

Something's not right in the heads of trophy 'hunters'

Devin Rokyta/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

The killing of Cecil the lion in Africa by an American trophy hunter has sparked a great deal of outrage and debate in recent weeks.

On one side you have a handful of "hunters" and those who claim trophy hunting is vital to conserving threatened species. On the other side, you have pretty much everyone else, who can see the practice for what it is - barbaric and disgusting.

The 13-year-old lion was illegally killed July 1 on the edge of a Zimbabwe reserve. Two African men, an outfitter and a landowner, have been arrested by Zimbabwe officials, who are also seeking extradition of the American hunter, Walter Palmer, a dentist from Minnesota who paid \$55,000 to shoot the lion with a crossbow. Palmer has maintained he did not know anything illegal was taking place during the hunt.

According to CNN, Palmer pleaded guilty in 2008 to making false statements knowingly to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service after he illegally killed a black bear in Wisconsin.

For his crime, he was sentenced to one year of probation and ordered to pay a fine of nearly \$3,000. If extradited to Africa, Palmer faces a much stiffer punishment in Zimbabwe, where the illegal killing of a lion is punishable by a mandatory fine of \$20,000 and up to 10 years in prison.

Everyone understands killing for subsistence, but it is impossible to justify killing for sport, as was the case with Cecil.

Let's be honest, trophy hunting is about killing a living animal, usually one that is considered rare, for its size, fur or rack. It's not about acquiring the meat to feed a hungry family, as is the case for most responsible hunters, and it certainly isn't about conservation.

If it were about conservation, we'd recommend these "hunters" donate money for preservation efforts, buy a fancy camera and shoot the animals with something a little less lethal. The "hunter" would still get to experience the thrill of the hunt and return with a trophy, while an animal wouldn't needlessly be killed for entertainment purposes.

The simple fact is there something wrong with a person who feels the need to travel to the other side of the globe to kill an endangered animal - like an elephant, rhino or lion - for nothing more than sport.