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Book Review

The Subjugation of Canadian Wildlife: Failures of Principle and Policy by Max Foran

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The Subjugation of Canadian Wildlife: Failures of Principle and Policy by Max Foran Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2018. ix + 429 pp. $39.95 paperback.

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Max Foran's *The Subjugation of Canadian Wildlife* argues that wildlife management and, by association, conservation are implicated in discriminatory anthropocentric practices that diminish biodiversity, protected areas, and marine ecosystems and dominate wildlife. Foran links the humancentric speciesism associated with animal domination to Aristotelian and Stoic philosophy and early Christianity. From there, he outlines the historical contours of what he calls the "dominant belief system." This belief system includes a combination of the indirect duties argument, which suggested that humans benefited from extending kindness to animals (Immanuel Kant 1724–1804), and utilitarianism (Jeremy Bentham 1784–1832), which advocated maximizing utility or causing the least pain. This belief system, Foran suggests, later evolved in the early nineteenth century to expand into what is now known as the "classic animal welfare" position. This position advocates pursuing an anti-cruelty policy for animals while maintaining their use to humans. According to Foran, this belief system has not evolved since. Instead, human exceptionalism and entitlement to animal exploitation based on underdeveloped linguistic and cognitive capacities are commonplace.

The Subjugation of Wildlife offers a thorough assessment of the current status of wildlife management and conservation in Canada. Foran offers examples from each of the provinces and territories to illustrate the consistency of the dominant belief system that underlies wildlife policy in this country. In addition to individual species, he lists failures in habitat protection, climate change policy, and the subjective application of wildlife risk markers (e.g., "concern," "at risk," and "extinct"). The introduction provides readers with the philosophical underpinning and overarching argument for the remainder of the book. Here, Foran summarizes the significant human moral and ethical positions that support our contemporary utilitarian/humanist approach to wildlife conservation and management. The goal of this book is, then, to carry readers through the implications of this philosophical approach, the dominant belief system, by visiting these failures in action. Chapter 1 gives a useful account of wildlife policy in Canada; the central figures in the wildlife conservation movement; the dubious relationship between conservation, management, and hunting; and concerns about different management systems. Included in this chapter is a 3.5-page introduction to Indigenous peoples and their role in wildlife management, which, according to Foran, is more of a confounding variable than an asset. Chapter 2 gives an overview of apex predator management across Canada. This chapter provides arguably the most insight into the failures of the management system, showing that it becomes decidedly human-centric regardless of the ecological value inherent in

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these predator species. Unfortunately, this chapter spends a considerable amount of time presenting a poorly researched section on Inuit harvesting and comanagement of polar bears in Nunavut (98–12). Chapter 3 includes a glaring omission: For whatever reason, Foran chooses not to contextualize the decline in mule deer in Alberta and the other prairie provinces by discussing Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), which has been present in Alberta since at least 2005; this was a missed opportunity to discuss the implications of harvesting as a wildlife management policy. Chapter 4, in the second section of the book covering wildlife and habitat conservation, discusses the Species at Risk Act (SARA 2002), the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy (1999), and the challenges of implementing these pieces of legislation in a human-centred management system. Chapter 5 details the threats to various terrestrial and marine habitats across Canada. Chapter 6 summarizes the challenges and opportunities associated with protected areas, with an emphasis on the failures that have allowed human use in and encroachment on these areas. In the concluding chapter, Foran advances the animal rights paradigm by emphasizing a decentred approach to management regimes and wildlife policies. He further advocates a focus on animals as autonomous creatures rather than commodifiable resources and recommends the development of a new human–animal paradigm that recognizes "kinship" with animals.

