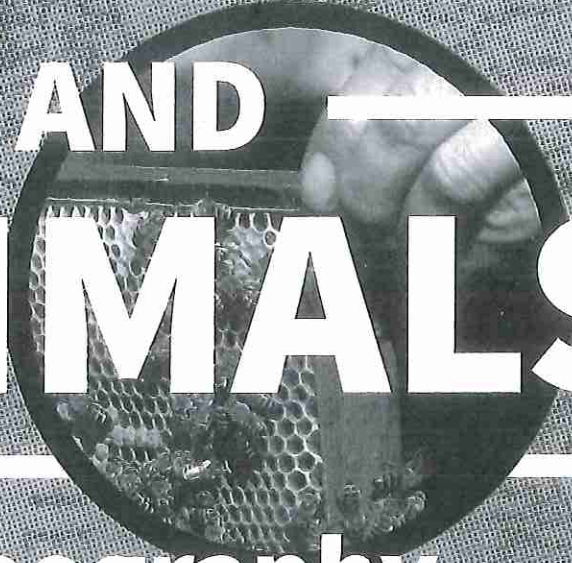
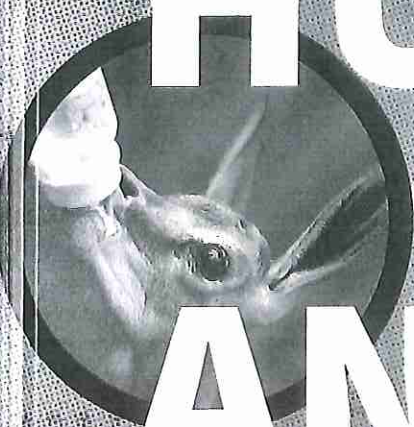


HUMANS — AND — ANIMALS



**A Geography
of Coexistence**



Julie Urbanik and Connie L. Johnston, Editors



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Poaching

Poaching is a crime that has various overlapping but surprisingly similar definitions. These all relate to the illegal removing, stealing, or extracting of natural resources such as game, wildlife, or fish. Put simply, poaching is the *illegal* taking of wildlife, and this constitutes a large threat to biodiversity and wild animals. In most cases, poaching requires the animals to be killed, for example for their meat, skins, or ivory. A global dissatisfaction with poaching has led to an increase of antipoaching initiatives to save a variety of animals from extinction. In the meantime, however, poaching itself also seems to be on the rise.

Large conservation nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Conservation International (CI) have a strong voice in defining the global legal frameworks like the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Therefore, they also shape what is legal and what is criminal, based on moral judgments and shaped by political dynamics. Currently, most of the conservation NGOs try to overcome poaching at the local level where it happens and not by educating the wealthier consumers who purchase many of these wildlife products. However, in today's world of inequality, human poverty and wealth are strong drivers of poaching.

It is important to make a distinction between subsistence and commercial poaching. Since the mid-1800s, when Yosemite National Park was established in the United States, many more wildlife reserves and national parks have been established around the world in such a way that local people's subsistence activities, such as hunting local species for food, have been outlawed. This is, in part, a legacy of European colonialism (1500s–1900s) and a time when nonlocal people were in control and made political and land-use decisions that benefited themselves instead of the cultures already living in their traditional homelands. In fact, some of the world's best-known nature areas that have been set up for the protection of animals and

enjoyment by tourists have created new, and problematic, regulations for the local people. For example, the Bushmen of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in Botswana are being criminalized as poachers, even though they have been hunting for subsistence for centuries. In March 2015, Botswana hosted the second conference of the United for Wildlife initiative, a consortium of some of the world's leading conservation NGOs. The Duke of Cambridge, Prince William, who is an eager sports hunter, supported the event, which was aimed at tackling poaching and illegal wildlife trade. Just before the conference, however, the Botswanan government had enacted a law prohibiting all hunting in the country except for regulated, legal trophy hunting for wealthy tourists. Despite attempts by the Bushmen to ask assistance from the Duke, United for Wildlife continues its collaboration with the government of Botswana that outlaws the Bushmen's subsistence hunting and transforms it into poaching (SI 2015).

In contrast to subsistence poaching, commercial poaching is the type that is generally connected with larger criminal syndicates. For example, it also takes place in our oceans where illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing is still a regular event in Europe. And in the Galápagos Marine Reserve, commercial, illegal shark fishing has led to a big decline of shark populations to meet the growing international demand for shark products. Among the best-known animals that are targeted for commercial poaching is the rhino. In South Africa's Kruger National Park, the poaching of rhinos has increased since 2008, after many years in which the population had been stable. Most of the demand comes from Asia, especially China and Vietnam, where demand is increasing based on the assumed healing properties of the horn (including the idea that it can cure cancer) and its status as a luxury item; some people simply put the horn on display in their houses. This demand leads to commercial poaching, and therefore the location and act of poaching itself are often only a small part in a global economy in which the poached animals are valuable. People all over the world, especially in wealthier countries, often purchase products such as medicines, clothes, food (e.g., cockles [a particular type of edible salt-water clam] or caviar) and jewelry that contain parts of wild animal bodies that have been obtained through poaching and illegal wildlife trading.

Various antipoaching strategies have so far been tried. For example, in South Africa there have been discussions about the legalization of ivory and rhino horn. Even the public has become more involved; tourists can now use a smartphone app (Wildlife Witness), developed by the Trade Records and Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce (TRAFFIC), to report any suspicious activities when traveling in Southeast Asia. But today the most dominant antipoaching strategy is militarization: Governments, NGOs, and private security companies, often in cooperation, search for poachers using military technologies and equipment (e.g., drones, weaponry, and recently also the introduction of tracker and sniffing dogs). This has often created small war zones in wildlife areas, and the increase of violence has

not only led to an increase in poached animals but also to the killing of many poachers and park rangers who work in anti-poaching units.

Stasja Koot

See also: Black Market Animal Trade; Ecotourism; Ivory Trade; Trophy Hunting; Wildlife

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Polar Bears

Native to the oceans, seas, and land masses found within or near the Arctic Circle, the polar bear is perhaps the most emblematic animal of the north polar region. Named *Ursus maritimus*, or "maritime bear," these bears are generally classified as a marine species because adults live primarily on sea ice. Distributed across portions of Russia, Norway, Greenland, the United States, and Canada, these bears face significant threats to their survival from anthropogenic (human-caused) activities, including climate change, habitat loss, pollution, and conflicts with human enterprise in the region.

Polar bears have evolved to occupy a narrower ecological niche than other bear species and are well adapted to surviving Arctic conditions, possessing a translucent, water-repellant coat and an insulating layer of body fat. Capable of swimming hundreds of miles, the polar bear is the only marine mammal adapted to also move efficiently in terrestrial environments. Weighing 775–1,300 lbs (350–590 kg) and measuring from 7–10 ft (2–3 m) in length, polar bears are the largest mammalian predators that spend at least part of their time hunting on land. The only other land