



Wild animals, welfare and ethics: Traditional vs compassionate conservation

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Me

- Veterinarian
- Ethicist/philosopher

- Animal ethics
- Conservation ethics

- AI and robot ethics



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Compassionate conservation (CC)

- Challenges mainstream or traditional conservation (TC)
- Ethically centres the animal and their welfare
- Stresses non-violence in conservation
- Caused a vigorous debate



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Marc Bekoff

- Ethologist/author



Liv Baker

- Animal welfare scientist (2008 workshop)



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Arian Wallach

Dan Ramp

- Conservation biologists: UTS *Centre for CC*
- CC writings triggered debate



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Conservation biology

- Value of biodiversity, ecosystem stability, evolutionary processes
- Under severe pressure: humans, climate, introduced animals/plants



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What is conservation biology?

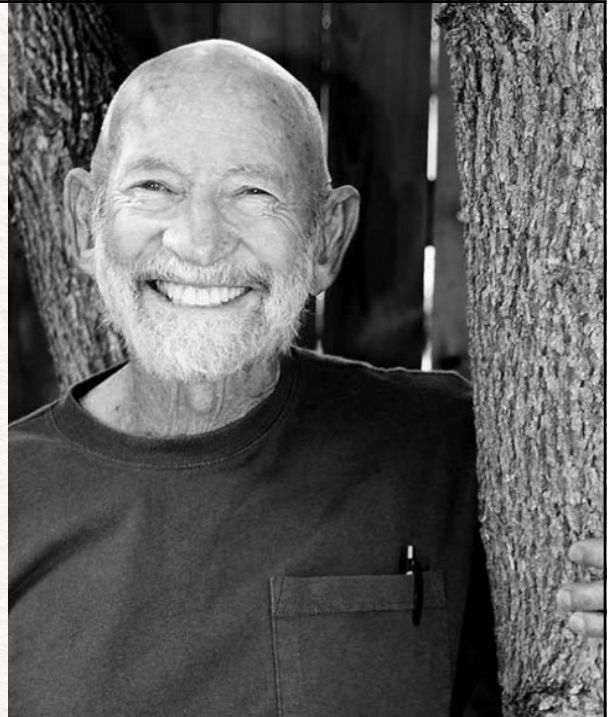
Michael Soulé (1985)

- Crisis discipline: urgent management ethical imperative

“Conservation and animal welfare are conceptually distinct and should remain politically separate”

“biologists often overcome their emotional identification with individual victims”

- Animal welfare and ethics entirely or partially sidelined



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Traditional conservation

- Interventions harmful to sentient animals
- Introduced species
- Overabundant native species
- Millions killed or trapped
- Harmful research



wiki

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Compassionate conservation

Conservation Biology 

Essay |  Free Access

Summoning compassion to address the challenges of conservation

Arian D. Wallach  Marc Bekoff, Chelsea Batavia, Michael Paul Nelson, Daniel Ramp

First published: 27 April 2018 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.13126> | Citations: 168

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The moral residue of conservation

Chelsea Batavia ^{1*} Michael Paul Nelson,¹ and Arian D. Wallach ²








Emotion as a source of moral understanding in conservation

Chelsea Batavia  Michael Paul Nelson, Jeremy T. Bruskotter, Megan S. Jones, Esty Yanco, Daniel Ramp, Marc Bekoff, Arian D. Wallach

Compassion as a Practical and Evolved Ethic for Conservation

Daniel Ramp, Marc Bekoff

Recognizing animal personhood in compassionate conservation

Arian D. Wallach ^{1*} Chelsea Batavia ² Marc Bekoff,³ Shelley Alexander,⁴ Liv Baker,⁵ Dror Ben-Ami,^{1,6} Louise Boronyak,^{1,7} Adam P. A. Cardilin,⁸ Yohay Carmel,⁹ Danielle Celermajer,¹⁰ Simon Coghlan,¹¹ Yara Dahdal,¹² Jonatan J. Gomez,¹⁵ Gisela Kaplan,¹⁴ Oded Keynan,^{15,6} Anton Khalilieh,¹² Helen Kopnina ¹⁶ William S. Lynn ¹⁷ Yamini Narayanan,¹⁸ Sophie Riley,^{1,19} Francisco J. Santiago-Ávila ²⁰ Esty Yanco ¹ Miriam A. Zemanova ¹ and Daniel Ramp¹

