

ALL THE WORLD IS



NOT YOUR STAGE

An essay on celebrities calling for hunting and hunting trophy import bans

By Hank's Voice

Recently, apparently, there must've been an unpublicized casting call for people who are best suited to play the role of misinformed, misguided, self-styled influencers who know very little to nothing about the realities of conservation, are willing to purport outright lies about hunting's role in it, and to feel that because they are famous, they can wield ignorance to convince the public and governments to make bad decisions that will negatively affect nature's future.



One hundred celebrities responded to this surreptitious casting call, via a signed letter that, mysteriously, no one can find a copy of. How intriguingly melodramatic! Such a tough audition too, as judging by their social media testimonials, it would be virtually impossible to choose who is the most qualified due to their lack of qualifications in wildlife biology, conservation, hunting programs, and rural community involvement. Their ignorance is universally of the highest level, so, as with most celebrity matters, the choice would be based upon popularity not pragmatism.

Yet there they are, actors, comedians, supermodels, singers, explorers, and politicians, all lined up, doing what they do best, rehearsing and memorizing lines, entertaining and manipulating audiences, acting out fictitious roles, all the time desperately, narcissistically, grappling for our attention so that they may be the center of attention, no matter how detached from reality their role-playing may be.

Jostling for power and fame, no matter whom or what they must trample to achieve it. And, because they have adoring fans, who are blinded by such “love”, they feel smug that everyone will embrace their illusions and feel that they are more qualified to make decisions about conservation policies than the hunting outfitters, professional hunters, biologists, government wildlife departments, and rural community leaders who have firsthand experience with these matters, and whose lives and livelihoods are inextricably intertwined with the sustainable use of wildlife.

Professionals are typically the people whom one refers to when they need help with any specific, technical matters. Most people see a doctor when they have medical concerns, a mechanic when their vehicle needs repaired, a lawyer when they are faced with legal issues, a banker for their financial affairs, etc. Qualified, experienced professionals. So why would anyone revert to consulting with celebrities, who have no professional, academic, or firsthand experience and qualifications with wildlife, when they wish to address any wildlife concerns?



Yet celebrities campaign for how they feel about hunting, and what they think are the true threats to wildlife, not even getting the vernacular or basic principles correct. And not only are their devoted followers supposed to believe them, but governments are expected to act upon what they say. A current case in point is happening in the UK, where the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting has been publicly proclaiming that the British government should ban all trophy hunting imports. First there, then they shall expand and “save” all animals, worldwide, by crusading globally.

Some major reasons they give is that trophy hunting disgusts them, is immoral, is done for ego and prizes, and is bad for nature. Hmm. Perhaps some introspection is in order. Acting websites even suggest that introspection can make one a better actor. But, since they only seem willing to judge others, let’s just do some inspection of them, for them.

Hunting disgusts them, and they consider it immoral. There is no shortage of things that celebrities do that many other people find disgusting and immoral, ranging from the terribly trivial, like faux pas fashion choices (maybe even wearing the wrong color designer belt or shoes probably made from leather) on up to their grossly overpaid careers that permit them to lead opulently lavish, wasteful lifestyles. How absolutely charming that people whose net worth runs in the tens to hundreds of millions of dollars callously feel that they should dictate policies that will economically impact countries and industries where those involved will never make a small fraction of those amounts, even in the best years. Countries where basic education, medical, nutritional and other life needs are often not even close to being fully met by most of the populace,



Celebrities say trophy hunting is done for prizes and egos. One definition of the word ego is to have a distorted self-regard, what psychologist Carl Jung referred to as, “inflated consciousness....hypnotized by itself.” Say no more. Not only is that glaringly apparent in most celebrities, but quick internet searches pull up all sorts of lists and articles on what celebrities have the biggest egos. “Trophy” egos, perhaps?

And prizes....ah yes! Definitely not limited in appeal to some fraction of trophy hunters. Celebrities love their red carpets, award shows, and prizes too, but on much grander scales, and televised, of course, so that everyone may see just how truly adored and special they are. Even just the swag bags alone that are handed out to award nominees, like the ones at the Emmy and Oscar awards, are each valued in the \$140,000 to \$205,000 USD range. What’s in them? Oh just “essentials “, like \$600 body oils to reduce stress, \$400 anti-aging skincare creams, \$15,000 liposuction treatments, \$50,000 passes for all-inclusive stays at ultra-posh resorts, and gold-infused extra virgin olive oil. You know, stuff that most people, particularly those who live in rural areas in developing countries dependent, in part, on hunting tourism, can totally relate to. And will pick up the next time they’re in town.

