



# TROPHY HUNTING

Busting the myths and exposing the cruelty

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# CONTENTS

- 2 Introduction
- 3 Foreword
- 4 Executive summary
- 5 Background
- 7 Scale and scope of trophy hunting
- 9 Legislation
- 10 Animal welfare
- 12 Putting the 'con' in economics and conservation
- 15 Case Study: canned hunting – breeding for the gun
- 16 Case Study: Zambia's hippo cull – trophy hunting masquerading as animal management
- 17 Case Study: The truth behind Zambia's trophy hunting industry – real-life stories from the local community
- 18 Conclusion
- 19 References



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# INTRODUCTION

It seemed to us that there was something very odd about a human enterprise that could provoke so much interest, produce so much evidence, and generate huge passion, but which washed around in an apparently fathomless sea of conflicting truths.

Perhaps that is the nature of people and their indulgences and pleasures, or of their rejection of horrors, dishonesty and cruelty – we can be forever at sea with our own beliefs, the collective truths of those whose ideas and causes we share. And this must be true, however unspeakable the act, however unjustified the deal, because this paradox conflicts us time and again, and inflicts upon us some of our worst excesses. The courage of a group, the protection of allies and the refuge of the indefensible.

But sometimes life and the decisions we take, the actions we support are a lot more simple. Once the veneer is scratched, the whiff of corruption can lead to truth. And so it seemed with the hotly debated and, let's be honest, debased matter of trophy hunting. Born Free knows a lot about this; we have been engaged in efforts to reveal the true colours for years and our effectiveness can, to some degree, be measured by the level of committed anger from those who promote this desperate business. But we haven't yet ended this insult to our common humanity; animals continue to die in imaginative and interesting ways for fun, habitats get modified and impoverished for those that live there – including humans – and the corrupt practices of those who profit, continue to oil the wheels that debase entire nations in the name of consumptive use.

So, it was some 18 months ago, that we decided to pull the threads together.

Given that the same conversations kept circling, about the real and personal reasons why people hunt for pleasure and reassurance, whilst the same denials and obfuscation bounced around. Given that we knew good people with access to the true economics of this enterprise and knowing that we had first-hand evidence of true human, community, wildlife and habitat impacts, we decided to do something different. So, we created a big idea. What if we commissioned an entire, cross-disciplinary investigation, in the field, within hunting organisations, with hunters, communities, academics, psychologists, economists, conservationists... and calmly set about settling the facts, and navigating that sea to a point of truth? The result is this report, backed up with evidence, not beliefs and prejudice; with facts from the front line and the cold, heavy resolve of our conclusions.

We commend this work and those who contributed, with utter commitment to be heard. It is to be followed by further publications in the form of a detailed study of trophy hunting in Zambia and an academic work on the psychology of those who hunt for trophies.

And finally, our thanks go to those who must live where hunting takes place and suffer the consequences. We are indebted to them and will continue to do all that is in our power to free them and the wildlife with which they live from this absurdity.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Howard Jones', written in a cursive style.

**Howard Jones**  
Chief Executive Officer, Born Free

## FOREWORD

Few issues get people's blood boiling more than trophy hunting – the killing of wild animals for fun. Gratuitous social media posts glorifying hunters and their bloody victims add fuel to an already raging fire.

However, the claims of proponents are often hard to pin down. The conservation dividend remains elusive. Welfare barely gets a look in. And the moral debate about the acceptability of a wealthy elite using high-powered rifles, bows and arrows, crossbows – even spears – to slaughter hundreds of thousands of the world's increasingly rare and endangered animals, continues unabated.

*Trophy hunting – busting the myths and exposing the cruelty*, informs, analyses and exposes some of the realities behind a practice that few admire and most condemn.

Public opinion is firmly against trophy hunting, and yet public policy lags woefully behind. I hope this Born Free report will encourage those in power, our elected politicians, to choose to be on the right side of history and end a practice that exposes our inhumanity – and shames us all.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Travers'.

**Will Travers OBE**  
President and Co-Founder, Born Free



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every year, hundreds of thousands of animals are the targets of trophy hunters. Between 2008 and 2017, close to 300,000 trophy items derived from more than 300 threatened animal species protected by international agreement, were exported from more than 100 countries.

These figures only reflect those trophies derived from species that are protected by international agreement, the export of which is subject to an international permitting system. When you include trophies derived from the hunters' own countries, for which official records may not exist or are much more difficult to obtain, the figures represent the tip of a very large iceberg.

Hunters claim the fees they pay to government agencies, hunting outfitters, taxidermists and shipping companies in order to hunt particular animals and have the trophy prepared and shipped home, benefit wildlife conservation, local communities, and the economies of the countries where trophy hunting takes place. They also often claim that by targeting problem or redundant animals their activities represent a legitimate form of wildlife management.

But their claims do not withstand scrutiny.

Modern trophy hunting is a cruel relic of the colonial era. The major motivation appears to be admiration and affirmation from fellow hunters, which trophy hunters increasingly seek through social media and other online platforms. The trophy hunting industry encourages this behaviour by offering awards for the number and types of animals bagged by hunters, and the variety of methods and weapons used to kill them.

Despite their claims, trophy hunters do not generally target problem, redundant or old and infirm animals, preferring to set their sights on animals with impressive traits – the darkest manes, the biggest tusks, the longest horns. This often results in the killing of key individuals, removing vital genetic resources and causing disruption to family groups, populations and, by extension, the wider ecosystems of which they form a part.

