



WILD ANIMAL ETHICS

The Moral and Political Problem of
Wild Animal Suffering

Kyle Johannsen



“Attention to wild animal suffering may be the most important recent development in animal ethics. It threatens to reverse a host of common judgments in environmental advocacy, conservation biology, and philanthropic cause prioritization. Kyle Johannsen has done an admirable job explaining why it matters, why we ought to do something about it, and feasible strategies for helping. This book is essential reading for anyone concerned about wild animals and our responsibilities to them.”

Bob Fischer, Department of Philosophy,
Texas State University

“*Wild Animal Ethics* is an excellent book that makes a powerful case for reducing wild animal suffering. Johannsen convincingly shows that assisting wild animals should be a top moral and political priority whether we care about animal welfare, animal rights, or both. He also addresses a number of important issues ranging from the ethics of killing predators to the ethics of genetic modification. Every reader will benefit from engaging with the arguments in this book, and wild animals will benefit enormously if we accept the main conclusions.”

Jeff Sebo, Affiliated Professor of Bioethics,
Medical Ethics, and Philosophy, New York University

“Much has been written about the appalling suffering that we inflict on animals through practices such as factory farming. But the suffering of animals in the wild is vastly more extensive. *Wild Animal Ethics* defends the claim that although we are not the cause of this pervasive suffering, we nevertheless have moral reasons to try to mitigate it. Johannsen’s arguments are neither naïve nor utopian. They make a convincing case for the importance of research into ways of intervening beneficently in the natural world, particularly through techniques of genetic modification that could gradually, and without harmful side effects, diminish predation and modes of reproduction that doom the vast majority of offspring to early, painful deaths. The suffering of animals in the wild is a serious moral issue, to which this book is a sensible, well-argued, and humane response.”

Jeff McMahan, White’s Professor of Moral Philosophy,
University of Oxford



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Though many ethicists have the intuition that we should leave nature alone, Kyle Johannsen argues that we have a duty to research safe ways of providing large-scale assistance to wild animals. Using concepts from moral and political philosophy to analyze the issue of wild animal suffering (WAS), Johannsen explores how a collective, institutional obligation to assist wild animals should be understood. He claims that with enough research, genetic editing may one day give us the power to safely intervene without perpetually interfering with wild animals' liberties.

Questions addressed include:

- In what way is nature valuable and is intervention compatible with that value?
- Is intervention a requirement of justice?
- What are the implications of WAS for animal rights advocacy?
- What types of intervention are promising?

Expertly moving the debate about human relations with wild animals beyond its traditional confines, *Wild Animal Ethics* is essential reading for students and scholars of political philosophy and political theory studying animal ethics, environmental ethics, and environmental philosophy.

Kyle Johannsen is Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy at Queen's University, Kingston. He is primarily interested in social and political philosophy, and in animal and environmental ethics. His first monograph – *A Conceptual Investigation of Justice* – was published with Routledge in 2018, and his work has appeared in journals such as *Dialogue*, *Environmental Values*, *Ethical Perspectives*, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, and *Res Publica*.



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Most of the content in this book has not been previously published, but it does contain content from my 2017 article "Animal Rights and the Problem of r-Strategists," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 20: 333–45; and from my 2020 article "To Assist or Not to Assist? Assessing the Potential Moral Costs of Humanitarian Intervention in Nature," *Environmental Values* 29: 29–45. Chapter 4, in particular, is basically a shortened version of the article I published in *Environmental Values*. I'm