Sustainability vs Overexploitation: A Nexus Between Illegal Wildlife Trafficking and the Climate Crisis

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February 2021
Overarching Themes:

- Sustainability
- Development
- Climate Crisis
- Illegal Wildlife Trafficking
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- Endangered Species Act
The Growth of Sustainability

- **Historical Progression**
  - 1798, Thomas *Malthus- An Essay on the Principle of Population*
  - 1968, Garrett Hardin- *Tragedy of the Commons*
  - 1987, Brundtland Commission- *Our Common Future*
  - 1992, United Nations, Rio Declaration on Environment and Development

- **Our Common Future**
  - “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”
  - Mandate- To address environmental issues as well as problems traditionally considered the domain of international law

- **Rio Declaration**
  - “Equitable Global Partnership”- 27 Principles
  - First 4 apply to sustainable development
    - Main theme- Humans are at the center of concern, and policies must incorporate environmental protection to meet developmental needs
The Dark Side of Development

- Difficulties in a growing world

- Government runs on regulatory scheme
  - EPA consideration in 2011
  - Gina McCarthy- Core Theme for 2014-18
The Climate Crisis and Sustainable Development

- **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**
  - Climate crisis is “one of the greatest challenges of our time”
  - “Adverse impacts undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development”
    - Increase in global temperature
    - Sea level rise
    - Ocean acidification

- **Failures in Implementation**
  - **Internationally**
    - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITIES)
  - **Domestically**
    - Endangered Species Act (ESA)
Incorporation of Climate Crisis into CITIES

- **International agreement to protect endangered plants and animals**
- **International trade of wild animals and plants that does not threaten survival in natural habitat**
  - 183 member nations
  - 37,000 nonhuman species regulated
  - Listed by Appendix
    - **Appendix I**
      - Trade permitted only in exceptional circumstances - 3% of all species
    - **Appendix II**
      - Trade strictly controlled - 97% of all species
    - **Appendix III**
      - Request for assistance in controlling trade of species protected in a specific country

- **Decisions reverberate into domestic trade**

**IPBES Report**

- **Five drivers:** changes in land and sea use; direct exploitation of organisms; climate change; pollution; and invasion of alien species

**International Wildlife Trade**

- **Extinction level exploitation**
- **Contravention of CITIES sustainability goals**

**Classification of species under CITES**

- **Appendix I**
  - Trade permitted only in exceptional circumstances - 3% of all species
  - (Example: African rhinoceros - threatened with extinction)

- **Appendix II**
  - Trade strictly controlled - 97% of all species
  - (Example: Orchidaceae - at risk of becoming threatened)

- **Appendix III**
  - Request for assistance in controlling trade of species protected in a specific country
  - (Example: Chilenian toad)

Source: CITES
The Overexploitatitve Nature of Illegal Wildlife Trafficking

- **Wildlife Trade- Specialized area of organized crime**
  - “One of the most lucrative businesses in the world”
  - 4th largest source of criminal earnings
  - 23 billion dollars, annually

- **Mature and complex with diverse customers**

- **Active Network**
  - Spans from Africa to the Amazon, Western Central Pacific, Indonesia and South East Asia with the main destination countries as China, Japan, Western European countries, and North America
  - II- Can be traded with permits
  - III- Ask other countries for support in monitoring trade
  - **Decisions reverberate into domestic trade**

- **Environmental crimes**
  - Cause ecosystem disruption, biodiversity loss, and cripple ecosystem, services
Case Studies
African Elephant- The Well-Known

- **Great Elephant Census**- 375,000 remaining in Africa
  - Ivory Demand
  - Crime on elephants costs Africa 1.9 billion dollars annually
  - Street value of ivory in Asia- 165-188 million

- **Climate Crisis**
  - Land-use changes
    - Reduce size of African habitat 81-97%
  - **Reduces Ecosystem Services**
    - Carbon Capture
    - Seed dispersal

- **90% of elephant mortality is because of poaching**
  - More elephants die from poaching than natural causes
Seahorse- The Mismanaged

- Annual amounts of approximately 150 million caught and sold illegally
  - 24.4% of total marine products confiscated globally
  - Chinese traditional medicine market (TCM)
    - Exhibit antitumor, antiaging, and antifatigue properties and are able to suppress neuroinflammatory responses and collagen release

- Souvenir and Aquarium trade- 1 million each annually

- Although there are seahorse bans, 22 countries supply, some with bans still in place- Thailand and Philippines

- Climate Crisis
  - Coastal reef destruction, deforestation, plastic pollution, ocean acidification
    - Ocean acidification has greatest impact

- Could be functionally extinct in some areas of the world in 25-30 years
Pangolin-The Poster Child

- One of the most illegally trafficked nonhumans
  - All 8 species threatened
  - Reproduce slowly

- Killed for meat and scales
  - Scales used in TCM
  - Everything from breastfeeding issues to arthritis

- Climate Crisis
  - Sensitive to temperature variation
  - Habitat loss
  - Interspecies interaction

- Ranked Class I under CITIES
  - Still poached
    - Amounts tripled 2017-2019
    - 2019- 97 tons of pangolin scales intercepted
Difficulties in Combating Illegal Trafficking

- CITIES - Premiere agreement
  - Conflicting commercial interests
    - Giraffe

- Regulate, not combat

- Organized crime not in purview
  - Low risk, high profit enterprise
  - Expanded portfolio

- Countries cannot adapt quickly enough to enforce
  - Democratic Republic of the Congo

- Multilateral agreements are crucial
Shortcomings of the ESA

- **Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt (END) Act**
  - Enacted in 2016
  - Directs federal agencies to work to strengthen law enforcement, reduce demand, and build international cooperation and commitment

- **US ranks as second largest market for illegal wildlife trafficking**
  - **ESA rollback**
    - Prohibition to consider climate crisis as “foreseeable”
    - Eradicates trade limits for threatened species
    - Allows for more trophy hunting
    - Reduces international cooperation regarding foreign species
Thank you!

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