

## **Economic exploitation of wildlife - Lazy conservation (Non-academic version)**

Many of the highly biodiverse countries suffer from several deficiencies of their environmental authorities, related to Neoliberal reduction of states (see XXX). Scarce economic resources, lack of professional staff, and high levels of corruption hinder efforts for efficient environmental law enforcement and crime prevention.

As an answer to the high levels of wildlife trafficking crimes, many of these states follow the capitalist logic by opening new options for legal exploitation of wild animals. The two more common justifications for this are A) to make local people “love” nature by giving it economic value, B) Saturate the market with legally harvested wildlife so people will not have to buy from illegal sources. Trophy hunting and commerce of endangered species from breeding centers and hunting concessions are some of the most common projects resulting from this logic.

The problem with this logic is that in reality, the absence of efficient authorities, absence of proper scientific basis and research into illegal activities, high levels of corruption and inequalities in dividing the profits, make these projects counterproductive; the sacrifice of animals legally exploited is added to the ones illegally hunted and or traded and permits are often used to launder illegal trade. Also the idea of saturating the market doesn't work in reality, as it confuses the public, people see that others legally keep animals and purchase the same species for lower price from traffickers. It also confuses the authorities who are rarely experts in wildlife identification and legalize wildlife bought illegally. The African Grey parrot is a great example, until recently it was the most traded species in the world, many countries had official breeding programs for this species selling them internationally. Theoretically, this should have functioned, there were so many legal African Greys breeding and sold, that it should have reduced the pressure on wild populations and saved the species. But obviously, this didn't work, new studies showed that the species was heavily affected by the trade and the numbers were going down quickly [1, 2]. Therefore, in 2017/16 the species was moved to the Annex 1 in CITES to stop its legal trade, which will drastically reduce its illegal trade, and hopefully will save the species before it is too late.

We call this kind of initiative “Lazy Conservation”. Countries do not make sufficient efforts to improve their environmental authorities, they don't invest in investigation or offer creative solution for wildlife traffic, but they enthusiastically adopt philosophies of privatizing nature and let market forces control the future of wildlife, hoping things will get better by themselves. This is a critical time for the world fauna, environmental degradation including deforestation and wildlife trafficking are on the rise globally and many species are on the verge of extinction. More and more countries bend to neoliberal pressures and allow and promote many schemes of wildlife exploitation. The efficiency of the authorities in most countries is not improving and in some areas is even worsening. The authorities are able to confiscate only a tiny fraction of smuggled wildlife . If the countries want to protect its fauna, it should stop relying on miraculous, superficial and irrational solutions and urgently

put serious efforts into restructuring their wildlife authorities to allow effective and sincere law enforcement. If countries want their citizens to stop participating in trafficking fauna, they must teach them stewardship and compassion, not schemes to buy them legally.

1. Poole, C.M. and C.R. Shepherd, *Shades of grey: the legal trade in CITES-listed birds in Singapore, notably the globally threatened African grey parrot *Psittacus erithacus**. *Oryx*, 2017. **51**(3): p. 411-417.
2. Annorbah, N.N., N.J. Collar, and S.J. Marsden, *Trade and habitat change virtually eliminate the Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus* from Ghana*. *Ibis*, 2016. **158**(1): p. 82-91.

### Questions

In general, does the text gives a good overview of the problems related to the Economic exploitation of wildlife, or do you think there are better ways to cover this issue?

Does this need more background info?

Is it easy and interesting to read? Does the English needs editing? Can you suggest edits?

Are parts of the text irrelevant, repetitive, or should be rephrased or deleted?

Are there any relevant issues that are not covered by this text? Would you be able to add them or just list them to be added by us?

Can you suggest a person or an institution that might have the right experience and perspective to rewrite this text? Are you happy to forward this text to them?

This is the non-academic version of this issue. Are you interested in writing the shorter, non-academic version? If not, could you suggest what parts are the most relevant to be kept in the shorter version?

Do you know of any academic work related to the subject that can be added to the academic version of the text?

Any comment?