

State of the Apes: Killing, Capture, and Trade Webinar Video Transcript

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Asha Tanna: Hello, and welcome to the latest webinar commissioned by the Arcus Foundation, examining the issues threatening the survival of nonhuman ape populations in Africa and Asia.

"State of the Apes: Killing, Capture, Trade, and Conservation" is the fourth volume published by Cambridge University Press.

My name is Asha Tanna.

I'm a broadcast journalist and primatologist, and I'll be your host.

Asha: The displacement of wildlife from natural habitats and the handling of wildlife in human environments makes all species more susceptible to disease.

Never in history has this been more apparent than right now as we live through a health pandemic.

The killing, capture, and trade in endangered and critically endangered apes, as well as other biodiversity, are not only driving them towards extinction but also impacting the health of our planet as ecosystems are disrupted.

This series will specifically be exploring the threats to all nonhuman great ape and gibbon populations.

All species are important, of course, but charismatic megafauna like chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas, orangutans, and gibbons are emotionally appealing apes, and they help to focus and raise awareness about conservation efforts.

In turn, this then benefits not only other biodiversity in those regions but the local communities who live side-by-side with them.

Humans are scientifically classified as great apes.

Studies of chimpanzees in Africa have also contributed significantly to our understanding of human evolution and behavior.

The future of these primates lies in our hands.

"State of the Apes" aims to provide insight as well as potential strategies to try to stem the demand and supply of apes.

The illicit wildlife trade is a multibillion-dollar industry.

It's a sophisticated enterprise often connected to other organized crime with a value estimated to be around \$10 billion U.S. dollars annually, excluding fisheries and timber, and it's happening in nearly every country on the planet.

Eradicating wildlife crime sadly is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and primates are high on the agenda and traded in their millions.

Between 2005 and 2011, roughly

22,000 apes were killed or captured in both Africa and Asia to supply the illegal wildlife trade.

That's almost 3,000 individuals a year, and a single ape can fetch anywhere between \$10-50,000 U.S. dollars.

The devastation caused by removing these species from their natural habitat has a significant economic domino effect.

Habitats destabilize, food security is impacted, tourism is disturbed or destroyed, and it's felt by the world's poorest communities.

During this series, I'll be talking to some of the world's experts about the nature of this vast and sophisticated supply chain.

What drives it?

Who's involved?

What factors have

helped it gather momentum,
and what are the potential
interventions available to
policymakers, to
government agencies,
communities, businesses, and
how do we change global public
perception and mindset
to safeguard the future
of our closest kin?

Also, looking ahead, we'll
explore a subject that's
extremely topical right now,
zoonoses, the transmission
of disease between
animals to people.

This is the focus of the volume
of the next "State of the Apes,"
but, first, let's speak to my
first panel who'll give us
a snapshot of what to
expect from volume four.

Asha: Joining me
are Annette Lanjouw,
chief executive officer of the
Arcus Foundation and head of the
Great Apes & Gibbons
Program; Karen Winfield,
founder and director of

Conservation Analytics;
and Dr. Naomi Doak, counter
wildlife trafficking expert with
the Elephant
Protection Initiative.

Annette Lanjouw, how
do you define
"killing, capture, and trade"?

Are they separate
threats, or are they linked?

Annette Lanjouw: Oh, the
killing, capture, and trade
of apes can be
separate threats or linked
because what it's based
on is the consumption of apes.

Whether they're
being consumed for food,
that can be either
for subsistence,
hunting to feed families,
or for commercial purposes,
selling it on to
other urban centers,
or they can be hunted
for the live capture,
in which case they may use these
apes to sell them on either as
pets or for the entertainment

industry or for private
collections, et cetera.

So it's basically the capture
and extraction of apes from
their natural habitat and the
destruction of social groups in
order to extract
these individuals.

Asha: Naomi Doak, as
someone who's worked on
wildlife trafficking,
what's driving this trade?

Is it all about money?

Dr. Naomi Doak: I
think, at its core,
ultimately, one of the key
issues underneath all of those
is about money.

It's not all about
organized criminal networks.

Particularly, if
you look at gibbons,
for example, which is one of
the groups that I have the most
experience with in
terms of in Asia,
you know, there is a
local consumption, so hunting
with guns is a particular

threat, and most of that is not targeted specifically at gibbons, but, you know, primates, in general, and other sources of bushmeat.

And in a lot of cases then, most of those individuals are used for local consumption.

Now, that could be the individual who hunted them or for that person to sell them into a local market.

Ultimately, that is about money, but it's also about, you know, providing an income for a family and food for a family.

It's not all about organized international trade.

There is a lot of that primarily for the pet market more so than anything else,

particularly with gibbons, and, you know, ultimately, that is about organized criminals who are driven by money.

But, I think, you know, it's more complex than just saying

it's all about money
because, for everybody,
money represents
something different.
While that sits at the
core of a lot of the trade,
it is not as simple
as that may sound,
particularly when we talk
about the international wildlife
trade, because even with those
organized criminal networks,
you know, ultimately, there is
a monetary driver behind the
individual who is the hunter.
I think there are also lots of
other reasons that people are
prepared to take the risks,
particularly when you're talking
about countries with conflict
or limited law enforcement where
wildlife issues are not as much
of a priority as they are as
other criminal activities.
And so the threat, the risk
involved for that monetary
reward can be really
minimal and outweighed.
You know, the return

outweighs that risk.

No one wakes up one

day and just says,

"Right, I'm gonna go and

poach a gibbon or an ape,"

you know, unless there is a

monetary reward behind that.

I think it's complicated also by

resentment for protected areas,

you know, displacement

of people in the past,

you know, perhaps, you know, a

level of dissatisfaction with

law enforcement efforts around

protected areas or limited

access, but you don't wake

up and want to take the risks

involved with capture and

killing of these animals

purely because you're annoyed

that the park is there.

There needs to be

something more than that and,

more often than not,

that extra bit is money.

Asha: Karen Winfield,

Naomi Doak spoke there about the

illegal trade, but apes

can be traded legally.

Can you explain how that's possible and also how that's also being exploited?

Karen:

Yeah, so under CITES, international trade is allowed for noncommercial purposes.

So if you're a zoo, you can trade to another zoo for breeding purposes or for educational purposes as long as there's not a primarily commercial purpose to that animal being traded, and so this is the way that savvy wildlife traders also get around it.

We had instances, when we were doing work in Indonesia, where brokers would say, "Just find yourself a zoo that is willing to act as and we'll be able to send that animal to you that way.

That's the most risk-free way because then it's actually legally being exported."

So that is one way that apes are being transported out of Asia into the UAE, in particular.

There's a couple of zoos that act as brokers in that area.

Asha: Annette Lanjouw, the demand for apes clearly isn't ceasing at any stage.

Why do people buy apes?

Annette: I think there's a number of different drivers behind the ape trade.

I think, first, one thing that's important to say is that all apes, whether it's the great apes or the smaller apes, including the gibbons and siamangs, are endangered or critically endangered everywhere where they are found, and so any hunting or capture is--from the wild--is illegal, and they are protected in every single country where they are found to occur, but they are hunted, and in some places, they are hunted for food or because they are problem animals and could come into somebody's field and destroy their crops or steal the fruit from the fruit trees,

or so on, so
they--you know, for a farmer,
they can be quite
destructive and problematic,
so in that case, there may
be an incentive to kill them.

And apes are large
animals, so if you shoot an ape,
you generally have a lot of
meat on that animal as well,
so it can be a
desirable food source.

The live capture is, of
course, driven by other needs.

People either keep them as
pets--young apes can be
very cute and very manageable
and sweet and affectionate,
and people like to
have them around.

They're amusing
because they're like humans,
and so they're comical, and so
people enjoy having young apes
around as pets.

As they get older, they
become less manageable,
very strong, sometimes
extremely dangerous,

and so then they are no longer
as cute and useful
to have as pets.

And an ape is a
long-lived animal.

They can live for many decades,
and so you can only keep them as
a pet, really, for the
first few years of their life,
and after that, they are put in
cages or chained to a tree or,
you know, kept somewhere,
where they can't harm people.

There's other uses
of apes as well.

Tourists like to have their
photographs taken with an ape,
a small gibbon or
a baby chimpanzee,
in their arms.

