



## Book Review

# Ragnhild A. Sollund and Martine S. B. Lie (Eds.) (2024) *Criminal Justice, Wildlife Conservation and Animal Rights in the Anthropocene*. Bristol University Press

**Patricia Puente-Guerrero**

Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), Spain

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With increasing evidence and growing awareness of how anthropogenic harms impact our lives and prospects, concern about the environment has gained substantial prominence in recent years. The environmental crises we are facing are often viewed from an anthropocentric perspective, though some advocate for the need for considering different standpoints. Green criminology has contributed much in this regard by broadening our horizons and offering new approaches to problematising our relationship with nature.

A prime example is Ragnhild Sollund and Martine Lie's edited volume, *Criminal Justice, Wildlife Conservation and Animal Rights in the Anthropocene*, which represents the culmination of an extensive, impactful, and eponymous research project (hereinafter, CRIMEANTHROP) that has revealed how legal instruments that might seem intended to protect "wildlife"<sup>1</sup>—preserve *for human use* would be more accurate—can, directly or indirectly, cause harm to and the loss of ecosystems, entire species, and/or individual members of such species.

The CRIMEANTHROP cross-disciplinary research initiative has been led and advised by well-versed green criminologists and has included the participation of knowledgeable scholars from various fields. Their collective expertise has ensured the timeliness and value of the outcomes of their studies. Spanning four years (2019-2023), this prolific project originally covered case studies from Germany, Norway, Spain, and the United Kingdom (UK). In this volume, Sollund and Lie broaden the scope to provide a more comprehensive understanding of human-wildlife relations, incorporating contributions from other scholars and experiences from additional countries, including Italy, the Netherlands, and Poland. This, together with the diversity of contributors' profiles and backgrounds, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks, is certainly one of the strengths of this work, which clearly enhances its overall impact.

*Criminal Justice, Wildlife Conservation and Animal Rights in the Anthropocene* critically and empirically assesses the implementation and enforcement of two international nature conservation conventions: the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the Council of Europe's Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention). The book is organised into twelve chapters, offering a general



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outlook of the existing challenges in implementation and enforcement, along with their implications, and case studies that illustrate the key aspects of such challenges. Collectively, these chapters contribute to a thorough understanding of the common patterns and particularities in the enforcement of CITES and the Bern Convention, thereby providing a solid groundwork for future advancements and solutions.

In the Introduction, Sollund and Lie contextualise the book within the CRIMEANTHROP project and lay the foundations for the discussion that will permeate the entire volume. First, they highlight how current approaches to the protection of wildlife generally lack, either formally or in practice, recognition of the *individual* intrinsic value of nonhuman animals, who have commonly been treated at the aggregated species level and ascribed value only in terms of their degree of relevance, utility, or threat to human interests. A focus on the intrinsic value of freeborn individuals thus represents one of the genuine contributions of this work. This consideration is absent in the language of the two conventions<sup>2</sup>, and, indeed, the authors bring to light how no current environmental convention truly protects nonhuman animals from harm, even though it might appear to the untrained or inattentive eye that this would be the primary mission of such legal instruments. In fact, the conventions merely define *which harms are legal* and establish where, when, how, by whom, to whom, and for what reasons the permissible harms can be inflicted, primarily invoking the euphemism “wildlife management.”

Notwithstanding the role that, even on a limited basis, CITES and the Bern Convention have played in the protection and recovery of endangered species populations, Sollund and Lie identify several shortcomings that need to be addressed. In particular, they emphasise that the key challenge lies in the implementation and enforcement of these conventions, which varies widely among different countries (and different locations *within* those countries) and can lead to perplexing results, such as the sanctioning or legitimisation of harmful practices. Hence, addressing the implementation and enforcement of CITES, the Bern Convention, and their related legal apparatus is of paramount importance, as this can yield valuable information to assess and enhance current scenarios and prevent these legal measures from becoming merely symbolic.

