



Dear Prime Minister,

The world's iconic species and megafauna are disappearing in our lifetimes. Elephants, lions, rhinos, giraffes, leopards and tigers are all threatened with extinction in the wild, their numbers a fraction of what they once were. Decimated by poaching, habitat loss, conflict with humans, and the vast trade in their body parts, these animals are also losing their lives to hunters who gratuitously kill them for 'sport'.

We write today to ask the UK government to help bring an end to this practice and stop granting imports of hunting trophies to the UK, starting with urgent action on protected species.

The number of animals killed by trophy hunters is staggering: in total, 1.7 million trophies were legally traded worldwide between 2004 and 2014, around 200,000 of them from threatened species. Of these, 2,500 were brought home by British hunters, including hundreds of heads, feet, tails, hides, tusks and horns from some of the most endangered species like rhino and elephant. In this period, elephants were being poached in their tens of thousands each year to cater to the global demand for ivory, yet they were still deemed fair game for trophy hunters.

Lions fared the worst, hit with the biggest increase in trophy hunting among the Big Five since 2004: around 13,800 lion trophies were traded over the subsequent decade. Lion numbers plunged 43% between 1993 and 2014. Cecil's death in 2015 prompted the UK government to conduct a study on the impact of trophy hunting, but no further action was taken and lion trophies continued to be imported in the following years.

In South Africa, a huge captive industry breeds lions to be killed by trophy hunters and for trade in their bones and other body parts, mainly to Asia. More than 8,000 lions are caged in these death facilities while only 1,300-1,700 adults survive in the wild. In Africa as a whole, as few as 20,000 wild lions remain, and in some areas have been persecuted and hunted beyond recovery.¹

Giraffe populations have crashed by 40% in the past 30 years. In 2018 two subspecies were listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN list. In the U.S., hunters brought back trophies from 3,563 giraffes between 2006 and 2015.

While the numbers are shocking, the true impact of trophy hunting goes far wider. Besides the loss of an individual animal, its removal can set off a cascade of destructive consequences for its family and social group, its gene pool and the survival of future generations. Trophy hunters fail to grasp these consequences when they talk about 'helping conservation' by removing old and weak individuals. In any event, hunters like to kill the largest and strongest animals to impress their fellow hunters. If a mature male lion is killed, his young cubs will likely be killed by the new pride male, which not only adds to the steady decline in numbers but may remove the strongest and fittest genes. Infanticide, changes in offspring sex ratio, uncontrolled

¹ 'Dereck Joubert sets the record straight about trophy hunting impact on lions and refutes claims of so-called benefits', Africa Geographic Feb 2019. <https://africageographic.com/blog/dereck-joubert-sets-record-straight-about-trophy-hunting-impact-lions-refutes-claims-so-called-benefits/?fbclid=IwAR0Liy7Jv7XbzLKi9NIjhCnEnfjIDKMdtXL8aTU6Dt8TYN43neg-JmN4e0>

aggression in juvenile males are just some of the consequences that have been observed.² Killing an elephant matriarch or mature bull will eliminate huge stores of knowledge and experience that would otherwise be passed on and are vital to elephants' survival and social cohesion. On an invisible level, the trauma and loss can leave an impact for generations.

Hunting practices such as shooting animals in breeding herds or killing a collared animal further deplete numbers – worse, they take out key individuals and undermine conservation measures by disrupting vital research. In two incidents last year, a giant collared bull elephant in Zimbabwe and another collared tusker in South Africa were killed. With only a few super tuskers left, the loss of these repositories of knowledge and genes is nothing short of catastrophic.

Does hunting help conservation or communities?

Hunting proponents argue that trophy hunting is a key part of conservation strategies and that it benefits local communities. However, there is little evidence to support either claim. Only a fraction of hunting fees and associated revenue ever reach local communities or wildlife protection agencies, with the vast majority disappearing into the pockets of foreign hunting outfitters or corrupt officials. Local communities may receive meat from a kill, or find seasonal employment on game farms – piecemeal, transient benefits that reflect a paternalistic and inequitable status quo. However, trophy hunting has done little to address or alleviate endemic problems of poverty, change the distribution of wealth between landowners and workers, or, crucially, engage, train and equip African nationals in the stewardship of their wildlife.

