



Beastly Business

**Centring Animals in Ecocide:
Lessons from biodiversity
conservation for climate breakdown.**

Prof Rosaleen Duffy, University of Sheffield rosaleenduffy@bsky.social

Centring Animals in Ecocide

- 1) Centre animals – what gets missed by focusing on climate change as ecocide
- 2) If we do that then how does that challenge existing definitions of ecocide
- 3) Risks – militarisation
- 4) Alternative harms based political ecology approach



Beastly Business

Part of this paper draws on a collective team effort – especially final part which summarises our paper [‘Harms Based Political Ecology’](#) in Journal of Political Ecology

[Beastly Business](#)



Challenging Ecocide, Centring Animals

Interactions and feedback loops between climate change and biodiversity loss

Should we also define biodiversity losses as ecocide? Eckerlsey (2007) argues that allowing the deliberate killing of the last populations of eg mountain gorillas is ecocide.

- Decentring humans is critical
- Current definitions of ecocide can reproduce problematic ways of thinking – failing to capture the harms and destruction arising from systemic abuse (Mitchell, 2024)



Animal Challenge to climate focused definitions

Who or what is accountable for biodiversity losses

European eel – hydropower is a key threat but is promoted as beneficial for climate

Think of climate – biodiversity interactions instead, in ways that centre the animal as important in its own right



Risks of militarisation

Language of urgency, emergency and immediate action can open the door for militarised and violent tactics

- Force then becomes the option of first, not last, resort – normal acceptable and even desirable (Duffy and Masse, 2021; Ramutsindela, Matose and Mushonga, 2022; Dickman et al, 2020, Ashaba and Marijnen, 2025)
- If extinctions are ecocide then this can create legal duties to intervene – can and have been militarised eg shoot to kill anti poaching operations, coordinating with national armies, private security operators and UNPKOs



Harms based approaches

Hübschle & Margulies (2024): a socio-ecological harms based approach that emphasises community engagement, sustainable use and working with communities to co-design interventions to tackle illegal trade

[Duffy, Hutchinson, Iordachescu and Lappe-Osthege \(2025\)](#): harms-based political ecology which centres animals could more fully capture the threats to animals.



Conclusion

Centering animals in ecocide helps us better understand and respond to environmental crises

Allows for reimagining international politics in ways that means we can reclaim alternative futures (Mitchell, 2024)

Prof Rosaleen Duffy, University of Sheffield rosaleenduffy@bsky.social

