

TROPHY HUNTING: WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS.

EVERY YEAR, TENS OF THOUSANDS OF WILD ANIMALS ARE KILLED BY TROPHY HUNTERS AROUND THE WORLD.

Threatened and internationally protected species, such as elephants, rhinos, lions, leopards, and bears, are amongst the most coveted targets.

Trophy hunting of threatened and internationally protected species, as well as the shipping of trophies to the hunter's country of origin, is legal across many countries. While the US and EU are the largest importers, significant number of trophies are imported to the UK each year, including from threatened species.

However, there is evidence that trophy hunting is often unsustainable and can threaten the stability of populations and the survival of species, while also frequently failing to deliver claimed benefits for wildlife and local communities.

In response to repeated government commitments to ban hunting trophy imports into the UK, the trophy hunting industry is actively lobbying policymakers and promoting arguments in favour of trophy hunting that may not stand up to scrutiny.

Trophy hunters pay to hunt and kill rare and threatened species.

The willingness to pay to kill a 'trophy' animal and retrieve body parts for display distinguishes trophy hunting from subsistence hunting or population management activities. Iconic and rare species are the most coveted targets.

Trophy hunters may pay very large sums to kill specific 'target' animals to obtain all or part of their remains, such as heads, tusk, horns, or skins, as trophies. Typically, the rarer the species, the more prized the trophy, increasing its symbolic and market value and making it more lucrative for hunting businesses. Although hunting packages often include several 'lesser value' target animals, such as antelopes or baboons, the industry is incentivised to encourage hunters to target threatened and protected species, such as elephants, lions, rhinos and leopards in Africa, brown bears in Europe, and polar bears in Canada.

Trophy hunting contributes to the decline of protected animals and undermines global conservation efforts.

Trophy hunting increases pressure on species that may already be negatively affected by habitat loss, wildlife trade and trafficking, climate change and other threats. It can also impact the genetic makeup of populations, disturb the dynamics of natural selection, and cause intense and avoidable animal suffering.

Many wildlife populations subject to trophy hunting are already in serious decline. Trophy hunting quotas are often set to maximise profits and are not based on scientific data, adding to the pressure on targeted species. Trophy hunters also typically target the

animals that make the best trophies. These are often the largest and most impressive individuals who play key roles in their social groups and whose genetic heritage is important for the species' future survival. Their removal is contrary to the dynamics of natural selection, weakens the gene pool, induces phenotypic (physical) changes, impacts reproduction and social behaviours, and may increase the likelihood of conflict with humans.

Trophy hunting fails to deliver claimed benefits for wildlife and communities.

Revenues from trophy hunting are typically too small to provide an effective and sustainable incentive for local communities to protect biodiversity, to prevent poaching, or to reduce human-wildlife conflict. The main beneficiaries of trophy hunting are governments, (mostly foreign) hunting tour operators, private landowners, and local elites. The proportion of revenue derived from trophy hunting that reaches local communities, or is used for conservation purposes, is, in many cases, very small. Trophy hunting typically maintains local people in a cycle of dependence, and can prevent the development of sustainable alternatives, such as ecotourism, which has the potential to provide more and better jobs and benefits for communities.

The legal trade in trophies facilitates the laundering of animal parts.

The legal trophy trade can stimulate demand for animal parts and provide opportunities for traffickers, fuelling corruption. The targeting of threatened and protected species for their body parts by trophy hunters can undermine global trade bans and efforts to curb poaching and trafficking, by providing opportunities for criminals to launder illegal wildlife products into trade. The use of hunting permits to facilitate the lucrative illegal trade in rhinoceros' horn in Africa, Asia and Europe has been well documented. The activities of criminal networks and syndicates pose risks to security, livelihoods, social stability, local economies, and the rule of law.

An overwhelming majority of UK citizens oppose trophy hunting and support a ban on trophy imports.

Current UK legislation allows the import and export of hunting trophies from species that are otherwise protected under UK and international law and are not allowed to be traded under other circumstances due to concern for their conservation status.

A significant majority of UK citizens surveyed oppose trophy hunting and support a ban on trophy imports. Acknowledging this growing societal opposition, successive UK governments have committed to introduce measures to ban or restrict hunting trophy imports, while several major players in the transportation sector have committed to cease transporting hunting trophies. The Labour Party's 2023 election manifest included a commitment to ban the import of hunting trophies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We call on the UK government to ban the import and export of hunting trophies to and from the UK.

A ban on the import and export of trophies is crucial to reduce the pressure on biodiversity, prevent avoidable animal suffering, and encourage alternative income streams for local communities in countries where trophy hunting takes place. It would also bring the UK into line with the increasing number of European countries taking action.

POCA, along with other groups such as Born Free, Four Paws and Humane World for Animals, who organised this week's events in Parliament, have long advocated for the end of 'sport' or 'recreational' hunting and campaigned with others for the ban on the importation of so-called 'trophies'.

Last time a bill on this came before Parliament, we had cross-party agreement to make it happen. Unfortunately, a few terrible men used an old parliamentary technique called Filibustering (a political procedure in which one or more members of a legislative body prolong debate on proposed legislation so as to delay or entirely prevent a decision.) This obstruction prevented the last attempt to ban the importation of trophies from becoming law. This time we must make sure this does not happen!