And that has fueled quite a
strong demand for young animals
who then, after a
couple of years of work,
get put in a cage or killed
or got rid of in some way
or another.

And then there's the extraction
of apes and the live trade

for zoos,
unaccredited zoos, circuses,
entertainment
facilities, safari parks,
and there's increasing demand
for apes because they're an
important draw for the public,
and people like to see apes and
so zoos and safari parks and
attractions like that like to
have apes on display, and
so that's another driver
of the live trade.

Asha: Habitat loss, we know,
is the biggest threat to all
biodiversity, and there is
urbanization among people
as the population is growing.

Are we in danger of
losing touch with nature,
and how do we reach people?

Karen: Well, I've just come
back from two weeks in
Coral Bay, so I don't think
there's much chance of me
losing touch with nature.

I get out there
as much as I can,
but as a society as a whole,

I definitely think

that is the case.

When you can see it

through the pandemic,

at the moment, we wouldn't be in

the situation we're in now if we

had a proper connection to

nature and we weren't consuming

nature at the rate that we

are and exposing ourselves

to zoonotic diseases.

Dr. Naomi Doak: It is tough when you

look at a lot of the countries

where these species originate.

You know, I think there is an

issue with the countries that

are--or the cultures and the

groups who are the primary

consumers, but I

think also, you know,

though, that's a very different

audience to try and connect back

to nature, than, say, the

individuals who are

removing these animals.

And, if we're talking

mostly about the pet trade,

for example, how you

change that behavior,

how you provide economic incentives not to engage or to report criminal activity or to really connect with and value these incredible, you know, resources, this biodiversity and these species that ultimately I think we are all stewards of, you know, I think, in a lot of those countries, you know, they're still not at a point where nature conservation is even remotely on the list of priorities because, particularly, at the moment with the impacts of the pandemic, you know, just surviving is the priority.

And it is incredibly hard to ask, to see it, sort of, from a privileged position and ask other people to put that--put nature first, and I think being able to explain the benefits and the importance of biodiversity in

nature to people in ways and
language and that resonates with
the things that are important to
them, you know, the
understanding that not everybody
sees what we see when we
look at one of these apes.

You know, not everyone
sees the qualities and the
characteristics that we value.

No, they see
something very different.

And, you know, we have to be
able to understand that and
think and put
ourselves, as cliché as it is,
"in their shoes" and understand
what is really driving,
you know, their willingness
to engage in these activities,
and how do we address those.

Asha: Annette Lanjou, as
Naomi has mentioned there,
the rural communities are some
of the most poorest and the most
desperate, but, of course, you
also have privileged communities
that drive the killing,
capture, and trade in apes.

People are scientifically
classified as apes,
but this word "ape" is not
commonly used in the
English vernacular.

Is that part of the problem?

Annette: I think part of
the problem is how you actually
frame it, you know, and I
think now Naomi said some really
important things just now when
she talked about how humans see
themselves as separate from
nature and that nature is there
for humans to exploit.

And I think the fundamental
problem with framing is this
idea that it's "humans and
animals," when actually
humans are animals.

We are great apes just like
chimpanzees and gorillas and
bonobos, and orangutans, and
we are more closely related
to chimpanzees, for example,
than chimpanzees are related
to gorillas.

We are part of nature, and we
need to look at ourselves

as part of nature.

Very often the problem for conservation and the problem for wild animals or natural habitats isn't the local people who are there.

Yes, they might be extracting, and they might be hunting and cutting down some trees, but the real problem is the demand for resources from countries far away, these rich countries that have an insatiable desire and hunger for resources that can only be extracted from countries where there is high biodiversity.

And so Europe and the U.S. and many other parts of the world are entering into forests in the tropical belt of Africa and Southeast Asia and extracting timber, extracting minerals, extracting all the resources that they need, cutting down trees, planting monocultures of various agricultural products, whether

it's palm oil or cocoa or
rubber, or whatever else
it may be that we need,
and we are extracting it,
and in that process,
we are feeding ourselves at the
cost of the local communities
who have lost the land that they
needed to live from and who have
therefore been pushed deeper and
deeper into poverty and pushed
to margins where they have to
also exploit and extract and
destroy resources in
order to stay alive.

Many of the people who are
hunting apes in Africa are not
hunting them because they don't
care about the forest or because
they don't even see the
importance of the forest.

They are hunting because they
need money in order to pay for
a malaria cure for a
child that is sick,
and the only way to get medicine
from a pharmacy is if you have
cash, and the only way to get
cash is to sell something that

somebody wants to buy for cash,
and that can be meat or a pet
chimpanzee, or
whatever it may be,
so they are trapped
into a cycle that is also,
again, about money and
about this need for
keeping ourselves going.

The big challenge that we have
is that we don't value nature
and don't see ourselves as part
of nature and don't see that,
by destroying nature,
we destroy ourselves.

And so this
hunger for resources,
this hunger for constantly
extracting and economic growth
as this thing that we
all believe has to happen,
and we keep growing and
growing and more and more,
and there are limits to
what the planet can produce,
and there has to be,
at some point,
the realization in this
intelligent species that we

think we are, that there is a
limit to how much we can grow
and how much we can extract
before we destroy it all.

And that really is what's
required for conservation
to effectively take place.

Now, we focus on protecting
areas and helping people find
alternative livelihoods
that don't destroy nature,
that don't destroy
wildlife populations,
but that understanding has
to happen locally and in
the countries that are driving
this extraction of resources
from across Africa and Asia.

Biggest threats are
habitat conversion.

It's the cultivation of crops
on areas that used to be forest,
whether it's for food products
for ourselves or food products
for the meat industry that we
also have this insatiable hunger
for, or whether it's
for other resources,
minerals that we need for cars

or mobile phones or whatever it
is that we need
these minerals for.

So that's a little bit the
very, very big picture of the
conservation challenge
that we're faced with.

Asha: Thank you to my guests
Karen Winfield and Naomi Doak
and Annette Lanjouw for their
insight on the overview of this
latest volume of
"State of the Apes."

Asha: The illegal trade in
live apes is a sordid business
involving many
players and big spenders.

It is primarily profit-motivated
to supply the demand of exotic
pets and provide subjects for
the entertainment industry in
zoos, circuses,
and safari parks.

This growing multimillion-dollar
commercial enterprise operates
on an international scale.

Weak law enforcement and
corruption in host nations make

it easy for traffickers to abuse
loopholes in trading live apes.
Nonhuman primates are highly
social creatures and live
in large family groups.
To abduct just one live
ape, usually an infant,
is a very violent and traumatic
experience for any surviving
apes, as group
members are killed,
trying to protect the target.
All great apes are classified
as endangered or critically
endangered, and while this
illicit trade is widespread,
this is not the
case for prosecutions.

Asha: Joining me to discuss
the live ape trade are
Karmele Llano Sánchez, founder
and program director of
IAR Indonesia
Foundation;
Emily Drani, co-founder of the
Cross-Cultural Foundation
of Uganda; James Wingard,
co-founder and legal director of
Legal Atlas; and Annette

Lanjouw, chief executive officer
of the Arcus Foundation
and head of the
Great Apes & Gibbons Program.

Karmele Llano Sánchez, you've
been in Borneo for 20 years,
running a rescue rehabilitation
and reintroduction program.

Can you share some of your
findings as to how the apes
end up with you?

Karmele Llano Sánchez:

Yeah, well, I have to say that,
when we talk
about illegal wildlife trade,
we sometimes we forget
about what factors are actually
driving this trade.

And what we see here in Borneo
is that most of the times,
those orangutans or other
animals that end up in
the wildlife trade, it's because
they have lost their habitat.

And deforestation is
a major driver of
illegal wildlife trade.

So we see a lot of
opportunistic hunting

and opportunistic pet trade.

People might end up finding an orangutan, really, in the back of their garden because, you know, the orangutans are being pushed to enter in villages and enter plantation, raid crops, and that comes with another problem which is conflict.

Human-orangutan conflict is just aggravating because of the fact that orangutans are losing their home, their habitat, and sometimes these killings of orangutans is just the reason because they are raiding crops and because they are being a problem for communities that depend on those crops to feed their families.

So it's not wonder that they retaliate against orangutans.