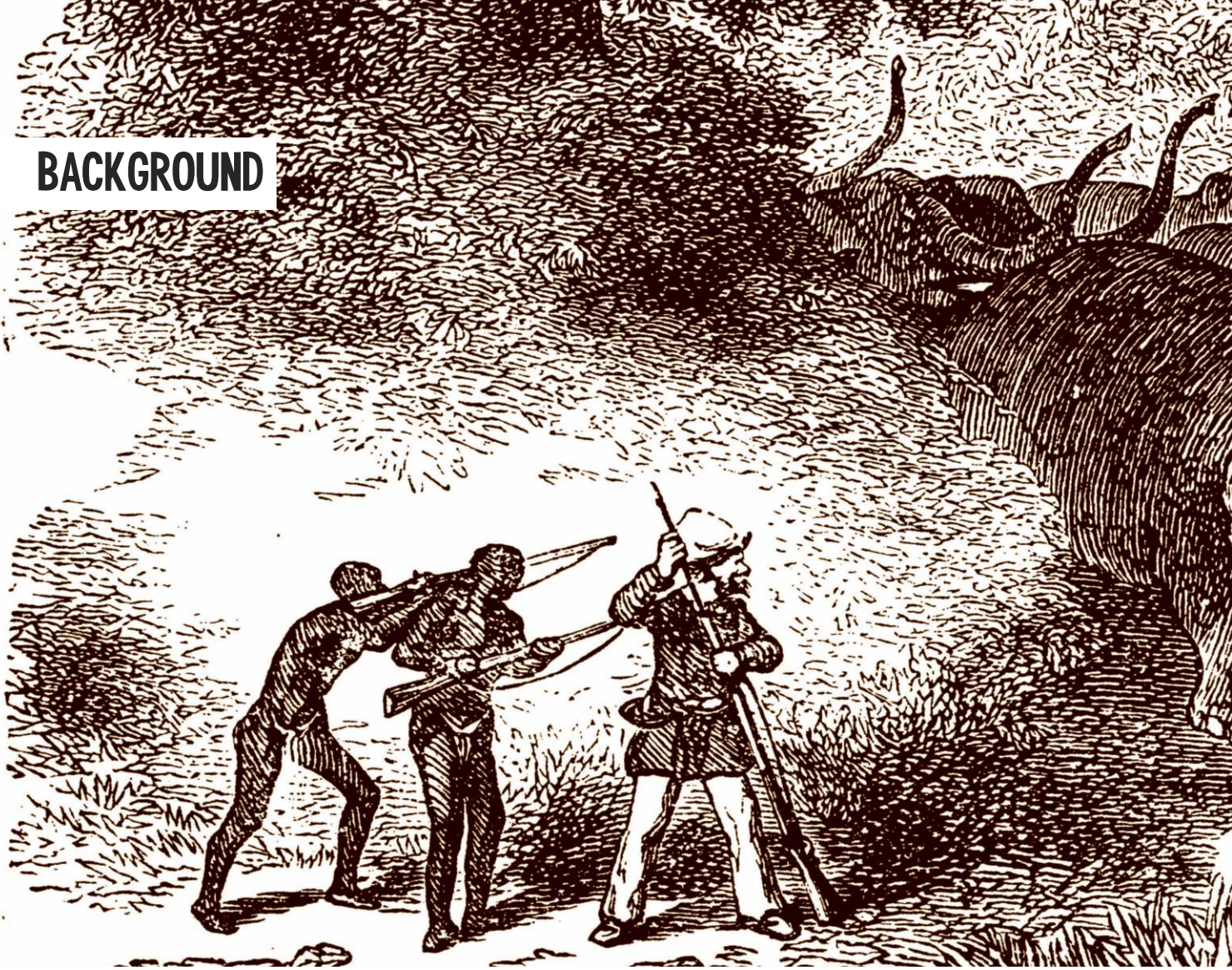
Far from incentivising wildlife conservation and helping local communities, trophy hunting operations generate only a tiny proportion of wildlife tourism income, with most of the fees they pay benefitting a few officials, outfitters, and professional hunting guides. Research suggest that little, if any, of the money hunters pay to make their kills ever filters down to local communities.

Born Free is opposed to the killing of any animal for sport or pleasure. Notwithstanding our ethical opposition, we work with policymakers to strengthen the rules governing trophy and sport hunting, and with enforcement agencies, wildlife managers and other stakeholders to ensure that rules, regulations and guidelines relating directly or indirectly to trophy and sport hunting are strictly applied and enforced.

Furthermore, Born Free fosters human-wildlife co-existence by identifying sustainable, non-lethal and compassionate solutions to human-wildlife conflict, as part of our wider mission to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, human-induced negative impacts on animal welfare and wildlife conservation.



## BACKGROUND



Trophy hunting can be described as “*the hunting and killing animals in order to display part or all of their bodies as trophies*”<sup>1</sup>. While the killing of Cecil the lion in Zimbabwe in July 2015 by a wealthy American trophy hunter generated global public interest and debate, trophy hunting has long been the subject of controversy.

