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**TROPHY HUNTING in Sweden: Starting August 21<sup>st</sup>, more than 500 brown bears will be killed before their annual hibernation.**

**The European Commission and the international animal protection community must address Sweden's repetitive violation of the Habitats Directive and ban the unethical trophy hunting of large carnivores that is escalating in Sweden.**

**Trophy hunting is increasing** globally and so in Sweden. Hunting is putting the survival of all large predators in serious jeopardy. Despite this, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)<sup>1</sup>, is increasing the quota every year for legal trophy hunting. Since year 2000 nearly 7 000 bears, lynxes, wolves and wolverines have been killed legally. In the first half of 2021 alone, permits have already been issued for killing more than 720 predators in Sweden.

**The cruel and unethical trophy hunting used by the Swedish EPA** to regulate the populations, is against the aim and purpose of the EU Species and Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). **Sweden is blatantly abusing these strict laws for protection** by customizing its own national loop holes and practicing uninhibited interpretation of the exception rules for limited hunting to entertain the trophy hunting industry.

**The Swedish bear population** currently numbers less than 2 900 individuals.

This month more than 500 bears are being targeted for trophy hunting in seven Swedish counties, although 107 bears including females and cubs, have already been killed this spring in aerial helicopter hunts. Bears waking up from hibernation too close to reindeers, are condemned in advance by the reindeer owners. Despite that the reindeer industry is receiving important state subsidies to accept the predators. The war-like, and normally illegal methods like trailing with scoters, 24/24 hour hunting and shooting from helicopters, are sanctioned by the County Administrative Board. Even persecuting females with cubs this way as well as females with cubs in their dens. These brutal practices against predators are increasing every year in northern Sweden. A region where illegal hunting is common, some with extremely sadistic methods as revealed in the hunting scandal of Norrbotten in 2017.<sup>2</sup> The torture of lynxes in traps, strangulations of lynxes and bears in metal wires in trees, dog provocation on trapped and wounded animals. This proves that legalized trophy hunting does not create respect for animals nor reduce conflicts.

**The legalized trophy hunting has instead corrupted Swedish hunting management** to the extent that the Swedish EPA actively undermines the purpose of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) by granting export permits for all trophies to facilitate and attract foreign hunters.

**Lethal disturbance** in late summer and autumn is critical for all bears when they must prepare for a healthy hibernation in October. Generally, bears get most of their calories from plants and berries and they must accumulate enough fat in order to survive the long Scandinavian hibernation of 5-7 months. This vital feeding period is called "hyperphagia" and they have to gain substantial weight every day, being active eating for up to 12-20 hours per day. For female bears it is an even more urgent pressure, as they give birth in their dens during hibernation and the mothers must be able to feed their cubs on fat-rich milk.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.swedishepa.se](http://www.swedishepa.se)

<sup>2</sup> [www.svt.se>norrbotten-huvudmannen-doms-till-fangelse-i-jaktharvan](http://www.svt.se/norrbotten-huvudmannen-doms-till-fangelse-i-jaktharvan)

**Precautionary principles is never applied by the government to protect wild animals in Sweden.** The devastating forest fires in 2018, during the bear's hyperphagia period, did not stop the trophy hunting of 300 bears. Two animal protection organizations; Jaktkritikerna (The Hunting Critics)<sup>3</sup> and Djurens Rätt<sup>4</sup>, appealed to the Director General of the Swedish EPA and to the local governors to stop the bear hunt. The appeal was ignored by informing that "they were on vacation".

**The severity of human disturbance on carnivores**, which may have many other unforeseen consequences on a vulnerable species like the brown bear during this vital and hectic feeding period, is completely ignored in the hunting permits from the County Administrative Boards and never questioned by the highest responsible authority, the Swedish EPA.

**Hunting decisions for brown bears are based on fictitious growth rates** that are biologically unrealistic; bears are especially vulnerable due to social and reproductive factors such as infanticide, reproductive suppression, slow population growth and long periods of cub dependency. Hunting during the hyperphagia period creates a type of disturbance and stress that differs from other human activities, because it takes place over larger and more inaccessible areas where the presence of people and hunting dogs is otherwise uncommon.<sup>5</sup> **As bears are sensitive to stress and can die from overheating, the Swedish method of using two big dogs hunt each bear, is extremely cruel.** The collateral damage on all bears and cubs, even if not killed, is openly ignored by hunting managers. Each year a big amount of small bears and yearlings, weighing less than a small child, are killed "accidentally" in the competitive trophy hunting frenzy. Hunters are never held responsible.

**In 2000, only 56 bears could be hunted and today, in 2021 the number has increased to 501 bears** to be slaughtered. The county of Jämtland (also location for the hunting lodge of famous footballer and hunter Zlatan Ibrahimovic), notorious for discriminating and killing predators, is leading this year's killing games by issuing hunting permits covering the whole territory, this time to kill 200 bears in one season!<sup>6</sup>

**The cruel practice of bear baiting** to lure them out for close-range shooting and dog hunting is used in Sweden. This unethical method is also used to follow them live in advance on installed cameras as the baiting starts already mid-July. Hunters pay large sums of money and can hence make their pick of trophy bears in advance. They then use semiautomatic weapons and aggressive predator dogs. Bears are quite commonly wounded by hunters, and then reported "lost" despite being seriously injured.

