

Research Briefing
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Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill 2022-23

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The [Hunting Trophies \(Import Prohibition\) Bill](#) is a Private Member's bill introduced by Henry Smith MP, which will have its second reading on 25 November 2022. The Bill has Government support and will ban the import of hunting trophies from species of conservation concern.¹

The provisions in the Bill will ban the import of hunting trophies into Great Britain from species listed in existing Wildlife Trade Regulations, except if excluded by the Government, and from any other species to be set out in regulations. This will apply to any animals hunted after the legislation comes into force, which will also be set out in regulations by the Secretary of State.

The Government has previously [proposed introducing a ban on the import of hunting trophies](#) in December 2021, following consultation. This was expected as part of an Animals Abroad Bill which has not been presented to Parliament to date.

¹ Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill, [Explanatory Notes](#), 23 November 2022

1

Background

There has been long running debate about trophy hunting, its contribution to wildlife conservation and links to wildlife trafficking. The [International Fund for Animal Welfare](#) (IFAW) defines trophy hunting as:

The activity of chasing and killing wild animals or game, especially for food or sport. “Trophy hunting”, specifically, is a form of hunting in which the hunter’s explicit goal is to obtain the hunted animal’s carcass or body part, such as the head or hide, as a trophy that represents the success of the hunt.²

Trophy hunting is legal if it complies with a country’s existing hunting legislation including ensuring all proper permits have been obtained (which may include permission to hunt endangered species). It is not the same as poaching, which is the illegal hunting or capture of wild animals.

The [International Union for the Conservation of Nature](#) (IUCN) is of the view that “with effective governance and management trophy hunting can and does have positive impacts”.³

The [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna \(CITES\)](#) is the international agreement between governments to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. In October 2016, [CITES Parties adopted a resolution](#) (PDF) on the trade in hunting trophies of species listed in the convention. It stated that “well managed and sustainable trophy hunting [...] provides both livelihood opportunities for rural communities and incentives for habitat conservation”.⁴

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) published an [assessment report on the sustainable use of wild species in July 2022](#). This found that 1.4 million km² of Africa is managed for recreational hunting.⁵ In its report it concluded that revenues from activities such as hunting “provide an important and substantial income stream for conservation agencies and local communities in some countries”.⁶ However, it also concluded that:

² IFAW, [Killing for Trophies: an analysis of the global trophy hunting trade](#), 14 June 2016

³ IUCN, [Informing decisions on trophy hunting](#), published April 2016

⁴ CITES, Conf 17.9, October 2016

⁵ IPBES Media Release, [IPBES Sustainable Use Assessment - 50,000 Wild Species Meet Needs of Billions Worldwide](#), 8 July 2022

⁶ IPBES, [Assessment report on the sustainable use of wild species: Summary for policymakers](#), July 2022

There is considerable variation in the way recreational hunting is governed and administered in different regions, which makes any generalization about its sustainability or unsustainability difficult.⁷

It also found that “selective hunting particular species, individuals or populations which have particular attributes (eg, large-sized or large horns) can impact ecosystem structure and processes”.⁸

Campaigners have called for a ban on imports of hunting trophies into the UK. [Born Free](#) rejects the notion that trophy hunting helps conservation and says that instead it supports “non-consumptive opportunities to generate income from wildlife”.⁹ The [Ban of Trophy Hunting Campaign](#) disagrees with trophy hunting, believing that “there's no justification for killing animals for fun - it's cruel, wasteful, and serves no purpose”.

In June 2022 the All Party Parliamentary Group on Trophy Hunting published a report [Trophy Hunting & Britain: The Case for a Ban](#).¹⁰ This report set out in detail its case for a ban, including details of the trophy hunting industry and the APPG’s concerns about organisations outside the UK lobbying against a ban.