Sometimes when these orangutans happen to have babies--and these babies end up in the trade or kept as pets usually in very

poor and awful conditions like
chained up or in small cages,
so those are the orangutans
that end up in our
center for rehabilitation.

Asha: Emily Drani, there
are cultural differences between
attitudes of people
in Africa and in Asia.

What about your experiences
of this trade in Uganda?

Emily Drani: In Uganda,
we--we're hosting about 5,000
chimpanzees and about
400 mountain gorillas,
and the cultural significance of
especially the chimpanzees is in
relation to them
being totemic animals,
so they're linked to
particular clans and totems,
but in some cases, they are
used for traditional medicine,
especially for bone setters.
We have a medicine,
cultural practice,
traditional medicine
practices around bone setting,
and in that, they use the

bones of chimpanzees because
chimpanzees are known
to be quite strong,
and there's a belief
that, if you use their bones,
then the healing
process will be quickened,
but then they also use the bone
which is crushed and mixed with
other substances to
make traditional medicine.

So, but very
similar to Indonesia,
you'd not find the chimpanzee
"hunters," as we call
them traditionally.

They have been exposed
because of deforestation,
so chimpanzees were not
even seen some years ago,
but now, because
of deforestation,
they are more exposed, and
there's a lot of crop raiding,
and they're
actually in the community.

And, of course, the question is
"How do you protect chimpanzees
that are outside

protected areas?"

So the cultural

value attached to them,

on the one hand, is protective

because they're associated with

cultural identity as

totems, but on the other hand,

they're also seen as part

of traditional medicine.

They've been very rare

and quite difficult,

I believe, to access previously,

but now that they have been

exposed, the risk of them being

used for medicine or targeted

for hunting or

being caught in traps,

which are set for

antelopes and, you know,

small animals like

warthogs, is higher.

It's also opportunistic.

You would not find necessarily

market for the body parts of

a chimpanzee in Uganda--maybe

across the DRC because we are

neighboring the

Democratic Republic of Congo,

where the tradition of actually

eating chimpanzees and primates
is much higher than in Uganda.

That's a practice that many
would say is not an indigenous
practice here, but
because of migration and,
you know, assimilation,
the values are changing,
and the culture
is also changing.

Karmele: Yeah, I think what's
a really good point about
the primates in this
case--orangutans being outside
of conservation areas
because, in Borneo,
we have up to 70% to 80%
of the population outside
of conservation areas.

That means that these orangutans
are in places like concessions
that belong to big
corporate--some of them
multinational--companies, and
it's becoming more evident that
the role of these big companies
in protecting these populations,
these 70% to 80% of the
population of orangutans

is very important.

Asha: I'm gonna come back to that question a little bit later in more detail, but, first, I want to ask Annette Lanjouw, there's still a lot of ignorance around the pet trade.

We've talked about opportunistic hunting, but from a consumer point of view, there seems to be a sort of disregard for those laws because, after all, all of the apes are protected, but people are still driving the demand for infants.

Annette: Yes, and it's very difficult to disentangle how much of it is opportunistic, how much of it is deliberate, how much of it is a byproduct of hunting or hunting is a byproduct of a desire to obtain young apes for the live trade.

Mainly, the live trade is focused on very young animals because they are

more manageable.

They are smaller.

They can be used either as pets
or in entertainment facilities
if they are shipped abroad
or in captive situations.

It's much easier to handle a
young ape than it is to handle
a adult or even a
juvenile or adolescent ape.

So I think the trade in live
apes is very much focused on
young animals, and it isn't
always clear whether those were
young animals that were taken
off of an adult when they were
hunting adults or killing
adults because they were problem
animals, as both Emily
and Karmele mentioned,
and were in conflict
with these animals,
and then they
take--they have the baby,
and they keep it as a pet for a
few years before they realize it
doesn't make a very good pet.

But there's also a live trade
that is very focused and very

deliberate and where buyers
are identified in advance,
and money is exchanged, and
hunters go out to capture apes,
and that is to fuel an illegal
trade that is for circuses,
entertainment facilities,
pets, exploitative use
in tourism industry.

There's a whole range of
different uses where these
animals are
found, and so, again,
that, then, is very deliberate
and focusing specifically on
finding and
capturing young animals.

Asha: James Wingard,
legislation around wildlife
trade, both legal and illegal,
we know have been exploited by
criminal syndicates
to fuel global markets,
but is it a utopian
idea, do you think,
that the law can be
changed to a gold standard?

Some conservationists argue that
perhaps we simply just need

to follow the cash flow.

James Wingard: Well, no,

I don't think I would

agree with that statement.

I think that expecting that

the law is going to answer all

questions is also unreasonable,

but that doesn't mean that

the law can't be

substantially improved.

There are--just listening to

the examples that everybody's

talking about, what you'll

see, if you look at the law,

is a fair concentration on

certain parts of the trade

chain, almost to the

exclusion of the rest of it.

So you'll see in every single

country something about hunting.

All of these species, as

everybody's mentioned,

are expected--well, are

protected--except for some

gibbons in some

of the countries,

but, otherwise, they all

have a protected status.

But what you won't see is any

regulation dealing with
the online advertising.
You will see very little that
actually regulates how
they're managed in a
captive-bred circumstance.

You won't see regulations
dealing with pet trade
hardly at all.

So there's substantial
room for improvement,
but we shouldn't
expect, of course,
it would solve all problems.

The law is not meant
to do that, of course.

It's meant to, you know, give us
the best playing field and the
best foundation
that we can hope for,
but then, ultimately, there are
many other things that need
to come into play.

Asha: Emily Drani, we talked
about opportunistic hunting,
and we know that habitat loss
and growing human settlement is
creating more human-wildlife
conflict issues.

But often, these demands are driven by the wealthiest of nations for resources.

Does the focus need to target consumers more when we come to conservation messages?

Emily: Yes, I--just going a little bit back to what Karnele said, in terms of the larger investors in Uganda, we have, you know, investors who come in and are given large tracts of land, and they want to establish commercial farms and especially sugarcane, and in the process, they actually destroy large tracts of forested land where there are chimpanzees, and the question is about their corporate social responsibility because that is not taken into account because they want to be given incentives to invest. So, if we're looking at the question that you raised about the consumers, in Uganda, the consumers would be these large

investors who come with--which
government
cannot turn down.

At the same time, they don't
follow the guidelines in terms
of restoration of the
forest cover that is destroyed.

The ecosystems, of
course, are not protected,
and as a result, they are
also partly responsible for the
exposure of the chimpanzees
and also the breaking of forest
corridors where you find the
pockets of chimpanzees that end
up getting marooned
in different small,
forested areas
because, you know,
large chunks of the forest
have now been turned into
sugarcane plantations.

Asha: The openness,
however, Annette Lanjouw,
is more apparent
if we look in Asia.

China's leisure industry is
the second largest in the world,
valued at \$450 billion

U.S. dollars

according to

OC&C Strategy Consultants.

What can be done to manage
profit over conservation?

Would criminal sanctions written
into legislation in prosecutions
of ape trade make a
difference, do you think?

Annette: It's very possible
that that kind of sanction would
have an impact, but I think the
real strategy has got to be
a combination of
different factors,
and punitive sanctions is going
to be one piece of a solution,
but it's only one piece,
and as James has said,
it's really important to make
sure that it focuses on the real
people that it needs to focus on
and not just the people who are
surviving and who are engaged
in these activities
for subsistence reasons.

I think, though, in the
example that you've given on
entertainment facilities, what's

really important is public perception and the sense that this is okay to see orangutan boxing matches or to have a selfie taken with a gibbon sitting on your shoulder, or whatever the exploitative use might be of the ape.

And I think, at the moment, what we're seeing is a very significant change in China as well as other parts of Asia as to how acceptable it is to see these things and to go to facilities where you are seeing animals being exploited.

As public perception changes and as people's tastes change and they feel like "This is no longer okay," then the profit margin goes down, right?

Then people don't make money from it anymore, and that will change.

That will lead to huge changes in how this is done.

It takes time, and there's a lot of animals that are suffering in the meantime, but I think it's

a real issue of looking at the demand and changing perception, changing attitudes, changing behaviors with respect to the demand.