**"Bear-hunting is the most popular form of big-game hunting on the planet"**<sup>7</sup>, writes bantrophy-hunting-campaigner and journalist Eduardo Gonçalves in his book *Killing Game, The Extinction industry*. "Safari Club International (SCI) is one of a number of hunting organizations that gives prizes to hunters who kill the most animals for "sport". Nota bene that SCI's *Record Book* include species like brown bears, lynxes and wolves; all of which can be hunted in Sweden.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.jaktkritikerna.se](http://www.jaktkritikerna.se)

<sup>4</sup> [www.djurensratt.se](http://www.djurensratt.se)

<sup>5</sup> [www.elsevier.com/do-bears-know-they-are-being-hunted?](http://www.elsevier.com/do-bears-know-they-are-being-hunted?)

<sup>6</sup> [www.lansstyrelsen.se/jamland/beslut-om-licensjakt-efter-bjorn](http://www.lansstyrelsen.se/jamland/beslut-om-licensjakt-efter-bjorn)

<sup>7</sup> [www.bantrophyhunting.org/Killing Game, The Extinction Industry, E. Gonçalves, 2020](http://www.bantrophyhunting.org/Killing_Game,_The_Extinction_Industry,_E._Goncalves,_2020)

**The majority of European citizens surveyed are being against trophy hunting** according to the recent report *Trophy Hunting by the Numbers: The European Union's role in global trophy hunting*, from Humane Society International Europe.<sup>8</sup> The report further expose the other of side of Sweden's treachery; namely Sweden being at the top of the list of the EU-countries importing and exporting CITES listed species between 2014 and 2018, contributing to the increase in import numbers to the EU by almost 40 %.

**Revealing enough**; in 2017 the proposal<sup>9</sup> to ban the import of lion trophies from canned lion hunts was refused by the parliament. Most swedes have little idea of the domestic large-scale trophy hunting occurring within their own borders, but are shocked when celebrities like Zlatan Ibrahimovic and politicians like the former Minister of Finance Anders Borg are caught importing their hunting trophies from African countries.<sup>10</sup>

**Science and ethics tell us trophy hunting is wrong**, states Professor Marc Bekoff.<sup>11</sup> So how can Sweden escalate this? Wild animals are not even protected against cruelty as they are not included in the animal protection laws. Sweden, the origin of "Ombudsman", has no ombudsman or commissioner for animals, neither wild or tame.

**Still, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency promotes the perfidy of killing large carnivores for sport and recreation** and is repeatedly issuing licenses on an extended scale to the diabolic practice of trophy hunting in Sweden.

**NGO's legal appeals against trophy hunting are repeatedly ignored in court.**

**WWF-Sweden remains silent** about legal trophy hunting, despite having received a legacy worth more than 10 million euro, from one single testator in 2019, explicitly to protect the Swedish predators. The irony is that his estate consisted of forests in counties where the bears, lynxes, wolves and wolverines are being the most persecuted.<sup>12</sup> What would he have done, had he known that the properties were going to be sold i.a. to the compromised Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. Or that funding of a controversial project in Namibia which involves trophy hunting, also came from WWF national offices in Europe - among others Sweden.<sup>13</sup>

*"Trophy hunting is utterly cruel, utterly unnecessary and utterly disastrous from a conservation perspective. It inflicts pain and suffering on animals for no other reason than to boast of some ephemeral 'prowess'. There is no material human need met by it; it is a hobby, pure and simple, and a deeply wrong one at that."* – Jane Godall

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Former diplomat in the Swedish Foreign Service

<sup>8</sup> [www.hsi-europe.org/Trophy Hunting by the Numbers: The European Union's role in global trophy hunting](http://www.hsi-europe.org/Trophy_Hunting_by_the_Numbers:_The_European_Union's_role_in_global_trophy_hunting), Import and Export of CITES listed species between 2014 and 2018

<sup>9</sup> Motion till riksdagen 2017/18:3007/Jakt på lejon/S. Arkelsten

<sup>10</sup> [www.expressen.se/kandisar-skiuter-och-importerar](http://www.expressen.se/kandisar-skiuter-och-importerar) hotade arter

<sup>11</sup> [www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/animal-emotions/201808/hunting-grizzlies-for-fun-is-unscientific](http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/animal-emotions/201808/hunting-grizzlies-for-fun-is-unscientific)

<sup>12</sup> <https://jamtlandstidning.se/WWF-saljer-skogsmark-i-lanet-for-mangmiljonbelopp>

<sup>13</sup> Killing Game, The Extinction industry/Ch. 17 Does WWF support trophy hunting?/ Eduardo Gonçalves