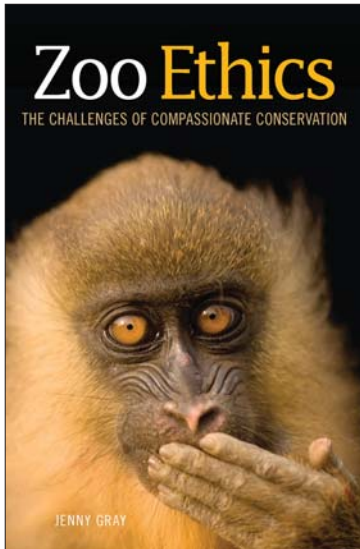


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Zoo Ethics

The Challenges of Compassionate Conservation

Author: Jenny Gray

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About the book

Well-run modern zoos and aquariums do important research and conservation work and teach visitors about the challenges of animals in the wild and the people striving to save them. They help visitors to consider their impact and think about how they can make a difference. Yet for many there is a sense of disquiet and a lingering question remains – can modern zoos be ethically justified?

Zoo Ethics examines the workings of modern zoos and considers the core ethical challenges that face those who choose to hold and display animals in zoos, aquariums or sanctuaries. Using recognised ethical frameworks and case studies of ‘wicked problems’, this book explores the value of animal life and the impacts of modern zoos, including the costs to animals in terms of welfare and the loss of liberty. It also considers the positive welfare and health outcomes of many animals held in zoos, the increased attention and protection for their species in the wild, and the enjoyment and education of the people who visit zoos.

A thoughtfully researched work written in a highly readable style, *Zoo Ethics* will empower students of animal ethics and veterinary sciences, zoo and aquarium professionals and interested zoo visitors to have an informed view of the challenges of compassionate conservation and to develop their own defensible, ethical position.

About the author

Jenny Gray is the Chief Executive Officer of Zoos Victoria and will assume the role of President of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums in 2017. She has held roles as Executive Director of Durban Transport, Head of Corporate Electronic Banking at First National Bank and Chief Executive Officer of Johannesburg Zoo. Jenny recently completed her PhD in Ethics at the University of Melbourne and regularly speaks at leadership and zoo conferences, including a talk at TEDx Melbourne in 2012.

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Educating Ethics

Unlike many things in science, ethics concern those things we value as individuals and as a society rather than facts. This can make it a challenge to teach and evaluate – students often compare their thoughts against ‘correct’ answers, and can struggle to think critically about their own ethical conclusions.

The Australian Curriculum requires teachers from Foundation to Senior Secondary to develop ethical understanding in their students. *Zoo Ethics: The Challenges of Compassionate Conservation* ‘Wicked problems’ can be used to provide you with some ideas and stories to help create contexts for students to apply and challenge their own ideas on what it means to be ethical.

These teacher notes can also act as a guide to provide students with a scaffold for evaluating not just their own ethical values but those of their peers and the community.

Disclaimer

The following exercises and text references could be confronting for some students. Consider student cultural backgrounds and individual education programs before proceeding.

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Curriculum Links

A) Teachers of Foundation to year 10 are required when operating under the Australian Curriculum (v.8.3 ACARA) to provide evidence in accordance with their state authority of having incorporated the General Capability 'Ethical Understanding' into their teaching framework.¹

This capability covers three key ideas:

- Understanding ethical concepts and issues
- Reasoning in decision-making and actions
- Exploring values, rights and responsibilities

These teacher notes will provide example activities that can be used in association with Wicked Problems to address these three ideas to advanced year 10 students.

B) Teachers of Senior Secondary Curriculum: Sciences – Biology, and Earth and Environmental Science, are required when operating under the Australian Curriculum (v.8.3 ACARA) to provide evidence of the following in the form of Achievement Standards.^{2,3}

a. evaluates how each science has been used in concert with other sciences to meet diverse needs and inform decision making; and how these applications are influenced by interacting social, economic and ethical factors

b. explains how each science has been used to meet diverse needs and inform decision making; and how these applications are influenced by social, economic and ethical factors

c. discusses how each science has been used to meet needs and inform decision making, and some social, economic or ethical implications of these applications

d. identifies ways in which each science has been used in society to meet needs

C) Content descriptions that can be covered using these materials:

a. Design investigations, including the procedure/s to be followed, the materials required, and the type and amount of primary and/or secondary data to be collected; conduct risk assessments; and consider research ethics, including animal ethics (ACSB002 and ACSEL002)

b. The use of scientific knowledge is influenced by social, economic, cultural and ethical considerations (ACSB011 and ACSEL011).^{4,5}

¹ <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/generalcapabilities/overview/introduction>

² <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/seniorsecondary/science/biology/achievementstandards#layout=row>

³ <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/seniorsecondary/science/earth-and-environmental-science/achievementstandards#layout=row>

⁴ <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/seniorsecondary/science/biology/curriculum/seniorsecondary#page=1>

⁵ <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/seniorsecondary/science/earth-and-environmental-science/curriculum/seniorsecondary#page=1>

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Exercise 1: Ethical escalator

Ask students to stand in a single group. Write 'Yes' and 'No' on separate A4 sheets of paper and use them to designate two sides of the room.

