

- 24 • Neoliberal assumptions were naturalized, including primacy of markets
- 25 • Militarized enforcement was advocated to police community resource use

26

27 **1. Introduction**

28 Conservation practice has been heavily shaped by neoliberal ideology since the 1980s (1–
29 3). During this time, conservation has been intertwined with development and privatization both
30 discursively and through policy choices (4,5). The ideological assumptions of neoliberalism,
31 when applied to conservation, can result in arguments that nature can and should "pay its own
32 way" (6–8). Arguments that human-nature relationships can be collapsed to a utilitarian and
33 transactional one are common and often center ideals of growth, profit, efficiency, and
34 development in environmental discourse (9–11). This in turn has impacted policy choices and
35 real-world practice, prescribing what is viewed as both desirable and possible within the realm of
36 conservation (12–15)

37 Tourism-as-conservation-strategy, particularly wildlife tourism, is one popular example
38 of this neoliberal conservation approach. Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries
39 globally, in part as a result of rapidly growing interest in wildlife tourism (16,17). Higginbottom
40 (18) describes wildlife tourism as including both non-consumptive and consumptive tourism
41 encounters with non-domesticated animals in their natural environment or in captivity. In this
42 paper, we are focusing on non-consumptive encounters (e.g., those which do not intend to have a
43 long-term or harmful effect on target animals) in relatively natural habitats. Around the world,
44 wildlife tourism offers an expanding range of experiences that incorporate new geographic areas,
45 species, and ways of interacting with wildlife while, at least theoretically, providing economic
46 incentives for governments to protect species and habitat (17,19).

47 The potential of tourism to contribute to both environmental conservation and economic
48 development has been discussed and debated extensively in management, non-profit and
49 academic spaces (12,20,21). The potential for a "win-win" strategy which conserves while
50 driving sustainable development is extremely appealing, even as real-world evidence
51 demonstrates that outcomes are complex and very context-dependent (22,23). Though the stated
52 goal of wildlife tourism is often ecological and social sustainability, tourism is likely to impact
53 wildlife and environments where it takes place as trade-offs occur amongst the values of
54 conservation, animal welfare, visitor satisfaction, and profitability (24–27). The trade-offs
55 between wildlife tourism’s costs and benefits vary according to the tourism activity, quality of
56 interpretation, sustainability of the company, and vulnerability of the wildlife at a species,
57 population, and individual level (12,17,28,29).

58 From a social justice and social sustainability standpoint, many concerns have been
59 raised about how the tourism-conservation model has been executed in practice. Tourism can
60 create new resource conflicts within communities or deprive vulnerable people of access to
61 essential resources (4). The creation of conservation spaces often involves land enclosure,
62 displacement and dispossession (30,31). This process may be overtly violent or may involve a
63 “slow violence” composed of unfulfilled promises (32–34). Absent an orientation toward justice,
64 benefits of tourism often increase social inequalities and can reproduce historical racial and
65 colonial patterns of power and accumulation (34–36).

66 Despite arguments that by creating revenue, tourism can incentivize local communities to
67 value the existence of wildlife, such arrangements of enclosure and new resource regulation must
68 often be consistently enforced through the militarization of natural resource management
69 (37,38). Through this framework, conservation becomes an issue of security and protected

70 wealth accumulation, and previous uses of natural resources are thus framed as threats to be
71 addressed (or in some critical literature, acts of resistance) (39). Even when pursued with good
72 intentions, eco-tourism models are thus embedded in a larger, global neoliberal context, and the
73 underlying ideologies which perpetuate that worldview (30,34).

74 ***1.1. Critical Discourse Analysis and Revealing Ideologies***

75 The ideological underpinnings of discourse can often be difficult to trace. Unlike
76 persuasive rhetoric which explicitly takes a particular viewpoint that is intended to influence how
77 the audience sees and thinks about a topic, ideological rhetoric starts from the premise that these
78 viewpoints are a given (40). Ideology thus works through discourse not only by creating certain
79 representations of the world and the relationships within it, but also by making certain states or
80 framings seem normal or possibly natural, rather than being the product of particular choices and
81 structures (14,36,41). The critical aspect of Critical Discourse Analysis thus seeks to make these
82 connections and assumptions visible, with a particular orientation toward revealing the
83 inequalities and power relationships inherent therein (42).