Does hunting contribute to a country's economy?

On a wider scale, trophy hunting's economic contribution is virtually nil, providing only 0.06% of GDP in the countries where it's practised. When viewed in the context of Africa's overall tourism sector, trophy hunting revenues of 1.8% pale in comparison to non-consumptive wildlife tourism, which accounts for 80% of total tourism (UNTWO). Big-game hunting uses vast areas of land without generating corresponding returns; to secure these areas, the land could be better used for non-consumptive wildlife tourism, where practicable.

Ways forward

By every measure, trophy hunting has only detrimental impacts on the already threatened animal populations it targets, is unsustainable and brings little or no meaningful benefits to communities. It is time to end trophy hunting altogether and focus on lasting, sustainable solutions that work for conservation and for communities. Conservancies provide a working model for the joint management of lands by private partnerships and communities, and aim to protect wildlife and generate sustainable income for the community. In Kenya, networks of conservancies based on collaborative strategies for land use are expanding, increasing tourism revenue and bringing economic benefits to communities.³

This is an opportunity for the UK to support such initiatives with international development aid. As MPs noted during the Ivory Bill readings in 2018, there is a clear link between poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability, and the work of the DFID must reflect this. Such aid programmes can work with communities toward solutions that lift people out of poverty and offer them a future where the protection of their natural heritage brings tangible and lasting benefits.

² For example, 'Sustainability of elephant hunting across international borders in southern Africa: A case study of the greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area', Sellier et al. 2013. <https://wildlife.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jwmg.641>

³ 'Strengthening Partnerships in African Conservation: Kenya's Wildlife Conservancies Movement', Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group, Aug. 2018. http://www.abcg.org/news?article_id=136

When it comes to saving the last of Earth's megafauna, it is not only a question of conservation but a moral imperative. Animals that once teemed in their millions have been largely wiped out, part of an anthropocentric extinction event that has claimed 60% of the Earth's fauna in the past 50 years. Today, the last of these animals continue to be relentlessly killed for their body parts to feed the demand for trinkets, bushmeat and fake medicinal cures. But even at this late hour it's not too late to save them and put in place the protections they need to recover and thrive in the wild. Banning the import of hunting trophies will send a clear message to the international community that there is no place for trophy hunting in this day and age.

We hope the British government will act quickly to implement such a ban and will lead the way in urging other countries to do the same. As with the Ivory Bill, the government can expect full and enthusiastic support from the British public for this move.

We look forward to your reply and hope to hear good news from your government soon.

Sincerely,

Denise Dresner
[Action for Elephants UK](#)

Note: The figures cited come from CITES Trade Database, UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Cambridge, UK, and from IUCN.

And the undersigned:

Alexia Abnett
Director, Southern African Fight for Rhinos

Drew Abrahamson
Founder, Captured In Africa Foundation

Jane Alexandra, Louise Ravula
Co-founders, Two Million Tusks

Rosemary Alles
Co-founder, Global March for Elephants and Rhinos

Damian Aspinall
Chairman, The Aspinall Foundation

Claire Bass
Executive Director, Humane Society International UK

Catherine Bearder MEP

Reinhard Behrend
Founder, Rettet den Regenwald e.V. (Rainforest Rescue)

Candice Bergen
Actress & conservationist

Professor David Bilchitz
University of Johannesburg; Director, South African Institute for Advanced Constitutional, Public, Human Rights and International Law

Scott Blais
CEO/Co-founder of Global Sanctuary for Elephants

Karen Botha
Chief Executive, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation

Rob Brandford
Director, David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

Laura Bridgeman
Acting Director, In Defense of Animals (USA)