Make it clear that students cannot ask any questions or converse among themselves. Those who wish to abstain from making a choice may remove themselves from the activity. Any student who talks will be asked to remove themselves from the activity.

Read the following statement to students: You have a gun. An endangered animal sleeps in a cage in front of you – do you shoot the animal?

Ask students to move to one side of the room or the other to answer yes or no.

Proceed with the following statements, explaining students can move to another side or stay in one place.

- An endangered animal sleeps in a cage in front of you, and a zoo keeper enters the cage – do you shoot the animal?
- An endangered animal stands calmly and silently in a cage in front of you, and an adult member of the public enters the cage – do you shoot the animal?
- An endangered animal stands calmly and silently in a cage in front of you, and a young child enters the cage – do you shoot the animal?
- An endangered animal paces aggressively in a cage in front of you, and an adult member of the public enters the cage – do you shoot the animal?
- An endangered animal paces aggressively in a cage in front of you, and a young child enters the cage – do you shoot the animal?

- A non-endangered animal paces aggressively in a cage in front of you, and a young child enters the cage – do you shoot the animal?
- A non-endangered animal runs aggressively at you – do you shoot the animal?

Ask students to volunteer their reasons for changing sides when they did. For those who did not move at all, ask them to explain what the most important value was at that time, such as 'the need to preserve endangered species', or 'the need to save a child's life', or even 'my desire to watch an animal die'.

Invite students to read *The Child or the Gorilla?* Discuss with them whether they felt the actions taken by the zookeepers were actions they support or criticise.

Invite students to also read *When to Say Goodbye?* Discuss with them what 'suffering' means to them – is it pain, emotional distress, absence of happiness? Is it something else?

Discuss with students the value of discovery and developing knowledge, and invite them to develop their own ethical escalator to demonstrate a point at which they would justify the killing of an animal in an experiment.

Take-home message

Ethics take into account values that will take on different priorities as other values come into place.

Exercise 2: Aw, it thinks it's people

Propose the following hypothesis to students: People only care for animals if they can anthropomorphise them.

1. Define for the students the word 'anthropomorphise'.

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2. Discuss ways we anthropomorphise our pets by giving them names, toys and clothing.
3. Invite students to develop a survey that could provide evidence to support or refute the hypothesis.
4. Invite students to read *Killing Surplus Animals*. Discuss with them whether they believe there would be a public outcry if 'Marius' was an unnamed deer.
5. Invite students to read *Should 'Cute' Count?* Ask them how they might encourage society to save cane toads or toad fish if they were endangered.

Take-home message

Ethics in science largely rely on our ability to empathise with the values other individuals, cultures and even other species might hold.

Exercise 3: Polarised pets

A) Divide the class randomly into two equal or near equal halves.

Randomly allocate each half with one of the following statements:

Group A. All non-human animals belong in a wild habitat that they evolved to occupy.

Group B. All non-human animals belong in human care.

Invite each group to develop a marketing campaign that would convince a third party to adopt their extreme position.

Discuss with students prior to their campaign what values in their target audience they could appeal to in

order to win them over. For example, Group A might appeal to anthropomorphisation by asking how their audience would feel if they were enslaved; Group B might appeal to fear of environmental destruction.

After the campaign, ask the students to reflect on how they deliberately considered ways to reach their audience by appealing to specific ethical concerns.

B) Create a line down the centre of a large room using masking tape, with a piece of paper containing statement A at one end and statement B at the other end.

Ask students to stand somewhere on the line to describe their place on the spectrum, taking into consideration our use of animals as companions, entertainment, food sources and in scientific investigation.

Invite students to read *To Touch or Not to Touch?* Ask them whether they personally find value in interacting with an animal in order to learn more about its ecology or biology.

Take-home message

We can learn a great deal by interacting with animals, but it can be hard to draw a line between the rights of our society and the rights of individuals.

Exercise 4: Buck stops here

Ask students to come up with a list of positive outcomes they would like to see society achieve in the future. From their suggestions, choose outcomes that might benefit from economic investment, such as 'curing leukaemia' or 'helping refugees'.

Hand out an equal share of fake currency (Monopoly money or toy currency works well) to every student

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in the class. Reserve an amount of currency for 'the bank'.

Provide 'Ethical Compromise' cheques as options for students. These could include:

- Cause a human to feel discomfort.
- Cause an animal to feel discomfort.
- Cause an animal to die.
- Cause a human to die.
- Cause 1000 people to lose their jobs.
- Destroy 100 square kilometres of habitat.
- Cause the price of groceries for an average family to rise by \$20 a week.

Give each a relative value in currency.

Invite students to 'spend' their money on outcomes they wish to see become realities. They can choose from the Ethical Compromise cheques.

Once they have completed the task, discuss which outcomes received the most investment, and

which attracted Ethical Compromises. Arrange the outcomes in a hierarchy from least investment to most and ask the students to consider them as a timeline from soonest to most distant.

Invite students to read *How Much for the Lion?* Ask them whether there is a price they would consider taking that could justify allowing a hunter to kill for pleasure, or for goods such as ivory or rhinoceros horn.

Invite students to read *More than the Parts*. Ask students what positive and negative consequences might arise from marketing the remains of animals that had passed away in zoos.

Take-home message

Many positive actions in the world exist within a system of economics that can present ethical quandaries.

Teacher Notes written by Mike McRae.