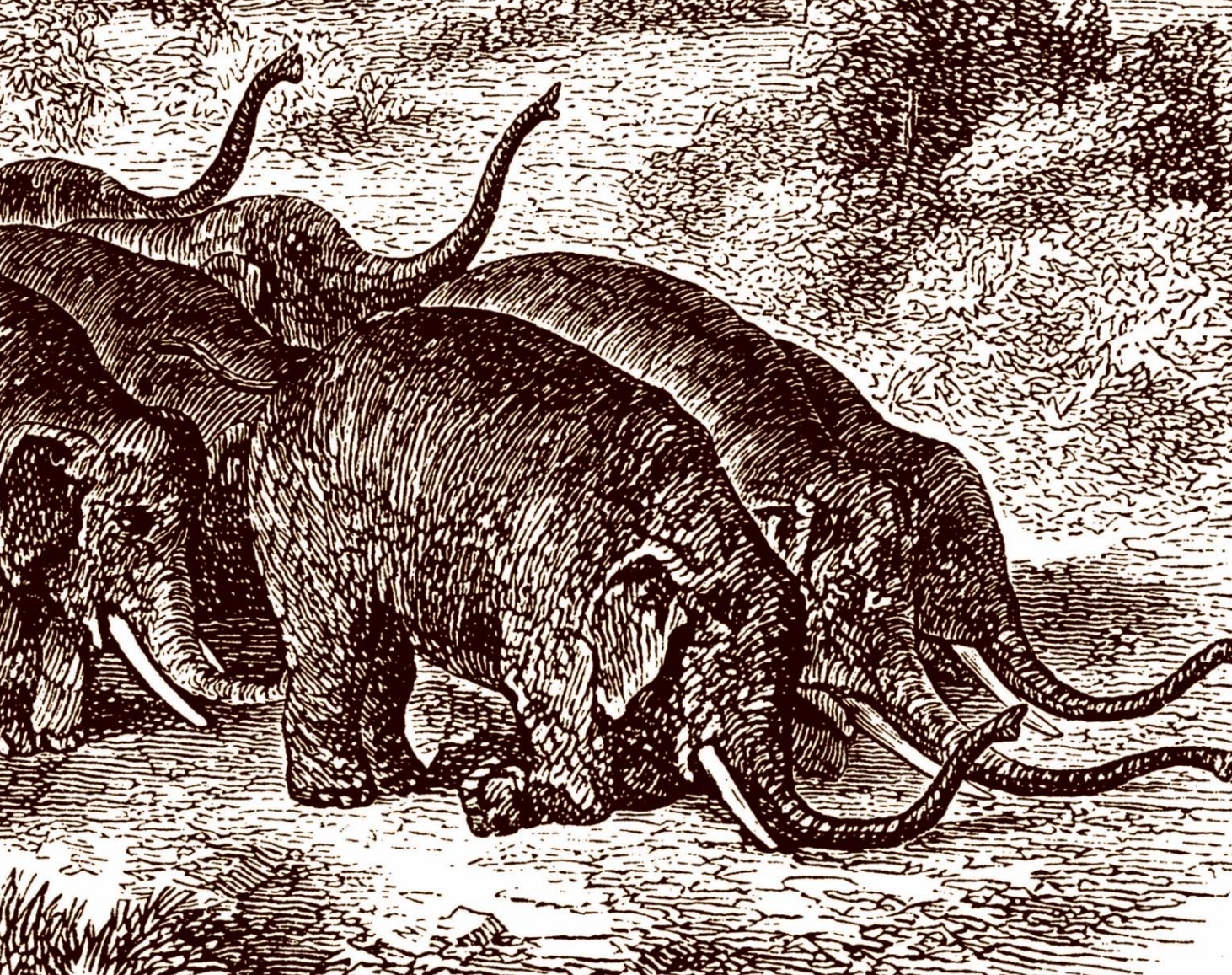
Recreational hunting is a centuries-old activity, but the modern practice of trophy hunting emerged among Europeans during the colonial era, and in the United States in the latter half of the 19th century. Over subsequent decades, the desire among wealthy hunters to bag trophy animals had devastating impacts on populations of many iconic and keystone species, particularly across South Asia and East Africa<sup>2,3</sup>.

Recognising the rapid decline in certain species that resulted from colonial sport hunting activities, some prolific hunters from the colonial era advocated for their protection. They included US President Theodore Roosevelt, the India-born British hunter and naturalist Edward James Corbett, and the artist and naturalist John James Audubon. While they were doubtless motivated, in part at least, by a desire to prevent the disappearance of target animals in order to sustain their hunting activities, these individuals are considered by many to have been pioneers of the modern conservation movement.

The publication of *Horn Measurements and Weights of the Great Game of the World* by taxidermist Rowland Ward in 1892, and of the *Trophy Scoring System for North American Mammals* by the Boone and Crockett Club in 1930, marked the emergence of competitive trophy hunting. This has resulted in hunters pursuing awards from hunting organisations based on the characteristics, quantity and variety of trophies they accumulate, as well as the methods by which target animals are hunted and killed<sup>4</sup>. Rare animals with particularly impressive characteristics are coveted.

The more recent emergence of canned hunting, mainly in South Africa, where intensively-bred animals (predominantly lions and other predators) are released into enclosures to be shot by paying hunters, has even divided hunting enthusiasts, with some traditional trophy hunting organisations shunning the activity on the basis that it doesn't represent a fair chase<sup>5</sup>.

Trophy hunters try to justify their activities by claiming that the fees they pay contribute significantly to national and local economies, that they remove problem animals, and in some cases distribute meat from hunted animals to local people, thereby contributing to poverty reduction in the developing world. They also claim that



trophy hunting contributes to conservation through the contribution of funds to wildlife agencies, thereby conferring a value to wildlife and wild habitats that might otherwise be converted for other uses, and by contributing to research activities<sup>6</sup>.

However, these claims do not withstand close scrutiny. Hunters rarely target problem animals, but by preference select their targets on the basis of the individual animal's size, colouration or particular physical characteristics. While in some cases parts of a hunted animal may be used for other purposes (for example, the meat may be offered to local people once the trophy part has been removed), this is rarely, if ever, the prime motivation. Trophy hunting is also often identified as a threat to endangered species, with much of the money generated by the industry going to government agencies and hunting outfitters, but never truly benefiting those who live in close proximity to wildlife, or the organisations mandated to protect wild animals. Moreover, the removal of key individual animals can have serious impacts for their surviving family groups and populations, and for the wider ecosystem.

Trophy hunting also has serious animal welfare consequences for the hunted individual and the family groups from which the individual is removed.

Researchers have suggested the real motivation behind trophy hunting lies in the opportunity for hunters to show off to their peer groups and demonstrate their disposable wealth through their ability to afford the associated costs<sup>7,8</sup>. In 2018, Born Free commissioned Professor Geoffrey Beattie of the Department of Psychology at Edge Hill University to conduct a critical analysis in order to better understand the psychology (or psychologies) behind trophy hunting; his book entitled *Trophy Hunting: A Psychological Perspective* will be published during 2019.

This report examines the scale, scope and impact of trophy hunting, and provides a critical analysis of claims made by trophy hunting proponents.