In July 2022, a [joint position statement from 166 civil society groups](#) across the world called for a ban on trophy hunting imports. It set out its reasons with supporting evidence for calling for a ban, which include:

- Trophy hunting threatens the survival of species
- Trophy hunting undermines wildlife conservation
- Trophy hunting fails to deliver meaningful economic benefits to communities
- Trophy hunting raises considerable ethical concerns
- Trophy hunting disregards animal welfare
- Trophy hunting is opposed by the public.¹¹

This is an area of ongoing debate as the following range of articles from The Conversation, an academic journalist site, shows:

⁷ IPBES, [Assessment report on the sustainable use of wild species: Summary for policymakers](#), July 2022

⁸ IPBES, [Assessment report on the sustainable use of wild species: Summary for policymakers](#), July 2022

⁹ The Born Free Foundation, [Shooting animals for ‘sport’](#) (accessed 13 May 2019)

¹⁰ APPG on Trophy Hunting, [Trophy Hunting & Britain: The Case for a Ban](#), 29 June 2022

¹¹ Born Free, [Global NGOs call for a ban on hunting trophy imports](#), 7 July 2022

- [Trophy hunting – can it really be justified by ‘conservation benefits’?](#) 10 October 2019
- [Trophy hunting will not save Africa’s lions – so the UK ban on imports is a positive step for wildlife conservation](#) 29 June 2022
- [Trophy hunting: why a UK import ban threatens wildlife conservation](#) 10 August 2022

Further background on Trophy hunting can be found in the [Commons Briefing Paper on Trophy Hunting](#) published in September 2019.

2 Regulation of the international trade in hunting trophies

The [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna \(CITES\)](#) works by subjecting international trade in specimens of selected species to certain controls. All import, export, re-export and introduction of the species covered by the Convention must be authorised through a licensing system.¹² This includes trophies from hunting.

CITES is implemented in the UK through [EU regulations which have been retained after Brexit](#). These regulations are stricter than those for CITES, extending the requirement for permits to a wider range of species, and completely banning the trade of some species that are not banned under CITES. For example, [stricter controls for species such as elephants, lions and polar bears](#) were introduced at EU level in 2015. The full list of protected species under the regulations is set out in the [2019 EU Regulation 2019/2117](#).

Further detailed explanation of the legislation covering imports of hunting trophies can be found in the [Commons Briefing Paper on Trophy Hunting](#) published in September 2019 and in the [Explanatory Notes for the Hunting Trophies \(Import Prohibition\) Bill](#).

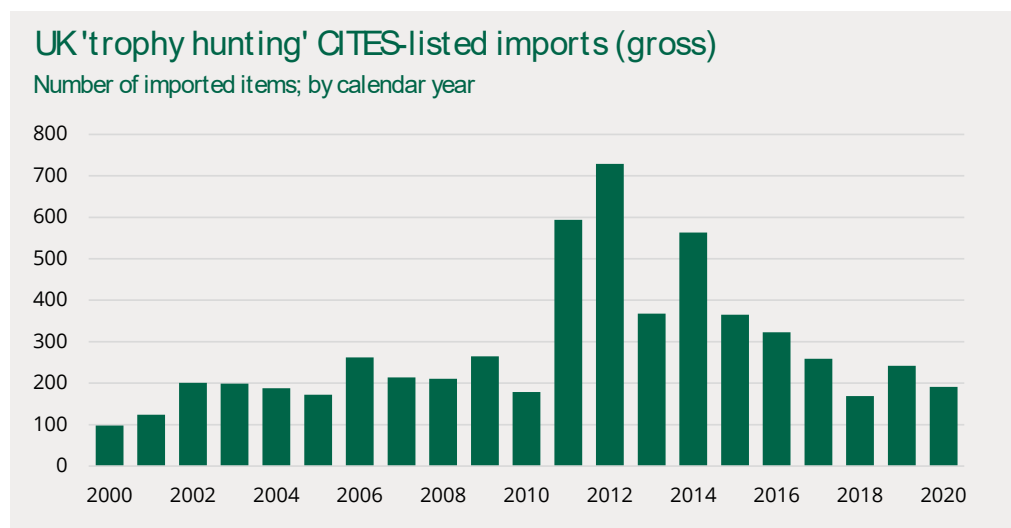
¹² CITES, [“How CITES works”](#) [accessed on 24 November 2022]

3

Trophy hunting import and export statistics

Statistics on imports and exports of CITES-listed animal-derived products are [published by the United Nations Environment Programme](#) on behalf of the CITES Secretariat.

Because of the time it takes countries to quality-check and submit their data, the latest complete year of data is 2020. The chart below shows gross imports to the UK in each year between 2000 and 2020.¹³ Imports peaked at 729 items in 2012, before falling gradually in the years following.



Notes: These figures are gross and are a tally of trades, rather than individual items; the same item may be counted more than once. Some imports may appear in the wrong year as import permits can be issued ahead of transaction completion.