84 In Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) frameworks (43–45) how we talk and write about
85 the world is seen as a social practice: it happens within social settings and institutions (e.g.,
86 work, politics, media) and it serves social purposes (e.g., to communicate ideas, persuade, or
87 construct meaning). Language and discourse are further seen to be in dialectic relationship with
88 social systems, which is to say they both reflect and construct those social systems, with all of
89 their attendant identities, relationships, values, beliefs, meanings, and power dynamics. CDA can
90 thus be a powerful tool for revealing and understanding dominant and resistant ideologies in a
91 given time and place, along with associated power dynamics and real-world consequences (46–
92 49).

93 News media is a rich source for understanding dominant discourses and social
94 relationships (40,48). News media often represents and reproduces dominant, establishment
95 ideologies and worldviews. One such ideology is that of neoliberal globalism which can be
96 identified by a cluster of related discourses and contentions (50). Neoliberal globalism broadly
97 contends that trends associated with globalization are inevitable and irreversible, are essentially
98 about market integration and liberalization, and are inherently a global good that benefits
99 everyone. These contentions have been used as the basis for advocating for specific economic
100 and social policy approaches and can be seen in a wide variety of discursive genres from
101 education to the imperative of having a personal “brand” (51–54). In brief, neoliberal globalism
102 argues that everything can and should be incorporated into a global framework of marketization
103 and economic value, and that this is the ultimate path of redress for social ills (50,55).

104 ***1.2 Disruption and Vulnerability in Neoliberal Conservation***

105 Neoliberal strategies, including tourism models of conservation and economic
106 development, are also vulnerable to global market trends and disruptions like the COVID-19
107 pandemic (56). In times of crisis, luxury goods become non-essential as focus is shifted to
108 humanitarian causes (19). As a luxury good, tourism’s reliance on global economic growth and
109 demand for recreational travel make it vulnerable to crisis and disruption (56). As tourism
110 numbers decrease, funds for conservation and revenue for local livelihoods decrease (19). This
111 vulnerability of the tourism industry can lead to food insecurity, increased reliance on natural
112 resources, impacts on biodiversity, and ecosystem degradation (57,58). Natural disasters, armed
113 conflicts, major political crises, economic recessions, and disease outbreaks have created
114 massive adverse consequences within the tourism industry (59). The COVID-19 pandemic posed
115 global challenges to the tourism industry that are unprecedented in scale and severity (19).

116 Travel bans and restrictions established early in the pandemic to prevent virus transmission led to
117 the collapse of the travel and tourism industry by April 2020, causing a 98% decline in travel and
118 tourism by May 2020 (56,60).

119 COVID-19's reported impacts on wildlife tourism vary throughout the scientific
120 literature. In some areas the decrease in over-tourism, specifically in protected areas, alleviated
121 pressure on wildlife and the environment by reducing inappropriate use, congestion, emissions,
122 and litter (61,62). Lockdown presented some tourism sites with opportunities to increase
123 rehabilitation and repair work, as well as allow species and ecosystems to recover (58,62). In the
124 Galapagos, tourism in protected areas closed for a period, giving park managers time to develop
125 guidelines to reduce negative impacts of tourism, diversify site products and services, and plan
126 for ways to more effectively benefit local livelihoods when tourism activities reopened (61).
127 However, positive environmental outcomes due to the pandemic are likely overstated and
128 temporary (19,62).