Chapter Two, *Legal Versus Illegal Hunts: A Species Justice Perspective on Wolf and Bear Theriocides in Norway* by Martine Lie, offers a comparative analysis of legal and illegal hunts of grey wolves and brown bears in Norway resulting in the killing—“theriocide”, as proposed by Beirne (2014)—or attempted killing of these nonhuman individuals. Lie examines court verdicts on illegal theriocides or attempted theriocides, as well as guidelines and legislation regulating legal large predator hunts, through the theoretical lens of a welfare-based species justice perspective. The chapter explores whether legal theriocides can be deemed as more “species just” than illegal ones based on concerns for harm avoidance and the welfare of the individual victims. This debate is important because if the suffering generated is the same regardless of the legal status of the action, then the boundary between *legal* and *illegal* becomes a mere social construct influenced by factors unrelated to the actual harm caused. This calls into question the very pillars of the current legal system and prompts us to reconsider how conflicts between human and nonhuman animal interests are managed and which values should take precedence.

Chapter Three, *The Implementation of CITES in Norway: A Longitudinal Approach to the Assessment of Enforcement from a Species Justice Perspective*, by Ragnhild Sollund, adopts a broad species justice perspective to assess CITES implementation and enforcement in Norway from 2010 to 2020, using the transnational trade in reptiles as a case study—specifically, the implications of the 2017 partial lifting of a ban that prohibited the keeping and trade of exotic reptiles. Employing a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative examination of police case files, court verdicts, and interviews with key actors, along with quantitative analysis of available data on CITES-related crimes, Sollund provides a comprehensive analysis of CITES enforcement in Norway. A major lesson from the chapter is the need for critical evaluation of potential consequences of policy amendments and modifications when they are proposed, and the necessity of continuous monitoring to ensure that the real objectives of those policies already enacted are being met—an approach that can help prevent unintended side effects stemming from regulatory updates or turnover with enforcement personnel. In addition, the chapter draws attention to the importance of information and public awareness in enhancing deterrence—a theme that runs throughout the volume.

In Chapter Four, *Online Illegal Trade in Reptiles in the Netherlands*, Isabella Dominguez, Marjan Hindriks, Jordi Janssen and Daan van Uhm examine the online illegal trade in reptiles in the Netherlands, unravelling the linkages between the legal and illegal markets and underscoring the key role the digital world has played in facilitating illegal activities. The authors utilise data from two prior research projects, including police files and interviews with experts as sources of information. Distinctively, Dominguez and her co-authors undertake a network analysis of a case of illegal trade in turtles and tortoises to deepen the understanding of the organisational structure of the illegal reptile networks and the influence of the internet and social media. This analytical strategy, with its innovative and enlightening character within the field of green criminology, presents significant potential for further research and exploration. While the chapter demonstrates the utility of network analysis, it leaves the reader eager for extensive details of its fundamentals, interpretation, and the results obtained. Fully developing these aspects could amplify the overall contribution of this insightful methodological approach.

In Chapter Five, *Countering Wildlife Crimes in Italy: The Case of Bird Poaching*, Lorenzo Natali, Ciro Troiano, Sara Zoja and Anita Lavorgna provide a detailed account of the methods and strategies used by poachers, showcasing the notable suffering inflicted on the victims—beginning with the capture techniques themselves and extending to the loss of the birds’ freedom or even their lives. Such poaching also poses a threat to other human and nonhuman individuals. As the authors note, hikers or hunters may inadvertently encounter booby traps. Non-targeted nonhuman animals can get caught in the traps as well, resulting in injuries or fatalities, often accompanied by considerable physical and psychological distress. By offering an overview of the different kinds of harms involved, the authors bridge environmental, ecological, and species justice perspectives. Their study reveals the complexities in detecting and prosecuting infringements and their analysis suggests areas for improving enforcement mechanisms. An outstanding contribution of this work is its illumination of the importance of the cultural aspects that enable and foster these harmful practices, as well as the need for raising awareness of the suffering of and enhancing empathy towards other species.

