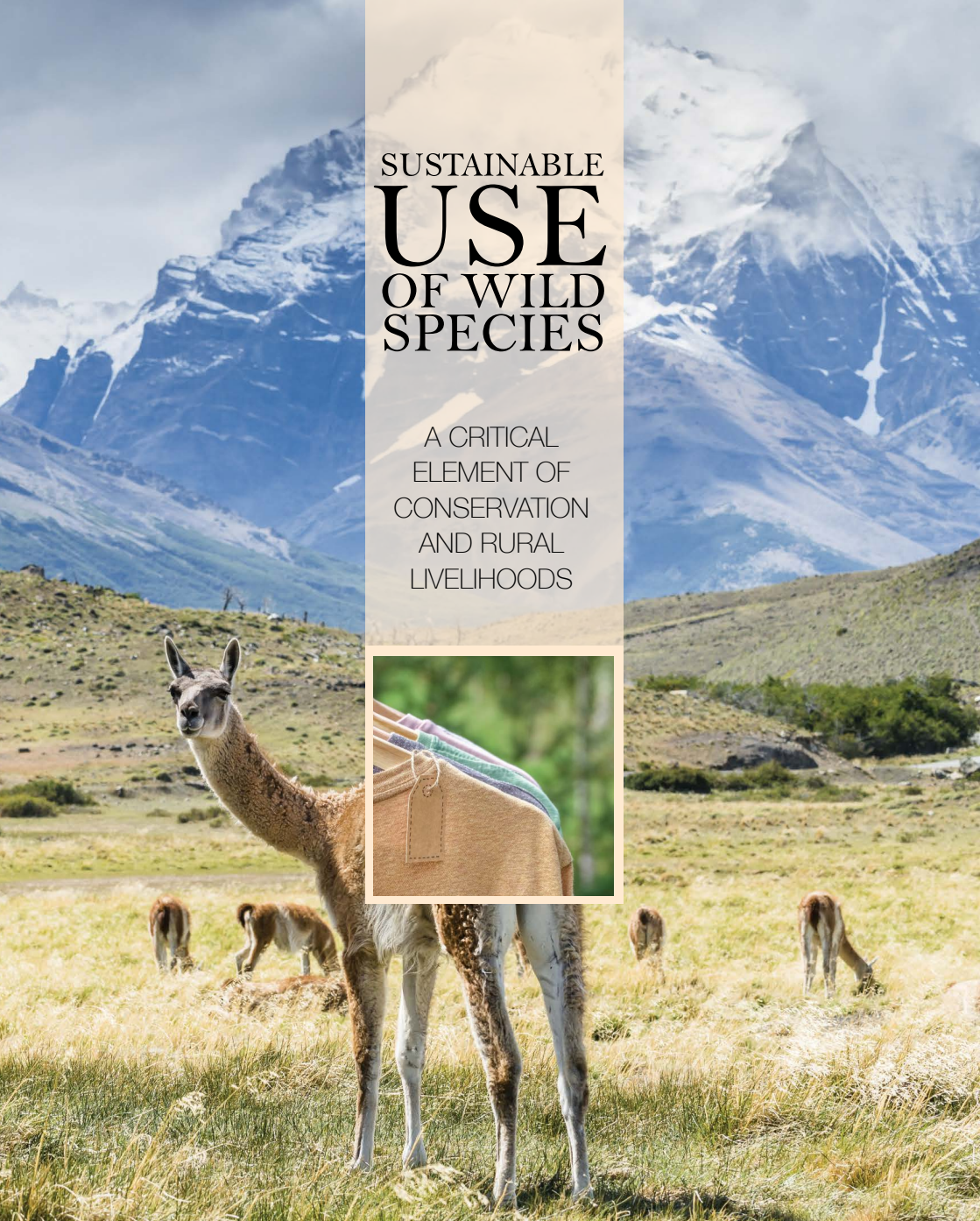


# SUSTAINABLE USE OF WILD SPECIES

A CRITICAL  
ELEMENT OF  
CONSERVATION  
AND RURAL  
LIVELIHOODS



“USE OF  
BIOLOGICAL  
DIVERSITY IS  
FUNDAMENTAL TO  
THE ECONOMIES,  
CULTURES, AND  
WELL-BEING OF ALL  
NATIONS AND  
PEOPLES.”