One thing I do want to really go back to, and Emily touched on this as well as Karmele, about the real challenge for apes across Asia as well as Africa is the loss of their habitat or the destruction of their habitat, and then they end up being captured or in situations where they become problematic for farmers, and so on.

And so the real drivers of those habitat changes are industrial-scale agriculture, whether it's for palm oil or rubber or cocoa or sugar, or other products.

It's extractive industries, whether it's mining or oil extraction or timber extraction, and it's infrastructure development, the

building of roads,
hydroelectric dams, and all
sorts of other infrastructure,
which allows people to enter
into forests and enter into
areas that used
to be very remote,
very distant, and that now
suddenly become accessible and
can be exploited in ways that
they weren't exploited before.

And each of those topics are
subjects of the series of the
"State of the Apes," where
the volume brings together the
expertise of a whole range of
different people to look at each
of those threats as is this
one that we're discussing today,
the killing,
capture, and trade of apes.

And I think what's really
important is that you
shouldn't focus
just on politicians.

You shouldn't focus
just on companies.

You shouldn't focus just
on local communities or

the scientific community.

Everybody needs to be aware of these issues, and everybody has a very specific role that they can play, and it's only when all of those roles are being fulfilled that we can really start talking about sustainable solutions.

And so what's important is examples of best practice, where people are trying to find that compromise that we were talking about earlier of still harvesting resources but in a way that's not destructive to the habitats and the wildlife that are found in there.

And that really is based on the mitigation hierarchy, where you always start with avoiding harm, and then mitigating harm as much as possible, and then restoring where you cannot avoid or mitigate.

And practices of companies and industry, and even people working

on a subsistence level,
with that framework, can
get you quite far in terms
of contributing to
conservation and finding
that appropriate balance.
So I think that's a really
important aspect to take into
consideration and
stronger land-use planning,
looking at those areas of
land that must absolutely be
protected because they are very
high in biodiversity or have
an incredibly important
ecological function to play,
and then looking at which areas
of land can be exploited in
different ways to ensure
that the wildlife can
continue to survive.

James: If I could go
back for one second to,
I suppose, underscore what
was just being said about,
you know, every piece of the
puzzle needing to play a role,
this would be one
of those examples,

but I feel like, you know,
what we have is a problem that
touches on, you know, various
parts of a system as a whole,
but what we don't have is a
system that responds necessarily
as a system.

You have entities, you know,
government agencies that are
all responsible for one part of
it, and they may or may not have
all of the tools that they need,
so one of the solutions needs
to be making sure that each part
that does play a role has
the tools that it needs.

So when it comes to simply
just wildlife trafficking,
one of the tools that
needs to be there is,
you know, related to online
trade and the investigatory
powers that are there, but
as we've also been saying,
you know, habitat
loss is an issue,
and that really doesn't have
much to do at all with the
criminal side or

with the standard,
you know, areas of wildlife
trade law that we've been
talking about.

It's more embedded in
environmental impact assessment
law or even in mining law or
some other extractive industry
area, and do they have something
in the laws that can mitigate
against those issues?

Or maybe it's some
other piece of the puzzle,
but what you don't really have
is a system that then
responds as a system.

You don't have, in
most of the countries,
even a wildlife task force where
they would be bringing together
the various agencies that are
involved so that they can engage
in, you know, the
exchange of information,
whether that's dealing with
confidential information in
the context of a criminal
investigation or just otherwise
understanding the

problem as a whole.

Uganda is one example where they

actually have a wildlife

task force that's in operation,

but in one of the reports that

we did in--prior to the chapter

that we worked on for this

publication, the "State of the

Apes," of the 17 countries that

we looked at, at the time, there

was no legal foundation in

any of them for that kind

of integrating system, right?

I think the last point that I

would make in all of this is

that there's an awful lot of

focus on criminalization when,

really, the vast majority of

what the law can do and what

the problem is really

all about isn't about

criminalizing things.

It's actually about

better management.

It's about understanding what

parts of the puzzle are actually

in play and how do

we give, you know,

the proper mandates to the

various entities that are involved, you know, ranging from things like public awareness to, you know, embedding the mitigation hierarchy in your environmental impact assessment legislation.

You know, those kinds of things all need to be looked at as a whole if we expect there to be a change.

You know, doing one thing in one area is more than likely not going to achieve what we're looking for.

Asha: Thank you to my guests James Wingard, Karmele Llano Sánchez, Emily Drani, and Annette Lanjouw, for their insight on the live ape trade.

Asha: Hunting and meat consumption are considered critical in human evolution. Anthropologists say it's helped with the development of our brain size,

intelligence, learning,
and social behavior.

Today, wild meat hunting
remains integral to many poor,
rural communities
for subsistence,
they need protein
for their cooking pot,
but the commercialization
of wild meat hunting
has a darker side.

It's driving local and
regional extinction in wildlife
populations, including apes,
and it's no longer traditional
hunting methods that are used.

The poachers of today are
armed and bankrolled by criminal
syndicates and are very often
supported by corrupt officials.

The demand for wild meat and
body parts are an international
trade, and it's also intertwined
with the wild animal trade.

For many great ape species,
when adults are killed,
the meat is a byproduct to
gain access to infants
for the illegal pet trade.

Asha: Let's meet our panel
here to discuss hunting for
meat and body parts.

We're joined by Annette Lanjouw,
chief executive officer at the
Arcus Foundation and head of the
Great Apes & Gibbons Program;

Julia Fa, Professor of Biodiversity
and Human Development
at Manchester

Metropolitan University;

Robert Mwinyihali,
urban bushmeat coordinator,
from the Wildlife

Conservation Society,

based in Kinshasa, DRC;

and Dr. Dilys Roe, biodiversity

lead at the International

Institute for Environment

and Development.

Robert Mwinyihali,

I'll start with you.

Give us an idea of what the wild

meat markets look like that you

have visited in DRC and

in other parts of Africa,

and are ape body

parts visibly displayed,

or are they hidden?

Robert Mwinyihali:

It is very clandestine.

It's not open.

It's not open in

the different--like,

in stores, in different markets,

you can see part of buffalos

or--or duikers, or, antelopes

which are--generally

is under the carpet,

under the table,

where people who

have connection, they know this.

They are trying to trade between

them with some knowledge of who

is trading, who wants it, and

these are the way people are

trading bushmeat in--in Kinshasa, in

Brazzaville and the rest of the country--

Asha: Julia Fa, globally

nearly 20% of the threatened

and near-threatened species

on the Red List of the

International Union for

Conservation of Nature,

the IUCN, are directly affected

by hunting--more than

300 mammal species.

Is it time to

militarize protected areas?

Julia E. Fa: I am rather concerned about that as the only or the first solution to the problem.

Some areas could do with better protection or perhaps firmer protection, but I always believe, or certainly the people that work with me, that there must be a way of actually undertaking conservation with the communities that are concerned in those areas.

So I'm very worried about militarization as the first port of call.

Asha: Dilys Roe, Julia advocates for working with communities.

What strategies have you seen work on the ground with local people where you've seen where they have seen wildlife as a benefit?

Dr. Dilys Roe: That's what it comes down to,

finding strategies where people do see wildlife as a benefit and where they really feel that they have a stake in that wildlife and therefore are invested in its conservation.

So one of the most common strategies to use particularly with great apes is tourism because there's a huge demand for tourists to go and see great apes, and they're prepared to pay a lot of money to do so, but one of the challenges associated with tourism is that, quite often, a lot of the revenue doesn't get to local communities, so they still, sort of, fail to see that it's a benefit.

They can see that these apes are making money, but they're not necessarily making money for them.

So one of the things that we've been doing is, sort of, really trying to make sure that local people are able

to benefit from tourism through small-scale enterprises or through other benefit-sharing schemes and to really, sort of, recognize that the people coming to see apes can generate significant livelihoods for them and support their livelihoods in ways that are much more sustainable than getting involved in hunting and poaching.

Asha: Annette Lanjouw, it's very easy to point the finger at rural communities.

Often, it's the poor farmer who needs to feed his family or to sell bushmeat in order to earn money to look after his family again.

But if we look at the bigger picture here, if we look at the illicit trade that is often embedded with crime syndicates, that's where more focus needs to be pushed.

