



Are proposed (and enacted) import bans on hunting trophies proportionate?



Dr Dan Challender and colleagues

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Background

- The year 2025 marks 10 years since the killing of ‘Cecil’ the lion.
- In this time, several wildlife charities have been advocating for import bans on hunting trophies in multiple countries.
- Stopping trophy hunting is the *raison d’etre* of one organisation: the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting.



Photo: A. Loveridge

Import bans on hunting trophies

- Bans enacted in:
 - **Australia:** African lion trophies.
 - **Belgium:** Imports of Annex A + 12 species on Annex B of WTRs.
 - **Canada:** Import and export of trophies from elephants + rhinos.
 - **Finland:** Imports of Annex A + 6 species on Annex B of WTRs.
 - **Netherlands:** Imports of Annex A + 6 species on Annex B of WTRs.
- Bans proposed/discussed in:
 - **France:** Import and export of species on Annexes A, B and C of WTRs.
 - **Italy:** Import and export of species on CITES App I and II.
 - **Poland:** Parliamentary group discussions on rationale for ban on all hunting trophies.
 - **Spain:** Parl'tary initiative for ban on imports of Annex A + 7 species on Annex B of WTRs.
 - **UK:** Proposals to ban imports of 6233 species on Annexes A and B of the WTRs.
 - **US:** ProTECT Act - modify ESA to prohibit imports of threatened species as trophies.

Methods used in the research

- Two pieces of research (1) UK focused, and (2) global/multi-country focused.
- CITES trade data – which species traded as hunting trophies?
 - Two time periods: (1) 2000-2021/22 and (2) 2015-2021/22.
- IUCN Red List of Threatened Species – threats and benefits from trophy hunting.
 - Is trophy hunting likely a **major threat** contributing to species being of elevated conservation concern, (ii) **likely or possibly** causing localized declines, or (iii) **not a threat**.
 - Are populations of CITES-listed species traded as trophies in 2015-2021/22 increasing, stable, or decreasing in countries where they have been hunted?
 - Does trophy hunting provide, or have the potential to provide, benefits to species and people?
 - Used the IUCN (2012) definition of trophy hunting.

Results - United Kingdom

- Imported 3,494 trophies from 2,549 individual animals in 2000-2021.
- From 73 species/subspecies. 159 trophies/year (116 ind. animals/year).
- Trophy hunting is not a major threat to any CITES-listed species imported to (or exported from) UK as a hunting trophy (2000-2021).
- It is Likely or Possibly a threat to some pop'ns of 8 species – or was in the past - but ≠ elevated conservation concern.
- The impact varies: lions vs. bears.



Number of CITES-listed animal species imported to/exported from the UK (2000-2021) (grey).
 Number of these species imported/exported as hunting trophies (2000-2021) (yellow).
 Number of these species for which trophy hunting is likely or possibly a threat to some populations but does not contribute to the species being of elevated conservation concern (orange).

