

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 6 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 East Asia or Sri Lanka. 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 E) 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 E, we will have to do something slightly different. We will have two proponent and two opponents, and one of the instructors will assume the moderator role.

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 the moderator will 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. Kirsten, Alex, Isabel

Proposition: *Ex situ* strategies (zoos, seed banks, botanical gardens) are a positive force for conservation of 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 websites: https://www.bgci.org/resources/bgs_in_conservation/ <https://canadianspeciesinitiative.ca/one-plan-approach/> Paul P. Smith | Botanic Gardens Conservation International Can botanic gardens conserve all of the world’s rare and threatened plant species? <https://www.pas.va/en/publications/scripta-varia/sv146pas/smith.html> The Addendum to Biodiversity Conservation in Sri Lanka. A Framework for Action. December, 2007. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/lk/lk-nbsap-oth-en.pdf>

Team B. Josh, Jade, Alexandria

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/> Parker, B.G., Khanyari, M., Ambarlı, H., Buuveibaatar, B., Kabir, M., Khanal, G., Mirzadeh, H.R., Onon, Y. and Farhadinia, M.S. (2023), A review of the ecological and socioeconomic characteristics of trophy hunting across Asia. *Anim Conserv*, 26: 609-624. <https://doi.org/10.1111/acv.12840>

Team C. Victoria, Ciara, Vennila

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: Iveson, M. (2024). Debt-for-nature swaps in Sri Lanka. ODI Essays | Sri Lanka: from debt to transformative growth. London: ODI <https://odi.org/en/publications/sri-lanka-from-debt-default-to-transformative-growth>

Team D. Andrea, Aili Smith, Vanessa

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

Key references: Dickinson. 2002. 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> One example of OECMs: Cook, C. N., C. J. Lemieux, H. S. Grantham, et al. 2025. “What Will Count?—Evidence for the Global Recognition of Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures. *Conservation Letters* 18, no. 5: e13150. <https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.13150>

Team E. Meg, Hannah Smith, Claire, Olin

Proposition: Monetizing biodiversity, species, and ecosystem services to be incorporated into national economies and international trade is an effective means to achieve conservation

Key references: Temel, J., Jones, A., Jones, N. and Balint, L. 2018. Limits of monetization in protecting ecosystem services. *Conservation Biology*, 32: 1048-1062. White, T.B. S.O. Petrovan, A.P. Christie, P.A. Martin, W.J. Sutherland. 2022. What is the price of conservation? A review of the status quo and recommendations for improving cost reporting. *BioScience*. 72: 461–471. Costanza, R., d'Arge, R., de Groot, R. et al. 1997. The value of the world's ecosystem services and natural capital. *Nature* 387: 253–260. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/im/rwim-sa-01/other/rwim-sa-01->

[valuation-cbd-en.pdf](#) Asia Pathways Blog Post. Natural Capital: Valuing Nature to Protect and Restore Ecosystem Services for Sustainable Development
By Derek Hondo, Agnes Surry, Yolanda Fernandez Lommen, Declan Magee|5
September 2024 <https://www.asiapathways-adbi.org/2024/09/natural-capital-valuing-nature-to-protect-and-restore-ecosystem-services-for-sustainable-development/>

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 based in Washington DC that seeks science and data-based solutions to sustainable 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 – an international NGO that combines fieldwork, good science, policy, and finance to conserve biodiversity and improve the lives of local and Indigenous peoples. 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 accomplished 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.