Annette: I think it's important to recognize that apes, great apes and small apes,

are protected in every country
where they're found.

So it's actually illegal to
kill apes anywhere in the world.

So it's all illicit.

However, there is, as you said,
a subsistence demand for meat
and for body parts, which is
driven by people who have very
few alternatives and who are
needing to feed their families
or generate cash in order to
pay for medicine or school,
or whatever it may be.

There's also a more commercial
trade in apes that is fueled by
demand in big urban centers as
Robert was saying--Kinshasa and
Brazzaville, big cities where
there are wealthy people who are
interested in wild meat and
interested and willing to pay
a premium for wild meat.

And then there's a demand in the
diaspora of people living much
further away but where they
still have a cultural attachment
to meat that they ate perhaps
as a child or that they

are familiar with.

And ape meat, as well as other

types of meat have also

acquired a certain prestige.

So because they're expensive,

because they're rare and

difficult to get, it can be

prestigious to serve this meat

at the table, and so people

are willing to pay significant

prices for meat, even in

cities like Paris or Brussels

or Amsterdam or New York.

So it is a trade in both

meat, as well as body parts,

although it's primarily for

the meat that this

commercial demand exists.

Asha: Robert Mwinyihali, the

eyes and the ears on the ground,

are local people, are they

willing to cooperate

with law enforcement?

In other words, would they be

happy to shop people who

they know are known

poachers in the area,

or do they have

difficulty doing that?

Robert: There is this tendency to try to empower local communities for managing their resources in Congo, which is a very good thing because, when the people have some kind of ownership and the customary rights about their natural resources like great apes, that may work. This is what we are doing, for example, in Ituri--to try to promote for this community where customary rights for communities are that people are entitled to have customary rules, customary rights about natural resources, including great apes, but this work-- deal with outsider, you know, for example, in Africa, the poachers are not necessarily people who are within the communities. They are people who are coming outside.

That is where, you know, we have to deal with both communities but, at the same times, working with government and law enforcement because people don't have this capacity to deal with outsider when it comes for poaching within their communities.

This is what I can say.

Asha: It's a very complicated issue.

Julia Fa, there's a term, "a viable alternative"--that is often bandied about when trying to make a change in behavior, but can a hunter ever really be a beekeeper long term?

Is that sustainable?

Julia: I think it's always very difficult to change people's ways of life, but there are examples in which hunters, you know, the adage of hunters or poachers turned gamekeepers.

There are many examples within Africa where, you know, poachers have actually turned to protect areas that

they are responsible for, but
I think there are--you know,
we are making strides in
making--in allowing people to
take what they need from the
land in a sustainable manner
but, at the same time, protect
those lands against people
coming in to poach their game.

As Robert says, the issue
sometimes is and many times
is that there are outsiders
coming into your land
and trying to take
what the land gives you.

I think it is incredibly
important to allow these
communities of both indigenous
peoples as well as rural
communities to use the
resources within that land
in a sustainable manner.

As Annette says, you are not
allowed--it is prohibited
to hunt certain species,
and I think,
in general, most
communities do protect or,
rather, not hunt

great apes and all that,
but we must allow them to
take enough from the land.

Asha: Dilys Roe, data
indicate that poorer households
derive a higher proportion of
their income from hunting and
consume significantly
more wild meat.

What strategies can
be used to tailor,
I suppose, or not necessarily
change behavior but maybe
to raise better education
amongst local people as
to the types of meat
that they're using and
how they go about hunting?

Dr. Dilys Roe: Quite often, I think
it's not really about education.

Quite often, people
are driven by poverty
and wild meat is the only source
of protein that they have.

So you can give them as
much education as you like,
but if there's
nothing else to eat,
there's nothing else to eat.

But I think it, quite often,
isn't poverty that's a driver of
wild meat consumption, and I
think that's something that we
really need to think more about
when designing initiatives that
are intended to try and
reduce that hunting
and that consumption.

And quite often, wild meat
consumption is driven by
cultural and
traditional practices.

It's also driven
by health concerns,
I mean people think that certain
species are more healthy and
other species carry diseases.

So, you know, sometimes
if you offer livestock,
for example, just as a
straightforward swap for the
protein that they
get from wild meat,
they'll decline the livestock
because they perceive it
as being unhealthy
compared to the wild meat.

So, really, it's absolutely

critical to understand,
you know, what are the drivers
of wild meat consumption and not
just assume it's because people
are poor and there's nothing
else or because
they're ill-educated,
but, really, to understand
in each specific context,
is it your culture?
Is it to do with the fact
that you just want food
from somewhere?
Is it that you're hunting
because you need money and
you're trying to sell that meat?
And then you can better design
your initiatives to respond
to those specific drivers, but
a lot of these projects fail
because they don't
understand those drivers,
and they make lots of
assumptions about what they are,
and they're quite
often wrong assumptions.

Asha: Annette, picking up on
what Dilys Roe has said there
about, sort of, engaging

with traditional and cultural
institutions, should that
then be prioritized
over law enforcement?

Annette: I don't think we
should grab one strategy
and say, "This is the strategy
that is going to solve
all the problems."

I think both
Dilys and Julia said,
you know, this is a question of
finding a number of different
strategies and adapting
the different strategies
to the specific circumstances
that you are confronted with,
and I think you need to
have, as Dilys was saying,
a real understanding of what
the drivers are because
it can change from one
village to the next or
from one household to the next.
One person might be hunting
because they need to sell the
meat because they need cash, and
it's the only thing that they
have that they can sell

because, many of these places,
agriculture is very poor, and
there aren't many other things
that they can sell for cash--so
something that can be converted
into money so that
they can buy medicine,
can be a very strong driver
for going out into the
forest and hunting.

For somebody else, it may
be a question of choice.

They like the taste of meat,
or they believe that meat is
healthier than
domesticated animals.

And, for another, it may be
because it's a tradition to hunt
at this time of the year or
at this season or at this age.

In some places, young men go out
and hunt because that is what
they do at that age at
that moment in their life.

And so you need to
understand what the drivers are,
and then you need to find out
what are the ways in which
you can, in a way

that they agree with,
change behavior, so
whether it's changing practice,
whether it's education,
whether it's law enforcement,
or whether it's providing
alternative sources of animal
protein so that they can feed
their families or sell meat at
markets and convert it to cash.

Asha: Robert Mwinyihali, we
know that corruption in many
of these regions where
great apes exist,
as well as gibbon
populations, is pretty bad.

How hard is it to try and
tackle this problem through
the judiciary, and should we be
looking at better record keeping
and educating the law
enforcement about the importance
of trying to save these species?

Robert: It is not necessarily
law enforcement which works.
It needs to b--to work hand
with hand with other aspects.

For example, in Ituri,
we are trying to work

with different hunters.

Working with hunters, it means that to try to understand who are they, what they're doing, and try to work with communities for what we call the management of the land.

It means, for example, outside of wildlife reserve, we are working with communities to create what we call forest communities, local forest communities.

This is where we are trying to implement governance in hunting with these communities.

Within Okapi wildlife reserve, we are trying to do--what to do--the zoning.

That means that we are setting apart where hunting will be authorized with special method to avoid--to try to increase the sort of governance within this protected area.

So it means that, when people are outside the norm, outside the rules, they can be inside,

punished or sanctioned according
to rules where people
set it themselves.

This is the way we are
trying to work with communities.

Asha: Thank you to my
guests Robert Mwinyihali,
Julia Fa, Dilys Roe, and Annette
Lanjouw for their insight
on hunting for meat
and body parts.

Asha: Cyberspace is the
biggest 24-hour market
on the planet.

Anything can be bought or
sold in a matter of seconds.

It is also the perfect breeding
ground for all types of criminal
activity, including the
illegal wildlife trade.

The internet is also
notoriously hard to police,
but investigations have found
that those very same algorithms
actually connect illegal
operators faster than it
takes moderators to

disable their content.

Presently, there's no law that forces big tech to hand over its users' content to law enforcement.

Accounts are simply shut down, and those same users are then free to open another one.

Social media is also the fastest way for members of the public to share news or images.

Popular content can be seen millions of times over on various platforms in all parts of the world.

Becoming a viral success is what most everyday users aspire to achieve.

Cute images and videos of exotic species with people holding them as desirable and attainable mascots. This is contributing to the demise of wild populations.

