

CAMPAIGN TO BAN TROPHY HUNTING

Press release

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Michael Gove urged to ban Botswana elephant body parts after President gives trophy hunting go-ahead

Conservationists and public figures have reacted angrily to today's decision by Botswana's government to allow elephant trophy hunting to resume after a 5-year ban which has helped the threatened animal to recover there.

Botswana has approximately 130,000 elephants - one third of the entire population which is estimated at 415,000, twice as many as any other nation, and is seen as crucial to the species' survival.

The country banned trophy hunting in 2014 after concern over falling elephant numbers.

Michael Gove is currently under pressure to review laws which permit British trophy hunters to bring home body parts from wild animals including species under threat of extinction.

Research by the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting has shown that elephants are the favourite 'big game' animal for U.K. trophy hunters. Britain is also one of the world's leading nations for elephant trophy hunting. A report last month by the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting revealed that the U.K. is one of just a dozen nations whose hunters have taken home both 1000 elephant trophies and 1000kg of elephant ivory in recent years.

Eduardo Gonçalves, founder of the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting, said:

"The trophy hunting industry has been lobbying furiously for this barbaric 'sport' to make a comeback in the elephant's heartland. They will be rubbing their hands with glee at today's terrible announcement.

"Unleashing trophy hunters on Botswana's elephants could spell disaster. Trophy hunting and poaching is already outstripping the African elephant's fertility rate. Trophy hunters target the biggest and strongest animals, which removes their genes from the population. We're seeing a marked reduction in average tusk sizes already, which is evidence of a weakened gene pool. Given their migratory patterns, the consequences of this decision could have a major impact on remaining elephant populations.

"Michael Gove should announce that the U.K. will refuse to issue permits to any British trophy hunter wanting to import tusks or other body parts from Botswana's elephants."

Chris Packham said:

“This is a despicable affront to a world waking up to a catastrophic loss of biodiversity and the sixth mass extinction. At a time when we need rapid progress, Botswana is regressing back to the dark ages of slaughter. Hunting Elephants has absolutely no place in the modern world - end of.”

Sir Ranulph Fiennes added:

“This really is a disgraceful decision. Trophy hunting is sheer and utter depravity. President Masisi and Botswana’s government should be ashamed of themselves.

“It is imperative that Michael Gove issues a clear statement saying that on no account will Britain allow the body parts of any elephant killed for fun in Botswana to reach our shores”.

Last July, a number of British public figures including Stephen Fry and Ricky Gervais penned an open letter to Botswana’s President asking him not to approve proposals to lift the ban.

The letter - which was also signed by Bill Bailey, Nicky Campbell, Peter Egan, Sir Ranulph Fiennes, Joanna Lumley, Virginia McKenna, Bill Oddie, Chris Packham, Sara Pascoe and Carol Royle - warned:

“This would be a major global conservation disaster, potentially the worst in living memory, and have tremendously damaging consequences for efforts to conserve endangered fauna and flora everywhere”.

Eduardo Gonçalves, founder of the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting, added:

“Botswana banned trophy hunting because of falling elephant numbers. Thanks to the ban, elephants there recovered.

“Botswana today holds the world’s most important remaining population of African elephants. It is literally the last stronghold for this species that has seen a dramatic decline in overall numbers.

“There are thought to be just 50 ‘Big Tuskers’ remaining. Smaller tusks make it harder for elephants to find water in dry riverbeds during droughts which are likely to be fiercer and more frequent with climate change.

“Killing mature bull elephants actually increases the likelihood of human-wildlife conflict. Researchers have compared it to the lack of a father figure leading to increased juvenile delinquency.”

NOTES:

The full **letter to President Masisi** can be viewed here:

<https://bantrophyhunting.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Botswana-open-letter-graphic.jpg>

The '**Deadly Dozen**' report with data on U.K. trophy hunters and elephant trophies can be viewed here:

<https://bantrophyhunting.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/THE-DEADLY-DOZEN.pdf>