While many species are targeted by recreational hunters, this report focuses on species classified as Threatened with Extinction (Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered) on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s Red List of Threatened Species, and those subject to international trade restrictions by virtue of their listing on the appendices of the United Nations' Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

## SCALE AND SCOPE OF TROPHY HUNTING



According to official figures submitted by governments, in the decade from 2008 and 2017, a total of almost 290,000 trophy items derived from close to 300 different animal species listed on the CITES Appendices were exported or re-exported from 119 countries to 165 importing countries<sup>9</sup>.

Exports from just five countries (South Africa, Canada, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe) accounted for almost 80% of the items.

### Top 10 exporting countries of CITES-listed trophy items 2008–2017

South Africa	79,127
Canada	61,760
Mozambique	37,154
Namibia	26,477
Zimbabwe	23,691
Zambia	15,034
Botswana*	14,415
Tanzania	9,020
Mexico	5,775
Argentina	3,955

\*Botswana introduced a hunting ban in 2014



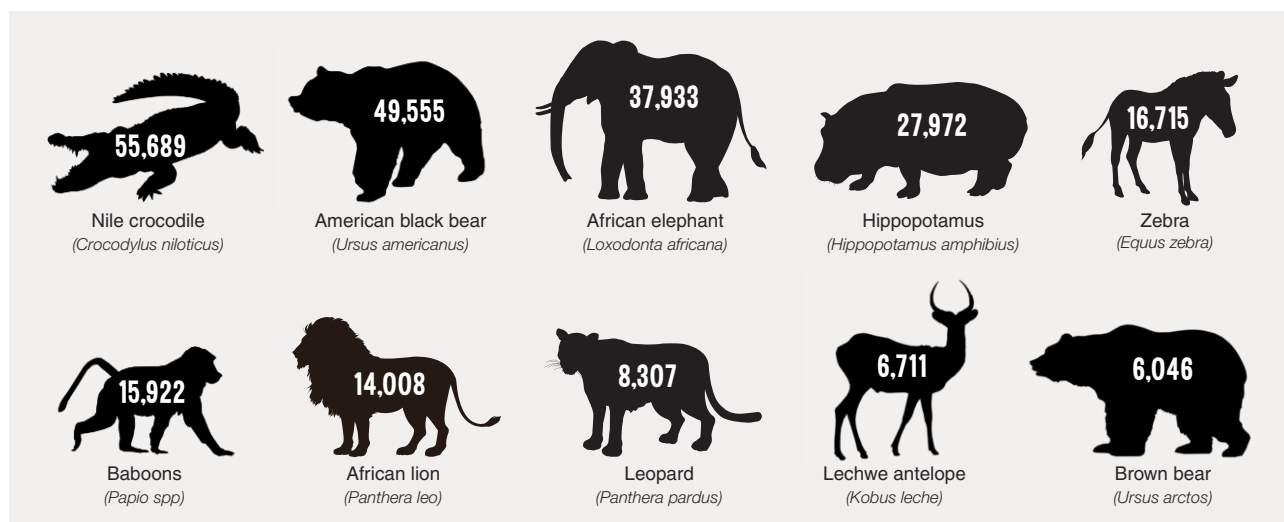
The United States was the declared destination for approximately 42% of all exports, with European Union Member States accounting for a further 27%.

### Top 10 destination countries for CITES-listed trophy items 2008–2017

United States	121,545
South Africa	22,634
Singapore	16,359
Germany	14,075
Spain	12,865
France	12,047
Mexico	5,946
Denmark	5,893
Russian Federation	5,328
Italy	4,232

The most numerous exported trophy items were derived from Nile crocodiles, American black bears, African elephants and hippopotamus.

### 10 CITES-listed species from which most trophy items were exported 2008–2017



These figures are limited to CITES-listed species, the international trade is regulated by a system of permits, and reported annually by governments to a central database. However, recreational hunting encompasses a much larger range of activities involving significant numbers of animals belonging to a wide range of species.

Research by the Humane Society of the United States revealed that trophy hunters imported a total of more than 1.26 million wildlife trophies into the United States in the decade to 2014, almost two thirds of which were derived from Canada and South Africa<sup>10</sup>.

These activities have considerable impacts on the welfare and conservation of both target and non-target animals<sup>11</sup>.

## LEGISLATION

The degree to which trophy hunting is regulated varies according to the country and species concerned.

International and national regulations, where they exist, are most commonly focused on preventing the extirpation or extinction of endangered species, rather than protecting the integrity of populations or ensuring the welfare of targeted animals.

At an international level, CITES regulates international trade in species listed on its Appendices, including trophies derived from those species. In 2016, CITES adopted a Resolution on Trade in Hunting Trophies of Species Listed in Appendix I or II<sup>12</sup>, which requires that trophies for export conform to relevant definitions, are legally obtained in their country of origin, their export is not detrimental to the survival of the species concerned, and the trophy hunting operations are sustainably managed. However, the mechanisms for scrutinising the sustainability of trophy hunting operations are weak and left largely to national governments, and there are no provisions relating to the welfare of the animal or animals from which the trophies are derived.

Most countries that allow trophy hunting operate quota and permitting systems, and restrict hunting activities to certain specified areas. Hunting blocks are often located on the borders of protected areas, from which animals may migrate or be lured, thereby becoming vulnerable to hunting. National quota setting is generally not subject to independent scrutiny, although hunting quotas for species listed on CITES Appendix I may be intermittently examined by its technical committee. A system for routine assessment of Appendix I quotas by CITES has been proposed.

Countries in which trophy hunters are domiciled may also regulate the importation of trophies, according to CITES rules or specific domestic legislative measures. For example, the United States restricts the importation of trophies from certain species identified in its Endangered Species Act<sup>13</sup>. The European Union (EU) requires its Member States to issue import permits for trophies from all species listed in Annex A of its Wildlife Trade Regulations, and six species listed on Annex B, prior to issuing permits, Member States are required to determine whether the trophy was legally acquired, and that its acquisition was not detrimental to the species – or in the case of Annex A species that its acquisition resulted in some conservation benefit<sup>14</sup>.