Gordon Buchanan
Wildlife photographer and conservationist

Carol Buckley
Founder, Elephant Aid International

Reute Butler
President, Friends of Conservation

Nicky Campbell OBE
Broadcaster and journalist

Salisha Chandra
Founding member, Kenyans United Against Poaching – KUAPO Trust

Giles Clark
Director of Conservation, Big Cat Sanctuary and TV Presenter

Jilly Cooper
Author

David Cowdrey
Head of Policy & Campaigns, International Fund for Animal Welfare

Jan Creamer
President, Animal Defenders International (ADI)

Cormac Cullinan
Director, Wild Law Institute (South Africa)

Dr Mahinda Deegalle
Reader in Study of Religions, Philosophies and Ethics

Arend de Haas
Co-founder & Director, African Conservation Foundation

Dr Louise de Waal
Sustainable Tourism Consultant and Creative Writer
Green Girls in Africa

Audrey Delsink
Wildlife Director: HSI-Africa

Heli Dungler
Founder, FOUR PAWS International

Lee Durrell
Honorary Director, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust

Dave Du Toit
Founder, Vervet Monkey Foundation

Stefania Falcon
Founder, Future 4 Wildlife - Africa

Dr Christian Felix
Board Member, Future for Elephants e.V.

Sudarshani Fernando
Sentinels Against Wildlife Crime (SAWC, Sri Lanka)

Eduardo Gonçalves
President, Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting

Jane Goodall, PhD, DBE
Founder - the Jane Goodall Institute & UN Messenger of Peace

Birgit Hampf
Founder, For the Giants (Germany)

Iris Ho
Senior Specialist, Wildlife Programs and Policy, Humane Society International

Sujeewa Jasinghe
Centre for Eco-cultural Studies (CES, Sri Lanka)

Dr Lynn Johnson
Founder & CEO, Nature Needs More

Stanley Johnson
Author and Co-Chairman, Environmentalists for Europe

Simon Jones
Founder and CEO, Helping Rhinos

Max and Josh Kauderer
Founders, Elephant Highway

Alan Knight OBE
CEO, International Animal Rescue

Andrew Knight
Professor of Animal Welfare and Ethics, Founding Director,
Centre for Animal Welfare, University of Winchester

Laurene K. Knowles
Founder, President, Eemotion Foundation

Bella Lack
Born Free Ambassador & member of Ivory Alliance 2024

Rob Laidlaw
Executive Director, Zoocheck Inc

Professor Phyllis Lee
Director of Science, Amboseli Trust for Elephants

Jan Leeming
TV presenter

Dr. Smaragda Louw
Director, Ban Animal Trading
Compassion In Action

Matt Lucas
Comedian and actor

Joanna Lumley
Actress

Dr Niall McCann
Conservation Director, National Park Rescue

Virginia McKenna OBE, Hon Dr Science
Founder, Born Free Foundation

Duncan McNair
CEO, Save the Asian Elephants

Christine Macsween
Co-founder, LionAid

Chris Mercer
Founder, Campaign against Canned Hunting

Marcelle Meredith
Executive Director, National Council of SPCAs South Africa

Fiona Miles
Country Director, Four Paws South Africa

Dr Les Mitchell
Pax Gaia and ICAS Africa

Kate Moore
Programmes Director, Lilongwe Wildlife Trust

Stephen Munro
Managing Director, The Centre for Animal Rehabilitation and Education (C.A.R.E.)

Ingrid E. Newkirk
Founder, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)

Lesley Nicol
Actress and conservationist

Edward Norton
Filmmaker & UN Goodwill Ambassador for Biodiversity

Sue Olsen
Founder, Olsen Animal Trust

Paul Oxtton
Founder/Director, Wild Heart Wildlife Foundation

Michael Palin, KCMG, CBE, FRGS
Writer, actor and broadcaster

Linda Park and Sarah Dyer
Co-founders, Voice4Lions

Asgar Pathan
Executive Director, Care for the Wild, Kenya

Donalea Patman OAM
Founding Director, For the Love of Wildlife Limited

Michele Pickover
Director, EMS Foundation

Ian Redmond OBE
Independent Wildlife Biologist
Co-Founder of the Elefriends campaign (1989) and Ambassador
for the UNEP Convention on Migratory Species

Melanie Reiner
Managing Director, Animals United e.V.

