



Book Review

Ragnhild Aslaug Sollund (2019) *The Crimes of Wildlife Trafficking: Issues of Justice, Legality and Morality*. Routledge: Oxon and New York.

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This book is destined to be a work of reference for anyone wishing to approach the study of trade and trafficking of wild animal species. Ragnhild Aslaug Sollund, a major figure in green criminology, has written a book that brings to fruition more than a decade of research on environmental crime, culminating in groundbreaking considerations in the field of justice, legality and morality.

The green criminology, ecofeminist theoretical framework and the chosen terms and concepts of this book—as introduced by the author—reveal a reality different, richer and more complex than the one we view through the lenses of tradition, culture and law: legal or illegal taking of free-born animals from their habitat or poaching is abduction or theriocide. Without these words, we cannot express new critical positions regarding both trade and trafficking that under the umbrella of international and internal legal regulations ignore victims, because they are considered nothing other than property or common goods.

Starting from two case studies—Norway as country of destination and Colombia as source country—Professor Sollund draws together features of both trade and trafficking that severely affect non-human species, creating the fabric for global reflection from a local analysis. Professor Sollund proposes a clear scientific argument based on her empirical research to assess the regulatory framework on the trade and illegal trafficking of species, and a development of it that reaches beyond the fact that the lack of compliance is mostly due to the very limited human and economic resources allocated to its enforcement. Further, the commitment of states is not fit for the production of justice in Colombia, Norway or elsewhere. She is mostly concerned about the victimisation of animals subject to trafficking. She claims rights for them as living beings, whom she calls sovereign, not to be abused, tortured or killed during trafficking, nor euthanised by authorities. The critique of speciesism is the ultimate result since the prevalence of the anthropocentric logic of legal instruments has impeded the recognition of these rights of individuals of species. The CITES Convention, often accused of lacking teeth, is analysed from a critical perspective that reveals problems that its anthropocentric logic had not allowed us to consider: the harm of wildlife trade in species and ecosystems as legal trade promotes growing exploitation and a parallel illegal trade that instrumentalises it for the laundering of species abducted from nature to pass them off as bred in captivity. The transposition and enforcement of this Convention by states show that free-born animals are considered part of species or as a mere

commodity. As a result, due to the lack of provisions on confiscation, the most humane solution provided by national authorities is often euthanasia because returning them to their habitats or keeping them alive in zoos or reserves would be too expensive or plainly impractical for the state.

This reality is assessed from a legal and practical point of view, with the analysis of a valuable set of case law precedents, clarifying statistics and data on confiscation and gendered customs inspections of persons. She conducts valuable and enlightening interviews with experts and national authorities, as well as with offenders. However, she does not provide the questionnaires, something that for scientific and egoistic motives, I missed greatly.

In the final chapters, this reality is examined from a moral and philosophical approach. After a path that the reader walks along with the author, after hearing the voices and being presented with the reality of motives and drivers of all parties involved—traffickers and traders, collectors, professional breeders, poor local people, law enforcement officers, chief executive officers of TRAFFIC and other non-government organisations—we are acquainted with the wide spectrum of crimes related to wildlife trafficking and their modus operandi: from the opportunistic sale to tourists by impoverished farmers to the use of internet by organised crime and ‘disorganised crime’. At the end, the study forces us to take a position on the treatment of non-human species subject to trade and trafficking.

Among the valuable reflections made in this book, the author highlights the need to raise awareness about the problem to fight the lack of knowledge about what is happening and the lack of enforcement of the laws meant to prevent it. Thus, the author relies on education and personal dedication because criminalisation is not always the solution, as lenient judgments in Norway indicate, or failure to comply with laws in Colombia show.

As an international law scholar, and because the book ‘discusses whether internationally agreed measures, such as international conventions, actually help prevent the trade’, I have found a trenchant analysis that has helped me put into new perspectives international and national regulations and their enforcement that are my field of research. Through the lens of green criminology and ecofeminism, the environmental rule of law and governance both at international and national level appear incomplete and flawed because of their anthropocentric perspective. Even so, I do not feel like Saul fallen off his horse on the way to Damascus. I certainly will embrace many of the premises of Professor Sollund in my future academic endeavours in the field.

The revision of the regulation can only be born of academic works of this quality and honesty. Further, it is works like this that lead us—as individuals of the human species—to reconsider our place in the animal order and accept that the change is necessary if we do not want to end up extinguishing ourselves as a consequence of the harm that our actions cause to the planet in the era of Anthropocene.

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