**ANISCI 5797.05 South Africa**

**Pre-departure Trip Expectations**

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I took this class on Exotic Animal Behavior and Welfare in conjunction with a class this spring on Wildlife Conservation Policy through the School of Environment and Natural Resources. That class concentrated on the history of wildlife conservation and management of wildlife species in North America, with information about Ohio in particular. One thing that will be very interesting for this class is to see how wildlife conservation in North America compares to South Africa. The history of the countries is totally different, as are the species being managed, but a lot of problems, such as overhunting and human-wildlife conflict, are similar.

With that in mind, here are some preliminary thoughts about the learning outcomes:

1. **Identify and evaluate key behavioral characteristics of exotic animals in relation to the animal’s habitat and external influences.**

We did not do much of this in the Wildlife Conservation Policy class as that class concentrated on wildlife law and policy rather than biology. But to make good policy about animals, you need to understand the animals themselves. In North America, wildlife is divided into three basic categories: game species, which are the subject of hunting seasons and regulations; protected species, which are most species; and non-protected species or nuisance animals that can be killed at any time. I would like to see if there is a similar categorization of animals in South Africa.

1. **Characterize the challenges and opportunities of managing exotic animal populations in relation to society expectations, competing domesticated species, government policy, and cultural perspectives.**

One of the most interesting concepts from the Wildlife Conservation Policy class was the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. This model has informed wildlife conservation in North America since the mid-19th century. Growing out of the near extinction of much of our wildlife due to hunting for commercial markets during the exploration and settlement of the United States and Canada, the model rests on the idea that wildlife is for non-commercial use of citizens and should be kept at optimal populations forever. The [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](https://www.fws.gov/hunting/north-american-model-of-wildlife-conservation.html) lists seven tenets:

1. **Wildlife is a public resource**. In the Unites States, wildlife is considered a public resource, independent of the land or water where wildlife may live. Government at various levels have a role in managing that resource on behalf of all citizens and to ensure the long-term sustainability of wildlife populations.
2. **Markets for game are eliminated**. Before wildlife protection laws were enacted, commercial operations decimated populations of many species. Making it illegal to buy and sell meat and parts of game and nongame species removed a huge threat to the survival of those species. A market in furbearers continues as a highly regulated activity, often to manage invasive wildlife.
3. **Allocation of wildlife by law**. Wildlife is a public resource managed by government. As a result, access to wildlife for hunting is through legal mechanisms such as set hunting seasons, bag limits, license requirements, etc.
4. **Wildlife can only be killed for a legitimate purpose**. Wildlife is a shared resource that must not be wasted. The law prohibits killing wildlife for frivolous reasons.
5. **Wildlife species are considered an international resource**. Some species, such as migratory birds, cross national boundaries. Treaties such as the Migratory Bird Treaty and CITES recognize a shared responsibility to manage these species across national boundaries.
6. **Science is the proper tool for discharge of wildlife policy**. In order to manage wildlife as a shared resource fairly, objectively, and knowledgeably, decisions must be based on sound science such as annual waterfowl population surveys and the work of professional wildlife biologists.
7. **The democracy of hunting**. In keeping with democratic principles, government allocates access to wildlife without regard for wealth, prestige, or land ownership.

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is widely credited with stemming the widespread extinction of once-abundant species in the United States and Canada. During my trip, one thing I will be thinking about is whether a similar model of wildlife conservation is at all applicable to South Africa and Africa in general. Poverty is much more widespread in Africa, and a democracy of hunting could lead to extinctions. However, people need to have some stake in keeping wildlife from going extinct.

I also want to consider the public trust doctrine. This is a core legal tenet in the United States, and wildlife is considered a public trust owned by all of us. Many state laws including in Ohio say this directly. Is there any similar concept in the South African legal system? I would like to know more about what the laws in South Africa are regarding wildlife. Also, does the fact that many of these species are on the CITES list of endangered species make a difference in how people think about these animals?

1. **Identify and explain the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence health and well‐being of exotic species and the scientific approaches used to address exotic animal health issues.**

We did not talk about animal health very much in my Wildlife Conservation Policy class – that is covered in other course on biology and ecology. But it did come up, particularly in cases where animal species end up on the Endangered Species List due to disease. For example, the Indiana bat has been decimated by white-nose syndrome. Scientists are working to understand what causes white-nose syndrome and to keep it from spreading.

I will be curious to see if animal species in South Africa are at risk due to the spread of disease, how many animal diseases are zoonotic, and how people can control the spread. I would also like to know if climate change, which is wreaking havoc on seasons and weather systems, if affecting the habits and health of animals in South Africa.

1. **Appreciate the diversity, complexity, and value of alternative exotic animal management approaches on animal and their surroundings.**

This one is going to be most challenging for me, given the uses of animals by humans that I find frivolous, inhumane, and abhorrent. At what point do you chalk something up to culture, and at what point do you draw the line and say it is unacceptable regardless?

Although the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is widely credited with saving species, it is not without criticism. Chiefly, it is based on non-commercial hunting by middle class hunters, yet the number of people who hunt in the United States has been steadily declining, and is now only 5%. Projections are that hunting will continue to decline, so we will need to find another basis for conserving wildlife.

Currently most of our conservation programs, as well as our state Department of Natural Resources, are funded by the sale of hunting and trapping licenses, as well as a tax on firearms and hunting and fishing equipment. This has resulted in a lot of money for conservation and is one reason the United States has so much land set aside for wildlife.

But if hunting dwindles to only a tiny segment of the population, we will need to find another way to fund conservation and staff our state conservation agencies. Many times more people participate in hiking, camping, wildlife watching, and nature photography than do hunting and trapping. We need to find a way to make money for conservation from these activities. Perhaps it is by putting a small tax on equipment for camping or bird watching. A few states have passed a small sales tax for conservation. Maybe we start selling tickets to our state parks. Ecotourism has the potential to generate a lot of economic growth. For example, one bobcat in Yellowstone was estimated to be worth $304,000 a year in spending by tourists who wanted to see and photograph him.

I would like to know if the situation is similar in South Africa and Africa as a whole. Poverty is much more widespread in Africa, and if people hunt, it is probably not for recreation as in North America but for subsistence. If done in small numbers, subsistence hunting can be sustainable, but if widespread, it can lead to extinction of species.

Still, there has to be a way that people in Africa can benefit from ecotourism. Africa has charismatic megafauna species found nowhere else on earth, and people from all over the world spend a lot of money to go see them. It makes no sense to kill off these animals when they can generate a lot more money by being kept alive. However, people near these animals need to have a way to benefit from them, or the people will not value them, and without value placed on these species, they will not be protected.

I hope to hear a variety of perspectives about these issues during my time in South Africa, and to see the problems for myself on the ground.