

A Political Ecology of Security: The convergence of conservation and security in the illegal wildlife trade

The illegal wildlife trade has risen to international prominence since the spikes in poaching of elephants and rhinos (from approximately 2008-2010). This has forged a renewed sense of urgency in conservation, a call to do something to tackle poaching and trafficking before they drive species to extinction. On the surface this seems to be a story about conservation and how it is changing. However, I look more deeply into these shifts and reveal how it is a story about capitalism, the security industry it sustains, and the fundamental restructuring of relationships with nature. In order to understand the growing convergence of security and conservation I develop a new framework for analysis, the political ecology of security, via three key strands of imperatives, framings and logics. The sense of urgency around the illegal wildlife trade has produced a series of important conceptual and practical shifts in conservation, which demand a more through investigation and analysis.