

**Title**

Kenya's Conservation Militia: Elephants, Poachers, and Ecotourism

**Teaching Notes****Author**

Caroline Appleton

**Abstract (no more than 300)**

This case study is focused on the decision hundreds of Kenyans have made in recent years to take up and use weapons in order to protect wildlife and develop an ecotourism economy. Ian Craig helped found the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) non-profit organization in 2004 and through NRT he has helped arm hundreds of wildlife rangers who have the legal right to shoot poachers on sight. This right is exercised with the intention of transforming the communities' economies into the profitable, equitable, and sustainable (environmentally and socially) form ecotourism is promised to bring – if done right. Students analyze the conservation militia's decisions using normative ethics, environmental ethics, population data for the endangered African elephant, and ecotourism impact resources. This case study can be used in undergraduate environmental studies, conservation biology, environmental ethics, sustainable development, and other related courses. The intention is to introduce normative and environmental ethics, practice argument thinking and writing, and allow students to self direct part of their research. Recommended readings and in class resources are provided. Significant effort was taken to make all resources come from free sources.

**What course(s) is this case appropriate for?**

This case study can be used in undergraduate environmental studies, conservation biology, environmental ethics, sustainable development, and other related courses. It is designed to be an introduction to normative and environmental ethics for students outside of these fields.

Notes are also made showing how this case study could be expanded for more depth of analysis appropriate for graduate courses and for the differences between using this in an environmental ethics versus other courses.

This case study is designed around three class sessions of 50 minutes.

**What level is this case appropriate for?**

This case study is designed for introductory to mid-level undergraduate courses. It could be used at the beginning of the semester to introduce themes, at the middle to exercise skills acquired in the class, or at the end to provide a condense case to conclude the semester.

**SES Learning Goals**

1. Ability to describe a socio-environmental system, including the environmental and social components and their interactions.

2. Ability to co-develop research questions and conceptual models in inter- or trans-disciplinary teams.
  - a. Ability to identify disciplines and approaches relevant to the problem.
  - b. Ability to develop research questions and methods in interdisciplinary teams.
  - c. Ability to communicate across disciplinary boundaries.
  - d. Value different ways of knowing and understand the value of different knowledge sources.
  - e. Ability to identify potential users of and applications for research findings.
3. Ability to find, analyze, and synthesize existing data.
  - a. Ability to identify data sources and appropriate tools, evaluate quality of data, and manage data.
  - b. Understand the different kinds of data and research methods used by relevant disciplines in the natural and social sciences.
  - c. Ability to integrate different types of data (interdisciplinary integration).
4. Ability to consider the importance of scale and context in addressing socio-environmental problems.
  - a. Understand that ecological and social processes often vary across differing contexts, including space, time, and conditions (e.g. economic or political).
  - b. Understand that ecological and social processes interact across different scales.

### **Topical Areas/Keywords**

Normative ethics (virtue ethics, deontology, and consequentialism)

Environmental ethics

Endangered species conservation

Ecotourism

### **Introduction/Background**

This case study uses the founder of the Northern Rangelands Conservancy (NRT) non-profit organization based in Kenya, Ian Craig, to illustrate a changing but highly controversial environmental ethic of endangered species conservation, poaching, and ecotourism supported communities.

A background in ethical theories is required for the analysis of the case study. If this taught in an environmental ethics course, then the background is probably not needed. For environmental studies, conservation biology, sustainable development, and other related courses, the background is probably needed. A few basic slides for this are included in the provided PowerPoint. Readings are also provided.

For more depth on normative ethics – that is readily available and of high quality – read the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy’s entries for the three major and competing normative ethical theories: virtue ethics (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue/>), deontology (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-deontological/>), and consequentialism

(<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/>). For ethics, read the SEP entry on environmental ethics (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/>).

**Learning Objectives:**

- Become familiar with the different competing and synergistic values in the decisions made by Ian, his rangers, the NRT conservancy communities, and poachers using different normative ethics and environmental ethics.
- Gain an understanding of how ecotourism takes place within a socio-environmental system
- Gain a deeper grasp on argument structure via relating facts and values to conclusions in long and short form, crafting objections, and countering objections. See homework #2 and rubric for clarification.

**Classroom Management**

**Session 1 – Introduction**

15 min	Introduce topic (ppt – see notes for slide 1) Watch video Review/briefly introduce normative ethics and environmental ethics (if needed)
10-20 mins	Individual reading
5 mins	Small group discussion around questions – walk around and guide
10-20 mins	Whole class discussion around questions

If students are not familiar with normative ethics and/or environmental ethics, assign the following short readings. The pdf is included.