**"Hunting trophies are given special dispensation under CITES and the export of them is not strictly considered commercial trade"**

Legislation and guidelines governing the deliberate killing of animals are generally focused on livestock and other circumstances such as the killing of animals for disease control purposes. Animal welfare legislation, in countries that allow trophy hunting, does not usually apply to wild animals at all, or if it does, it may be restricted to animals that are bred, raised or kept in captivity. South Africa's Threatened Or Protected Species Regulations (TOPS), associated Norms and Standards, and provincial regulations, do provide some minimal requirements for captive predator breeding operations with regard to space and provision of veterinary services, although the welfare of the animals is not specifically referenced.



## ANIMAL WELFARE



"Cecil the lion was shot and wounded with a bow and arrow, and only killed several hours later"

© A J Lovridge

Very few studies have attempted to assess the welfare implications of trophy hunting, although Jones and Draper provided a comprehensive summary in *Animal Welfare in a Changing World* published in 2018.

The welfare impacts of open-field shooting have been examined for several mammal species, including deer<sup>15</sup>, badgers<sup>16</sup>, and hares<sup>17</sup>. However, studies on trophy hunting have primarily focussed on sustainability, species conservation and ethics<sup>18</sup>.

The killing of Cecil the lion in Zimbabwe in July 2015 by a wealthy American trophy hunter generated intense public interest, not least because of the animal welfare implications.

Cecil was a particularly impressive black-maned 13-year-old male lion who had sired numerous litters of cubs, and at the time of his killing reportedly controlled two prides of females and cubs alongside another male. Researchers from the University of Oxford had collared the lion as part of an ongoing research project in Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park<sup>19</sup>. It was reported he was deliberately lured out of the park into an adjacent area where hunting was permitted, and initially shot with a bow and arrow, which, according to media reports, was the American hunter's weapon of choice. Reports also suggested that the first shot was not fatal, and the wounded lion was subsequently tracked and only finally killed many hours later.

Media interest in the killing of Cecil was intense. Stories about the incident reached nearly 12,000 per day and social media mentions peaked at nearly 90,000<sup>20</sup>.

The reasons for the public and media reaction to this particular incident are the subject of speculation and analysis, particularly given that the killing of a lion by a trophy hunter is not, in itself, a particularly unusual event. While Cecil's high-profile nature, and the fact that he was the subject of ongoing scientific research, were undoubtedly significant factors, researchers have suggested that animal welfare concerns may have played a big part. The circumstances of Cecil's death, and the public and media response to it, certainly highlighted a number of animal welfare-related issues.

### Individual suffering

In most circumstances where animals are deliberately killed, convention demands that the methods used should minimise negative welfare impacts. Chapter seven of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code, published by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), recognises the need to ensure the welfare of food animals during pre-slaughter and slaughter processes<sup>21</sup>. It also recommends that, when killing animals for disease control purposes, methods used should result in immediate death or immediate loss of consciousness lasting until death, and that anxiety, pain, distress or suffering in animals should be avoided<sup>22</sup>. Minimising suffering in circumstances where animals are deliberately killed, including wild animals, are core to veterinary principles<sup>23</sup>. Part of the rationale for the maintenance of the international moratorium on whaling, implemented by the International Whaling Commission, revolves around concerns about the humaneness of killing methods<sup>24</sup>.

Most societies implement these principles by specifying permitted killing methodologies for particular circumstances, requiring operatives to undertake appropriate training, and including oversight inspections to ensure requirements are being adhered to.

However, hunted animals enjoy no such protections.

Some hunting organisations acknowledge that trophy hunters have a responsibility to avoid inflicting undue suffering, and should aim to make quick and humane kills<sup>25</sup>. However, many trophy hunting organisations offer awards for methods of killing a trophy animal which might include the use of bows and arrows, handguns, or 'traditional' weapons such as muzzle loaders or spears, methods that clearly do not prioritise the welfare of the target animal, and are likely to increase the possibility of suffering<sup>26</sup>.

Studies show that the use of bows may result in a 50% wounding rate (animal shot but not recovered) in targeted white-tailed deer, suggesting this method of killing is far from guaranteed to result in a clean kill<sup>27</sup>. Injured animals not only suffer, but may also be unpredictable and may present an increased threat to people or other animals in their proximity<sup>28</sup>.

Since at least part of the motivation of the paying trophy hunter is to procure a good quality trophy, there is clearly an incentive to use methods that do not damage specific parts of the animal that will subsequently be displayed. If, as is often the case, the head of the animal forms an integral part of the trophy, a hunter might target other body areas, increasing the likelihood that a clean kill won't be achieved and that the animal will suffer.

It's not just at the point of killing where animal welfare is compromised. Target animals may be pursued for long periods of time (in some cases days) during hunts. Individuals may be separated from family groups or populations which may result in considerable stress. In some cases, target animals may be deliberately lured into hunting areas where the presence of potential predators or competitors might also cause distress. In Zambia, for example, the baiting of lions to draw them out of national parks into the Game Management Areas where hunting takes place is reportedly common practice. Prey animals such as deer and antelope will run when chased to the point of exhaustion, and studies have demonstrated elevated levels of stress hormones (including endorphins and cortisol) in hunted deer compared to those that are cleanly shot without a prolonged chase<sup>29</sup>.

Hunting proponents frequently speak of the concept of a fair chase<sup>30</sup> where the hunter does not have an 'improper advantage' over the hunted animal, and the animal has a fair chance of escaping the hunter. However, the failure of a trophy hunter to achieve a kill should not be taken to imply that the welfare of the hunted animal has not been compromised.

### **Wider animal welfare impacts**

Trophy hunting also has wider implications for the welfare of non-target animals.

