



## Trophy Discussion Guide

Directors: Shaul Schwarz & Christina Clusiau  
Year: 2017  
Time: 108 min

**You might know these directors from:**  
This is the debut feature film from this directorial team.

Shaul Schwarz previously directed:  
Aida's Secrets (2016)  
Narco Cultura (2013)

### FILM SUMMARY

What does the term “trophy” mean to you? To some, it is a memento of a completed challenge to be cherished and displayed in one’s home with great pride. For others, the term conjures thoughts of carcasses and the remains of great beasts whose lives were ended without practical or moral reason. With immense respect, patience, and above all an unbiased eye, Shaul Schwarz and Christina Clusiau’s beautiful and horrifying TROPHY attempts to grapple with this argument and how it relates to conservation.

Few, if any, would disagree that Africa’s majestic animals are worth saving from extinction, but the numbers don’t lie. Where there were once over 100,000 black rhinos on the plains of Africa, there are now less than 3,000 on the entire continent. There were once millions of elephants roaming all over Africa, but now just 1 percent of that population remains. Even major national parks and wildlife reserves across Africa have lost up to 60 percent of their large wild animals over the course of the last forty years. What can humans do to save these animals from going extinct?

People like American recreational hunter Philip Glass firmly believe that his financial investments in hunting these wild animals—specifically the Big Five (lion, leopard, buffalo, elephant, and rhinoceros)—are the key via conservation efforts to keep their numbers stable. At the same time, upstarts like John Hume are pouring money into farming efforts that seek to utilize these great animals for financial gains without actually having to purposefully kill any animals. Both of these views on the issue come with substantial moral and ethical questions. With great political delicacy and award-worthy technical merit, TROPHY ventures into the wild seeking answers. If you spot any, please be sure to alert your guide.

## FILM THEMES

With impressively balanced composure, TROPHY wrestles with the conundrum of how humanity should attempt to save Africa's most celebrated creatures from extinction. Where are the fine lines of conservation actually drawn?

### WILDLIFE ON THE BRINK

There is no question that humans are having a unfathomably negative impact on wildlife around the globe. In 2011, The Guardian [reported](#) that "Major national parks and wildlife reserves across Africa lost up to 60% of their lions, giraffes, buffalo and other large wild animals between 1970 and 2005...and found the steepest falls in west Africa, where up to 85% of wildlife had been lost in the last 35 years, and in east Africa, where nearly half of all wildlife has disappeared." As TROPHY depicts, the numbers have not gotten any better in the last few years.

### HUNTING AS (SO-CALLED) SPORT

In a brief sojourn, we're taken back to the olden days where international colonization brought the European tradition of sport hunting, a leisure activity partaken in only by the upper class, to nations where no such thing previously existed. Most famously, Teddy Roosevelt traveled the world with rifles in hand, a safari hat atop his head, and posed for countless photos with slain animals still bleeding at his feet. Now for many, it's one's heritage and pride to call oneself a hunter. Rather than killing for the sake of feeding one's family or community, animals killed for sport are generally only executed in the pursuit of a trophy, whether that be a stuffed head to mount in one's living room, or something as seemingly trivial as a picture as proof of a kill.

### MARKETING THE BIG FIVE

Throughout TROPHY, we follow American recreational hunter Philip Glass as he pursues his dream of killing one of each of the [Big Five](#)—buffalo (trophy worth: \$12,500 to \$17,000), lion (trophy worth: \$8,500 to \$50,000), leopard (trophy worth: \$15,000 to \$35,000), elephant (trophy worth: \$25,000 to \$60,000), and white rhinoceros (trophy worth: \$125,000 and up)—Africa's most sought after trophy animals. Marketed by the [\\$23 billion American hunting industry](#) as the hard to attain holy grail of trophy hunting, the concept of the huntable Big Five is little more than a corporate invention.

### FARMING AND/OR HUNTING AS CONSERVATION

There are two sides of the same coin when it comes to big game conservation. One group believes that the financial backing and corporate interests of the hunting industry are enough to keep wild animals like elephants and rhinoceroses from going extinct, while on the other side of the fence we have people like John Hume who believe that farming these animals is the only foreseeable future for ensuring their continued existence on this planet. Both arguments come with substantial ethical questions. The question remains: what exactly is conservation?

**“Give me one animal that has gone extinct while farmers were breeding it and making money off of it – there’s not one.”**

John Hume

**“To many different people, trophies are quite different – one man’s rubbish is another man’s trophy.”**

Shaul Schwarz



## FILM FACTS:

- Directed by Shaul Schwarz and co-directed by Christina Clusiau, TROPHY debuted at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. The film went on to screen at other major festivals around the globe, including SXSW, CPH:DOX, Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, Moscow International Film Festival, and more.
- According to [The International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List](#), the statuses (ranging on a seven step scale from Least Concern to Extinct) of the [Big Five](#) animals hunted for sport are as such: Lions: Vulnerable; Elephants: Vulnerable; White Rhinoceroses: Near threatened; Leopard: Near threatened; and Buffalo: Least concern.
- The international trade of rhinoceros horn has been banned since 1977 among the now 182 member countries of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), the body that governs international wildlife trade. On April 5, 2017 it was decided by South Africa's Constitutional Court that domestic trade of rhino horn would again be [legalized](#), following the lawsuit against the the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs (DEA) by rhino farmer John Hume and safari operator Johan Kruger.
- "South Africa is home to 70 percent of the world's 29,500 rhinos, which are in the midst of a poaching crisis...Demand for horns, which are made of the same material as fingernails, comes mainly from Vietnam and China, where they're worked into valuable carvings and are erroneously used as a cure-all in traditional medicine." National Geographic [notes](#) that 1,054 rhinos were poached in South Africa during 2016 despite efforts to stop it.
- World Wide Fund for Nature [reports](#) that "over the last 100 years, African elephant populations have declined from 3-5 million to 470,000-690,000 and Asian elephant populations have declined from 100,000 to between 35,000 and 50,000. Habitat loss and conflict with people are among the biggest threats to their continued survival."
- According to a comprehensive [analysis](#) by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) filed in 2016, "As many as 1.7 million hunting trophies may have been traded between nations between 2004 and 2014, with at least 200,000 of that being made up of categories of species, also known as taxa, that are considered threatened."

## WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. **Donate** to conservation agencies like [Save the Rhino International](#) or the [African Wildlife Foundation](#), which both work to ensure wildlife and wild lands thrive in modern Africa.
2. **Teach** young people about issues like animal welfare and conservation while encouraging them to be vocal about protecting animals and the environment. PETA has a wonderful guide to get started called [Teaching Kids Compassion For Animals](#).
3. **Take action** locally by keeping up with the [Animal Welfare Institute's Action eAlerts](#), which guide you to current animal welfare issues and ways to contact your state and federal legislators.
4. **Visit** and support national parks and [ethical animal sanctuaries](#), where wildlife roams free and remains protected from hunters, poachers, and unscrupulous practices.

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**Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.**