

Moderated Debate on Contentious Conservation Issue

Overview: Biodiversity/wildlife conservation lies at the nexus of myriad issues spanning socioeconomics and human poverty, Indigenous and local community rights, asymmetries in GDP & wealth within and among nations, climate change, pollution, international trade, human wildlife conflict, industrial agriculture, tourism, and emerging zoonotic and human diseases. We will not pretend that this is a complete list. Potential solutions to these problems come neither easily nor without controversy – and no plan of action will please all stakeholders. We have chosen 7 focal ‘propositions’ related to conservation for debate – most of these directly relevant to tropical conservation. These are not clean, simple, dichotomous issues with clear morally right and wrong answers. You will have to discuss with your group mates how you wish to approach them. You must also ensure that both sides of the argument, pro and con, are well covered even if you all agree that one is more supportable than the other. Worth 20% of your final grade.

For each topic, we have provided a few key articles, but you are, of course, permitted (or rather strongly encouraged) to add more – especially ones relevant to Kenya or East Africa. You should also seek to be creative in the arguments that you make pro and con the proposition, and be engaging in your presentation. The debates will be done without visual aids but can include your written notes or scripts. We ask that each of you assume a persona – by which we mean, we ask that each of you think of a possible suite of credentials and jobs that you have held or currently hold that make you an expert on the topic at hand. At the end of this assignment we have included an example of a ‘persona’ that I adopted last year as I had to step into the role of moderator for one student group.

We have assigned students to groups and these are indicated below. All but one group (Group A) there are three members. For each group there are three roles: moderator, proponent for the proposition, opponent of the proposition. Within each group, you can decide which role each member will play. In advance of the trip, you should discuss among yourselves who will be pro and who will be con (email, Zoom, whatever works for you). For Group A, we will have something slightly different. We will have two proponents and two opponents, and one of us will assume the moderator role. We will adjust the times accordingly.

You should work together to find material on your assigned topic, but thereafter there will be some independent work that each of you must do. However, we would like you to work together on this as these debate topics sometimes tap into some emotional issues and we wish to ensure that the person taking the ‘less popular’ side has lots of room to shine (and it can be fun to play devil’s advocate).

Please note that we will also poll everyone before the debate and afterward to see if opinions have shifted.

Format:

- Introduction – approx. 2-3 minutes. Set up the debate with an overview of the issue (moderator)
- Opening arguments – approx. 2 minutes per participant (proponent and opponent)
- Point-counterpoint debate – approx. 10 minutes (proponent and opponent, with moderation)
- Class discussion (all) – approx. 10 minutes
- Summation (moderator) – approx. 4-5 minutes

Team A. Bethlehem, Celina, Vikas & Elizabeth

Proposition: *Ex situ* strategies (zoos, seed banks, botanical gardens) can be a positive force for conservation of significant components of extant biodiversity.

Key references: Tabley et al. 2015. Amphibians and conservation breeding programmes: do all threatened amphibians belong on the ark? *Biodivers Conserv.* 24: 2625-2646. Cannon & Kua. 2017. Botanic gardens should lead the way to create a “Garden Earth” in the Anthropocene *Plant Diversity.* 39: 331-337. Stokes. 2018. Why conserving species in the wild still matters. *Biodivers Conserv* 27: 1539–1544. Useful website: https://www.bgci.org/resources/bgs_in_conservation/

Team B. Renée, Hannah & Rosstin

Proposition: Trophy hunting is a useful tool for providing monies to enhance local conservation and the well-being of local communities?

Key references: Lindsey et al. 2007. Trophy hunting and conservation in Africa: Problems and one potential solution. *Cons. Biol.* 21(3): 880-883. Creel et al. 2016. Assessing the sustainability of African lion trophy hunting, with recommendations for policy. *Ecol. Appl.* 26: 2347-2357. Adhikari et al. 2021. Community-based trophy hunting programs secure biodiversity and livelihoods: Learnings from Asia’s high mountain communities and landscapes. *Env. Challenges.* 4: 100175. Useful on-line article: <http://www.conservationmagazine.org/2014/01/can-trophy-hunting-reconciled-conservation/>

Team C. Lauren, Mikaela & Olin

Proposition: International programs like ‘debt for nature swaps’ are powerful and effective instruments to enhance conservation in developing nations.

