Written evidence submitted by Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting (AAB0030)

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"Big Game Hunting, in terms of conservation, does not work" **– IUCN Report**

"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" **– US Congressional Report**

"The idea that trophy hunting benefits African economies is a myth – or more accurately a lie" **– African conservationist**

"Supporters of big game hunting claim that the activity supports conservation by attaching a value to the preservation of endangered species and bringing revenues to rural areas. But this is nonsense" **– The Times**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The claims that trophy hunting benefits the conservation of species are not supported by the evidence. Trophy hunting does not generate significant funds for conservation or for anti-poaching programmes. Nor does it generate sufficient revenues for local populations to act as an incentive for the preservation of wildlife and their habitats.
2. Instead, trophy hunting has been found to have had considerable negative impacts on conservation. It is removing large numbers of animals from declining populations. It is leaving behind mostly smaller/weaker animals to pass on their genes, making it less likely those species will survive rapid environmental changes such as accelerating climate change. On the other hand, populations of threatened species have improved, sometimes dramatically, when trophy hunting of those species has been halted.
3. Nature tourism has repeatedly been shown to generate far greater revenues for conservation than trophy hunting. It also creates far more, and much better-paying jobs, for local populations - thus acting as a stronger inventive than trophy hunting to support conservation of species and their habitats.
4. No evidence has ever been presented of any negative conservation consequences resulting from the trophy import bans put in place by the governments of Australia, France, the Netherlands or the United States.
5. The precautionary principle of conservation, as defined by Defra, should be applied to UK government policy with regards to trophy hunting, namely: **"The precautionary principle states that where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, a lack of scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation."**[i]

KEY FACTS

1. Elephants, leopards, zebras, lions and primates are among the ten most popular trophy animals shot by British trophy hunters, according to figures from CITES (the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora). Other threatened species shot by UK hunters in recent years include polar bears, giraffes, cheetahs and rhinos.
2. The number of trophies of threatened species entering the UK has increased significantly in recent years. In the 1980s, the figure was an average of 17 a year. Since 2010, the number has averaged 200-300 animals annually.
3. The latest figures from CITES of trophy imports into Britain are for the year 2019 and indicate that UK hunters brought home 234 trophies – and an additional 19 kg of elephant tusks - from 28 protected species. Imports in 2018 were of 109 trophies and an additional 9 kg of elephant tusks.
4. 2019 imports included trophies of leopards, giraffes, bears, monkeys, zebras, honey badgers, hyenas, and sheep. British hunters also shot lions bred in captivity for 'canned' trophy hunting.
5. Other protected species shot by British trophy hunters in recent years include Civet cats, Cougars, Golden jackals, Hippos, North American River otters, Wild cats, and Wolves.

A. THE CONSERVATION IMPACTS OF TROPHY HUNTING

1. Trophy hunting is accentuating the problems facing threatened species. According to a recent US Congressional report: **"Trophy hunting removes a significant number of animals from (…) rapidly declining populations".**[ii]
2. Studies throughout Africa show significant declines in species where trophy hunting occurs. In more than half the areas studied in a report by IUCN scientists**, "the animal populations have declined."**[iii] A study published in Science Daily found that wildlife populations in hunting areas suffered an 83% reduction in numbers.[iv]
3. The 2015 IUCN Red Data analysis on lions reported that trophy hunting was one of the main contributors **"to an astonishing decline of 42% of the continent's total lion population."**[v]
4. Andrew Loveridge, the Oxford University scientist who radio-collared Cecil the lion, found **"trophy hunting had the single most significant effect, with levels of hunting mortality exceeding deaths of lions in conflict with people or killed in wire snares set by poachers. It far outstrips natural levels of mortality."**[vi]
5. Leopard numbers declined the most in areas where trophy hunting was most prevalent.[vii]
6. The impacts of trophy hunting on wildlife have been known by trophy hunters for over a century. Frederick Selous wrote in 1908 that **"since my first arrival in 1871, I had seen game of all kinds gradually decrease and dwindle in numbers to such an extent that I thought that nowhere south of the Great Lakes could there be a corner of Africa left where the wild animals had not been very much thinned out."**[viii]
7. Despite this, Safari Club International – the world's principal association for trophy hunters - offers a growing number of prizes to hunters who shoot the most animals.
8. Over 260 hunters have won SCI's Hunting Achievement Award at 'Gold' level or higher. This is a prize handed to hunters who have killed animals from at least 100 different species. **"To win the highest Safari Club International (SCI) award, known as 'World Hunter of the Year', a hunter must kill more than 300 animals across the globe"**[ix]**.** SCI's 'Global Hunting Award' Diamond level requires the hunter to have hunted in all 6 continents.