Source: CITES, [CITES Trade Database \(version 2022.1\)](#) (accessed 21 November 2022)

South Africa is the largest exporter of trophy hunting goods to the UK, accounting for 34% of items imported to the UK between 2000 and 2020. Zimbabwe was another large exporter to the UK, contributing over a quarter (27%) of all trophy hunting items imported by the UK during this period.

37% of trophy hunting imports to the UK were derived from elephants (Elephantidae). The next largest categories after this were items from big cats (Felidae) and bears (Ursidae).

A summary of these figures is provided in the table below.

¹³ There is often a difference in what an importing country and an exporting country report in terms of the quantity of items traded between them. Gross imports takes the larger figure reported, where this differs between the two countries involved in a transaction. For more information, see page 10 of [A guide to using the CITES Trade Database Version 9 \(PDF\)](#) (September 2022)

UK gross 'trophy hunting' imports, 2000 to 2020

By country of export and type of animal

Exporter	Imports	% of total	Family	Imports	% of total
South Africa	2,006	34%	Elephants	2,194	37%
Zimbabwe	1,605	27%	Big cats	747	13%
Canada	610	10%	Bears	649	11%
Namibia	379	6%	Hippopotamuses	608	10%
Tanzania	278	5%	Primates	515	9%
Botswana	257	4%	Cattle, bison, buffalo, a	483	8%
Zambia	249	4%	Horses	296	5%
Mozambique	137	2%	Crocodiles	161	3%
USA	100	2%	Wolves, foxes, etc.	124	2%
Russia	91	2%	Giraffes	32	1%
Others	203	3%	Others	106	2%
Total	5,915		Total	5,915	

Notes: These figures are gross and are a tally of trades, rather than individual items; the same item may be counted more than once.

Source: CITES, [CITES Trade Database \(version 2022.1\)](#) (accessed 21 November 2022)

Globally, the UK is not one of the largest importers of CITES-listed trophy hunting products. Considering all gross imports between 2000 and 2020, the UK was the 24th largest importer. The largest were the United States of America, South Africa, and China. This is in terms of gross imports, so it also captures imports of goods which are subsequently exported onwards. In 2012, when UK imports were at their peak, the UK ranked 16th highest in the world.

As of 2020, the largest exporters of trophy hunting products were South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. However, over the longer period of 2000 to 2020, Canada was by far the largest exporter, accounting for 40% of all exports. Around a third (34%) of global gross exports of trophy hunting products during this time were from bears (Ursidae), with around 15% from elephants (Elephantidae) and 9% from crocodiles (Crocodylidae).

4

The Bill

The [Hunting Trophies \(Import Prohibition\) Bill](#) is a Private Member's bill introduced by Henry Smith, which will have its second reading on 25 November 2022. The Bill has Government support as set out in the Explanatory Notes and will ban the import of hunting trophies from species of conservation concern..¹⁴

¹⁴ Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill, [Explanatory Notes](#), 23 November 2022

4.1 Background on the Bill

Until 2018, the Government’s position on banning the imports of hunting trophies was that it supported the existing regime, which allowed “trophies to be imported, provided that there is no impact on the sustainability of species”.¹⁵ However, a response to written question on banning the imports of lion trophies on 15 July 2019 stated the Government was reviewing the evidence:

Lord Selkirk of Douglas: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will consider banning the importation of lion trophies to the UK, following the decision by Australia, France, and the Netherlands to ban such imports.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: In May 2019 the Government hosted a stakeholder roundtable to hear views from all sides of the debate. We are reviewing existing evidence surrounding trophy hunting and its impact on conservation.¹⁶

A [call for evidence on hunting trophies was issued](#) in November 2019, as was a consultation on [controlling imports to and exports from the UK](#). In addition, the [2019 Conservative manifesto](#) included a commitment to “ban imports from trophy hunting of endangered animals”.

Following this, [the summary of responses and the Government response](#) were published in December 2021. This set out the response to a proposed ban, which was overwhelmingly in support:

The responses to the consultation indicated a clear preference (86% of responses) for the government to put in place additional restrictions beyond current controls. The majority of those who provided a response to the consultation (84%) indicated that their first preference would be for a ban on imports and exports of hunting trophies from all species to and from the UK.