Animal societies can be extremely complex, with individuals having specific roles within their social groupings. Trophy hunters will usually seek animals with certain traits, and these are often the largest or most impressive animals within a group or population. In many cases mature male animals are targeted.

**"It's not just the hunted animals that suffer – the knock-on effects on their surviving family members can be huge"** Hunting proponents often defend the targeting of older male animals on the grounds they are past peak breeding age and no longer contribute to the genetic diversity of future populations. In some cases, for example with black rhinos, removing surplus males has been justified on the grounds that it stimulates population growth by reducing competition between animals confined to restricted areas<sup>31</sup>.

However, removing particular animals on the basis of specified individual traits may have a disproportionate impact on the behaviour of remaining animals in the group, and its genetic integrity. The targeting of 'big tusker' bull elephants by trophy hunters has resulted in a serious decline in the number of such animals, with the loss of vitally important accumulated social knowledge and experience from which younger animals learn<sup>32</sup>. Older bull elephants control younger males in bachelor groups, who may become more aggressive when the older bulls are removed, with the resulting potential for increasing interactions and associated injuries, and even increased conflict with people<sup>33</sup>. In the case of lions, the removal of older males who control prides may lead to younger male animals killing the former pride male's cubs so as to be able to breed themselves, with serious welfare implications for the cubs and the adult females who care for them; this disruption can adversely affect social cohesion and population stability<sup>34</sup>.

Where female animals of breeding age are targeted by trophy hunters, any dependent young are likely to suffer starvation or predation.

## PUTTING THE 'CON' IN ECONOMICS AND CONSERVATION



### Economics

Trophy hunting proponents claim hunting fees make a vital contribution to local and national economies in the countries where trophy hunting takes place.

A report by the IUCN in 2009<sup>35</sup> estimated the annual turnover for big game hunting in Africa to be in the region of US\$200m, around half of which is generated in South Africa.

While this sounds like a lot, it represented just 0.06% of annual gross domestic product for the 11 major African countries that allow trophy hunting, generating an average of just US\$1.1/hectare in those countries (excluding South Africa). The report concluded that “The socioeconomic contribution and the contribution to development of big game hunting is virtually nil.”

In 2016, the IUCN talked of “weak governance, corruption, lack of transparency, excessive quotas, illegal hunting, poor monitoring and other problems in a number of countries”, and of the need for “urgent action and reform” of the industry<sup>36</sup>.

A more recent 2017 study entitled *The Lion's Share*<sup>37</sup> concluded that “the current total economic contribution of trophy hunters from their hunting-related, and non-hunting related, tourism is, at most, about 0.03% of GDP”, suggesting that the proportion contributed roughly halved over the previous decade. An economic study published in 2013 estimated that trophy hunting generates just 1.8% of total tourism revenues in countries that allow the practice<sup>38</sup>.

Alternative economic activities can generate far more revenue from wildlife than trophy hunting: according to the report *Dead or alive? Valuing an Elephant*<sup>39</sup>, a live elephant may be worth as much as US\$1.6m over its lifetime through income from photographic tourism, many times the fee typically paid by a trophy hunter to shoot a bull elephant, which may typically be around US\$40-45,000 but can be as low as US\$10,000<sup>40</sup>.

Furthermore, non-consumptive photographic wildlife tourism can often operate year-round, host a significantly larger number of guests, employ more people, generate higher average revenues, and offer higher staff wages than trophy hunting outfitters<sup>41</sup>.

Even if hunting revenues do filter down to local communities, the financial benefits are all too often tiny. In a 2009 report, the IUCN calculated that, on average, big game hunting might redistribute between US\$0.04-0.18 (4-18 cents) per hectare in six African countries that allow trophy hunting, and that individual community members might benefit by an average of just US\$0.30 (30 cents) each per year<sup>42</sup>. However, money from trophy hunting rarely filters down to any meaningful level. An analysis of data published by the pro-hunting International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation found hunting companies contribute on average 3% of their revenues to communities living in hunting areas; the vast majority of their turnover goes to government agencies, outfitters and individuals located in national capitals or overseas<sup>43</sup>.

The trophy hunting industry creates far fewer jobs than hunting proponents claim<sup>44</sup>. Moreover, trophy hunting may actually be preventing non-consumptive forms of nature tourism from maximising its potential contribution to local economies<sup>45</sup>.

Trophy hunting has also long been wracked by corruption. An analysis entitled *Missing the Mark* by the United States Democratic staff of the House Committee on Natural Resources, examined the trophy hunting of African elephants, black and southern white rhinoceros, leopards and lions in Zimbabwe, Tanzania, South Africa and Namibia. It found “many troubling examples of funds either being diverted from their purpose or not being dedicated to conservation on the first place”, and concluded that “corruption within governments or organisations can prevent trophy hunting revenues from funding conservation activities and can even lead to the mismanagement of hunted populations<sup>46</sup>.”

Zimbabwe’s community-based conservation programme CAMPFIRE, of which trophy hunting operations form a significant part, is reported to have been in serious decline for more than a decade despite significant support from international NGOs and foreign governments, thanks in large part to corrupt practices<sup>47</sup>. The programme has been dogged by governance issues<sup>48</sup>. In Zambia, proceeds from trophy hunting due to local Community Resources Boards and tribal Chiefs have consistently gone unpaid, in spite of these benefits being guaranteed in law through Concession Hunting Agreements (see Case study on page 17).



The emergence of pseudo-hunting in South Africa, where hunting permits were fraudulently issued to the agents of traffickers in order to obtain horns from hunted rhinoceros for sale into illegal Asian markets, resulted in the deaths of many rhinos, and the stimulation of demand for rhino horn, further incentivising rhino poaching. Authorities in Poland recently reported concerns about the disappearance of rhino and elephant trophies imported from South Africa, which are suspected of being smuggled out of the EU into illegal trade<sup>49</sup>.

