Abstract - Coghlan

Wild animals, welfare and ethics: Traditional versus compassionate conservation

What are our obligations to wild animals, introduced species, and their welfare? Traditional conservation tends to prioritise the protection of wild animal and plant species and environments over the welfare of sentient animals, such as those from introduced and non-native species. Traditional conservationists believe that harming and killing sentient animals that are ecologically damaging is often justified, even when the suffering caused is high and the numbers of animals killed is large. Recently, a movement in conservation biology called 'compassionate conservation' has challenged this traditional practice. Compassionate conservationists argue, controversially, that conservation should abandon strategies that involve deliberate killing and harming and instead find alternative ways of protecting plants and animals. This presentation will discuss the traditional conservation vs. compassionate conservation debate. This will allow us to appreciate some of the difficult issues and topical disagreements related to ethics and welfare in contemporary conservation.

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Revision #3
Created 2025-02-13 05:07:15 UTC by Admin
Updated 2025-02-13 06:00:22 UTC by Admin