Chapter Six, *Analysis of Social and Legal Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Tackling the Illegal Killing of Wolves in Poland*, by Piotr J. Chmielewski and Agnieszka Serlikowska, scrutinises the illegal killing of wolves in Poland. The rich analysis and discussion are guided by three main research questions, as described below, which the authors address using a wide range of sources, including scientific literature, legislation, court judgements, public opinion polls, non-governmental organisation (NGO) workshops, and expert panel discussions. First, the authors explore what factors influence judicial decisions on theriocide in Polish courts. Next, they examine which societal dynamics contribute to the acceptance or tolerance of illegal wolf killings by the Polish population. Finally, Chmielewski and Serlikowska discuss which challenges law enforcement agencies face in combating illegal wolf killings. An essential aspect of this chapter is its emphasis on the lack of comprehensive and publicly available data, such as official statistics on crimes related to protected wildlife species, permits issued for the legal killing of wolves, and the number and outcomes of court decisions concerning wildlife crimes. Importantly, the authors highlight the profound implications this absence has on both deterrence and enforcement efforts. The chapter also sheds light on the complex, disjointed, and overlapping normative framework for wolf protection, making it difficult to determine which law(s) is/are to be applied in instances of wolf theriocides or other human actions that harm wolves. This intricate legal landscape undermines the framework’s deterrent effect, particularly when combined with the abovementioned lack of accessible data. In addition, Chmielewski and Serlikowska illustrate how anthropocentrism visibly permeates Polish regulations, jurisprudence, and the approaches of prosecutor’s offices to theriocide, as the killing of nonhuman animals is treated primarily as a financial loss *to the State*. Understanding these dynamics is essential for grasping the broader implications of humans’ perception and treatment of—and injustices to—nonhuman animals.

Chapters Seven and Eight focus on the strengths and challenges of enforcing wildlife protection laws in Spain and Germany, respectively. *CITES in Spain: Blueprints and Challenges of Spanish Practice on CITES and Welfare of Trafficked Victims*, by Teresa Fajardo, concentrates on CITES implementation, particularly the Spanish Action Plan against Illegal Trafficking and International Poaching of Wildlife Species (the TIFIES Plan). The analysis draws on crime statistics, judgements, and expert interviews to identify existing good practices and areas for improvement. Positive developments include the establishment of a specialised environmental prosecutor’s office and *Servicio de Protección de la Naturaleza* (SEPRONA), a police unit for nature protection. As contributors throughout the volume stress repeatedly, specialised training and roles for enforcement authorities, which allow for the accumulation of expertise over time, along with adequate resource allocation, are crucial for success. The creation of these dedicated bodies with well-trained personnel also signals that violations are taken seriously and will be prosecuted. In addition, Spain has adopted a policy targeting the recovery and reintroduction of seized individuals, which, despite its limitations, better supports the wellbeing and rights of nonhuman animals. Significant hurdles remain, however, such as insufficiently detailed official environmental crime statistics, lack of consideration of nonhuman animal rights and welfare in wildlife trafficking legislation, and a fragmented and unclear regulatory framework that complicates enforcement. Moreover, challenges in obtaining evidence of such crimes and a lack of specialisation among judges can lead to lenient punishments with little deterrent effects. Fajardo’s chapter also underscores the crucial role of raising social awareness to curb the demand for wildlife, which is essential for advancing nonhuman animal justice.

*Paper Tigers and Local Perseverance: Wildlife Protection in Germany* by Christoph H. Stefes, explores Germany’s federal administrative system and the crucial role of street-level bureaucrats (SLBs)—civil servants in direct contact with citizens—in enforcing wildlife protection laws, especially in decentralised regimes. Stefes draws on interviews with key stakeholders (public officials, politicians, and NGO representatives) and analyses quantitative data on criminal and administrative violations. Despite Germany’s tougher penalties compared to other European Union states, low detection rates and lenient sentencing indicate enforcement failures. Stefes attributes these to a lack of public and political support for wildlife protection, insufficient expertise and training among authorities, limited resources, and the complexities of the legal system. Importantly, the combination of both expert and local knowledge, as reflected in a centralised authority with municipal agencies, appears to

yield the best results. The author also shrewdly observes that data on recorded criminal activities serve as a barometer of the dedication and resources allocated by authorities to combat wildlife crime.

