

Lessons From A Deceitful Anti-Hunting Interview

by Michael G. Sabbeth, Esq.

Late last year I followed a link on a Dallas Safari Club (DSC) Facebook page to an audio file of an interview conducted by Emma Barnett, BBC's Emma Barnett Show, June 17, 2019, of Danene van der Westhuyzen. Danene and her husband, Gyspert, own Aru Safaris, one of the most prestigious outfitters in Namibia. (link to interview: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=403191380289594>) I was compelled to listen to the recording because Danene is a friend. Full disclosure: Danene hosted me when I gave two presentations in November 2016 at the Namibia Professional Hunters Association (NAPHA) annual conference in Windhoek.

Listening many times to the interview, I knew that instructive lessons for our hunting community could be distilled. Emma Barnett's (Barnett) interview was deceitful, dishonest and condescending. Based on my analysis of Barnett's tactics, I crafted a presentation which Danene and I gave at the 2020 DSC Convention.

Presented here is an analysis of three of Barnett's interview abuses: mischaracterizing Danene's arguments; focusing on the trivial while ignoring what is important and sandbagging Danene. Link to the full text of our DSC presentation: <https://www.thehonorahunter.com/index.php/blog/246-dallas-safari-club-deconstructing-the-interview-of-danene-van-der-westhuyzen> . [DSC Presentation](#) .

That Seems Romantic!

Barnett began the interview by asking how Danene became involved in hunting. Danene explained that she had been hunting since childhood. Barnett then asked whether Danene's clients shoot for food or to put a trophy on the wall. This inquiry should have been a red flag that an anti-hunting attack was imminent. Danene answered: "They (the hunters) don't just sit in a vehicle and look at animals and say they are pretty. The hunter becomes part of nature and nature is not beautiful all the time. Nature is death." Danene continued: "It's all about the experience. It's about seeing the sun rise." Danene's layered response emphasized that nature can be cruel and that hunters were conservationists.

Barnett responded: "It sounds terribly romantic but take the romance out" and then asserted alleged facts about declining lion and giraffe populations. Note Barnett's deceitful tactic. Danene spoke about nature not being beautiful all the time and nature being about death. Ignoring Danene's vivid descriptions, Barnett willfully mischaracterized Danene's answer as "romantic." Barnett's tactic was to ignore the substance of Danene's answer and mock a minor part—beautiful sunsets. Barnett trivialized and demeaned Danene's assertions.

Also please note Barnett's immoral use of the logical fallacy of false choices—that hunters kill for food (good) or for a trophy on the wall (immoral). Barnett's moral defect is ignoring other available choices or outcomes. Barnett unethically focused on the hunter's *intentions* rather than the *consequences* of hunting. The hunter could have acted morally in many instances, such as by giving the meat to other people and or the hunter's fees could have supported anti-poaching programs.

That's A Bold Claim!

As the interview continued, Barnett accused trophy hunters of destroying animal populations. Barnett asked why not get rid of trophy hunting and boost photo tourism. Danene emphatically denied Barnett's premises. Danene asserted that trophy hunting takes animals that are past their prime and is done pursuant to strict quotas which represent less than one percent of the existing populations. Danene then stated: "There is no way that trophy hunting could ever have a negative influence on a species... no way."

Rather, Danene continued, human encroachment, human-wildlife conflicts and poaching are the threats to wildlife. Danene then explained that wildlife will survive and thrive only when they have value, and that hunting gives them value. To support her claim, Danene gave examples where wildlife such as elephants, lions and rhinos destroy villages and produce. Then treated as mere pests, they are destroyed. Wildlife is saved when they have value, Danene repeated.

Emma said she understood the concept "but that is a very bold claim to say that trophy hunting can never have a negative impact on a species." Danene replied fervently: "It is not bold. It's a fact. It's a proven fact."

Barnett again employed the deceitful rhetorical tactic of ignoring Danene's factual claims about the minimalist number of hunting permits issued and her foundational economic argument that wildlife will survive only if given value. Barnett did offer a mild acknowledgement of Danene's points by saying, "I understand your concepts, and thank you for sharing them." But Barnett had no interest in deepening her understanding by further discussing these points.

Ignoring the substance of Danene's arguments, Barnett moved on to challenging Danene on a thoroughly trivial point: whether trophy hunting could *ever* have a negative impact on animals. Whether Danene's statement was accurate—a negative impact could never exist—or was mildly hyperbolic is irrelevant. Her statement was insignificant in the larger context that animals are saved when they have value. Barnett avoided meaningful issues and constructed her attacked based on meaningless issues. Note how this tactic, among others, illustrates Barnett's lack of seriousness, integrity and professional ethics.

Barnett's Greatest Deceit

Approaching the end of the interview, Barnett exhibited her greatest deceit and subterfuge. Refusing to move on from the economic principles Danene expressed, and fixated on Danene's meaningless assertion that trophy hunting can never have a negative impact on the wildlife populations, Barnett said to Danene, rather self-servingly: "I know we have not spoken before, but regular listeners of this program know I am a big fan of trying to understand whether or not something is a fact, so let me

welcome to the program doctor Mark Jones, head of policy at the international animal charity Born Free.

A few salient points must be made here. Danene was not informed that Mark Jones or anyone else was going to participate in the interview. Danene was not informed that any person was going to challenge Danene's knowledge or credibility. To induce Danene to agree to the interview, Barnett represented to Danene that the topic of the interview would be women and hunting. Other than the first few moments of the interview, that topic was not addressed. Mark Jones is a spokesperson for a virulent anti-hunting organization. Jones' introductory comments were a cascade of anti-hunting attacks.

Barnett began: "So, Mark, who has been listening, welcome. Is that a fact that trophy hunting can never have a negative impact on wildlife?" Mark Jones does not answer the question but continued his verbal anti-hunting fusillade. "Let me say first of all that Born Free opposes the hunting or killing of any animal for sport or for fun. We oppose any hunting for trophies or for any kind of sport and I think many people are shocked to hear that trophy hunters continue to pay to kill wild animals so they can stick their heads or skins on a wall or in a cabinet." He attempted to equate hunting with colonialism. Read the full text of the presentation.

Danene responded to Jones' comments like a striking cobra. "I am first and foremost aghast by your comments. It is easy to say something is not factual. There are other studies, unbiased studies, very good studies, which prove the opposite." But Barnett's treachery had an impact.

Here is my point. Barnett sought to establish her moral and intellectual stature by smugly asserting that she is "a big fan of trying to understand whether or not something is a fact." Evidently her fandom for facts did not include giving credence to Danene's assertion of facts. Contrary to her self-congratulatory prelude, Barnett chose as her fountain for truth an arrogant self-righteous anti-hunter.

As if in a glaring klieg light, we see that Barnett was not seeking truth. She demeaned and trivialized truth. Barnett was advancing a pre-conceived bias against hunting and used, unannounced, a rabid anti-hunting ringer to support her bias. Moreover, Danene could not defend against Jones' challenges to her assertions because Barnett intentionally did not disclose that Jones would be part of the interview and did not disclose that Jones would ambush her to undermine her credibility. Recall that Danene was induced into this interview under the pretext of discussing women and hunting, not of matters like the minutiae of hunting quotas.

The rhetorical trickery and outright deceit of this interview give luminous insight into the moral defects in Barnett's professionalism, at least regarding her performance in this interview. The hunting community can learn much from studying this interview. Hunters should be prepared for interviews, train themselves to instantly identify dishonest tactics and plan appropriate responses. Remember, you have the right and power to say: "I won't be treated this way! This interview is over!"

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