The Washington Post

Animalia

The Trump sons go hunting again. Will more trophy photos follow?

By Kerry Lauerman August 6, 2016

Mia Farrow
@MiaFarrow

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What went so wrong with Trump sons that they could kill this beautiful creature

6:44 AM - 13 May 2015

1,388 1,150

In the heat of the campaign – and during a particularly brutal week for their

father — Donald Trump's two sons suddenly disappeared. Donald Jr. and Eric, according to reports, left the country on a hunting trip.

Beyond that, curiously little is known. Bloomberg Politics reported that the trip was a fundraiser for a foundation run by family members of Tyrone Woods, a Navy SEAL slain in the Benghazi, Libya, attack. Various political reporters heard that they fled to the Yukon, a favorite hunting location of Donald Jr. He then posted an Instagram photo of himself with his son, which showed them in Canada for a "Father son trip" — but in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

The campaign didn't respond to requests for more information. Their media silence could very well be just mean they're on a needed vacation. But it could also be a way to dodge the uncomfortable subject of the Trump sons' well-documented love of hunting — a subject that stalks them on social media like one of the very large predators they have killed for sport.

It all started in 2012, when photos of the sons with big-game trophies leaked to an animal rights group, and then exploded on social media. Gothamist reported that the photos showed the men posing with "a dead elephant, kudu, civet cat and waterbuck while on a big game safari in Zimbabwe." In one shot, Gothamist said, "Donald Jr. proudly holds a dead elephant tail in one hand and a knife in the other. In another, the brothers are seen standing beside a 12'8″ crocodile hanging from a noose off a tree."

It was a time when big-game hunting became a fresh cause for social media shaming (see GoDaddy CEO Bob Parsons, and his notorious elephant video).

The photos have regularly resurfaced ever since.

xoxo, Jane
@PoodleMama1966

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The GOP. Here's Donald Trump Jr. holding the tail of an elephant (party symbol) that he killed. #TrumpSacrifices

9:55 PM - 30 Jul 2016

195 79

Just this week, Samantha Bee used one to jab Eric Trump for his comments about workplace sexual harassment:

Full Frontal
@FullFrontalSamB

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"She was asking for it. A strong cheetah would never allow itself to be subjected to getting shot." -@EricTrump

9:14 AM - 2 Aug 2016

7,338 11,201

When Trump supporters pointed out that the animal was actually a leopard, it just fueled a series of follow-up tweets from Bee, including:

Full Frontal @FullFrontalSamB 3 Aug

Eric Trump hurt this innocent duck and we are sad about it!
pic.twitter.com/Fw0e1NItCz

Full Frontal
@FullFrontalSamB

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He shooted a shark :(pic.twitter.com/RPKHiV8Tnu

10:44 AM - 3 Aug 2016

308 845

During the primaries, the Trumps tried to use it to their advantage. They outfitted journalists in camo and took them on pheasant hunts in Iowa, where the sport remains popular.

That possibly humanized the Trumps, making them seem less Cartier, more Carhartt.

Still, a November Marist poll showed that Americans are nearly split when it comes to hunting animals for sport — 56 percent said they oppose it — and they are particularly against big-game hunting. Eighty-six percent of respondents said they disapprove of it, and six out of 10 said they believe it should be illegal.

Donald Jr. spoke in exhaustive detail about his love of hunting for the enthusiast site Bowsite earlier in the year. He explained that he learned to hunt as a boy from his maternal grandfather during summers spent in Czechoslovakia. He said he has been an active hunter throughout his life, that his preferred form is bowhunting, and that he frequently employs it during the weekends to hunt whitetail deer in New York.

“Almost every weekend I’m out doing something,” he said.

He talked of hunting not just as a pastime, but as an important influence on his character. “I owe the outdoors way too much to try to do the usual apologize and hide thing,” Trump Jr. said. “It’s kept me out of a lot of other trouble I probably would’ve gotten into.”

What might the Trumps be hunting in Canada? “Caribou, moose, muskox, bison, wolves, polar bears, grizzly bears, black bears and Dall’s sheep” are all available to hunt, with the proper licenses.

But so far, they’re keeping quiet about it. Possibly, in our post-Cecil the Lion era, they sense it as too big of a political weakness.

If it is, then Hillary Clinton has already picked up on the scent. When animal rights protesters interrupted a speech Thursday, she didn’t seem to miss a step.

“Apparently, these people are here to protest Trump,” she said. “Because Trump and his kids have killed a lot of animals, so thank you for making that point.”

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Although Trump has long colorfully criticized

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The president's sons are expected to attend the launch of the Trump International Golf Club, the first Trump-branded golf resort in the Arab world. Trump's policies have outraged many in the region, but in the United Arab Emirates — a key U.S. ally — such rancor has been invisible.

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