



Conflicts between Wildlife Conservation, Animal Welfare and Human Interests, and ways Forward

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Today, both wildlife conservation and animal welfare concerns are widely publicized, and most people take the positions of one or the other. Wildlife conservationists who considered that the species is more important than the individual, or the animal welfare activists who take the view that the individual is more important than the species. This means that whenever there is a conflict of interests between the survival of the species or the individual often the winner is neither the species nor the individual!

The third concern which is usually given priority and taken for granted, is how will human interests best be served; here the questions must be asked is: is this local or global human interests, or those of today or of the future?

The 3 concerns that are often in conflict.

- 1) Wildlife conservation: that is the interests of the group or community
- 2) Animal welfare: that is the interests of the individual
- 3) Humans' present interests which often trumps others

Figure 1

One thing we are all learning fast from global warming and the escalating reduction in species diversity (the result of human's putting their present interests above that of anything else) is that if our future generations are to survive and have a life as we know it, then we must consider the interests of future generations very carefully... that is your grandchildren and their children. For example by killing this elephant because it has invaded your farm, eventually there will be very few elephants, if any... and this will effect the survival of your grandchildren, so what can you do about it?

In this talk I want to outline where the differences and similarities exist between peoples' understanding of these issues. This is not some academic exercise, it is crucial for saving the biosphere and ourselves. The aim is to guide people to make informed choices when these three issues come into conflict as they do every day in many areas of the globe.

It is easy to say to oneself, "well what difference will it make if I give up this or that, kill a marauding animal or change my lifestyle when there are so many millions of others who won't?"

But, spread the word and although there may be different solutions, the central concern is that we have to stop putting today's human interests first without very careful consideration, and that means living in some sort of harmony with the rest of the living system rather than in conflict. We are showing you how this can be worked towards with one of the most charismatic species of large mammals: elephants here at Jafuta.

But, first we need to be very clear what we are talking about.

What is Wildlife Conservation?

“Wildlife” generally means wild animals and plants of any species. But the problem to- day is that there is no truly “wild” areas left in the world, all is surrounded and in some way “managed”, that is affected by humans. This means that perhaps we should re- phrase “wildlife” to be “animals and plants living in that area”. Making a distinction be- tween traditionally “wild” and “domestic” species is also not helpful ... there may be some places which have mainly traditionally “wild” animals, and others where there are mainly “domestic” animals but in most of the world wild and domestic animals share their homes and properly managed the ecosystem and biodiversity can gain from this. Whether individuals are wild or domestic they can still suffer! Recently “wildlife” has been dropped from “conservation” and words such as Compassionate, Convivial, Co- operative or Considered Conservation being proposed by a variety of authors who come from different disciplines.

But why try to keep all species living? After all there are many species of animals and plants whom we find a nuisance and wish to be without, mosquitos biting us and rats in our kitchens for example.

Well, the real underlying reason is that as species become extinct, whether they are insects, plants, amoeba, grasses, or rhinos, the living world becomes less stable. This is because every species in intertwined with every other.

As Confucius in ancient China implied: “the batting of the wings of a butterfly in Peking affects movement of a fish in the Zambezi.

We do not and never can know all the intricacies of all these relationships but suffice it to say that ecologists have been only too aware of the complexities of the eco system/ biosphere since van Humboldt (1769-1859) pointed it out at the beginning of the 19th century... today we are waking up to how important a stable biosphere is for our own survival.

Eventually, perhaps sooner rather than later, the biosphere will no longer be able to sustain itself in the way that we know because of the reduction of species diversity, so our lives will be threatened and we will have to change.

The Grand Recycling Project was set up when life began, and if this is broken then it can no longer function.

What is the Wild?

- There is no Wild left, everywhere in the world is being affected by human activities and large mammals are managed by them in some form.
- This “management” therefore must include a consideration of the welfare of the individual animals, whether they are wild or domestic.
- To this end, “Wildlife Conservation” is being renamed: “Compassionate”/“Convivial”/“Co-operative” or “Considered Conservation”.... Take your pick!