IUCN Policy Statement on  
Sustainable Use of Wild Living  
Resources (2000)

# What is sustainable use?

Globally, millions of people depend on the use of wild species, including plants, animals and fungi. Use of wild species underpins many local and national economies and livelihoods, and is important recreationally, culturally and spiritually. Conservation of renewable wild resources is paramount and can be achieved through sustainable use.

According to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) sustainable use “entails the introduction and application of methods and processes for the utilization of biodiversity to prevent its long term decline, thereby maintaining its potential to meet current and future human needs and aspirations.”

Habitat loss and degradation is by far the greatest threat to wild species populations globally. Sustainable use can provide the necessary incentives to maintain wild habitats instead of converting them to other uses such as agriculture. It can also provide the incentives for local people to tolerate, and actively steward, dangerous wild animals, despite the significant costs these animals can impose.

Sustainable use is supported by sound knowledge of species and the broader ecosystem, and benefits from governance conditions that incentivise conservation. One of the fundamental characteristics of supportive governance is clear tenure and secure legal rights for local people to manage and benefit from wild resources. This is critical to counter overexploitation, illegal use, and degradation or clearing of natural habitats.



# Types of sustainable use

Wild species can be used in many ways.

**Sustainable use can be classified as either consumptive or non-consumptive.**

"**Consumptive use** is not necessarily lethal if live individuals are removed or only parts and/or derivatives are removed from the specimen."

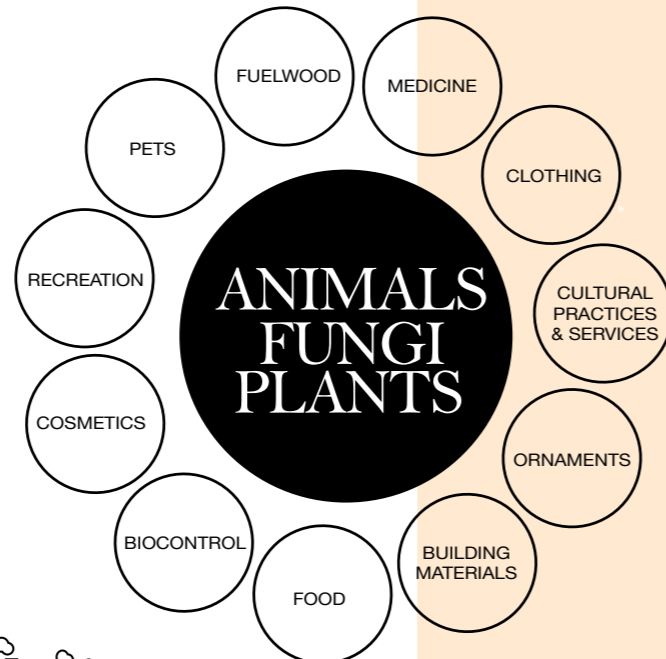
**Non-consumptive use** does not involve the removal of an individual or its parts or derivatives. Instead the wild species is used in its natural environment such as through photographic tourism or bird watching.

"IN MANY CASES, IF NOT MOST, SUSTAINABLE USE IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST ASSURANCES FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES"

Convention on Biological Diversity  
(<https://www.cbd.int/sustainable/>)

"TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY SYSTEMS OF STEWARDSHIP EMBEDDED WITHIN CULTURAL PRACTICES ENABLE THE CONSERVATION, RESTORATION AND CONNECTIVITY OF ECOSYSTEMS, HABITATS AND SPECIFIC SPECIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL WORLDVIEWS"