Asha: Here to discuss the relevance of how social media is impacting the killing, capture, and trade of apes
are Valentina Stackl, senior communications specialist

at Greenpeace USA;
Dr. Liana Chua, reader
in anthropology at Brunel
University in London;
and Dr. Sian Waters,
IUCN Primate Specialist Group
vice chair of the
Section for Human
Primate Interaction.

Welcome to all of you.

Liana Chua, I'll start with you.

Smartphone usage in developing
countries is often a lifeline
of communication for
many communities.

The figures are
quite staggering.

In Asia alone, 870
million people use Facebook.

One billion
people use Instagram.

That's a massive audience.

Evidence has suggested that
most sales are initiated
through social media.

Do you think the illicit
trade in apes has
weaponized the internet?

Dr. Liana Chua:

Yeah, thank you.

That's a really interesting question, an interesting way to describe the role of social media and this particular trade as well.

I think it has, to a certain degree, in the sense that, as you noted earlier in your introduction, social media in particular has specific viral properties and certain algorithmic properties that really, sort of, come together to generate the certain kinds of images but also misconceptions about what apes are in a way that they can actually then very easily fan demand either for apes themselves as pets, for example, or encourage certain kinds of encounters that people then desire in various ways.

For example, if you think about, you know, people's desire to go and hug or get into close proximity with

cute apes, cute orangutans at
zoos or entertainment centers,
it's much, much easier now than
it was in the past to actually
find examples of
these and to, sort of,
feel the sense that you are
entitled somehow to move into
the--to try and find ways of
facilitating these encounters.

And I think there's also
this question of how the use
of social media and the
use of smartphones,
in particular, have
just made it much,
much easier--we could even say,
democratized access to illegal
trade markets in rural areas
which are the areas that tend
to feed this demand for apes,
for various other animals that
really shouldn't be taken
out of their environments.

And so, yes, you
could argue that,
because of this
combination of virality,
because of the

algorithms of social media,
it's now made it much easier for
both buyers and suppliers to get
in contact with each other
either indirectly or directly
through various
networks and to, sort of,
facilitate this trade.

But having said that, I think
I'd also add that social media
can also weaponize or can
also be weaponized in quite
a different way, which is that
it can also be used in various
ways to disrupt those
sorts of movements,
that kind of trade.

And I'll give you a
really quick example.

This isn't directly
related to trade itself,
but there
was--just a few days ago,
there was this
incident on Facebook,
on Indonesian
face--not Facebook--YouTube,
I believe, where a
bunch of young lads,

you know, in a rural area in Sumatra, filmed themselves basically manhandling a monkey, a-- mitted leaf monkey, which is endangered, on this riverbank, and I think it was very much, you know, part of this wider attempt to go viral, to get lots of "likes" for what they were doing. They were basically having a laugh and having a great time. Now, what was interesting was that, after this went onto YouTube, it went viral, it got its "likes." It also then received a huge backlash from various members of the public who actually saw this and thought, "Actually, this is not right." And so they were then instrumental in reporting this particular incident, and, eventually, these guys were tracked down by the wildlife

authorities and arrested.

So I think that's another really interesting example of how, you know, social media doesn't just get weaponized to facilitate illegal movements of animals.

It can also be weaponized in very different ways to disrupt those sorts of movements.

Asha: Liana Chua painted a very graphic image there of the backlash that can come when people feel that wildlife is being "messed with," I suppose you could say, but there is--we all have a responsibility to wildlife, and that can sometimes come in the form of memes--love them or hate them--or with celebrity images with exotic animals that can be re-tweeted or shared millions of times over.

These are very commonplace on social media.

Why is this a problem?

Some people might argue that those images are just a bit of

fun, unlike the
incident that was described.

Is this an opportunity for
conservationists to use
social media as a platform to
drum home a stronger message if
they are unhappy about these
types of images being used?

Valentina Stackl:

Yeah, absolutely.

I think this is a really
interesting question 'cause
let's talk about
memes for a second.

So everybody kind of
is familiar with memes.

It's usually an image with some
text that conveys some sort of
feeling or some sort of story,
but if you really boil it down
to its essence, a "meme"
is what we like to say,
"a unit of culture," culture
that then gets spread from
person to person through
sharing on social media,
through our phones,
through WhatsApp groups,
and what's important

to realize is that,
in humans, we understand the
world around us through stories.

And if memes are tiny stories
that make sense of the world,
if we, for example, see apes
dressed in cute human outfits
or especially human
and ape interaction,
we begin to
understand that as desirable,
as normal, as
something that's attainable,
and that's where
the danger lies.

But actually, I would like to
use another example of something
that's more of a viral video.

I think there are so
many examples of this,
especially about cute animal
stories and things like that,
but I don't know
if you remember,
a few years ago, there was a
baby chimpanzee that was rescued
from the Democratic
Republic of Congo,
and the video

that was posted was,
I believe, a pilot and
this--holding this baby chimp
as he's flying away from,
you know, the chimpanzee's
original habitat.
His parents had been
killed by poachers,
and he's sort of holding this
baby chimpanzee and kissing him
on the head, and this
video had millions of views,
and it was actually
posted by the sanctuary,
I believe, where the
chimpanzee ended up.
So what is the issue with that?
Of course, it was
probably well-intentioned.
It probably got a lot of
attention about poaching
of chimpanzees in that region.
But what that also did
is--let's look at the story.
It's a classic
hero's narrative, right?
The pilot is the
hero in the story.
He's saving the

chimpanzee from poachers.

But as soon as you introduce
this human-to-ape relationship,
the viewers--this
is what they see, right?

They see that they themselves
could potentially be
the heroes in the story.

They could rescue
apes and chimps,
and that's where the
problems start happening.

There's lots of
other examples of this.

For example, you
mentioned celebrities.

Who could forget Bubbles?

Michael Jackson's chimp even
made into a statue by the famous
artist Koons, and
these kinds of things.

And even today, for example,
Justin Bieber had a very famous
incident with this little monkey
that actually got taken at
the border when he was trying
to enter with it in Germany.

And these kinds of
things teach us and tell us,

as much as we share them online,
that "You too can have a--"
you know, "own a pet monkey,"
and that they make good pets,
that there can be a loving
relationship between humans
and apes, when, in reality,
what needs to be spread is
the message that we need to
protect these animals in the
wild and that this human
interaction with animals
is actually not safe or good.

But that's the problem.

The algorithm and the clicks,
they want the human interaction
with the animals.

They want cute
animals in human outfits.

So how do we
reconcile those two things?

Asha: But, Liana Chua,
I believe you wanted to
comment on that.

Dr. Liana Chua: Yeah, I just
wanna follow up on this,
you know, this question of
what happens to seemingly
well-meaning images that often

get taken by rehabilitation centers, for example, that are, you know, actually trying their very best to do a good job of saving apes or rescuing creatures that need help.

I think one of the problems that I certainly encountered in my research is that a lot of these images and a lot of these bits of video footage can actually acquire very problematic afterlives that these organizations don't necessarily anticipate when they're actually taking the footage.

So, you know, to try and come at this example of the pilot stroking the chimp's head and, you know, rescuing--from the other side, from the perspective of people on the ground, in Borneo, for example, you often get, say, indigenous or rural communities who see these images of orangutans being cared for in rehabilitation

centers by carers, and there
are two things that happen here:

One is that they
think, "Oh, all right,
then, so it's okay
to have, you know,
lots of close human-orangutan
contact because these people are
basically caring for
and loving for the apes.

That's great.

Why can't we do it ourselves?"

The second sort of complication
that often arises is that you
then get the sense of
resentment because,
sometimes in some communities,
especially where there are tensions
is with conservationists
and rehabilitation centers,
they then get this impression
that there are double standards
at play here that, you know,
there are these foreign
conservationists who are allowed
to come in and take care
of these apes and treat
them as pets whereas,
if they, as villagers,

keep apes as pets,
they immediately
get confiscated.

They get into all sorts of
trouble with the
wildlife authorities and
police, and that can,
in turn, breed a certain
amount of resentment towards
conservation, which can be
very damaging in the long run.

So I think, you know, it's
not just about creating
these misconceptions about
being heroes and saving apes.
It's also having very specific
knock-on effects on the ground
in places where these
apes actually live,
and that is a real problem.