Figure 2

Here along the Zambezi river, “wild” fauna and flora abound, but for how long?



Figure 3

The Grand Recycling Project of Life.

Plants to Animals to Wastes to Decomposers to Plants

Figure 4

What is happening world wide, largely because of modern agriculture, and other hu- man activities, is that with species becoming extinct there are vacant “niches” in the ecosystem; the web of life has broken strands so that it eventually will not be able to re-cycle its self. By clearing land whether forest, mountain, plain, valley, applying chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, a multitude of species, each of which helps hold the biosphere together, are becoming extinct at an alarming rate.

Scientists at the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity concluded that: “Every day, **up to 150 species** are lost.” That could be as much as **10 percent a decade.**

Around 7.5 decades and non left!!!

Figure 5

So ensuring that all species of animals and plants survive on the planet is crucial to our own survival.

Then, what is the difference between Preservation and Conservation?

We need to agree and be very clear what we mean.

Preservation means that that a particular building, body or ecosystem will be kept as it is, preserved for eternity; (e.g., the mummification of bodies in ancient Egypt, or the preservation of an old building of a particular architecture or a particular history).

However, it is not possible to preserve a particular ecosystem because it is not fixed in time: the living system and individuals within it are, of their nature, dynamic and always changing, for example, to preserve elephants, or baobab trees: those particular elephants and baobab trees have individual experiences during their lives.

When they die and are replaced, the replacement will not be identical with the old because their genes, the environment and their individual experiences differ.

Pondering on this is what lead the early ecologists (at the beginning of the 20th century) not to use the term Preservation but rather Conservation.

Conservation allows for the constant changes of living systems and the species within it and recognizes that each use and are used by others and this includes humans.

Because there are no grazing animals in this mountain “conserved” area, the grass is growing long



Figure 6

Because there are no grazing animals, the Lady Orchid is threatened and will become extinct in this area unless some grazing management is put in place.



Figure 7

Conserving plants and animal species is crucial for our future as well as because we want to use them in one way or another, for tourism, for hunting, for food, for economic value, or products such as fibre, bones, tusks, medicines, or just keeping the biosphere going, this means that the eco system has “instrumental value”, that is, it is of value to humans for one reason or another.

- **Preservation** (fixing in time) is not possible for a living system which is of its nature changing and dynamic.
- **Conservation** recognizes changes and that each species uses and is used by others in the web of life.

Figure 8

But conservation prioritizes species or groups of species, it is not concerned with individual suffering. So, many have argued that, because there are too many of this or that species, the ecosystem changes, and some species become scarce or extinct in it. Therefore there must be some “management” to retain those species.

- Conservation is concerned with eco-systems or communities, not with individuals because the eco-system is of value to us humans (called Instrumental Value)
- Animal Welfare is concerned with causing suffering to other sentient/feeling individuals, and recognizing that they have value to themselves, they care about things: (called Intrinsic Value).

Figure 9

Sometimes this means killing off some of the individuals of a species that are too numerous to conserve the ecosystem. Recently, cases have hit the headlines such as the killing of elephants in the Kruger National park in the 1990’s on the grounds that the elephants were too numerous and were destroying the existing ecosystem.

Because individual animals have feelings, and care about things, we have to ask if killing is morally justified? Is this the only way we can conserve eco-systems or should we be broadening our concerns to considering individuals who have what is called “intrinsic

value” (that is value to themselves)? Should we go around killing animals as we wish for conserving eco-systems? Should we pause to consider whether killing a being who is sentient, and has feelings, is morally defensible? If we do not, then we will be permitted to kill another sentient being humans for example, because they threaten the eco-system, in fact in this case, the whole biosphere.

This brings us to the consideration of the welfare of animals.

Animal welfare

If another animal is “sentient” (has feelings), then his life matters to him, just as much as life matters to us humans. Therefore we cannot justify killing him/her unless we think very carefully about it. This means that other species, as well as humans, have “intrinsic value”, that is that life matters to them, they care to live, they have emotions and are aware of being alive.... and will try to remain alive if they possibly can. Because of this, we should not cause them to suffer, in fact we should make every effort to ensure that they do not suffer. Is the individual suffering from pain, a disease that could be relieved, or suffering mentally? Is he going to personally benefit from staying alive and living the life he is living?