ICCA Consortium, 2012



## Sustainable use takes many different forms



CONSUMPTIVE		NON CONSUMPTIVE	
	LETHAL	NON LETHAL	
COMMERCIAL	<p>Harvesting and ranching of crocodilians such as for luxury leather trade</p> <p>Harvesting of big-leaf mahogany (<i>Swietenia macrophylla</i>) for timber</p> <p>Commercial fishing</p>	<p>Capture and collection of birds, fish, insects for pet trade</p> <p>Collection of animal fibres and feathers. For example, shearing vicuña (<i>Vicugna vicugna</i>) wool in the Andes for the luxury fibre trade</p> <p>Harvesting of renewable resources for example incense from lansan tree (<i>Protium attenuatum</i>) or sap from wild maples</p>	<p>Establishment of tourism enterprises such as whale watching or wildlife safaris</p>
SUBSISTENCE	<p>Hunting and harvesting for food</p> <p>Traditional, cultural and spiritual practices, such as traditional hunting of dugong (<i>Dugong dugon</i>) and green turtle (<i>Chelonia mydas</i>) in Torres Strait, Australia</p> <p>Use of wild plant and fungal components as medicines</p>	<p>Collection of renewable natural resources including wild fruits, nuts and fungi for food</p> <p>Gathering fallen wood</p>	<p>Harvesting of swiftle nests in Southeast Asia for food and traditional Chinese medicine</p> <p>Hunting with falcons</p>
RECREATIONAL	<p>Sport hunting in Europe, America, Africa and elsewhere</p> <p>Angling</p> <p>Insect collecting and display of preserved individuals</p>	<p>Flower collection</p>	<p>Catch, tag and release game fishing</p> <p>Participation in wildlife tourism</p> <p>Falconry for recreation</p>



## Benefits

There are numerous benefits of sustainable use, including:

### FOR CONSERVATION:

- Can generate a wide range of economic and non-economic benefits, which provide incentives for species and habitat conservation
- Can make wildlife management a viable land use option in the face of competing alternative uses
- Can be an effective element of wildlife population management - both helping keep populations within ecological carrying capacity limits and incentivising recovery of depleted populations
- Can offset the costs of living with dangerous animals
- Can help engender a greater connectedness to nature - including for those who live and work in urban areas

### FOR PEOPLE:

- Can be a critical source of food, medicines, fuel and other basic needs
- Can be an important source of income and jobs - particularly significant in remote rural areas where there are few other options
- Can ensure continued cultural heritage, practices and spiritual inspiration
- Can contribute to improved mental and physical health
- Can contribute to development outcomes, such as building community networks, skills and capacities
- Can strengthen land tenure, resource access, natural-resource management and local enterprise development
- Can provide overall empowerment of local communities.

# Challenges

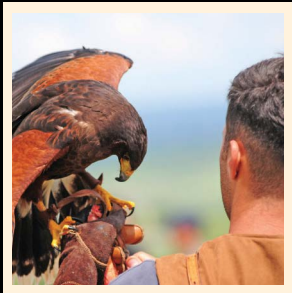
Like many other conservation interventions, limitations to effective sustainable use may include:

- Conflict between local people and wildlife that can compromise willingness to engage in conservation, and may result in wild species being killed in retaliation.
  - 1) human injury and death
  - 2) loss of crops and livestock
  - 3) damaged infrastructure
  - 4) disease transmission (to humans and wildlife)
  - 5) school absenteeism of children to guard crops at home or too scared to walk to school
  - 6) reduced farm productivity for farmers who are spending more time guarding their crops, and other intangible social costs such as stress.
- Lack of capacity and political will (or stability), poor governance and corruption with the result that management and monitoring to ensure sustainability are compromised.
- Unclear or weak land tenure; inadequate benefit sharing, and lack of devolution of power over wildlife resources to local communities with the result that the benefits of use do not reach the local people living with wildlife and thus incentivize them to protect it.
- Poverty - with the result that immediate needs prevent people from managing populations for long-term benefits.