Asha: Sian Waters, picking
up on what Liana Chua there,
talking about local engagement
with sanctuaries or wildlife
groups and local communities,
how do we change that narrative?

How do we say to people, "Apes
are worth more in situ than
they are dead or trafficked or

being rescued by celebrities
in their private jets?"

How do we go about doing that?

Dr. Sian Waters:

Well, I think, as primatologists
or people who
are caring or studying primates
in general, I think we must
be very aware and reflect
on our own behavior.

So what Valentina and Liana were
saying about these various memes
that come through, there
are also these problems with
primatologists who have their
photographs--quite well-known
primatologists who have their
photographs taken with--
which gives people the idea that
these primates make suitable
pets as was said.

Any--it seems that photos in
general with a primate in close
contact with a person will make
people perceive the animals as
potentially good pets--in some
cases will see the animals
as not endangered, which
may well lessen support

for conservation in general.

So I think, as primatologists,
we must start to think about
how we are portraying
these primates,
and probably it's better without
human contact unless the context
is extremely clear, for example,
in a veterinary situation.

I think it's difficult to convey
to local communities about the
importance of apes in habitats
and the fact that they don't
make good pets and shouldn't be
trafficked as pets when you have
people in some
rescue centers, who are,
you know, complaining about
trading apes as pets when
they're actually holding
a young ape themselves.

So I think we have a long way
to go within the profession in
order to understand how we
impact on local communities
as Liana said.

I think in some instances, local
communities may well think that
we think, as primatologists,

as conservationists,
that the apes are more
important than they are.
And I think it's absolutely
imperative that conservationists
look at that from a
community's point of view,
and every community
will be different.
All of this stuff
will be place-based.
It will very much
depend on the area,
on the culture of
the local people,
social makeup of
the communities,
et cetera, et cetera, and I
think the other mistake that
we often make is that we treat
communities as an amorphous
mass, as something that isn't
made up of lots and lots
of different groups, and
because, just as ours are,
they're not just a community of
hunters or subsistence farmers.
There are lots of different
small groups in between,

amongst those.

So I think, you know, we need to do our social science research, looking at those communities, understanding where they're coming from and how they understand, perceive, and value primates and apes, in particular, before we can begin to really make any headway in that respect.

Asha: Valentina Stackl, social media platforms are known in technical terms as "the enabler" because they're hosting the content.

There's no--currently, there's no law which makes these platforms provide law enforcement with details of the users who are violating wildlife legislation, and this is because of private policy issues.

Do you think there needs to be more action to lobby more social media platforms?

The fact that they have signed

up to certain pledges doesn't
go far enough?

Valentina: That's

interesting because while,
on one hand, I do think that
the social media platforms can
probably do a lot
more on these issues,
there is, of course, the
issue of culture again,
and as long as we don't change
the culture and the stories that
we tell each other about what is
right and what is wrong when it
comes to these apes, we can't
necessarily get to the goals
we're trying to get to.

And I'm gonna use a
very specific example.

It's very specific to
the West, but Tinder,
Tinder is an online dating
platform that a lot of people
use in the West, and
actually around the world,
that involves a lot of swiping.

I'm sure you're
familiar with it.

Now, how does this relate

to what we're talking about?

For a while there, a lot of
men who were on these websites
started posting pictures
of themselves with tigers.

So there's a lot of
these roadside attractions,
places in Thailand
and other countries,
even in the U.S., where you can
take a picture with a tiger that
is subdued, a baby
tiger, et cetera.

And these pictures
were everywhere,
so much so, that
it became a trope.

These men probably were thinking
that they were portraying,
you know, they were
cool and adventurous,
but what it was turning into
was sort of this idea
that these--this was
sort of ridiculous,
and they were trying
a little bit too hard.

And after a bunch of articles in
The New York Times about this,

et cetera, Tinder
actually put out a blog,
which is not
necessarily enforceable,
but sort of a new policy
requesting that the members
of the site do not post pictures
posing with any tigers or lions,
or any other big cats, due
to the exploitative nature
of these images.

And while I think that the
reason why there is much less
photos like that on that website
now isn't necessarily because
of Tinder's policy.

I actually think it's more
because our culture shifted
around this, and our
narrative shifted around this.

So while originally, sort of,
the meme or the picture of this,
you know, single man with
a tiger was something
that presented desirability,
it flipped on its head, right?

And it became something
that you did not really
want to be a part of.

So I think it's a combination of these platforms changing their policies and also enforcing them, but I think also it's culture that needs to change, and, actually, you know, we can use those same platforms to change that culture and to change the story.

Asha: Primates are found in, sadly, more and more fragmented forests now, and the forests are cleared for a number of different reasons. Many of the reasons are due to big companies coming into habitats to clear either for extractive industries or for timber.

How do we use social media to pressurize big companies to try and stop the problem of apes coming into human settlement because their own home is being destroyed?

Sian: We see primates in a different way to other people.

We assume that other people see them the same way, and we assume that other people will understand our meaning and the fact that we want to raise awareness about primates, without thinking about what those photographs mean to other people when they lose context.

I mean, that is the whole crux of the matter--when they lose context, which they so easily do on social media as both Liana and Valentina have said.

I think we must, before we post a photograph, we need to reflect on how other people will perceive that because it's not about the message.

It's about how that message is perceived that is the most important part of this.

So if the context isn't crystal clear, then I would really, really ask the primatologist concerned, whether they work with captive

primates or wild primates,
to really think about posting
that photograph on a public--
in public on a website, on
social media, or anywhere else.
You know, we all have them.
Keep them to yourself, but don't
post them where they can
go viral and lose all context.

Asha: Thank you to
my guests Liana Chua,
Sian Waters, and Valentina
Stackl for their insight
on social media.

Asha: As the world struggles
to deal with the fallout from
COVID-19, there are still many
unanswered questions about how
exactly this outbreak
started and what was the
precise zoonotic origin.

Following an investigation by
the World Health Organization,
the WHO, it claims the Chinese
wet market in the city of Wuhan
in Hubei Province is still
the most likely place

for the outbreak.

The current novel virus is a timely reminder of the complex links between the health of nature and the health of the human population.

Asha: Our first debate from volume five of "State of the Apes" is on trade, zoonoses, and threats to health.

So let me introduce you to our panel.

Joining me, Annette Lanjouw, chief executive officer of the Arcus Foundation and head of the Great Apes & Gibbons Program;

Dr. Steve Unwin, founder of the Orangutan Veterinary Advisory Group at the

University of Birmingham;

Thomas Gillespie, Professor of environmental sciences and environmental health at Emory University and Rollins School of Public Health;

and Dr. Aili Kang,

director of China strategic engagement for the

Wildlife Conservation Society.

Thomas Gillespie, I'll
start with you if I may.

What exactly is zoonoses,
and can disease transfer
happen both ways?

Dr. Thomas Gillespie:

Thanks for that question,
a critical one.

So, zoonoses are pathogens
that can jump between species

In our various fields, we
use different terms for the
directionality, but in

the most general sense
a zoonotic pathogen is one
that can jump between species,
to us, to humans, or from us.

Asha: Steve Unwin, the
pandemic has had a devastating
impact on public health, but
it's also crippled economy.

One study from the journal
"PARKS" found that countries
undermined conservation
decisions rather than supported
them following the pandemic in
an effort to boost the economy.

Is this a surprise?

Dr. Steve Unwin:

Based on human behavior,
no, unfortunately,
it's not a surprise.

I think, because we're
dealing with a pathogen,
and following from what
has just been said from Tom,
pathogens don't know
direction, and so,
therefore, they also don't
know geographical borders.

And I think, when we're trying
to deal with these sorts
of global issues
such as the pandemic,
we need to just be
better when we're looking at the
social, ecological, as well as
the economic factors 'cause,
at the moment, there is no
cohesive global policy on that,
and the virus doesn't care
whether you are in the
United States or
Brazil or the U.K.
so we just need to get
better at doing that.

Asha: Aili Kang, the

virus started in China,
and as somebody who is
based on the ground there,
the wet markets were shut down
pretty quickly, but what's
the kind of likelihood of them
reopening in the future?