A one-day old foal investigates a dog, her experiences of the world will be different from another foal because she knows something about dogs.

Any animals under our management, therefore, whether companions, friends, working, farm animals or in zoos, sanctuaries, wildlife parks or national parks must not suffer in any prolonged way which could be relieved. More than that, they should have a “good life”, a life of quality that is worth living.

Animal welfare is a consideration of the welfare of an animal; is he “well treated” or “cruelly treated” in all aspects of his life: living, working, training.

In law cruelty is defined as: “behaviour which causes physical or mental harm to another whether intentional or not”.

Figure 10



Figure 11

But, not all members of a species always suffer in a similar environment because of their different genes and their different life-time experiences

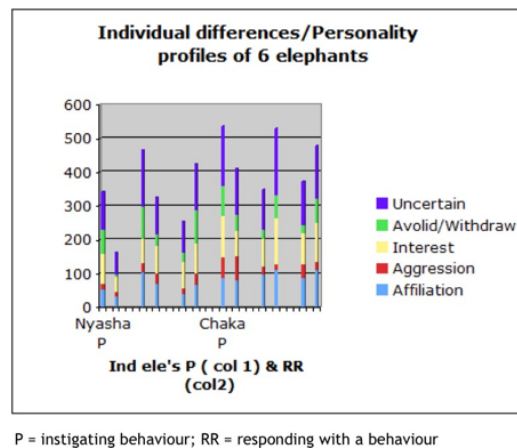


Figure 12

The personality profiles of 6 elephants from their interactions with each other. Notice the differences in the various behaviours for each individual.12) Feelings and learning. Individual Experiences of life.

Animal welfare tends to prioritize the individual

Over the last 50 years there has been much research conducted on different animals in many different types of environments to assess when they are suffering both physiologically and behaviourally. So today, we can tell from the behaviour of mammals and birds when they are “distressed”. that is suffering from prolonged stress, in other words when the environment is unacceptable to that individual. For example, keeping elephants chained up for 24hour periods when they are showing stereotypes or other evidence of distress means they are suffering and not having a life of quality.

But there are often conflicts between Conservation and Animal Welfare; should the group or species, or the individual’s interests be prioritized? One example that a vet may be confronted with is: when a young elephant is stuck in the mud and his mother has deserted him to join the herd. Do you get him out? If so will he find his mother? If he does not, which is very likely, he will have a long agonizing death anyway. Getting him out will be expensive: should the money be spent on this? or should it be spent in some other way to conserve the species?

But would it always be best to leave well alone, surely if there are people who would like to have the young orphan elephant and raise him in a good environment, then it would be better for him to be dug out.

But, when he grows up with us, he is unlikely to be able to be put back in the wild because he knows humans well and likely to become a rogue elephant raiding farms or terrify village people. But, if he is to be kept, then he will cost a lot of money, he must be fed, handled and guarded. Can the people who take him on ensure that he will have a long, good elephant life, and if so how?

At Jafuta this is what we have been working towards: how can we provide a long life of quality to our elephants, which is as good, if not better than the life in the wild, and does not cause loss of the diversity of other species? So, how can our elephants be fitted into the environment and help to demonstrate species diversity?

Local human needs

But what if the interests of the conservation of the fauna and flora and that of welfare of that species conflicts with local human needs?

Even an elephant that has not had any direct contact with humans may discover people's crops and eat and trash them, so what do we do? How do we protect crops from hungry elephants? Because of growing population density: the population of Zimbabwe has grown from 13 million in 2013, to 15.5 million in 2022 and insufficient jobs, many people remain farmers in the country. Since they have to feed themselves from what they grow and there are more of them, they believe they need more land, and so they move into wildlife areas to cultivate, cut trees or graze their animals.