Chapter Nine, *The Norwegian Chain of Wildlife Treaty Effectiveness*, by David R. Goyes, employs the concept of “regime effectiveness” to study the implementation of CITES and the Bern Convention in Norway. First, Goyes analyses the conventions themselves—their rationales, characteristics, and, importantly, their differences. Second, Goyes reviews Norway’s domestic legislation that implements these conventions, scrutinising “critical legislative events”<sup>3</sup> and their connection to major conflicts over human-nature interactions. The author notes that while Norway adopted CITES with minimal changes (in other words, the Norwegian law implementing CITES contains most of the language of CITES, itself), the Bern Convention underwent substantial transformations. Goyes attributes these differences in implementation to their divergent potential economic impacts. Finally, the chapter presents the results of narrative interviews with wildlife management stakeholders (parliamentarians, civil servants, and NGO representatives) to discern the extent to which wildlife treaties are reflected in their stories and, ultimately, influence their behaviour. Goyes’ interviewees shared stories about their beliefs, personal identities, professional practices, perspectives on wildlife regulations, and views on wildlife management. This methodology proves particularly noteworthy because it offers deep insights into the practical dynamics and real-world impact of international treaties on stakeholder behaviour.

Chapter Ten, *Rewilding in the UK: Harm or Justice?*, by Tanya Wyatt, presents a nuanced discussion on the key issues surrounding the debates on “rewilding” in the UK, focusing on the reintroduction of the lynx. The author employs a mixed-methods qualitative approach, combining a comprehensive review of sources with semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. Wyatt’s chapter serves three key functions. First, it presents the public’s (primarily anthropocentric) stance on the reintroduction of the lynx, thereby identifying key areas where intervention might be necessary to avoid human-wildlife conflict. Second, Wyatt’s chapter contrasts these perspectives on human-nature relationships with scientific evidence, which soundly supports rewilding to increase biodiversity and restore ecological processes. Third, the chapter expounds on our moral duty to repair the damage humans have caused and the value of rewilding in countering speciesism and advancing species justice. Notably, the author stresses the need to undertake wildlife conservation through habitat preservation and restoration in order to prevent history from repeating itself.

From a broader philosophical perspective, Chapter Eleven, *We Only See What We Know: Animal Conservation and Human Preservation*, delves into how our relationship with the natural world has become more distant over time and the implications this has had. Palermo argues that anthropocentric views of human-wildlife relationships have become widespread in Western society, whereby wildlife is treated as a commodity that can be exploited—and, thus, harmed *legally*—to satisfy human interests. Legislative attempts to limit such harms are aimed primarily at safeguarding nonhuman species as *resources*, rather than as efforts to realise the intrinsic value and rights of these species. The author invites us to question this hierarchical view of the world where we (humans) occupy the top rung and suggests that the problem with CITES and the Bern Convention may be that they fail to move us emotionally. In the words of the author: “They are as remote and alien to most as the beneficiaries of their ‘protection’” (p. 197).

Finally, in *Conclusion*, Sollund and Lie outline the major findings and core insights of this volume. As the authors summarise for us, the CRIMEANTHROP project has yielded important advancements regarding the gaps in wildlife protection, thereby building the foundations for social and policy transformations leading to a brighter and more just future for all inhabitants of our planet. *Criminal Justice, Wildlife Conservation and Animal Rights in the Anthropocene* is a must-read for scholars, practitioners, policymakers, environmental activists, and anyone seeking to understand the complex dynamics of human-wildlife interactions and the implications for conservation and justice. Through a sound and thought-provoking analysis, the book encourages readers to challenge existing assumptions and reflect on our relationship with other species and the place we occupy in the natural world. Such reflection is not only welcome but also imperative given the pressing environmental crises we are currently grappling with.

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*Correspondence:* Dr. Patricia Puente Guerrero, Lecturer in Criminology, Department of Criminal Law and Criminology, National University of Distance Education (UNED), Spain. [ppuenteguerrero@der.uned.es](mailto:ppuenteguerrero@der.uned.es)

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<sup>1</sup> I share the editors' commitment to avoiding speciesist and anthropocentric language. Given the lack of ideal alternatives, I will opt for the dichotomy of "nonhuman animals" and "humans" and, like them, I will use the term "wildlife" to refer to freeborn individuals from nonhuman animal species.

<sup>2</sup> The one exception is a brief reference, mentioned in the preamble to the Bern Convention, which provides that "wild flora and fauna constitute a natural heritage of aesthetic, scientific, cultural, recreational, economic and intrinsic value that needs to be preserved and handed on to future generations".

<sup>3</sup> Drawing on Chambliss (1993), Goyes uses the term "critical legislative events" to refer to "the points at which laws are produced that provide a new approach to a problem" (p. 156).

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