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The fatal flaws of compassionate conservation

Meera Anna Oommen,¹ Rosie Cooney,^{2,3} Madhuri Ramesh,¹ Michael Archer,⁴ Daniel Brockington,⁵ Bram Buscher,^{6,7,8} Robert Fletcher,⁶ Daniel J.D. Natusch,⁹ Abi T. Vanak,^{10,11,12} Grahame Webb,^{13,14,15} and Kartik Shanker^{1,16*}

Deconstructing compassionate conservation

Matt W. Hayward ✉, Alex Callen, Benjamin L. Allen, Guy Ballard, Femke Broekhuis, Cassandra Bugir, Rohan H. Clarke ... See all authors ▾

Envisioning the future with ‘compassionate conservation’: An ominous projection for native wildlife and biodiversity

Alex Callen ^a ✉, Matt W. Hayward ^{a,b,c}, Kaya Klop-Toker ^a, Benjamin L. Allen ^d, Guy Ballard ^{a,f}, Chad T. Beranek ^g, Femke Broekhuis ^g, Cassandra K Bugir ^g, Rohan H. Clarke ^h, John Clulow ^a, Simon Clulow ^{a,i}, Jennifer C. Daltry ^j, Harriet T. Davies-Mostert ^{c,k}, Yamil E. Di Blanco ^l, Victoria Dixon ^m, Peter J.S. Fleming ^{d,e,n}, Lachlan G. Howell ^o, Graham I.H. Kerley ^b, Sarah M. Legge ^{a,p}, Dean J. Lenga ^q, Wolfgang Wüster ^q

Science denialism and compassionate conservation: response to Wallach et al. 2018

Don A. Driscoll ✉, Maggie J. Watson

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Summoning compassion to address the challenges of conservation

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Poisoning

wiki



Warning 1080 Poison
Sodium fluoroacetate
will be present on the ground from : 6/8/07.

- **DO NOT touch bait**
- **WATCH CHILDREN at all times**
- **DO NOT EAT animals from this area**
- **Poison baits or carcasses are DEADLY to DOGS** 

For more information contact:
Freephone  

Unauthorised removal of signs or baits is an offence

The baits are cut carrot approx 30mm long, and dyed green.



<https://pestsmart.org.au/toolkit-resource/trapping-of-feral-cats-using-cage-traps/>

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Shooting



wiki



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Trophy hunting



<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/oct/12/zimbabwe-will-not-charge-us-dentist-killing-cecil-lion>

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Diseases

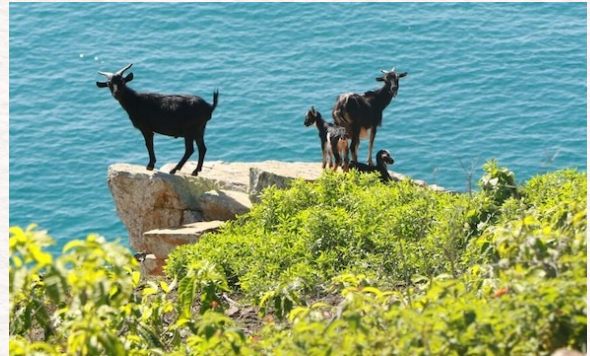


<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-01/calicivirus-kills-large-numbers-of-pet-rabbits-in-tasmania/12409624>

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Pelorus cases



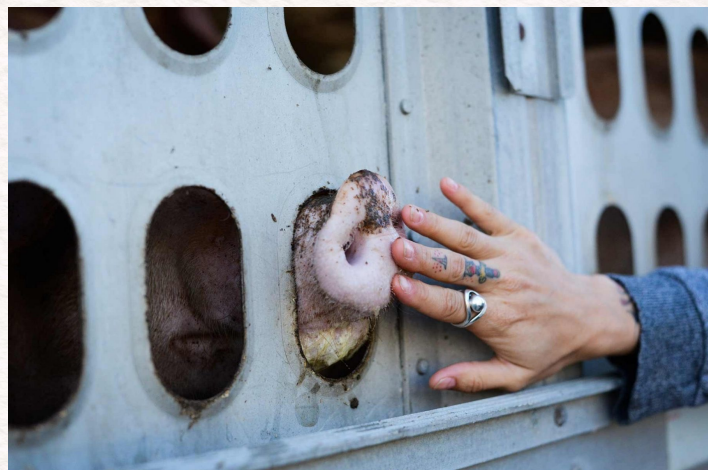
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-07-23/dingoes-set-to-become-pelorus-island-environmental-saviour/7652424>