Dr. Aili Kang: I think it's not
really--I'll be very positive.

I think China make
a bigger decision.

It announced the ban last
year in February to ban all
the terrestrial animal
for consumption,
and that is a total ban which
may--there should--won't be
any--let's say, just to clarify,
the wet market is not
only for wildlife.

It's also for some of
those other livestocks,
so I split that separately for
the wildlife related market
for consumption, I
don't think it will be reopened,
at least for another ten
years, because China
suffer for two--twice.

Not only this time
but also in 2003, the SARS.
So I think we will remember.

Asha: Is it slightly cynical
of me to say that perhaps
this trade will be
driven underground?

Aili: Some of those
will be underground,
for sure, because there's
people's design as nature,
but I think the biggest markets
already closed and the illegal
trade, the scale of
illegal trade also,
I think, reduced significantly,
but we should be cautious for
the future while people
start to be not very careful
and forget these big issues.

I think some of those
illegal markets may recover
in a unfortunate way, so
we need to keep an eye
on that seriously.

Asha: Annette Lanjouw, what
role does culture play in
live wildlife markets,
and is it prolific?

Can we change people's behavior?

Annette: I think we

have to understand that,

all over the world,

people hunt for food.

It's not something that's

unique to either Asia or Africa.

In Europe and in the U.S.,

people hunt for food as well.

And so, for many,

in many cultures,

there's a desire for those

foods that are found

in those countries.

Now, in places where

apes occur in the wild,

there are some cultures who

consume apes because

there's a preference for it.

But in many cases, it's also

because apes are relatively

large-bodied animals, and they

can be opportunistically hunted

when people go out

and hunt for food.

And they can capture

an animal that's large,

and it has more meat on

it than a small animal.

So there's always an incentive
to go for the larger animals.
So it's not always that people
specifically hunt for apes
because they want apes.
Sometimes they're
just hunting for food,
and they will capture
whatever they cross paths with.
But apes are, in some places,
either in Southeast Asia or in
Africa, desired because of their
taste or because it's seen
as a prestige animal
that is endangered,
it's rare, it's hard to come
by, and it costs a lot of money.
So it is valued in that respect.
So in those cases, there are
obviously cultural drivers that
are incentivizing
people to hunt for apes.
Behavior change communication,
which is education programs and
communication that is focused
not just on raising people's
knowledge levels but actually
trying to change behavior and
incentivize behaviors that are

less destructive of nature and perhaps even positive and contribute to conservation, are strategies that are used to try and combat the illegal trade and hunting of apes and other endangered species.

So there are and have been a number of successful campaigns that have tried to change people's attitudes and their understanding and their mindset, and I think Aili spoke about the link between the pandemic and the wet markets and how there's now also a greater awareness of the risk of consuming animals that have been hunted from forests, that are wild animals, and the risk of getting diseases.

And so those are all parts of the kind of culture and attitude changes that can have positive conservation impacts.

Asha: Thomas Gillespie, Annette mentioned there awareness--this isn't

going to change overnight.

So when animals are traded illegally, there is a lot of movement and, often, they can be kept behind closed doors or perhaps on display in very close quarters with other species.

What are your concerns about disease transmission?

Thomas: The issue of overlap is critical, so whether you're talking about the diversity of the tropical forest where the apes are residing primarily and the interactions between the many pathogens that are occurring naturally in those systems, the way in which they can be exposed, and then we can be exposed, is one part of this, but then, when we go into these settings where they've been taken out of the wild and that they've been taken into unnatural interactions with other species,

we can see novel opportunities for pathogens to make a jump, that that would be a barrier that wouldn't be crossed in nature because those species may not overlap naturally, or their behaviors in nature would keep them apart, but the process of being captured and being transported and being held may provide unique opportunities for exchange.

Asha: Steve Unwin, we know that the plight of the orangutan and palm oil plantations go hand-in-hand.

That's one prime example, but what other types of human activity can cause disruption to ecosystems in which all species of ape live?

Dr. Steve Unwin: That is a very vast question.

Humans, because we, being the dominant species on the terrestrial--or on the planet in general, have changed how the landscape

looks and how we interact
with all species
in all situations.

So, I know you
mentioned, with oil palm,
there is good evidence
that orangutans can actually,
to a certain degree, coexist in
secondary forest and deal
with oil palm, so they can
be quite, as a species,
relatively adaptive to
these human modified systems.

The problem, however, with
disease and also with trade,
as baby orangutans are sold,
especially are still traded,
is we're just providing
opportunities for interspecies
disease spread, and I know
we've talked about zoonoses,
but I think it's potentially
more helpful to look
at multispecies disease because,
by separating out zoonoses,
the other issues of human
activity and human behavior are,
sort of, forgotten a bit about, and
trade is part of that when

we're talking about things
like food security,
and Southeast Asia is currently
having a huge issue with African
Swine Fever, for example, which
is not a zoonoses but definitely
impacts on the
resilience of the ecosystem.

With orangutans, in
particular, there's an issue
of human-wildlife conflict,
and this is why I think
the messaging needs to
be community-focused.

And following up from
what Annette was saying,
being, it's not
just in education.

It's just teaching people
about what the issues are.

It's getting communities
involved in taking
ownership of situations.

That's the really big challenge
because it's human behavior,
and it's, just, we talk about
the Sustainable Development
Goals and all of that sort
of thing that are done

at a high level.

Without correct messaging and community engagement, then, it's not going to work for all of these different issues that are on the human community-nonhuman wildlife interface, and so, yes, that's--and orangutans are--multiple different sorts of issues are a focus of this because they're one of the symbols of Southeast Asia for wildlife, and so they are frequently in the media, but I think it's more if we can start to serve the message about the multi-species-- how the orangutan fits into that ecosystem, the importance of it as well as where these issues are with trade, then having that integrative message would really help.

Asha: Aili Kang, Southeast Asian culture can be steeped in things like traditional medicine or in mascots and trophies. These all feed into

the illicit trade.

If we go down Steve's road of
looking at engaging communities,
can we engage communities
who don't want to
change cultural behavior?

Aili: I feel

there is possibilities.

I think, first of all, it is
about the outsider need to
respect and to learn why the
culture and--the root of the
culture, and then to have
open discussion about
what is possible because,
no matter I believe,
no matter what culture,
people respect the life,
if people's life,
especially the kids,
their life is
threatened by those diseases,
I think the parents the adult,
will take the responsibility and
will re-thinking about what
is the culture talking about.
So, one side, I think a lot of
culture should be respected,
should not change into the

modern way that we think it
should be, but on
the other side,
an open discussion to look into
the culture to think about
what is good for the people
themselves is the way to open
a conversation, and then
explore the possibility
of the engagement and
to change the behavior.

Asha: Thomas Gillespie, is it fair to
say that this current pandemic
has been a dress rehearsal
for something that could be
potentially more serious if
we don't take the threat
of zoonoses more seriously?

It's sort of created an
opportunity for real change,
but will this
change the status quo?

Thomas: That's what we have
to hope for is change, right?

So it's--we, as Steve
was saying earlier,
we, you know, human nature,
we respond to crises,
and so we have one now.

It provides the
opportunity for us to reflect,
and we rarely have an
opportunity like this
where something--there's
a crisis that's impacting us
collectively, globally, and
so the fact that it's impacting
our families at the local level,
it's impacting our communities,
it's impacting the economies,
it's demonstrating that
we haven't been thinking how
intimately linked all of these
things are to nature and
how much we depend on nature,
that without a relationship
with those natural systems,
we have nothing.

And so I'm seeing a lot
of positive change
and a lot of challenges.

As we heard, some
governments are going back to,
kind of, business-as-usual
approaches as solutions
to rebuilding after this
pandemic, but there are
hopeful signs of shifts, and

the dialogue that's happening
is better than it has ever been
across the silos at the
highest policy levels to the
local level, so I'm hopeful,
and I think we all need to be.

This is our moment.

Asha: Thank you to
Aili Kang, Annette Lanjouw,
Steven Unwin, and
Thomas Gillespie,
for their insight
on trade, zoonoses,
and threats to health, and
to all of the guests who've
taken part in this webinar.

If you'd like to read
more on the subject,
you can buy the book, "State
of the Apes," or download it.

Just log on to
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Thanks for watching.