

WWF Policy and Considerations on Trophy Hunting

Trophy hunting is a form of wildlife use that involves paying for a hunting experience that results in a trophy for the hunter. Because of the distinct differences between conservation approaches for terrestrial and marine species, WWF's trophy hunting policy covers only terrestrial species.

Many countries utilize trophy hunting as a wildlife conservation and management tool within the broader framework of sustainable use programmes. When unmanaged or improperly managed, trophy hunting can have serious detrimental impacts on wildlife. Thus, in some circumstances, WWF provides scientific and technical advice when requested by relevant stakeholders (e.g., government and local authorities, local communities and private land owners), to improve the management of such programmes in order to assist them in providing benefits to species populations and/or habitats, and to local communities.

WWF recognizes the diversity of cultural attitudes, opinions, and ethics with regards to trophy hunting. Ultimately, it is up to governments and local communities to determine and implement the strategies that best serve their wildlife and people.

Trophy hunting—where it is based on a clear scientific understanding of species population dynamics and is properly managed—has been proven to be an effective conservation tool in some countries and for certain species, including threatened species.

Trophy hunting can generate substantial economic benefits, community and political support, and have direct benefits for threatened species and biodiversity by:

- Compensating for the costs of living with wildlife that are destructive and/or threaten human safety;
- Offsetting opportunity costs of alternative and more destructive uses of wildlife habitat;
- Generating economic benefits that improve livelihoods and thereby provide incentives to communities, land owners and other users to manage their wildlife sustainably and to choose wildlife conservation as a preferred land use option rather than other uses, such as commercial agriculture;
- Generating revenues for government agencies that improve their ability to manage wildlife;
- Enabling direct vigilance and support by trophy-hunting operations to reduce wildlife poaching and habitat alteration; and
- Engendering philanthropic and political support for biodiversity conservation by hunters who value both the hunting opportunity and the non-monetary values of conservation.

These mechanisms often work in concert with nature tourism, direct payments for biodiversity conservation, and other forms of support for nature conservation. WWF accordingly encourages the use of multiple methods, where possible, to diversify and increase incentives for conservation.

As such, WWF holds the position that trophy hunting is a potential conservation tool that can be considered as part of an overall conservation strategy, including for threatened species (here encompassing the IUCN categories of vulnerable, endangered and critically endangered.) That said, the appropriateness of using trophy hunting to conserve threatened species must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

WWF recognises that the trophy hunting of threatened species could in certain circumstances be at odds with their conservation – whether in terms of perception or in reality. These risks are particularly acute for species that are seen as icons of the natural world and as powerful symbols of the need for concerted conservation action.

It is therefore particularly important that trophy hunting programmes adhere to the minimum conservation standards outlined in this policy in a way that clearly demonstrates benefits for populations of the species in question and for local communities, and that those benefits can be properly documented for public scrutiny.

WWF does not support trophy hunting unless the following conditions are clearly met:

- 1) It provides benefits to the wildlife populations of affected species, their habitats and associated ecosystems;
- 2) It provides economic and other benefits to local communities that incentivise restoration and conservation of wildlife populations, including ensuring that wildlife conservation remains a preferred land use option;
- 3) It operates within a functioning legal framework;
- 4) It is culturally and religiously appropriate within the local context; and
- 5) It meets other minimum conservation standards in this policy.

WWF strictly opposes trophy hunting when:

- 1) There are no reasonable prospects for moving a trophy hunting program towards meeting the minimum conservation standards of this policy as enumerated below;
- 2) It is conducted illegally;
- 3) The revenue does not demonstrably generate benefits for conservation and local communities;
- 4) No effort is made to ensure adherence to commonly accepted ethical norms;
- 5) Wildlife populations are genetically manipulated for trophy size or colour variants;
- 6) Non-indigenous or exotic species are introduced for the specific purpose of trophy hunting;
- 7) Animals are nutritionally supplemented with the intent of enhancing trophy size and quality;
- 8) Animals are moved to a site for the specific purpose of trophy hunting, to supplement unsustainable harvesting levels of resident populations (“put-and-take” practices); or
- 9) It is culturally and religiously inappropriate within local contexts.

In addition, WWF strongly opposes “canned” hunting or the hunting of captive-bred animals, which we believe is unethical and has no conservation benefit.

Minimum conservation standards for trophy hunting programmes

WWF strives to ensure the relevant stakeholders in any trophy hunting programme implement minimum conservation standards, including the following:

- A science-based approach to providing benefits to species and their habitats (i.e., based on sound research and data on the status, population dynamics and habitat requirements of target species populations);
- A specific legal framework in order to regulate all aspects of the trophy hunting programme (e.g., quota-setting, trophy standards, national laws and regulations, professional guide and hunter standards), with adequate administrative and

enforcement capacity at both local and national levels to ensure its proper implementation;

- An administrative framework for a science-based monitoring programme, including regular game counts, assessments of population trends in order to facilitate quota setting and secure sustainability of wildlife use;
- Maximizing economic and social benefits to enhance conservation impacts;
- Strong participation by local communities in decision-making, management and benefit allocation;
- Adherence to accepted ethical norms, including ensuring that methods used are humane;
- Respect for local cultural attitudes and values;
- Weighing the potential benefits to the species and local communities against the risks, erring on the side of precaution; and
- Transparency in record keeping, data management and information sharing in relation to hunting programs and related conservation activities.