- Limited knowledge on the species to determine sustainability of harvest, especially where species are migratory.
- Polarity in public opinion: Some forms of sustainable use (e.g., hunting) are highly political, and often emotive. This can create barriers to objective, science-based decision making.

# A globally recognised conservation solution



“UNLESS CONSERVATION PROGRAMMES TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE NEEDS OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE USE OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA, CONVERSION TO ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF LAND USE MAY OCCUR.”

(CITES Res Conf 8.3)

Sustainable use – particularly consumptive forms such as hunting - is often assumed to be illegal, underhand or immoral. But sustainable use is internationally recognised as being an important and legitimate element of conservation and has been integrated into many regulatory and policy frameworks. Sustainable use can be a highly successful conservation tool as illustrated by its emphasis in international conservation policy forums. For example:

- Sustainable use is one of the three objectives of the **UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** and recognised as contributing to the achievement of several Aichi Biodiversity Targets and Sustainable Development Goals,
- One of the other two objectives of the CBD – **Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (ABS)** - also relates to sustainable use in that there are many benefits to be derived from the genetic components of biological diversity.
- The **Nagoya Protocol** is a supplementary agreement to the CBD. It provides a transparent legal framework for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources
- The **UN Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)** underlines that *“sustainable use of wild fauna and flora, whether consumptive or non-consumptive, provides an economically competitive land-use option”* and *“unless conservation programmes take into account the needs of local people and provide incentives for sustainable use of wild fauna and flora, conversion to alternative forms of land use may occur.”* CITES has endorsed the CBD definition of sustainable use and the CBD’s Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
- Sustainable use is also an important theme in other multilateral environmental agreements such the **Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)** and the **Africa-Eurasia Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)**.

Finally, IUCN's position on sustainable use stresses that "use of biological diversity is fundamental to the economies, cultures, and well-being of all nations and peoples".

# So, what happens if ...

## Use of wild species is banned?

Banning the use of wild species is often suggested as a response to actual or perceived unsustainable use. Sometimes, this happens in response to political pressure from animal welfare lobby groups. Banning the use of wild species may reduce local support for conservation and remove local incentives to protect wild species. Often the assumption is that a ban will lead to no use taking place. But the reality is that it often leads to illegal, unmonitored and uncontrolled use. There may also be a loss of cultural identity and traditional practices and knowledge; management and conservation initiatives are less effective and often fail without input from local people.



## Use of wild species is not properly managed?

This may lead to illegal, unmonitored and uncontrolled use of wild species. In these circumstances, there is higher likelihood that use cannot be sustained. It is important to note also, that there are still a number of legal but poorly monitored and unsustainable trades occurring, such as with timber, medicinal plants and fisheries.

Therefore it is critical that effective governance systems are in place for use of wild species to be sustainable and to make a positive contribution to conservation and to local peoples' livelihoods. Therefore it is critical that effective governance systems are in place for use of wild species to be sustainable and to make a positive contribution to conservation and to local peoples' livelihoods

### FURTHER READING :

- **IUCN CEESP/SSC Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group (SULi)**

A global expert volunteer network focused on enhancing the role of sustainable use of wild resources in supporting biodiversity conservation and community livelihoods. It was formed in 2012 as a joint initiative of IUCN's Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy and the Species Survival Commission, and brings together a unique array of thinkers, researchers and practitioners from government, intergovernmental, NGO, academic and community background.

- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines**

The Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable use of Biodiversity consist of 14 interdependent practical principles, operational guidelines and a few instruments for their implementation that govern the uses of components of biodiversity to ensure the sustainability of such uses. The principles provide a framework to assist Governments, resource managers, indigenous and local communities, the private sector and other stakeholders on how to ensure that their use of the components of biodiversity will not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity.

**For further information please visit the SULi website**

(<https://www.iucn.org/commissions/commission-environmental-economic-and-social-policy/our-work/sustainable-use-and-livelihoods>)

or contact the **SULi Chair, Dr. Dilys Roe: [dilys.roe@iied.org](mailto:dilys.roe@iied.org)**