

TROPHY HUNTING – FACT SHEET

Trophy hunting – a dubious leisure activity that is endangering wildlife

Killing endangered and internationally protected species, like lions, elephants, rhinos, large sharks or polar bears, can be booked at hunting fairs or with specialised tour operators. In a range of countries, it is legal and even advertised by the hunting lobby as species conservation measure and development aid.

Thousands of polar bears, sharks, lions, elephants, rhinos, leopards, and other animals, including of endangered species, are being killed every year by trophy hunters. This may jeopardise the survival of critical populations. Trophy hunting is unethical and is fostering illegal trade and corruption, which makes it all the more unacceptable.

OceanCare, together with partner organisations, is calling for a ban on the import and transit of hunting trophies in Switzerland which has to include, among others, the following taxa (list is not exhaustive):

- Polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*)
- Great White Shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*)
- Manta ray (*Manta*)
- Sawfish (*Pristiformes*), e.g. Common Sawfish
- Elephants (*Elephantidae*), e.g. African Elephant
- Rhinos (*Rhinocerotidae*), e.g. Black Rhinoceros
- Hippo (*Hippopotamus amphibius*)
- Primates (*Primates*), e.g. Baboon
- Carnivores (*Carnivora*), e.g. Lion and Leopard

Trophy hunting under the guise of species conservation

Time and again trophy hunting is promoted as species conservation measure – because it earns foreign currencies and should therefore (in theory) provide an incentive to conserve wildlife as a source of income.

However, reality doesn't follow the theory: alluring profits for tour operators, corruption and lack of control result in trophy hunters killing too many animals, while the local population hardly benefits from the revenues. Authorities are neither capable of laying down scientifically sound hunting quotas, nor of enforcing these in the vast, often deserted hunting grounds. Hence, this often rests with the tour operators – setting the fox to keep the geese. There are recurrent reports from South Africa, Tanzania and other hunting tourism destinations that corrupt tour operators, gamekeepers and officials ignore hunting quotas and don't pay over the revenues. Moreover, the consequences of trophy hunting go far beyond the deaths of individual animals, because trophy hunters aim for the strongest and most experienced animals, which are therefore most essential for species survival. This is true for both aquatic and terrestrial species. In addition, hunting may destroy social structures. Hunters prefer male lions with grand manes which are typically leading their prides. When they are shot, younger males take over the prides and kill the cubs fathered by their predecessor. Thereby valuable genetic traits get lost. Similar phenomena are evoked by hunting brown bears.

While scientific evidence for the benefits of trophy hunting is widely lacking, documentations on how trophy hunters are depleting endangered species keep piling up. For example, scientific studies show

how trophy hunters decimate lion populations in Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Ever younger lions are falling victim to the hunters, as the older mane-bearing males are subject to particularly high hunting pressure and therefore are lost first. Leopards and other big cats are supposed to suffer similar negative effects. In 2014 a study showed that elephant hunting in the tri-border area of Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe, too, is eliminating males in their best reproductive age. Trophy hunting for polar bears and brown bears contributes to population declines, too.

About 85 species of fish targeted by trophy fishing are listed as critically endangered in the Red Lists. Trophy hunting poses another serious threat to them, in addition to commercial fishing and bycatch.

Species	Shooting fee
polar bear	30'000-40'000 Euro
elephant	17'000-65'000 Euro
large shark (e.g. white shark)	2'100-2'800 Euro (ship rental for 8-10 hrs.)
lion	18'000-54'000 Euro
white rhino	35'000 Euro
black rhino	240'000-280'000 Euro
leopard	8'000-30'000 Euro
African buffalo	6'000-17'000 Euro

Trophy hunting under the guise of socio-economic development

On closer inspection, the alleged contribution of trophy hunting to poverty reduction and development aid turns out to be more than questionable, too. First, hunting is often taking place on private property, which means that neither the treasury nor the local population is benefiting. Second, even in those few areas where the local population gets a share of the revenues, predominantly foreign tour operators pocket the lion's share of profits. On average, local populations in Africa earn no more than CHF 0.2 per year and head from hunting tourism.

Hunting creates only 15'000 local part-time jobs in the main eight destination countries (with a population of 140 million people). Big game hunting contributes merely 0.006% to national budgets in Africa. These breadcrumbs can hardly make us refer to hunting as development aid. In contrast, picture safaris generate billion dollar amounts and create a multitude of jobs for local people. For good reason countries like Kenya for a long time, or Botswana since 2014, decided against hunting and in favour of photo-tourism. Kenya earns one billion US\$ every year from photo-tourism – trophy hunting would have yielded 30 million US\$. In the Okavango Delta of Botswana, photo-tourism creates 39 times as much jobs as hunting.

Same for the polar bear: Trophy hunting, which mainly relies on selling indigenous hunting quotas to hunters and tour operators, only makes a minuscule contribution to solving the socio-economic troubles of the indigenous population.

Killing fish for trophies, e.g. shark teeth or shark jawbones, mainly fills the coffers of the tour operators and has no broad effect on socioeconomics.

Incomes per capita from hunting endangered species are very low and offer no forward-looking contribution to poverty reduction. Rather people's poverty is abused as a fig leaf to justify trophy hunting.

Trophy hunting solely is for satisfying the lust of killing

Hunting for a myth: Big game hunters especially crave Africa's so-called Big Five – elephant, rhino, lion, buffalo and leopard. Trophy hunters also spare no expenses for hunting polar bears, and their counterparts among fishermen are thrilled by killing large sharks and other large marine predators.

The desire to kill knows no bounds in hunting tourism: Wild animals, particularly lions, are even bred and accustomed to people just for being eventually shot dead in an enclosed hunting ground (so-called "canned hunting").

The lion case: In 1980, there were more than 75'000 lions in Africa. Recent estimates reckon that today only 23-39'000 are left. However, trophy hunting for lions significantly increased over the past years, with Tanzania and South Africa being the main hunting destinations. Studies from Tanzania very clearly prove the negative effects of these hunts.

The polar bear case: There are about 25'000 polar bears left and the prospects are dim. Despite imminent threats by climate change, Canada is permitting fur traders and trophy hunters to kill more and more polar bears. In 2013 the bullets killed 740 polar bears. And official hunting quotas are being exceeded. Trophy hunting in Canada accounted for 72.2% of polar bear skull exports and 21.4% of polar bear hide exports from 2005 to 2014.

The shark case: Experts estimate that up to 200 million sharks are killed every year. Most of these animals die as bycatch or are deliberately killed to use their fins or flesh for human consumption. Some shark populations dropped by 80%. Trophy hunting is adding to the decline of large sharks, as they are on top of the list of many trophy fishermen.

Literature (examples)

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