129 Disruption can reveal the extent to which the maintenance of social, cultural, and
130 ecological values has been marketized and made reliant on globalized systems founded on
131 unimpeded and undisrupted growth, commodification, and independence, to the detriment of
132 social infrastructure and capital (63,64). Disruptive moments of crisis also create space to
133 question and resist dominant ideologies or can be exploited by those in power to further solidify
134 power (65). Moments of crisis are thus opportunities to understand dominant and potential
135 alternative discourses, ideologies, and patterns of power in society.

136 ***1.3 Aims***

137 Critical discourse analysis is well-positioned to provide insight into how value trade-offs
138 in neoliberal conservation are understood, and how ideologies and power shape and inform this

139 understanding (48,66). In this paper we use content and critical discourse analysis to examine
140 media coverage of wildlife tourism in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic as a case study of
141 dominant discourses in a moment of crisis. Through this examination we are able to reveal a
142 variety of beliefs, assumptions and power dynamics inherent in tourism-as-conservation-
143 strategies. Results further highlight the limitations of the present dominant discourses to deal
144 with the inherent complexity in these social-ecological systems. We explore what themes and
145 topics were included in this discourse, how different identities were constructed, and what
146 rhetorics were used. This analysis reveals patterns of power and ideology, with implications for
147 conservation science and practice.

148 **2. Methodology**

149 ***2.1 Article corpus***

150 News articles related to COVID-19 and wildlife tourism were gathered using the database
151 Lexis Nexis Academic. The Boolean operator ‘AND’ was used with terms ‘COVID*’, ‘tour*’,
152 and ‘wildlife’ to search for news articles between January 1, 2020 and May 17, 2021. Articles
153 were sorted by relevance and any articles evaluated as potentially applicable to analysis were
154 downloaded ($n = 356$). Eleven additional pages of search results were examined after the last
155 potentially relevant article was downloaded and no further articles were deemed applicable. The
156 remaining search results were thus assumed to also not be relevant to the present study. Articles
157 were ultimately included in the analysis if they addressed COVID-19’s impacts on wildlife
158 tourism, wildlife, or conservation for a final n of 237 articles. Relevant articles ($n = 237$) dated
159 from March 15th, 2020 to May 17th, 2021. News items accounted for 220 of the articles coded,
160 and the remaining were editorials ($n = 16$) or testimony ($n = 1$). Thirty articles appeared as
161 identical text published in more than one outlet (headlines and geography publication are noted

162 in Supplementary materials A). In these cases, the geographic location of each publication
163 instance was included in the analysis of media production, but the text of these articles were
164 included in the content and critical analysis only once.

165 ***2.2 Analytical approach***

166 In this study, we used a combination of content analysis and critical discourse analysis to
167 understand news coverage of COVID-19-related disruption of the wildlife tourism industry.

168 When dealing with a relatively large corpus such as this one, content analysis and critical
169 discourse analysis can complement each other to provide a more complete picture of discursive
170 practice (40). Content analysis provides a rigorous and quantitative view of the components of
171 the discourse in broad terms. Critical discourse analysis of a subset of the discourse then lets us
172 examine the specific discursive and lexical strategies in practice with an eye to power dynamics
173 and consequences of these strategies. We approach this analysis using Fairclough's framework
174 for critical discourse analysis (40,43,50), paying particular attention to the representations,
175 identities and relationships that are constructed and to the use of neoliberal globalist
176 presuppositions and lexical choices. We also take into account the realities of media production
177 as social practice, noting where and by what kinds of entities discourse was produced and how
178 journalistic practices regarding who is considered a source, and who a subject, produce patterns
179 and implicit and explicit ideologies in the text.

180 Content analysis was used to assess what common frames were found and with what
181 frequency across all articles. Coding categories were developed based on a close reading of a
182 subset of the relevant articles ($n = 50$) by two authors (CM, JW). Two authors (CR, JW) then
183 both coded a different subset of 30 articles using a codebook. Intercoder reliability was
184 calculated using Cohen's Kappa. Cohen's Kappa for all categories ranged from 0.86 to 1 or

185 “near perfect” agreement. The remaining articles were coded by one coder (CR) (67). The
186 overarching frames were recorded, and frequency/percentage descriptive statistics are presented
187 for each frame.