What are celebrities awarded for? Making films that illustrate fictitious worlds, films that blow up cars, promote violence, destroy buildings, and have enormous carbon footprints. It’s estimated that a Hollywood film production, with a budget of \$50 million USD, on average, can produce 4000 metric tonnes of CO2. Equivalent to running 108 cars for a year. All that travel, transportation, products, material deliveries, on-site generators, pyrotechnic scenes, etc. certainly adds up, with little respect

yet those who are employed by hunting outfitters can make a decent living where there are few other employment opportunities. People grateful to make even a modest living who will potentially be negatively affected by celebrities who buy multiple vacation homes, each costing in the millions. It’s difficult to see this arrogant, “let them eat cake” celebrity attitude as anything but disgusting and immoral.



or concern for its effects on the environment. And, a single soundstage can lead to 4000 hectares of deforestation, due to the use of lauan, a lightweight plywood often unsustainably harvested from rainforests. For some perspective, that's equivalent to about 9000 sports fields. Plus the cinemas that movie fans go to generate lots of waste via food and service items, and they require electricity, water usage, human waste removal, and rodent control. But, by all means, shooting single digit percentages of certain wildlife species (renewable, valuable natural resources) in sustainable manners that, in turn, funds habitat protection for immeasurable biodiversity is definitely something we should all campaign against, according to celebrities.



The amount of money celebrities make is staggering. A sampling of the net worth of some of the signatories on this secret letter are as follows: Judi Dench - 45 million, Ricky Gervais - 140 million, Kate Moss - 70 million, Michael Caine - 13 million, Michael Palin - 25 million, Annie Lennox – 60 million. Piers Morgan has a salary of 2 million and a net worth of 20 million. Ed Sheeran's Divide Tour grossed 776 million in just over two years. Yet they implore people to support the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting by buying ugly t-shirts and sweatshirts for \$25 to \$50 USD. Because not enough money from the hunting industry, according to their personal views, gets to rural communities, rich people pay lots of money to travel all over the world to kill these animals, and hunting outfitters are getting filthy rich. Hmm. Interesting. Yet one can scour this persecutory website full of misinformation and not find one scrap of evidence that this campaign contributes financially to conservation or rural communities in any way.

Send in the clowns. Not to make us laugh, but to point out just how foolish these celebrities are being.

Proper conservation is not a dress rehearsal. Habitat must be maintained in order to maintain wildlife, and legal, regulated hunting programs can and do accomplish this. There is rarely a Scene 1 Take 2 when habitat is lost because of irresponsible decisions like import or hunting bans that devalue wildlife and disincentivize hunting programs there. Other land uses, not compatible with wildlife, quickly take these wildlands over. But, honestly, what do celebrities care?



Once they've gotten the attention they want, they move on to the next cause célèbre. Except this time it could truly be the devastating loss of wildlife. Who would want to gain fame from that?

Cameo appearances have no place in conservation matters. And although science fiction is a popular movie genre, fictionalized science has no place in conservation.

There are good reasons why the term derealization is used for what it's called when you feel like you're in a movie, alienated from or unfamiliar with your surroundings. Celebrities make some incredibly good money living and working in worlds detached from reality. And then feel entitled to manipulate and devastate those who only play autobiographical roles in real life situations.

The time is overdue for the celebrities who are masquerading as conservationists to exit stage left, in an orderly and uneventful departure, as the term means, so as not to detract or distract. Their misguided, malicious, misinformed campaigns are doing just that – distracting from the true challenges nature faces and detracting from the efforts that many dedicated, qualified people are directly involved in, trying to ensure nature has a sustainable future, against many challenges to which celebrities need not add.

Celebrities often have much fame and notoriety lingering long after their careers and lives end. Wildlife species do too, as we all still talk about those that have gone extinct from mistakes we've made. Let's not make more mistakes. No one should want to tell future generations that we no longer have certain animals in the wild because we mistakenly let the opinions of unqualified people influence decisions that resulted in wildlife and wildlands no longer having enough value to remain on the landscape. Typecast these celebrities as they truly are - anti-conservationists.

Hank's Voice in collaboration with APHA