B. ARTIFICIAL SELECTION: HOW TROPHY HUNTING IS THREATENING ENDANGERED SPECIES

1. Trophy hunting is having a serious impact on species' gene pools. Scientists fear this makes it less likely they will be able to adapt in time to rapid environmental changes such as climate change.
2. According to evolutionary ecologist Robert Knell: **"'Trophy' animals tend to be the most evolutionary fit and possess the high-quality genes a population of animals need to adapt quickly to a changing environment".**[x]
3. **"With a high genetic diversity, a population of any animal possesses a wider selection of different versions of genes. It is then better able to cope with environmental threats, diseases and other threats… Climate change threatens to trigger new diseases among African wildlife and to bring about more intense droughts and heatwaves."**[xi] The gene pool of the African lion has shrunk by 15% over the last century.
4. Safari Club International's Record Book lists the world's biggest trophies and guides hunters as to where to find the biggest animals. The Book shows that the heads and bodies of lions today are today significantly smaller than they were 30 years ago.

5. The Record Book also shows that the average tusk size of African elephants has declined markedly in the last generation. Elephant trophies are scored by SCI according to the weight of its tusks. Until the late 1990s the minimum score for entry into its Record Book was 100 – representing a combined weight of 100 pounds for the animal's tusks.[xii] However the diminishing size in elephant tusks recently forced SCI to lower the entry bar to 90 lb as trophy hunters found it increasingly difficult to find larger-sized elephants.[xiii]
6. As recently as 1997, **"an elephant with really good ivory (100 pounds, or 45kg, per tusk is the magic number) is generally considered Africa's top hunting trophy".**[xiv] However **"nowadays, hunters say they're excited for anything bigger than 75 pounds… the average tusk size that hunters can expect is closer to 40 or 50 pounds."**[xv]
7. The emergence of 'tuskless' elephants has also left scientists worried: **"Tuskless elephants weaken their chances of survival since they need their tusks – to strip bark from trees and dig for water in dry riverbeds to survive long dry seasons, to defend their young from predators."**[xvi] **In South Africa, 98% of the 174 females in Addo Elephant National Park were reportedly tuskless, whereas in the Kruger National Park - where hunting is prohibited - just 3 % of elephants are tuskless.**[xvii]
8. Accelerating climate change could now leave elephants highly vulnerable, scientists warn. **"When environmental conditions change – a shift in seasonal rainfall or warmer temperatures – the risk of extinction increases dramatically, even with a healthy population of animals apparently unaffected by trophy hunting."**[xviii]
9. Researchers believe that the current situation is now so critical that removing just a few healthy males could be enough to tip a threatened species beyond the point of 'no return'. According to Knell: **"hunting animals that stand out from the crowd because of their impressive horns or lustrous manes could lead to extinction."** His research predicts that **"removing even 5% of high-quality males risks wiping out the entire population for species under stress in a changing world".**
10. The impacts on a species' gene-pool resulting from trophy hunting have been known for over a century. Darwin in 1896 observed that the system of killing only the finest stags on Scottish estates could cause the red deer to degenerate.[xix]

