

Trophy Hunting in Africa: Facts & Evidence

What is trophy hunting?

Trophies of hunted game are taken as a personal record of a successful hunt. In Africa, it is characterised by high fees for ‘trophy’ species and low off-take volume, as part of a programme administered by a government, community-based organisation, NGO, or other legitimate body.

CITES

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) seeks to *regulate* international exports and imports in specimens of wild animals, including hunting trophies, at sustainable levels. CITES has currently 180 Parties, including the EU and its Members States.

Why is CITES important for trophy hunting?

CITES provides a legal basis for trophy hunting to take place, recognising the distinction between strictly governed sustainable use and illegal exploitation of wildlife linked to international organised crime. For example, as a result of the conservation benefits to the black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) from trophy hunting, CITES allows its trophies to be imported and exported, which is the only trade permitted in this species. Where hunting has been prevented, species have declined. For example, in Kenya, because of a ban on hunting (and other ways of utilising wildlife for profit), in place since 1977, the country has lost between 60 and 70 per cent of its large wild animals¹. Consequently, demand can only be met through the illegal market, which primarily relies on the killing of rhinos by poachers for their horns². The 2014 ban on trophy hunting in Botswana suggests that a similar increase in poaching is occurring there³.

Incentive-driven Conservation

For wildlife to survive outside (and even inside) of protected areas in Africa, people must have strong incentives to tolerate, or ideally embrace, wildlife as a land use^{4,5}. Trophy hunting is a major industry in parts of Africa, creating incentives for wildlife conservation over vast areas, which otherwise might be used for alternative and less conservation-friendly land uses⁷. In this context, trophy hunting can bring multiple benefits to wildlife and the communities that live with wildlife⁸. The potential for trophy hunting to generate important conservation incentives, the conditions under which it is likely to do so, and good practice examples in action, have been highlighted in the IUCN SSC Guiding Principles on Trophy Hunting as a Tool for Creating Conservation Incentives⁹.

Habitat Conservation

Trophy hunting gives large areas of land ‘conservation value’. A minimum of 1.3 million km² is used for trophy hunting in sub-Saharan Africa, which exceeds the area encompassed by national parks¹⁰. This makes trophy hunting viable across large areas where other activities are not viable, including areas with little infrastructure, relatively low wildlife densities, and political instability¹¹.

Economic benefits

Conservation costs money. Trophy hunting produces revenue for protected area management and community conservation. This revenue is estimated to be US\$217 million per year in Africa. A simulated ban on trophy hunting in Namibia significantly reduced the number of conservancies that were able to cover their operating costs¹².

Species Conservation

Most of the hunted individuals (e.g. 96% in South Africa in 2012) are often from more common and abundant species¹³. The authors of recent study entitled “Banning Trophy Hunting Will Exacerbate Biodiversity Loss” argue that where political and governance structures are adequate, trophy hunting can help address the ongoing loss of species¹⁴. Trophy hunting can also finance reintroductions, for example, black wildebeest (*Connochaetus gnou*) and southern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) in South Africa.

¹ Norton-Griffiths, M. (2007) Whose wildlife is it anyway? *New Scientist*. Vol. 193: 2596. [Link](#).

² Leader-Williams, N. (1992) *World Trade in Rhino Horn: A Review*. TRAFFIC International, Cambridge. [Link](#).

³ Somerville K. (2015) *No longer at ease: clouds on the horizon for Botswana's conservation success story*. African Arguments. Edition: July 23, 2015. [Link](#).

⁴ Roe, D., Nelson, F. and Sandbrook, C. (2009) *Community management of natural resources in Africa: impacts, experiences and future directions*. IIED, London. [Link](#).

⁵ Child, B.A., Musengezi, J., Parent, G.D. and Child, G.F.T (2012) The economics and institutional economics of wildlife on private land in Africa. *Pastoralism: Research, Policy and Practice*. [DOI](#).

⁶ Naidoo, R., Weaver, C. L., Diggle, R. W., Matongo, G., Stuart-Hill, G., and Thouless, C. (2015) Complementary benefits of tourism and hunting to communal conservancies in Namibia. *Conservation Biology*. [DOI](#).

⁷ Lindsey P.A., Roulet, P.A. and Romanach, S.S. (2007) Economic and conservation significance of the trophy hunting industry in sub-Saharan Africa, *Biological Conservation*. [DOI](#).

⁸ Leader-Williams, N. and Hutton, J.M. (2005). Does extractive use provide opportunities to reduce conflicts between people and wildlife. In: Woodroffe, R., Thirgood, S.J., Rabinowitz, A. (Eds.), *People and Wildlife: Conflict or Coexistence*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. [Link](#).

⁹ IUCN SSC Guiding Principles on Trophy Hunting. [Link](#).

¹⁰ Lindsey P.A., Roulet, P.A. and Romanach, S.S. (2007) Economic and conservation significance of the trophy hunting industry in sub-Saharan Africa, *Biological Conservation*. [DOI](#).

¹¹ Lindsey, P.A., Alexander, R.R., Frank, L.G., Mathieson, A., and Romanach, S.S. (2006) Potential of trophy hunting to create incentives for wildlife conservation in Africa where alternative wildlife-based land uses may not be viable. *Animal Conservation*. [DOI](#).

¹² Naidoo, R., Weaver, C. L., Diggle, R. W., Matongo, G., Stuart-Hill, G., and Thouless, C. (2015). Complementary benefits of tourism and hunting to communal conservancies in Namibia. *Conservation Biology*. [DOI](#).

¹³ Cloete, P.C., Van der Merwe, P. and Saayman, M. (2015) *Profitability of the game ranching industry in South Africa*. Second edition. Pretoria: Caxton Publishers.

¹⁴ Di Minin, E.D., Leader-Williams, N., Bradshaw, C.J.A. (2016) Banning Trophy Hunting Will Exacerbate Biodiversity Loss. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*. [DOI](#).