Results - United Kingdom



Results - United Kingdom

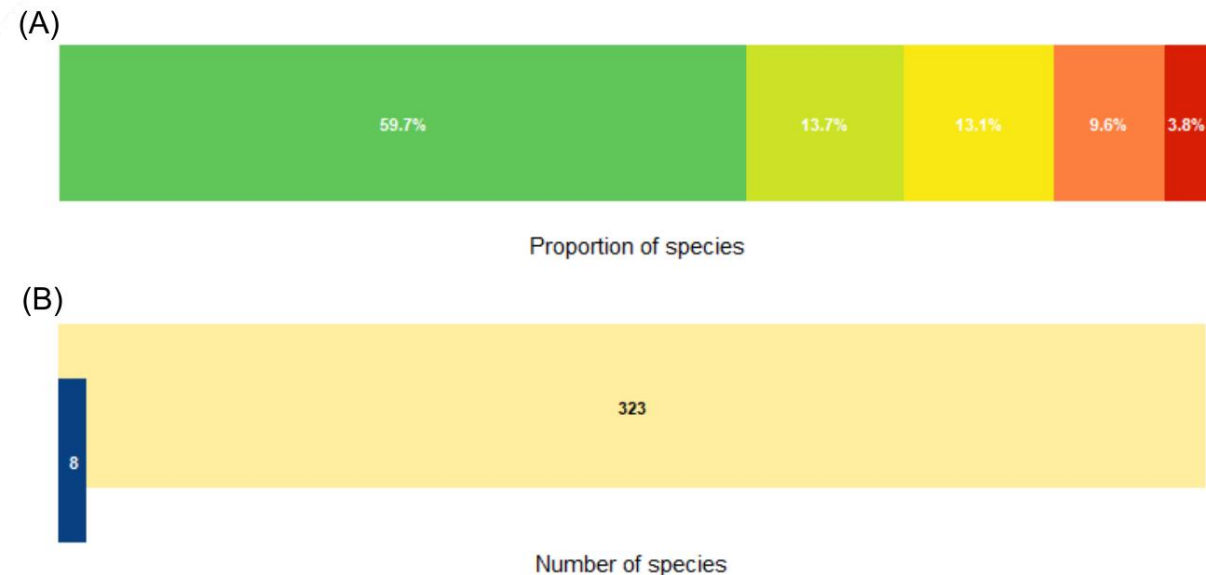


Results - United Kingdom



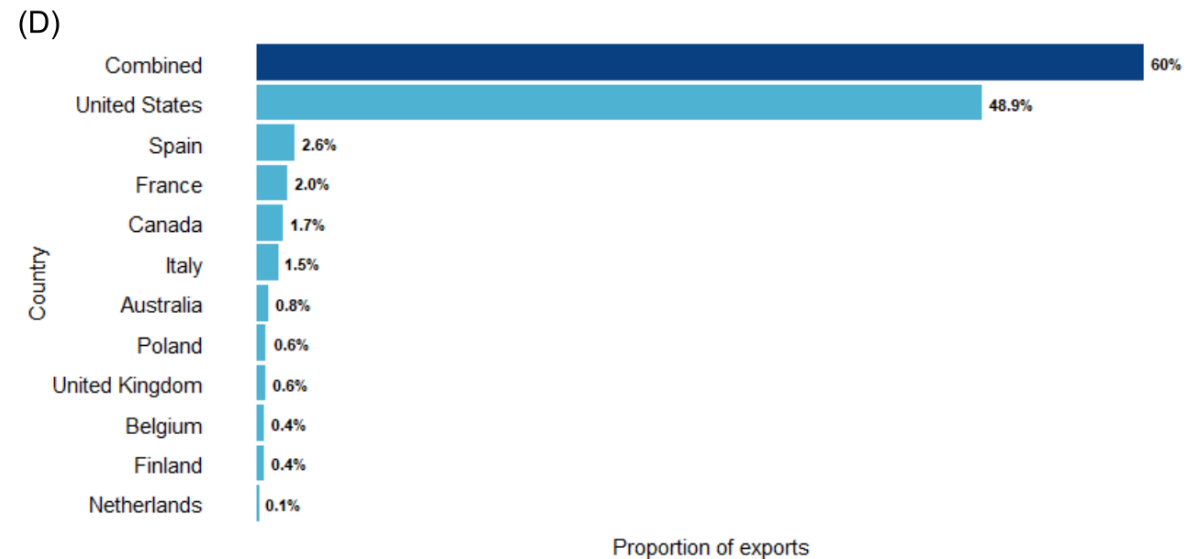
Results – Global/multi-country study

- Since 2000, int'l trade in CITES-listed species as trophies = ~516,000 trophies.
- An estimated 391,000 individual animals, involving 332 species/subspecies.
- Of the 332 species and subspecies:
- Trophy hunting not a major threat to one.
- It is Likely or Possibly a threat to the same 8 species as in the UK study.
- Most species ($n = 230$ or 73%) are not threatened on the Red List.
- 85% ($n = 281$) of the taxa involved exports of <20 individual animals/year.



Results – Global/multi-country study

- Of 179 CITES-listed species and subspecies traded as trophies in 2015-2022:
- 72% of exports were from countries where populations of the hunted species are increasing or abundant.
- 9% are decreasing; 18% unknown.
- E.g., 95% of 2,438 Afr. elephant trophies were from stable/(hyper)abundant pop'ns.
- Countries that have enacted, are or considering bans, account for 60% of trade in trophies from CITES-listed species.







Results – Global/multi-country study

- Enacted/proposed import bans would affect 15% of all trade in trophies from CITES-listed species (2015-2022).
- This includes those that are highest in value and would likely have a disproportionate impact in financial terms with no conservation benefit.
- **Benefits:** actual/potential benefits to species and/or people from trophy hunting of ≥ 20 species (UK study):
- American black bear, argali, blesbok, bighorn sheep, blue sheep, bongo, Cape mountain zebra, Hartmann's mountain zebra, ibex, lion, leopard....



Arguments for import bans are misguided

- Trophy hunting threatens species. 
- No, not based on this evidence!
- Local people don't benefit or benefit enough. 
- Lots of context-specific benefits including cash, jobs, houses, meat, and community projects (e.g., the building medical centres and schools).
- The public want a ban! 
- No. This depends on the survey (and survey design) and on the attributes of the hunt: the species, revenue flows, and who benefits.
- Trophy hunting could be replaced by photo-tourism. 
- No. Trophy hunting covers many areas that are not viable for photo-tourism.

Plausible impacts of import bans

- Reduced revenue to government agencies for conservation and management (e.g., anti-poaching).
- Reduced income for Indigenous peoples and local communities (some living on a few dollars/day).
- Reduction in/loss of benefits: meat, jobs, housing, community projects (e.g., access to clean water).
- Biodiversity as a land use becomes less economically competitive likely leading to land use change.



Implications for public policymaking

- Our analyses suggest that virtually all of the enacted/proposed bans are disproportionate in relation to the threats to species involved.
- They overlook the benefits of trophy hunting.
- Evidence that politicians and the public have been misinformed or intentionally misled.
 - ~75% of MP's statements were factually incorrect in second reading of UK bill in 2022.
- Consultation with exporting countries not taken place in some instances despite Res. Conf. 6.7.



Thank you for listening.



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dan.challender@biology.ox.ac.uk