This becomes a particular problem for the elephants because they are then confined to smaller areas, and are hungry, so they break out, and eat and trash the farmers crops. The farmers then suffer and it becomes a conflict between saving the elephants or satisfying the local population. Because generally, the local population of humans are considered more important than elephants, some elephants are then shot... ironically this does not have to be the elephant which did the damage, it is often any elephant. The animal welfare people say "save the individual, whatever the consequences", and the conservationists say, "killing an individual here and there will not threaten the population of elephants and might reduce the ecological damage elephants cause".

There are 2 results of this: (a) the individual welfare of the elephant is not served by killing him in this case. (b) and there end up fewer elephants. In the end, there may be no elephants left in that area that was set aside for wildlife. In Europe and America this happened a century or two ago so that there are very few bison, no wild equines, no predators such as bears or wolves on most of the land.

So what can be done about these conflicts?

First everyone must improve their sustainable agricultural techniques (which are well known), put them into practice and understand that there may be solutions that do not require killing of individuals. The farmers and all of us, need to understand both the intrinsic and the instrumental value of having elephants around, and also use up to date regenerative agriculture to bring them higher net yields where they already cultivate. They must employ Agro-forestry to ensure they have sustainable wood and the ecology that goes with it, and the number and type of stock that they graze must be controlled so their stock thrives without causing species to disappear.

The elephants must be discouraged from going onto the farms. This can be by electric fencing; by giving them unpleasant experiences with chillis and/or have bees hives strategically placed so bees sting them, and other ways which are being developed with modern technology which do not cause prolonged suffering or death.

We need to ensure that the elephants that are in some form of enclosed/sanctuary/semi-wild/wild environment have a life of quality in the future. This means that we need to know what all their needs are: their physical, social, emotional and intellectual or cognitive needs and fulfill them. We do now have a considerable amount of information about all the different needs of elephants, and, if we outline these carefully we can develop standards to direct us in how we should keep them to give them a life of quality and ensure their future conservation. The charity's weareallmammals.org and elecrow.org have been working on this with wildlife conservationists, animal behaviour scientists, animal welfare activists, owners, handlers and vets for the last 5 years. The idea of these standards is that in the future, when there is even more pressure on land and human populations are even greater, there will still be some elephants around living good lives in "managed" environments.

Show the standards

So saving the baby elephant that has got stuck in the mud is not such a clear cut decision as you would like. But provided there is somewhere he can go to be raised and thereafter have a life of quality which also contributes to greater biodiversity, then go for it, and save him... but if not, don't and spend the money saved on other projects which will take into account the interests of the local human community, and marry conservation with individual animal's interests: Considered Conservation. We can do it, but it will be hard work and the future depends on you and your students.

In the future, living together with other species, recognizing their similarities and differences in mind and body, their different ways of living and different points of view, is possible and rewarding for all of us.

We must not be doctrinaire to live in harmony. The eco system has many ways of achieving this and we must learn from it and from other animals how to resolve our conflicts.

Education, Research, Innovation and Discussion is the way forward.

How to measure Distress in animals, wild or domestic

Physical ill health and suffering

Malnutrition/poor growth
Frequent ill health ./wounds./disease/infection
Frequent occupational diseases ./lameness/mastitis
Frequent need for the use of drugs &/or surgery ./antibiotics/worming/beak clipping/castration/tail docking/teeth removing etc.

Behavioural changes indicating psychological ill-health.

The performance of abnormal behaviours which appear purposeless/no benefit.
Stereotypies(repeated behaviours fixed in details & apparently purposeless /weaving, crib biting, head twisting, tongue rolling, etc.
Increase in aggression compared with feral/wild of same species
Large difference in time budgets compared with feral/wild / standing immobile or sleeping significantly more.
Increase in behaviours related to frustration or approach/avoidance conflicts /head shaking, nodding, tail thrashing., or frustrated locomotion /pawing, pacing, leaping etc.
Ontogenic changes in behaviour. That is behaviours performed or prevented that are not appropriate to the animals age/ isolated animals inability relate to others/mal-imprinting sex/ inability to walk, run etc. .

Figure 13



Living together, using and being used by others

Figure 14