Key references: Cassimon et al. 2011. The pitfalls and potential of debt-for-nature swaps: A US-Indonesian case study. *Global. Env. Change* 21: 93-102. Macekura. 2016. Crisis and Opportunity: Environmental NGOs, Debt-for-Nature Swaps, and the Rise of 'People-Centred' Conservation. *Environment and History*. 22: 49-73. Useful article: <https://www.worldwildlife.org/press-releases/central-africa-s-first-debt-for-nature-swap-invests-25-million-for-tropical-forest-conservation-in-cameroon>

Team D. Isabella, Megan & Mica Mae

Proposition: Multi-nation treaties and conventions are effective tools in diminishing illegal trade in wildlife and wild plants and enhancing conservation

Key references: Dickinson. 2012. International conservation treaties, poverty and development. *Natural Resource Perspectives Series*. Overseas Development Institute 74. pp. 1-4. Njogu. 2012. Wildlife management and conservation in view of international conventions. *The George Wright Forum*. 29: 109–117. Trouwborst et al. 2017. International wildlife law: Understanding and enhancing its role in conservation. *BioScience* 67: 784-790 Some useful web sites: <https://www.cbd.int/brc> ; <https://www.wcs.org/our-work/solutions/international-policy>

Team E. Cassidy, Adam & Isobel

Proposition: Folk medicine is of little demonstrated value for human health, but a leading cause of biodiversity loss

Key references: Nóbrega Alves. 2008. Reptiles used in traditional folk medicine: conservation implications. *Biodiv Conserv* 17: 2037–2049. Chassagne. 2017. Role of ethnopharmacologists in the conservation of endangered animal species. *J. Ethnopharmacol*. 207: 268-270. Alves and Rosa. 2005. Why study the use of animal products in traditional medicines? *J Ethnobiol Ethnomed*. 1: 5. Useful popular article: <http://time.com/4578166/traditional-chinese-medicine-tcm-conservation-animals-tiger-pangolin/>

An important caveat here –we are not talking about medicines that are developed locally using native plants and animals, but rather products imported – often illegally – from afar that people within importing nations will never have seen.

Team F. Kearsten, Katie & Sarah

Proposition: Empowering women (education, economically) will have a disproportionate effect on conservation

Note: No one, I would hope, would be so silly as to say excluding women from educational and economic opportunities is the opposing view here – rather the opposing view should be that it is better to dedicate funding to all rather than to a particular segment of society. Thus, it is a ‘bang for limit buck’ proposition here and where we can have biggest effect for limited moneys.

Key references: <https://www.undp.org/blog/cultivating-resilience-womens-leadership-biodiversity-conservation> ; <https://www.iied.org/role-influence-impact-women-biodiversity-conservation> ; <https://www.unep-wcmc.org/en/news/empowering-rural-women-and-girls-as-a-solution-to-environmental-sustainability-and-food-security> ; Abdulsalam, M. et al. 2024. Women empowerment in environmental conservation. In: Aransiola, S.A., Babaniyi, B.R., Aransiola, A.B., Maddela, N.R. (eds) Prospects for Soil Regeneration and Its Impact on Environmental Protection . Earth and Environmental Sciences Library. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-53270-2_16

Team G. Victoria, Alise & Brianna

Proposition: National parks and reserves are the most effective ways to conserve a country’s natural heritage and to meet a nation’s obligations under the new Kunming-Montreal Agreement for conserving 30% of lands and waters by 2030.

Key references: Nelson, J.G. 1987. National parks and protected areas, national conservation strategies and sustainable development. *Geoforum* 18: 291-319; Alemu, M.M. 2016. Environmental role of national parks. *J Sustain. Develop.* 9(1) DOI:10.5539/jsd.v9n1p1 ; <https://parks.canada.ca/nature/science/conservation> ; <https://www.iucn.org/story/202307/inspiring-places-why-are-national-parks-so-important-people-kenya>

Example of a moderator persona:

My name is Dr. Stephen Lougheed. It is my great pleasure to moderate this debate today. First, a bit on my background. I am currently president and CEO of the World Resources Institute, a global NGO that seeks science and data-based solutions to resource use and to better the future of human populations around the world. Prior to WRI, I was a Senior VP of the Americas at Conservation International. I did a B.Sc. in Biology at University of Texas at Austin, graduating summa cum laude in 1990, and my Ph.D. at the Harvard School of the Environment focusing on the importance of country-specific endangered species acts in the Americas in affecting change for biodiversity. With my wonderful collaborators and students, I have published over 200 books, book chapters and peer-reviewed articles on biodiversity conservation, the climate crisis, international wildlife trade, and environmental policy.