However, around three quarters of the detailed responses submitted to the call for evidence did not support a ban on imports and exports of hunting trophies from all species. We note the evidence which suggests that in some cases, trophy hunting can support species and habitat conservation, as well as local livelihoods, and that there may not always be readily available or feasible alternatives which deliver the same benefits. We also note evidence of damaging impacts of unsustainable and unchecked trophy hunting in some cases, and examples of where local populations do not benefit from the activity.¹⁷

The Government also set out its proposed policy approach. This would be to ban imports of trophies of endangered species including those listed in t, he

¹⁵ [HC Deb 650 c401 29 Nov 2018](#)

¹⁶ [Lions: Hunting: Written question - HL16885](#) 15 July 2019

¹⁷ Defra, [Hunting trophies: call for evidence](#), 2 November 2019

existing regulations on wildlife trade, with some additions. The Government would also include trophies from animals that are captive bred:

We will do this by introducing legislation to ban the import of hunting trophies from species of global conservation concern. Species in scope of the ban will be those listed on Annex A and B of the UK Wildlife Trade Regulations and any other species not covered by these regulations but subject to hunting and of particular conservation concern (namely those assessed by the [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#) as Near Threatened, Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered or Extinct in the Wild). We will keep this under review as new evidence emerges around species' conservation status and threat. For all species in scope, the import of hunting trophies from both wild and captive-bred animals will be banned.¹⁸

Rules on exports of hunting trophies would remain the same. There would be no ban on “the practice of trophy hunting itself or ownership of hunting trophies”, as these had not been consulted on.¹⁹

According [to the Government press release](#) on 10 December 2021 the ban will cover 7000 threatened species and a further 1000 which are “near threatened or worse”.

The legislation for the ban was originally expected to be part of the Animals Abroad Bill, as set out in the Government’s [Action Plan for Animal Welfare](#) published in May 2021. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee launched an inquiry on the Bill, including [written submissions and an evidence session](#). However, [that Bill has not been brought forward](#) by the Government.

4.2

The Bill

[Hunting Trophies \(Import Prohibition\) Bill](#) has four clauses. The Bill provides for a ban on the import of hunting trophies into Great Britain, with the full details of which animals will be covered to be set out in regulations. The ban will only apply to animals hunted after the Act comes into force.

Clause 1 of the Bill prohibits the import of hunting trophies into Great Britain as part of the process of taking them from where the specified animals were hunted to where the hunter resides. Trophy hunting is defined as whole animals, parts of animals or derivatives processed in any way.

The explanatory notes of the Bill set out in detail the existing legislation, including EU Regulations and how they interact to control imports of animal trophies. [Council Regulation \(EC\) No. 338/97 on the protection of species of](#)

¹⁸ Defra, [Hunting trophies: call for evidence](#), 2 November 2019

¹⁹ Defra, [Hunting trophies: call for evidence](#), 2 November 2019

wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein are referred to as “the Principal Wildlife Trade Regulation”. As the explanatory notes set out, any existing legislation will not prevent the ban on imports covering specific animals as “the Wildlife Trade Regulations will not apply to the movement of hunting trophies where that movement is prohibited”.²⁰ The current rules on exporting hunting trophies will be unchanged and will continue to apply.

Clause 2 sets out the animals the import ban will be applied to, which will include species listed in Annex A and B of the Wildlife Trade Regulations, (unless excluded through the regulations); and any other species included in the regulations. Regulations will be introduced in Parliament using the affirmative procedure. Any amendment will be made using the negative procedure.

Clause 3 sets out the territorial extent of the Bill and how it applies to imports and exports between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, to take account of the Northern Ireland Protocol. The Bill will prohibit the import of hunting trophies into Great Britain, including via Northern Ireland.

However, there will be an exception for qualifying Northern Ireland goods under the EU Withdrawal Act 2018, which will be allowed to be imported into Great Britain. These are defined as goods that are “lawfully present in Northern Ireland and are not subject to customs control” other than for export; or goods that are “Northern Ireland processed”.²¹

Clause 4 sets out the territorial extent as England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as international trade is a reserved matter. The Bill will come into force when set out in regulations by the Secretary of State.

²⁰ Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill, Explanatory Notes, 23 November 2022

²¹ The Definition of Qualifying Northern Ireland Goods (EU Exit) Regulations 2020, Explanatory Notes

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