

# Why Trophy Hunting is Wrong – an open letter.

Killing animals for ‘trophies’ is indefensible and cruel.

We welcome the British government’s proposal to ban trophy imports and exports. We urge it to implement a comprehensive ban, bring it in as quickly as possible, and to work with other governments to help end trophy hunting.

Claiming that trophy hunting of endangered species is beneficial to conservation, but that illegal poaching of the same species is harmful, makes no sense. An impoverished African villager can be punished for killing a wild animal, while wealthy foreigners pay for the privilege to shoot the same animal for ‘sport’ and ‘selfies’. Trophy hunting fees rarely provide substantive benefits to local communities. Britain should not give taxpayer-funded aid to support a hobby which entrenches social inequalities.

Trophy hunters aim for the biggest animals with the largest tusks, horns, or antlers, resulting in ‘artificial selection’ in many species. The size of elephant tusks and other animals’ horns is getting smaller. Killing large males reduces genetic diversity, making it less likely those species can adapt to global warming. The trophy hunting industry rewards those who have killed the most animals in the most countries. It promotes Records Books that encourage hunters to shoot the biggest and strongest individuals. These animals score the most ‘points’, winning the hunter a place in highly-coveted annuals.

Killing endangered species, such as African elephants or lions, in order to supposedly save those species is potentially a recipe for disaster. The idea that trophy hunting is repugnant but should continue for unproven conservation benefits is absurd. Governments everywhere should adopt the precautionary principle of conservation. Trophy hunting has had devastating impacts on wildlife populations. Every species is vital to dynamic ecosystems.

Many species targeted by trophy hunters - such as African elephants, giraffes, and lions - are social, emotional, intelligent beings. Killing them for their unique traits in order to acquire personal memorabilia goes against all basic civilised values. Climate change and habitat loss are contributing to the extinction of wildlife. Humanity does not need to add to these threats by supporting trophy hunting.

Trophy hunting is not a ‘sport’ – it is a one-sided ‘hobby’ of a few wealthy women and men that consists of killing an unsuspecting victim. The real sport of ‘trophy hunting’ involves two sides in a fair and equal contest in which athletes pursue excellence through skill and sportsmanship. There is nothing fair or sporting about seeking lion heads, elephant tusks or leopard skins for home furnishings or bragging rights.

Policy-makers, scientists, businesses, local communities, and conservation groups should work together to support sustainable economic development that creates real prosperity for people through preserving our precious natural heritage.

Trophy hunting has no place in the modern world. By banning hunting trophy imports and exports, Britain can help begin to close this chapter in our history.

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