In January 2018, Tanzania's incoming Environment Minister accused hunting operators in the country of the multiple use of individual hunting permits, and of involvement in elephant poaching and illegal exports of ivory<sup>50</sup>.

## **Conservation**

Hunting proponents also claim trophy hunting benefits wildlife conservation through the fees it generates and offers a wildlife management tool. However, species conservation outcomes depend on the way trophy hunting and wildlife management are governed and enforced<sup>51</sup>. Evidence suggests, far from benefiting wildlife conservation, the effects of trophy hunting are all too often detrimental. The fact that many species are in serious decline in the very countries which allow them to be hunted tells its own story.

*Missing the Mark* concluded "trophy hunting cannot be assumed to have a conservation benefit on the strength of a guarantee that hunters' fees will flow to communities or wildlife agencies" and that it is "exceedingly difficult to prove that removing additional animals from a vulnerable and dwindling population would benefit the species"<sup>52</sup>.

Field studies have also called trophy hunting's conservation credentials into question in relation to lions and leopards in Tanzania<sup>53</sup>, lions in Zimbabwe<sup>54</sup>, leopards in South Africa<sup>55</sup>, and elephants across parts of Southern Africa<sup>56</sup>, among others. Rather than targeting problem or surplus animals, hunters tend to covet animals with particular traits which make them good trophies. This can have serious adverse genetic consequences which can threaten future population health and viability<sup>57</sup>, and may remove the key individuals within a population that are more resilient to other threats such as climate change<sup>58</sup>. Removing adult males from a population can change the behaviour of other animals, and reduce the survival of young, a problem particularly associated with big cats. A study conducted on lions in Zambia before and after the imposition of a hunting moratorium highlighted the positive effect of the moratorium on cub survival<sup>59</sup>. The targeting of female animals can result in a reduction in breeding success and the loss of knowledge key to the survival of family groups<sup>60</sup>.

Assertions that restricting targeted lions to males over a certain age, on the assumption that they are past breeding age and therefore redundant, have been discredited<sup>61</sup>. Cecil the lion, who was around 13 years of age when he was killed, was head of two prides at the time, and it is highly likely that younger males moving into the pride after his death will have killed any young cubs, severely disrupting the prides. Lions are not easy to age accurately, resulting in male lions of breeding age regularly being targeted. Excessive hunting of lions in Tanzania has resulted in increasing disregard for minimum age rules, since there are no longer sufficient older lions to target<sup>62</sup>.

Elephants tend to move out of areas where hunting occurs, and the disproportionate targeting of older bull elephants within bachelor groups can seriously skew population dynamics and disrupt the behaviour of younger bulls, increasing the risk of conflict with people<sup>63</sup>.

Trophy hunting proponents will often point towards the stability of heavily-managed wildlife populations in fenced reserves in parts of southern Africa as evidence that trophy hunting can be carried out sustainably, and can even lead to increases in certain populations. However the conservation value of such heavily-managed populations has been questioned<sup>64</sup>. The management of wildlife areas in order to maximise the numbers of high-value trophy animals can also result in damaging impacts to the ecological balance in such areas. Researchers from Oxford University concluded that trophy hunting can hamper conservation or exacerbate species declines "if it results in alterations to ecosystems, such as habitat fragmentation, the introduction of exotic species, or targeted reduction of predators of trophy animals"<sup>65</sup>.

Because hunters value rarity, and in some cases are prepared to pay very large amounts of money to kill very rare animals, the rarest species may be disproportionately affected by hunting pressure, and may be driven towards extinction as a result<sup>66</sup>. A recent report prepared for the IUCN and others noted that 40% of the big game hunting zones in Zambia and 72% in Tanzania are now classified as "depleted", because the big game has been hunted out of these areas<sup>67</sup>.

## CASE STUDY:

# CANNED HUNTING – BREEDING FOR THE GUN

Across South Africa, upwards of 8,000 lions and other predators languish in 260 or more intensive captive breeding facilities.

Many of these animals are destined to be shot by paying hunters in canned hunts.

The lion breeders exploit the animals at every stage of their development. Cubs are removed from their mothers at a few days old so she can be bred again quickly. The cubs can be hand-reared by unwitting paying volunteers and cuddled by paying tourists who are led to believe they are orphans destined to be returned to the wild<sup>68</sup>.

As they grow, the animals are used for tourist experiences such as petting or walking with lions.

Once they mature, many will be sold to canned hunting operations; up to 1,000 lions reportedly lose their lives in canned hunts in South Africa each year. Many more are slaughtered so that their skeletons can be sold into Asian markets for use in traditional tonics and medicines.

South Africa's National Council of Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals states that canned hunting, as well as being unethical, is directly linked to animal abuse that is unacceptable to society at large, and in the context of professional and recreational hunting, animal welfare cannot be ensured without due consideration of the impacts of breeding, transportation and holding standards for wildlife in the related game industry<sup>69</sup>. The IUCN has called for the practice of breeding lions in captivity for the purpose of canned shooting to be terminated through a structured, time-bound process<sup>70</sup>. Several trophy hunting organisations in South Africa and beyond have also denounced canned hunting<sup>71,72</sup>.

In 2018, Born Free exposed the lion breeding industry in its report *Cash Before Conservation*<sup>73</sup>, which it presented to South Africa's Parliamentary Committee in August 2018. As a result of the Committee's recommendations, South Africa's parliament adopted a Resolution urging the government to put an end to the practice. However, in its response in March 2019, the government failed to take any meaningful action. As a consequence, thousands of lions and other predators on breeding farms continue to suffer at the hands of canned hunters and wildlife traders, unwitting tourists and volunteers continue to be duped, and South Africa's reputation as a responsible custodian of its wildlife continues to be diminished.

Many organisations, including the IUCN, consider the canned hunting industry should be closed down. Its closure needs to be conducted with intelligence, humanity, and above all compassion for the animals concerned. The responsibility for this must lie primarily with the South African authorities.





