

## **Boone And Crockett Club On Trophies**

The Boone and Crockett Club, the oldest hunter-conservationist organization in North America, has released a position statement and video on big-game trophies and hunting on 18 January 2017.

There are several aspects to public hunting and its connection to wildlife and habitat conservation that are not well understood. Trophy hunting, however, is the subject that has generated the most misunderstanding and misperceptions. It has become a polarizing topic, both internationally and in North America. As a result, the conservation benefits of hunting in general and the ethics of some hunters individually have come under attack. The Club felt it was time to bring forward the historical and scientific context of big-game trophies and offer the Club's views on the subject.

The Boone and Crockett Club does not believe trophy hunting is a particular form of hunting, but rather the selective pursuit of an older, more mature animal that tends to be more wary, elusive, and more challenging to hunt. When hunters choose to selectively hunt in fair chase, they are engaging in wildlife conservation at its core. It is a choice that should be respected and admired, not criticized.

The Club has encouraged selective hunting for over a century for a variety of reasons, which are further delineated in its position statement. Originally, selective hunting was a means of helping decimated game populations to recover in the first half of the 20th century. With most species now recovered - some areas to an overabundance - the existence of mature animals today is proof that modern wildlife management policies, which include public hunting, are successful and do not harm the sustainability of game populations.

"The arguments being put forth that trophy hunting is unacceptable are value-based and have no scientific relevance," said Club President Ben B. Hollingsworth, Jr. "They also ignore the historical linkage between hunting, wildlife recovery, conservation and management, and the future welfare of game species. Most of the criticisms about hunting big-game trophies appear more concerned with the actions of individuals than for the welfare of wildlife."

The new position statement expresses the Club's belief that the term "trophy hunting" is ambiguous, subjective, and can therefore be easily exploited to advance anti-hunter rhetoric. Hollingsworth explained, "Inserting the word 'trophy' in front of the word 'hunting' is a disingenuous tactic intended to sway the public against all hunting. In the Club's view, selective hunting is not something that can be singled out and legislated away without threatening public hunting as a whole, as well as our proven system of wildlife conservation. The Club strongly encourages those who do not hunt to ignore misleading rhetoric. It also reminds sportsmen to uphold the highest ethical standards whenever they hunt and apply peer pressure on others to do the same. In doing so, everyone who cares about wildlife will continue to support wildlife conservation."