Dan Richardson
Actor and conservationist

Professor Alice Roberts
Biological anthropologist, author and broadcaster

Dr Jill Robinson MBE
Founder & CEO, Animals Asia Foundation

Caroline Ruane
CEO, Naturewatch Foundation
Coordinators of the World Animal Day movement

Dr Adam Rutherford
Geneticist, Author & Broadcaster

Noor Santosian
Co-founder and President, Africa Nomads Conservation

John Sauven
Executive Director, Greenpeace UK

Elizabeth Schrank
Founder and Director, Elephantopia

William Shatner
Actor

Stephen Sibbald
UK Country Director, World Animal Protection

The Rt Revd Dr Alan Smith
Bishop of St Albans

Dr Bool Smuts
Director & Founder, Landmark Foundation

Patsy Stagman
Rhino Conservation Dubai

John Stephenson
CEO, Stop Ivory!

Yvette Taylor
Director, Lawrence Anthony Earth Organization

Janet Thomas
Founder and CEO, Animal Aid Abroad (Australia)

Carl Thornton
Founder & Director, PitTrack K9 Conservation

Thomas Töpfer
Chairman, Rettet die Elefanten Afrikas e.V.

Will Travers
President, Born Free Foundation

Helen Turnbull
CEO, The Cape Leopard Trust

Sarah Uhlemann
Director International Program & Senior Attorney
Center for Biological Diversity

Amy Wilson
Co-founder, Animal Law Reform South Africa

Rory Young
Co-founder, Chengeta Wildlife

Members of Parliament

Heidi Allen (Ind)
South Cambridgeshire

Sir David Amess (Con)
Southend West

Hilary Benn (Lab)
Leeds Central

Clive Betts (Lab)
Sheffield South East

Tom Brake (LibDem)
Carshalton and Wallington

Alan Brown (SNP)
Kilmarnock & Loudon

Rosie Cooper (Lab)
West Lancashire

Sir David Crausby (Lab)
Bolton North East

Jim Cunningham (Lab)
Coventry South

Sir Edward Davey (LibDem)
Kingston & Surbiton

Martyn Day (SNP)
Linlithgow and East Falkirk

Emma Dent Coad (Lab)
Kensington

David Drew (Lab Co-op)
Stroud

Tim Farron (LibDem)
Westmorland and Lonsdale

Jim Fitzpatrick (Lab)
Poplar and Limehouse

Yvonne Fovargue (Lab)
Makerfield

Sir Roger Gale(Con)
North Thanet

Zac Goldsmith (Con)
Richmond Park & North Kingston

Helen Hayes (Lab)
Dulwich and West Norwood

Kelvin Hopkins (Ind)
Luton North

Andrea Jenkyns (Con)
Morley & Outwood

Sir Greg Knight (Con)
East Yorkshire

Peter Kyle (Lab)
Hove

Pauline Latham (Con)
Mid Derbyshire

Emma Little Pengelly (DUP)
Belfast South

Caroline Lucas (Green)
Brighton, Pavilion

Ian Lucas (Lab)
Wrexham

Kerry McCarthy (Lab)
Bristol East

Stuart McDonald (SNP)
Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East

Catherine McKinnell (Lab)
Newcastle upon Tyne North

Rachael Maskell (Lab Co-op)
York Central

Carol Monaghan (SNP)
Glasgow North West

Jessica Morden (Lab)
Newport East

Matthew Pennycook (Lab)
Greenwich and Woolwich

Rebecca Pow (Con)
Taunton Deane

Virendra Sharma (Lab)
Ealing, Southall

Tommy Sheppard (SNP)
Edinburgh East

Angela Smith (Ind)
Penistone and Stocksbridge

Alex Sobel (Lab Co-op)
Leeds North West

John Spellar (Lab)
Warley

Wes Streeting (Lab)
Ilford North

Graham Stringer (Lab)
Blackley and Broughton

Giles Watling (Con)
Clacton

Daniel Zeichner (Lab)
Cambridge

House of Lords

Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

Baroness Young of Old Scone