## CASE STUDY:

# ZAMBIA'S HIPPO CULL – TROPHY HUNTING MASQUERADING AS ANIMAL MANAGEMENT



In October 2018, the Zambian authorities upheld a legally contested culling contract that had been previously awarded to trophy hunting operator Mabwe Adventures Limited, allowing it to market the hunting of 1,250 hippos living along the Luangwa Valley to paying trophy hunters over a five year period.

Mabwe Adventures Limited subsequently subcontracted the marketing of the hunts to a South African hunting outfit, which in 2019 began offering Luangwa trophy hunting packages inviting hunters to kill two hippo for £4,350, three for £7,850 and five for £11,360.

The Zambian authorities have claimed that what they describe as a cull is necessary because the Luangwa Valley has an overpopulation of hippos, unusually low annual rainfall has resulted in the animals damaging river banks, and there is a high risk of anthrax breaking out among the animals which could threaten the lives of other animals and people in the locality.

However, none of these claims withstand scrutiny. The issuing of the contract was shrouded in secrecy and did not follow an open tendering process, as is required in Zambia. Local Chiefs, Community Resources Boards, local safari operators, and international conservationists have all expressed opposition and outrage.

Will Travers OBE, Born Free's President and Co-Founder, commented: "Along with many others, Born Free is deeply concerned the real reason behind the proposed cull is financial gain. This matter needs to be resolved quickly and permanently, and the threat of a cull taken off the table. If not, then Zambia – one of Africa's great wildlife strongholds – is likely to suffer lasting reputational and economic damage as international tourists seek other, more benign safari destinations."

With only around 130,000 remaining across Africa, hippos are under increasing threat from habitat loss, poaching and wildlife trade. Yet they remain one of the most common targets for international trophy hunters.

At the time of going to press, information received by Born Free indicated that the proposed cull had been suspended following pressure from within and outside Zambia.

## CASE STUDY:

# THE TRUTH BEHIND ZAMBIA'S TROPHY HUNTING INDUSTRY – REAL-LIFE STORIES FROM THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

In Zambia, the government's Wildlife Department is committed by law to returning a 50% share of Trophy Hunting Licence Fees and 20% of Hunting Area Concession Fees every quarter to Community Resources Boards (CRBs) and local Chiefs in the Game Management Areas where trophy hunting takes place. In addition, safari outfitters are encouraged to pay an additional fee directly to the CRBs.

However, Born Free's investigation conducted in 2018 among local communities in Zambia's premier hunting destination, in the Luangwa Valley, revealed that little, if any, of this money ever reaches them. When funds are released, they fall hugely short of the amounts due, resulting in local salary arrears in the CRBs and great hardship and suffering.

As a result, local people typically have an overwhelmingly negative attitude towards trophy hunting, accusing the Zambian government and its Department of National Parks and Wildlife of withholding fees, corrupt practices, and of exploiting the wildlife with which they live, for the benefit of others.



"...my knowledge and understanding is that there is absolutely no community upliftment from hunting revenue which is happening within my Chiefdom."

**Shadreck Zulu**, Chief Mnkhanhya, Mambwe District



"Trophy hunting only serves for a few people on the top. Very few individuals benefit from trophy hunting and it does not create any change to the people that live with wildlife and natural resources, so let's stop it."

**Isaac Banda**, Executive Officer of Mnkhanhya Community Resources Board



"In fact, these people who come from various countries to buy licences for hunting, they just come here to our country to kill animals, collect their trophies and the meat, leaving the community without anything and empty-handed."

**Jackson Zulu**, Village Headman, Mnkhanhya Chiefdom

Born Free's investigations also raised concerns of widespread unethical and illegal practices within Zambia's trophy hunting industry, including:

- the baiting of lions and leopards right up to and even within the boundary of national parks
- hunting towards nightfall increasing the risk of wounding
- safari operators bribing government and wildlife authority officials to obtain the rights for hunting blocks
- unsustainable quota setting within hunting blocks, based on income generation targets rather than biological criteria
- pressure on safari outfitters to sell off hunting licences cheaply towards the end of a season, in order to fulfill their quotas

Born Free's report *The truth behind Zambia's trophy hunting industry: stories from the local community* will be published in full in summer 2019.

## CONCLUSION



Trophy hunting is a contentious practice generating strong and often emotive opinions. In policy terms, the discussion centres on the sustainability of the practice, its claimed role in support of species conservation and poverty reduction in wildlife areas.

The ethical and animal welfare implications are rarely given significant consideration in the policy context. However, because of the scale of trophy hunting, its highly commercial nature, and the motivation of and methods used by paying hunters, the impacts of the activity on animal welfare are clearly highly significant and deserve far greater consideration, whereas the claimed benefits to species conservation and local economies are increasingly discredited. In most other policy contexts where live animals are deliberately killed, the welfare of the animals affected both directly and indirectly by the activity would be a high priority.

While there are people willing to pay large amounts of money for the privilege of killing a wild animal, it seems likely the practice of trophy hunting will continue to persist in one form or another. However, public concerns and pressure relating to the ethics and sustainability of trophy hunting and its claimed conservation and community benefits, continue to grow, including in the United States which is the largest importer of wildlife trophies<sup>74</sup>. In light of the growing global crisis facing wildlife and biodiversity<sup>75</sup>, these public concerns continue to drive policy changes, including restrictions on the transport and importation of trophies. As these concerns grow, trophy hunting will inevitably become less acceptable to a concerned public, and those who promote it will become increasingly isolated.

If we are to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals to which most of the world's nations are committed, the devastating declines in species and biodiversity must be halted and reversed, and species protection must be given equal footing with climate change. In order to give wild animals a secure future, we must learn to treat them with far greater respect and find alternative ways of realising value from wild animals and nature through non-lethal, ecologically and economically sustainable practices that will benefit wild animals and people alike.

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