Copp, D. (Ed.). (2006). Oxford Handbook to Ethical Theory. Oxford: Oxford University Press. “Environmental Values” section, pg. 375-377 and “Value Theory,” pg. 381-384

The final assessment tool is to have students write out their ethical argument for whether the conservation militia’s decision to kill a poacher to protect an elephant is justified at the end of the case study. It is encouraged to tell students this is their ultimate learning goal for the case study.

Permalink to NYTimes article with video (*provided in ppt*)

<http://www.nytimes.com/video/2012/12/27/world/africa/10000001868554/a-poachers-redemption.html?smid=pl-share>

**Student handout**

See attached handout sheet. It has the case’s background, questions for in class discussion, and the homework prompt below.

**Homework 1**

See student hand out document.

Homework due at least 1 day before next class session so teacher/TA(s) can evaluate for next class discussion. This evaluation can be formalized by points or made informal as a completion grade. Either is acceptable. The in class discussion, blocks of analysis, and selection of readings to offer or assign help guide what the answers should be. The point is to use this a way to make students think through their first steps towards the larger homework #2 and help teacher/TA compile all sources and provide to class via web component of course.

**Session 2 – Research Sharing**

<i>10 mins</i>	<i>What kind of data did you find?</i>
<i>10 mins</i>	<i>What kind of data did you want but could not find?</i>
<i>10 mins</i>	<i>Are all different ethical arguments in conflict?</i>
<i>10 mins</i>	<i>Which ones are and which ones aren't?</i>
<i>10 mins</i>	<i>Which values do you think are more important than others?</i>
<i>10 mins</i>	<i>How did this research relate to your view on whether it is justified to kill a poacher to protect an elephant?</i>
<i>20 mins</i>	<i>Individual research and work on final ethical argument assignment</i>

Use homework 1's results to create a basic PowerPoint showing the types of data found and prime the start of the class discussion. Emphasize that all resources are compiled and shared using the web component of the course.

Additional questions to help guide the class depending on the type of course:

- 1) Compare NRT's map to population maps.
- 2) Compare the times that NRT's rangers were away at training and the monthly changes in elephant poaching inside the conservancies.
- 3) Compare NRT's figures of ecotourism revenue going towards the conservancy and other benefits to critiques of ecotourism.
- 4) What ethical guidelines can you think of for creating a conservancy, creating an ecotourist lodge, and creating a community around the two?

**Homework 2: Ethical Argument**

See ethical argument document

**Session 3 – Argument Sharing**

<i>1-5 mins</i>	<i>Does anyone not have their draft? If so, deduct points from the assignment and make them work on it during class.</i>
<i>1-5 mins</i>	<i>Turn in one draft to TA(s)/Teacher and pick up rubric</i>
<i>5 mins</i>	<i>Break into partners</i>
<i>10 mins</i>	<i>QUIET Partners read draft and write comments on paper and using rubric</i>
<i>5 mins</i>	<i>TALKING Share results with partner, TA(s)/Teacher walks around</i>
<i>10-20 mins</i>	<i>Create groups with partners to share results, TA(s)/Teacher walks around</i>
<i>Remainder</i>	<i>Wrap up conversation</i>

Emphasize resources posted online if students need more  
Emphasize that the rubric they used for giving feedback to partner is the grading rubric  
Emphasize using the feedback they received to improve their paper  
Emphasize additional feedback available via office hours and email

## **Blocks of Analysis**

### Normative ethics

Virtue ethics is concerned with the character traits of a person as the object of moral inquiry. For example, a person who sincerely cares about improving the livelihoods of people in their community is seen as virtuous whereas a person who is greedy and irreverent towards the livelihoods of people in their community is seen as unvirtuous.

Deontology is concerned with the sense of duty or obligation of a person as the object of moral inquiry. For example, a person who believes and acts on the belief they ought to protect endangered species is following a deontological ethic that makes them see poachers as unethical.

Consequentialism is concerned with the outcome of a person's decision as the object of moral inquiry. For example, if a person kills poachers and this leads to an increase in the target species population, then the act of killing poachers is justified. But, if a person kills poachers and the target species population does not improve, then the act of killing poachers is not justified.

### Environmental ethics

Natural entities is a simple umbrella term to describe the whole of environmental ethics' targets of moral considerability. A natural entity can be single object, a single species, a single ecosystem, a single ecological function, etc. and any aggregation or combination of them.

Instrumental values are derived out of the use of a natural entity. These are usually treated as having a quantification associated. For example, a tree has instrumental value when used as firewood or building constructions.