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'Summoning compassion...' Wallach et al

- Compassion = 'to suffer with'
- "appropriate response to suffering"
- "moral virtue"



<https://joannemcarthur.com/we-animals/>

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CC diagnosis

1. Instrumentalism
2. Collectivism
3. Nativism

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Instrumentalism

- Tool: valuable for some end
- Intrinsic: valuable for its own sake
- Treatment with respect vs.
- “*expendable means to conservation ends*”



<https://www.bookyourhunt.com/en/Tour/9297>

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Collectivism

- *“prioritizes the group over its individual constituents”*
- *“wildlife individuals viewed and valued as instances of their type, rather than unique and distinct” individuals*

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Nativism

- Introduced species don't belong
- *“deep-seated ideologies about how nature should be”*
- Justify violent removal

wiki



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Pro tanto tenets reflecting compassion in Wallach et al

1. **First, do no harm:** generally avoid harmful interventions, exercise care
2. **Individuals matter:** animals have intrinsic value
3. **Inclusivity:** irrespective of rarity, species, nativeness etc.
4. **Peaceful coexistence:** avoid aggression and violence; prioritize nonlethal and non-invasive conservation strategies


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CRITICISM

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'Disastrous do-nothing approach'

- Griffin et al., 2020; Hayward et al., 2019
- Hampton et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2019
- Lethal and other harmful methods essential
- CC portends ecological disaster

CC response?

- Supports various non-lethal/harmful methods and exploration
- Harm/killing on occasion with deep regret? (Batavia et al 2020)



ABC TV

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'Animal rights in disguise'

- Callen et al. 2020
- Not what it appears to be
- Liberation "*dressed up as conservation*"

CC response?

- Perhaps we should recognize animal rights

**ANIMAL
LIBERATION
NOW**

**THE DEFINITIVE CLASSIC
RENEWED**



PETER SINGER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY YUVAL NOAH HARARI, AUTHOR OF SAPIENS

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'Compassion is problematic'

- Griffin et al 2020
- Reliance on emotions not reason
- Disregard for consequences

CC response?

- Morality includes emotion e.g. to appreciate cruelty and injustice
- Reasoned compassion
- Consequences matter

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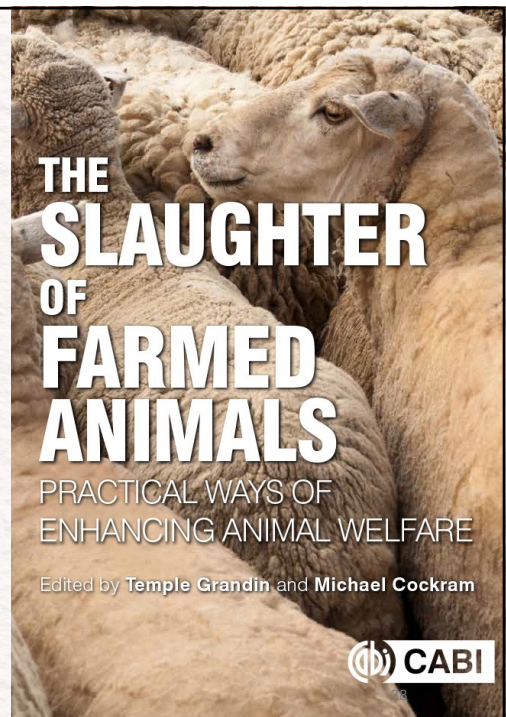
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'Animal welfare ethic'

- Ngaio J. Beausoleil 2020
- Accept human uses of animals
- Avoid 'unnecessary' harm
- e.g. less painful killing

