

Nature Crime - How we're getting conservation wrong by Rosaleen Duffy.  
Yale University Press 2010.

Rosaleen Duffy, Professor at the Centre for International Politics at Manchester University and lifelong wildlife enthusiast has produced in Nature Crime a book that will not endear her to the world's major conservation organisations.

It is based on years of meticulous research, field work and observation and written clearly from a pro-wildlife position; nevertheless it challenges many of the nostrums of species preservation, habitat conservation, and eco-tourism, as well as the platforms of many governments with regard to these issues.

Nature Crime is divided into six chapters: The International Wildlife Trade; Global Action, Local Costs; Wildlife Wars: Poaching and Anti-Poaching; Rhino Horn, Ivory and the Trade Ban Controversy; Guerrillas to Gorillas: Blood Diamonds and Coltan; and Tourist Saviours.

Professor Duffy considers the costs of the international illicit and licit market in wildlife, as well as the bush meat trade, the impact of offensive, militarised wildlife protection, which often alienates local populations, the implications of international legislation and bans on differing local situations and wildlife populations, the need to selectively lift the ban on selling ivory, the ways in which global trading in precious metals, gems and minerals such as Coltan threatens endangered animals, and the negative impact of eco-tourism on local environments.

While laudably maintaining a degree of academic impartiality, Rosaleen Duffy's passionate feelings may be discerned in much of what she writes, and the book as a whole has much more power to move and challenge as a result.

One tiny cavil: there are a number of black and white photographs in Nature Crime, all taken by the author, only a few are clear and overall they add little to the text. In addition, the normally exemplary standards of Yale UP with regard to proof-reading and copy-editing take a spectacular and surprising nosedive in this text, an irritant to the author no doubt, but also to the reader.

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