

Zambia lifts ban on hunting of big cats

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Zambia has lifted a ban on the hunting of big cats that was imposed over allegations of corruption in the awarding of government hunting concessions, officials said Wednesday.

The decision removes the last remaining restriction of a total ban on [hunting](#) introduced in January 2013 and gradually lifted since last August after the [government](#) said it was losing too much revenue.

"The hunting of lions will start during the 2016 to 2017 [hunting season](#) and this will be done very cautiously," Tourism Minister Jean Kapata told AFP, adding leopard hunting would resume this year.

"We made sure there were no complaints of corruption and only people that met the required standards were given the concessions."

She said the government was now satisfied with population sizes, with around 4,000 lions and 8,000 leopards in the southern African country.

Government-licensed hunting is common across the region, with tourists paying to shoot a small number of selected animals.

The practice is controversial but many wildlife experts accept that hunting can aid long-term conservation.

In neighbouring Botswana, a group of lawmakers is seeking to upend a ban on elephant hunting, saying the animals have multiplied in some areas to unmanageable levels.

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