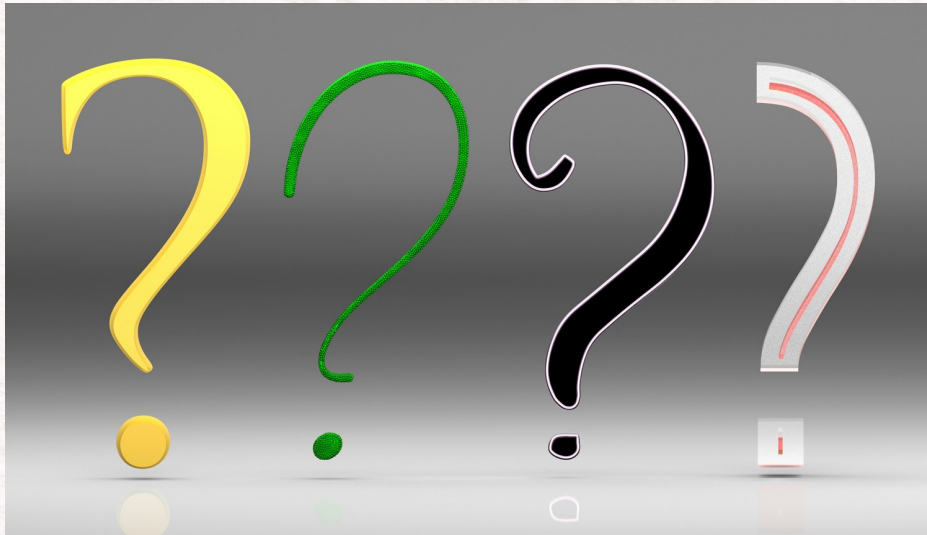
CC response?

- Duties to animals is the Q at issue
- TC involves injustices or cruelty



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Further questions



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What conservation methods do CC support?

- Rewilding?
- Fencing?
- Tracking? (e.g. drones)
- Aversion? (e.g. repellents)
- Fertility control? (e.g. genetic)
- Captive breeding?
- Translocation?
- Support certain predators?

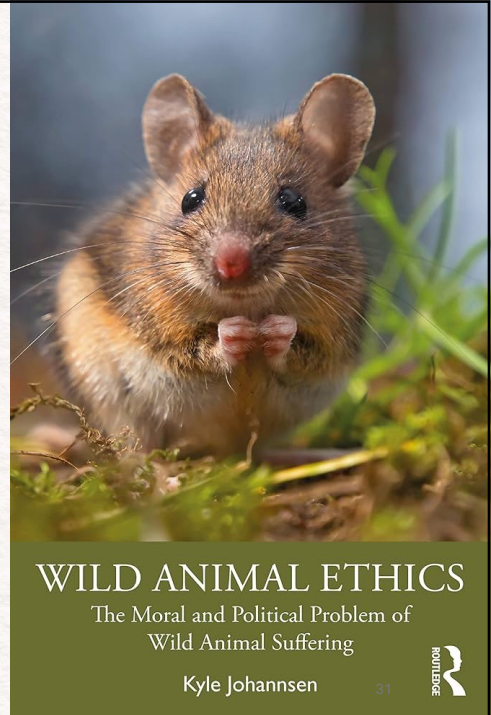


<https://www.westerndownsqueensland.com.au/experience/tours-trails/wild-dog-barrier-fence>

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What about 'natural' harm?

- Horta 2017, Katz 2024
- Suffering in nature: predation, disease, starvation
- Duty to animals in 'healthy' ecosystems?
- 'Foreign aid'
- Supplemental feeding?
- Natural disaster relief?
- Veterinary care?
- Removal/modification of predators?



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Convergence?

- Many TC care about welfare
- CC value non-sentient nature
- Agreement about some evidence
- e.g. lethal control without strong evidence of efficacy, clear goals
- Public opposition

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Sticking point?

- Moral status or worth of animals
- Animal ethics (e.g. speciesism)
- Environmental ethics (e.g. intrinsic nonhuman value)
- Need for further dialogue?



ANIMALS
AND THE MORAL COMMUNITY

MENTAL LIFE, MORAL STATUS, AND KINSHIP

Gary Steiner

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<https://cup.columbia.edu/book/animals-and-the-moral-community/9780231142342>

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