

Brief Oral Testimony of Iris Ho
Senior Specialist, Wildlife Programs and Policy
Humane Society International
Before the
House Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife
H.R. 2245 Conserving Ecosystems by Ceasing the Importation of Large Animal Trophies Act

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Good morning, Chairman Huffman and committee members.

My name is Iris Ho representing the Humane Society of the United States, Humane Society International and the Humane Society Legislative Fund. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 2245. My gratitude also goes to Chairman Grijalva for introducing this important legislation.

Four years ago this month Cecil was lured out of Hwange National Park, shot by an American hunter with an arrow, suffered 10 agonizing hours before the hunter finished him off the next day. Adding insult to injury, two years later, Cecil's oldest son Xanda was also killed by a hunter not far from where Cecil was killed. Cecil was a beloved international icon and generated revenues for the local-tourism industry. Both lions were vital components of Oxford University's studies; and let's not forget, both were fathers.

While the trophy hunting industry attempted to quickly draw away from Cecil's killer and the circumstances surrounding it, Cecil and Xanda's high-profile killings epitomize the true nature of the trophy hunting industry – one that encourages killing rare animals, ignores science, tramples on conservation, disregards wildlife laws, and fuels corruption and wildlife trafficking. Hunting quotas are often overshot, not based on science; they lack independent review; age limitations are not enforced; hunting regulations are flouted. Trophy hunters don't kill for

conservation. They kill for bragging rights, for fun, and for obtaining an animal trophy to display their conquest at home.

There is irrefutable scientific evidence that trophy hunting has contributed to substantial declines in lion and leopard populations across Africa that have put these species in danger of extinction. Deliberate removals of animals by trophy hunters have cascading effects by disrupting social cohesion and population stability. It also magnifies human-wildlife conflict. When older bull elephants in bachelor groups or the male head of a lion pride are removed, the young males have shown to become more aggressive, resulting in increased likelihood of infanticide and starvation in lion prides, and attacks from both to livestock, agriculture, and humans.

Animals aren't the only ones who lose in the trophy hunting enterprise. Locals will pay the price if key wildlife disappears. Non-consumptive tourism such as wildlife viewing safaris contribute significantly more sustainable revenue and jobs than trophy hunting. Trophy hunting contributes to 0.03% of the annual GDP of the 8 countries surveyed in 2017, supporting only 7,500 jobs. To put this in perspective, a recent report puts non-consumptive tourism at supporting 24 million jobs, generating \$48 billion expenditures for African protected areas. By killing majestic animals for a one-time fee, trophy hunting cripples current and future tourism industries and harming economic potentials for the local communities.

A few years ago I visited a Chinese official urging his government to consider banning the elephant ivory trade. He listened to me, smiled, and said, "How about you Americans stop hunting elephants first?" I was embarrassed. It really is up to us to stop contributing to the problems we are trying to—and demanding others to—fix.

The U.S. spends billions of dollars annually on foreign aid to help fragile democracies strengthen rule of law and governance, while American trophy hunters bolster an industry notorious for corruption. It is not just the survival of the species at stake, but also our standing as a global leader.

Closer to home, trophy hunting is increasingly disdained by young Africans and Americans alike. A U.S. poll indicates that 80% of respondents oppose importing lion and elephant trophies into the U.S.; 80% of Republican responders opposed. Young Africans share this sentiment, where one once commented, “When foreign hunters leave, Africa is left with empty forests and bones.”

Dear committee members, this is NOT a partisan issue. It is time that we rid the United States of our disgraceful reputation as the world’s most prolific trophy hunters.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering any questions you might have.