Three notable weaknesses emerge throughout this book. First, Foran misses a vital opportunity to engage in settler-colonial critiques of wildlife conservation and management. Had he been more sympathetic to Indigenous perspectives and critiques, his analysis would have been more relevant, although, had he chosen to engage a colonial critique, he would have had to admit complicity in the system, which would have contradicted his anti-Indigenous sentiments. Instead, the focus of this book is on a belief system that is dependent on a limited analysis of resource economics and management. Second, the anti-Indigenous sentiments are most unfortunate. When discussing the Inuit harvesting of polar bears, Foran makes a pointed remark about Indigenous concerns getting in the way of effective wildlife management and policymaking (37). He then goes on to claim that "contemporary Aboriginal groups have deep connections to wildlife because of their continuing links to the fur trade, a quasi-subsistence way of life . . . . and the hunting and trapping privileges granted by governments through historic treaty rights" (37). Clearly, Indigenous peoples have had and continue to have pre-existing relationships with nonhumans that predate contact with settlers. As well, hunting and trapping rights are recognized by the federal government and are not privileges bestowed onto Indigenous people. Citing Indigenous animal–relations during the hunt, Foran contends that Indigenous hunters claim that harvesting traditions are built on mutual respect and a yielding on behalf of the animal if the hunter follows proper protocol (39–40). This idea is challenged later when he cites George Wenzel, described as "perhaps the foremost authority on Inuit culture" (109), as stating "This rationalization of 'subsistence' is at best a stretch . . . . Nevertheless, it helps to justify Inuit commercial activity on time-honoured cultural grounds with respect to polar bear pelts, body parts, and guided hunts" (109). According to Foran, Inuit claims to cultural traditions are baseless. He then attempts to strengthen his point by claiming that "Polar bear lives are being sacrificed in the

interests of a subsistence culture in the twenty-first century . . . . The need to kill polar bears to support Inuit culture is overstated" (110). His disdain for Inuit harvesting and culture is clear and unwarranted. Foran claims that the Inuit harvesting of polar bears is a premodern practice that has no redemptive qualities. Important information concerning economic marginality and adaptation is missing from Foran's assertion that the Inuit harvesting of polar bears is unnecessary. Inuit live in some of the most remote and inaccessible regions of the country, and the high cost of living in many communities in the Arctic is incredibly problematic. The subsistence harvest is but one means of meeting the caloric intake needs of the Inuit. Moreover, the adaptation to alternative species such as polar bears may occur because of the risks associated with consuming other species that have become too toxic or have diminished in numbers as a result of climate change. In a final overstep, Foran suggests that "the Canadian federal government [should] commence the process of transitioning Inuit culture from a consumptive to a non-consumptive use of polar bears" (111). This paternalistic and anti-Indigenous sentiment is assimilationist.

Finally, although Foran uses philosophy to provide context for the current state of wildlife as a natural resource in Canada, his recommendation is to adopt a fully realized animal rights framework for wildlife management and conservation. The animal rights position, as opposed to the animal welfare position that relegates animals to instrumental roles, advocates for equality with humans and an abandonment of animal use:

> First, we need to banish our acceptance of wildlife as a renewable resource and instead see them as a trust to be guarded and honoured through a different, kinder, more compatible set of perceptions about living beings in an interdependent world…Second, a recognition of wildlife's autonomous nature could modify the dominant belief system's underlying principles without appealing to arguments about equality, rights, or moral standing . . . . Third, we might rely on the very qualities we see as differentiating ourselves from non-humans. Can we resort to our higher levels of consciousness and ask ourselves what our rational responsibilities are toward those whom we are able to dominate? (287–88)

There are points scattered throughout this book where Foran alludes to the idea of accepting animals as "kin," or "kindred spirits." This idea of animals as relations has deep roots in Indigenous thought. His idea is likely borrowed from this tradition, yet no credit is given to Indigenous thinkers, nor is the idea fully realized in the book. In summary, this book would be beneficial to those who are looking for an introduction to conflicts with wildlife management and conservation in Canada. However, it should be noted that there are significant concerns with the opinions this author holds regarding Indigenous engagement in these realms.