evening. Meyerdricks said he had no issue with the use of hidden cameras to tell the story, describing it as modern day investigative journalism.

"I thought it was a well-made documentary," said Meyerdricks. "*Blood Lions* gives us a lot to ponder as far as lion hunting is concerned, but I do not agree with everything in the movie... There are arguments for hunting, and substantial evidence of how it con-



The *Blood Lions*' crew, from left: Dave Cohen (editor), Bruce Young (co-director), Pippa Hankinson (producer), Ian Michler (specialist consultant) and Nick Chevallier (co-director). Picture: Rodney Prynn

tributes to conservation and community development."

He said hunting was recognised by Cites, the World Wildlife Fund, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature as a legitimate conservation measure that raised massive revenue for game reserves.

In a letter sent to all Phasa members on Friday, Meyerdricks said: "Our position on lion hunting is no longer tenable. The matter will be on

the agenda again for our next AGM and I appeal to you to give it your serious consideration, so that together we can deliver a policy that is defensible in the court of public opinion." – Roving Reporters

● *Additional reporting, Nana Zuke and Romeo Ndlovu. This story is part of a Roving Reporters' environmental journalism training project supported by the Human Elephant Foundation and the Wilderness Leadership School.*

CANNED LION HUNTING AT A GLANCE

1996: The Cook Report The BBC's award-winning Cook Report brings the "hunting" of captive lions in SA to the world's attention.

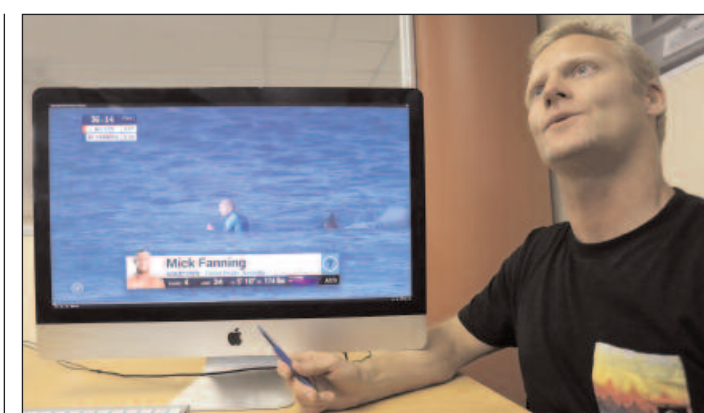
2006: Canned hunting legislation is introduced Marthinus van Schalkwyk announces new laws to stop "canned hunting".

2010: Canned hunting legislation overturned The SA Predators Association wins a Supreme Court of Appeal case against the prohibition of hunting of captive lions.

2011 – 2014: Lions slip through legislative cracks In the absence of effective national legislation, lion farming mushrooms.

22 July 2015: *Blood Lions* The documentary of the same name premieres at the film festival.

25 July 2015: Call for action President of the Professional Hunters Association of SA Herman Meyerdricks calls for revision of the laws governing canned hunting.



Kloof videographer Ryan Logie shot the video of a great white shark attacking surfer Mick Fanning in Jeffreys Bay. Picture: BONGANI MBATHA

How shark attack on Fanning was filmed

MERVYN NAIDOO

A KLOOF videographer gave the world a ringside seat to a nosey great white shark's brief interaction with one of the world's top surfers.

The video Ryan Logie shot has gone viral, notching up almost 20 million views on YouTube alone.

Logie had his camera trained on Mick Fanning when the surfer's board rope is believed to have been entangled in the snout of a 3m shark.

Fanning was poised to get going in the final of the J-Bay Open surfing competition at Jeffreys Bay. Logie was doing freelance work for World Surf League (WSL), which organised last week's event, when the drama unfolded.

Fanning's flailing arms in his escape bid and the shark's exertions elicited gasps and screams from spectators on the beach.

When a metre-high wave obscured the view of Fanning's brush with the shark, it heightened the tension.

A commentator yelled over the public address system: "Get him (Fanning) out of there."

Logie, whose brother Travis was on the professional surfing circuit for years before retiring last year, said he kept his camera on Fanning "out of concern".

"I knew him personally, so I just kept the camera on him, but I didn't freak out."

Fanning was pulled out of

the water, unharmed, by the safety crew on duty, but even before the surfer was taken ashore, Logie's video shoot had gathered momentum on social media networks.

He had been filming off a platform, about 400m away, for an international audience, which included Fanning's mother in Australia, who watched the streaming coverage on WSL's TV channel.

Logie, who records news documentaries for *Carte Blanche* and eNCA, said he didn't usually shoot live action but makes an exception for surfing.

