

Conservation is not this ‘morality play’

A journalist’s selective ‘exposé’ of big-game hunters has brought them death threats and online abuse, in what amounts to a trial by media

In June, journalist Nada Farhoud cast professional hunter Robin Hurt as a villain who had “normalised killing animals for fun”, while disregarding his decades of support for community-based conservation and his statement that regulated hunting remains one of the best ways to fund the conservation of wildlife.

Ms Farhoud is a champion of wildlife. As the environment editor of the *Daily Mirror*, she has carved out a reputation with a stream of anti-hunting exposés designed to provoke outrage. Whether featuring lions, elephants or leopards, each of these headlines painted a picture of brutality. But beneath this theatre lies a different story. One where the truth is obscured, science is ignored and real conservation efforts are undermined.

Ms Farhoud’s work represents a classic case of neocolonial eco-moralism. She writes about African wildlife as if Africa were a passive landscape needing salvation from the West. Her reporting rarely includes the voices of the very people who live with wildlife and manage its risks every day. These experiences are replaced by a simplified narrative; the hunter is always the villain, the animal always the victim.

Clickbait

This is not conservation journalism. It is a performance that is crafted for readers who will never encounter the complexity of managing lions outside Kruger nor elephants near farmland in Namibia. It is clickbait conservation, designed to provoke, not to inform.

In 2023, Ms Farhoud targeted Syed Rizwan, a hunter who actively funds conservation work. Her article published identifying information about his home and business. This led to a barrage of online abuse, including death threats to his family. Mr Rizwan

filed a formal complaint with the UK’s press regulator IPSO, citing privacy violations and initiating a copyright claim. He also had to relocate his family for safety.

This was not responsible journalism but trial by media; a reckless exposé that endangered a conservationist by inviting harassment through personal targeting rather than offering a critique of his work.

Ms Farhoud continued this pattern in 2025 when she went “undercover”



Professional hunter Robin Hurt is cast as a ‘villain’, with his conservation work ignored

at The Stalking Show. Her resulting article portrayed hunting providers as cruel profiteers. Yet it offered no serious engagement with the scientific nor ethical complexities of sustainable use. The portrayal was one-dimensional and designed to shock rather than inform.

Even more troubling is the inconsistency of the platform Ms Farhoud writes for. The *Daily Mirror* has historically profited

from industries that subject animals to genuine suffering. The paper sponsored the English Greyhound Derby from 1983 until 1990, during which time the event was branded the *Daily Mirror* Greyhound Derby in certain years, including 1987. This fact is often omitted when the paper claims moral authority on animal welfare.

Selective

Ms Farhoud’s indignation about animal suffering appears highly selective. The *Mirror* condemned hunting as barbaric while benefiting from gambling-fuelled sports that killed hundreds of dogs annually.

Yet the greatest irony lies not in the coverage but in the consequences. Trophy hunting underpins conservation financing across millions of hectares in Africa. It supports anti-poaching patrols, community infrastructure, scientific research and habitat protection. Without that income, wildlife does not flourish and neither do the communities. Forests are cleared for farming. Elephants are shot by desperate farmers. Lions are speared in retaliation. Critics such as Ms Farhoud rarely offer alternatives to this reality.

Conservation is not a morality play. It is a daily negotiation between humans and wildlife, often in regions where livelihoods depend on pragmatic choices rather than distant ideals. That negotiation belongs to those who live with the consequences, not those who write about them just for clicks.

Let this be clear: the greatest threat to wildlife today is not the person carrying the rifle. It is the person holding the pen and misinforming the masses. 🐾

➔ *Eugène Lapointe is president of the IWMC World Conservation Trust*