C. DOES TROPHY HUNTING SUPPORT CONSERVATION?

1. A report co-authored by the UN Food & Agriculture Organisation and the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation, a pro-hunting group, found that hunting companies contributed only 3% of their revenue to communities living in hunting areas.[xx] Its report goes on to say that the vast majority of expenditure does not accrue to local people and businesses, but instead to firms, government agencies and individuals located internationally or in national capitals.
2. Andrew Loveridge gives the example of Zimbabwe's Hwange reserve, where he worked and observed Cecil the lion until his death in 2015. **"Hwange's annual conservation budget is around $276 per sq. km. Even at this bargain-basement budget, it cost more than US$1.5 million to protect Cecil until he was 12 years old. A one-off fee of $50,000 to kill him did not remotely offset this cost. Nor did the park, whose budget paid for his protection, benefit from this revenue."**[xxi]
3. Despite industry claims to the contrary, trophy hunting does not deter poaching. The sums invested in anti-poaching operations by the trophy hunting industry have been found to be insignificant. The average spend in Tanzania by trophy hunting operators for anti-poaching efforts was US$0.18 per hectare. By contrast the figure for Kenya's Wildlife Service – where

trophy hunting is banned and there is a thriving nature tourism industry - is US$14 per hectare.[xxii]

4. According to a US Congressional study: **"Rhino poaching has soared during the last decade even as the South African government has encouraged trophy hunting."**[xxiii]

D. THE BENEFITS OF STOPPING TROPHY HUNTING

1. Lions in Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park recovered following a trophy hunting moratorium. According Andrew Loveridge: **"We went from a situation in Hwange in which any male lion leaving the national park was in danger of being indiscriminately shot to one in which adult lions were relatively safe."**
2. Mweetwa et al conducted a 'before and after' study of 386 lions while they were being trophy hunted and when a three-year moratorium on lion hunting was introduced in Zambia.[xxiv] They found **"a large increase in Lion abundance during the hunting moratorium, from 116 lions in 2012 immediately preceding the moratorium to 209 lions in the last year of the moratorium."**

E. TROPHY HUNTING VS NATURE TOURISM

1. In the words of an IUCN report: **"Big game hunting does not effectively contribute to development despite taking up vast areas of land."**[xxv]
2. A large-scale study by economists concluded that **"any suggestion that trophy hunting can play a significant role in economic development at a wider scale is completely implausible."**[xxvi]
3. Loveridge conducted a study which found **"of 624 households in 3 communities close to the park, only 18% of the respondents said they gained any benefit from trophy hunting taking place on community land… Trophy hunting is unlikely to raise living standards significantly. The promise of improved livelihoods through revenues derived from trophy hunting does not appear to be fulfilled, nor is hunting incentivising people to tolerate wild animals."**[xxvii]
4. Studies by the UN World Tourism Organisation indicate that nature tourism is better placed to generate conservation benefits. According to UNEP and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre in Cambridge, lions are presently prospering **"in a number of large and well-managed protected areas"** that have generated **"significant cash revenue through wildlife tourism for park management and local communities, providing a strong incentive for conservation."**[xxviii]
5. Countries that have abandoned trophy hunting have been able to reap significant rewards. According to IUCN, **"tourism in Kenya is now approaching $US1 billion per year... Kenya has therefore clearly benefited financially from stopping hunting."**[xxix]

F. CONCLUSIONS

1. A number of countries have introduced trophy bans. In March 2015, Australia banned lion trophies and curtailed imports of elephants and CITES Appendix I species.[xxx] In November, France did likewise.
2. In April 2016, the Dutch government introduced a ban on all CITES Appendix I species and six Appendix II species including white rhinos, hippos, elephants, lions, and polar bears, banning 200 species in all.[xxxi]
3. Despite claims from trophy hunting supporters that the bans would "imperil" biodiversity, no evidence has ever been produced to suggest this.
4. The majority of scientists dispute claims that trophy hunting promotes conservation. As one of a number of letters written by several groups of scientists in response to such claims states: **"it yields low returns at household levels, with only a fraction of generated income reaching local communities. It also siphons off wildlife from adjacent protected areas, reduces population connectivity and resilience, and can have genetic consequences such as reductions in body, horn, and/or tusk size. Its effects on wildlife demography and behaviour can be profound."** [xxxii]
5. Many conservationists believe that the decline in species such as lions can only be reversed by a mix of measures which include a halt to trophy hunting: **"a complete cessation of all lion hunting would allow populations to stabilise, buying time for other coordinated measures."**[xxxiii] According to lion researcher Peter Lindsay, **"trade restrictions could reduce a direct source of mortality of lions and potentially allow lion populations depleted due to over-hunting to recover in the short-term."**[xxxiv]

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