Logie said he was not startled when he saw a fin flash in front of the surfer. "My immediate thought was that it may be a dolphin, because they are often spotted in the area, or a ray."

"When I saw him struggling I knew it was a shark. I realised he was too far away for me to do something, so I just focused on him. It was the only way I could tell if he was okay."

Logie said he believed that when Fanning tried to fend off the shark, the shark plunged and its tail knocked the surfer off his board.

Jeremy Cliff, head of research at KZN's Sharks Board confirmed the incident had involved a great white.

He said: "I suspect it swam up to investigate, got its snout stuck on the rope, tugged and caused the surfer to fall."

mervyn.naidoo@i.nl.co.za

ADVERTISING FEATURE

KAYSER BAIRD WINS NINTH TOP BROKER AWARD

DURBAN-BASED broker Kayser Baird has dominated Santam's annual broker awards since 2000, winning nine times over the 15-year period – an impressive feat for an independent broker that writes into dozens of leading insurance companies.

The award winners were announced at a glittering awards ceremony held at the Hilton Hotel on June 24.

Winning the top award for 2014 makes Kayser Baird one of Santam's most awarded brokers in the country.

The firm was founded by Jim Kayser in 1986 – and with him still active in the business today, Kayser Baird remains true to its roots as an independent, family-owned business.

"With our current leadership including brothers Michael and Shaun Baird, Kayser Baird's dominance of the local

personal and business insurance market will continue," explains managing director Jim Kayser. "While our business has transitioned from a small family business into a major player rivaling the largest direct insurers and multinational brokers, we remain true to our roots as an independent broker with accuracy and service excellence at the core of our offering."

Visiting Kayser Baird's impressive offices in Kloof does not feel like you are walking into a family-owned business. Instead, you are met by immaculately dressed staff operating in a slick, paperless environment. Kayser Baird runs multi-million-rand systems and technology, and walking around its offices gives you a sense of what it takes to be a market leader in such a competitive industry.

"Our staff are without doubt the backbone of our business. We attract and retain only the best – and the results speak for themselves," explains director, Michael Baird. "Our systems are important, but our people are the heart of the business and that is how we stay ahead of our competitors."

Visit Kayser Baird's website at www.kbi.co.za



Kayser Baird founder and managing director, Jim Kayser (left) with directors Michael and Shaun Baird.



Uncompromising standards.

Immaculate attention to detail, impeccable service and administration. This is our brand promise.

KAYSER BAIRD

INSURANCE BROKERS

Kayser Baird is an authorised financial services provider

VEHICLE RENTAL
CAR OR VAN CASH OR CARD
from **R95 PER DAY!**
AVAILABLE COUNTRY WIDE & AT AIRPORTS
Daily, weekly, monthly or long term.
Special discounts & unlimited kilometres rates available.

BLACKLISTED?
CAN'T GET FINANCED?
BANK DECLINED?
WHY NOT RENT TO OWN?
BRAND NEW OR LESS THAN 1 YEAR OLD
VW POLO, ISUZU, NISSAN, SUZUKI, HONDA, TOYOTA
082 742 9975 (KZN/National)
031-208 4826 www.VRENTALS.co.za

Thank you to those who gave us the will to survive.

The money you left us gave hope to all



Tel: (031) 3033890 Fax: (031) 3034184

GRAND WINTER SALE

DESIGNER WALL TILES 1 ST GRADE WAS 79.95 NOW 54⁹⁵ m ²	GLAZED PORCELAIN TILES 300mm x 600mm WAS 79.95 NOW 46⁹⁵ m ²	SLATE TILES 200mm x 200mm WAS 99.95 NOW 79⁹⁵ m ²
CERAMIC FLOOR TILES 1 ST GRADE WAS 89.95 NOW 64⁹⁵ m ²		POLISHED PORCELAIN TILES 600mm x 600mm HAND FINISH NO SEALING REQUIRED WAS 119.95 NOW 89⁹⁵ m ²
DESIGNER FLOOR TILES 1 ST GRADE WAS 89.95 NOW 69⁹⁵ m ²		POLISHED PORCELAIN TILES 600mm x 600mm HAND FINISH NO SEALING REQUIRED 1 ST GRADE WAS 149.95 NOW 109⁹⁵ m ²

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK
CREDIT & DEBIT CARDS ACCEPTED
UNDERCOVER PARKING AVAILABLE
BACKUP GENERATOR POWER
WHEELCHAIR FRIENDLY

3/9 Garth Road, Mayville, Durban (Near Westridge Park Tennis Stadium) Tel: 031 207 6451
• VAT included • E&OE • Website: www.mallstiles.com

mallstiles