Intrinsic values are not derived – they exist in and off themselves regardless of ever being recognized. These are treated as having infinite value. For example, a tree has intrinsic value because it exists and this value cannot be denied.

Anthropocentrism places only people within the realm of moral considerability and makes all decisions of what is ethical and unethical from the evaluation standpoint of society. This environmental worldview, by and large, recognizes intrinsic values in humans alone and appeals to instrumental environmental values. This is the historical position, often treated as the status quo, and a subject of controversy. Environmental pragmatism offers a modification where enlightened/weak/long term anthropocentrism can account a broader range of instrumental values. For example, a tree has instrumental value because it performs the ecological functions of cleaning air for people to breath and habitat for plants and animals to use in a variety of ways.

Nonanthropocentrism has a larger realm of moral considerability than just people. It has many stripes (see below for the two major types) but historically is distinguished by including intrinsic values. For example, when facing the decision of whether to cut down a forest to convert to agriculture, the nonanthropocentrist could argue that the plants, animals, and even the whole ecosystem have intrinsic values that outweigh any and all instrumental values the city could potentially yield, and therefore the land conversion cannot take place.

Biocentrism is a type of nonanthropocentric environmental worldview that includes human and nonhuman living things in the realm of moral considerability.

Ecocentrism is a type of nonanthropocentric environmental worldview that includes parts of an ecosystem including the ecological functions, air, water, etc.

*The specific directions student take for researching their argument can vary. Below is a short list of what is likely to be addressed.*

Economic drivers

ex: build resilient local economy, provide jobs, large mammals attract ecotourism

Societal drivers

ex: purge corruption brought by poaching, reduce crime, promote social stability

Political drivers

ex: the government can't be everywhere, therefore build a distributed nonprofit army

Biological requirements

ex: sustaining large mammal populations requires ecosystem integrity

Ecosystem services – supporting, provisioning, regulating, cultural services

ex: shifting from cattle to ecotourism leads to improving the supporting services like soil production, which in turn provision food and resources, regulate erosion, and promote the cultural values that ecotourism capitalizes off of

### **Assessment**

See homework 2 and rubric documents.

### **Acknowledgements**

This work was supported by the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESYNC) under funding received from the National Science Foundation DBI-1052875. I attended their “Teaching about Socio-Environmental Synthesis with Case Studies” workshop during July 23-26, 2013.

Additionally, this work was supported by the Center for Ethics and Technology (CET) in the Department of Public Policy at the Georgia Institute of Technology.



## References (sorted by type)

### *Media*

Solomon, B. (2012, December 27). A Poacher's Redemption. Retrieved November 29, 2013, from New York Times:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/video/world/africa/10000001868554/a-poachers-redemption.html?smid=pl-share>

### *Data Sources*

CITES. (2010). Monitoring of Illegal Hunting in Elephant Range States. IUCN.  
GRID Arendal. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2013, from <http://www.grida.no/>  
IUCN. (n.d.). Loxodonta Africana Reports. Retrieved November 29, 2013, from Elephant Database: [http://www.elephantdatabase.org/report/Loxodonta\\_africana](http://www.elephantdatabase.org/report/Loxodonta_africana)  
Northern Rangelands Trust. (2013). The Story of the Northern Rangelands Trust. Retrieved November 29, 2013, from  
[http://www.brand2d.com/nrtsite/NRTBooklet\\_Final\\_SinglePages.pdf](http://www.brand2d.com/nrtsite/NRTBooklet_Final_SinglePages.pdf)

### *Ecotourism and Ecosystem Services*

Orams, M. (1995). Towards A More Desirable Ecotourism. *Tourism Management* , 16 (1), 3-8.  
Snyman. (2012). The role of tourism employment in poverty reduction and community perceptions of conservation and tourism in southern Africa. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* , 20 (3), 395-416.  
World Resources Institute. (2008). A Guide to Ecosystem Services: A Guide for Decision Makers. Retrieved November 29, 2013, from  
[http://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/pdf/ecosystem\\_services\\_quick\\_guide.pdf](http://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/pdf/ecosystem_services_quick_guide.pdf)

### *Normative Ethics*

Copp, D. (Ed.). (2006). *Oxford Handbook to Ethical Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. "Value Theory," pg. 381-384

### *Environmental Ethics*

Copp, D. (Ed.). (2006). *Oxford Handbook to Ethical Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. "Environmental Values" section, pg. 375-377 and  
Norton, B. (1991). Chapter 5: Worldviews: A Whirlwind Tour. In *Towards Unity Among Environmentalists* (pp. 74-98). Oxford: Oxford University Press.