188 A subset of articles that included multiple frames and were longer in length were selected
189 for more in-depth linguistic and textual analysis ($n = 64$ or 27.0% of all articles). This subset of
190 articles was analyzed in NVIVO (1.7.1). Close reading of the text, annotation, coding for lexical
191 choices, and text search were used to examine how identities were constructed, how those
192 identities were framed as being in relationship, and what representations were made as to the
193 nature of the “problem” and potential solutions.

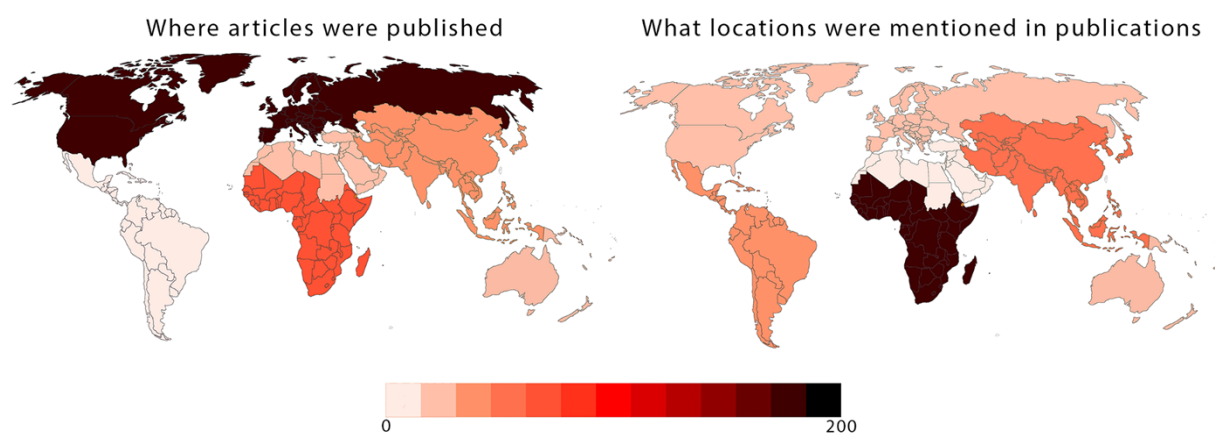
194 **3. Results**

195 ***3.1 Patterns of media production in the archive***

196 The news articles in this study originated from 125 different organizations.
197 Approximately half were identifiable as local or national newspapers ($n = 63$) or multinational
198 news channels (e.g., CNN, $n = 3$), as well as four tabloid publications. Three of the newspapers
199 were specifically focused on financial reporting. The remaining articles were identifiable as
200 releases from news agencies or press release aggregators ($n = 20$ and 4 respectively), more
201 closely resembled blogs or online magazines ($n = 12$), often associated with specific interests
202 such as business, education, travel, science or the environment ($n = 6$).

203 Publications originated from around the globe, but the majority were from publications
204 located in Europe and North America (54.9%), with 73 from U.S. publications and 74 from U.K.
205 publications (together representing 45.1% of all articles). The geography of publication origin
206 contrasts neatly with the geographic subjects that predominated in the discourse (Figure 1).
207 While North America and European locations are mentioned in 25.2% of articles, this was most

208 often as means a reference to the location of some environmental or scientific expert, or to note
209 that many tourists originate from these places. In contrast, while only 20.9% of articles
210 originated from a news organization located in sub-Saharan Africa, this region was the
211 overwhelming focus of the discourse (71.5% of articles mention a location or country within
212 sub-Saharan Africa, or often referenced the continent as a whole).



213
214 **Figure 1.** Location of article publisher (left) and what locations were mentioned in articles
215 (right) on a scale from 0 to 200 instances by regions defined by the United Nations Sustainable
216 Development Goals framework.

217 218 *3.2 Content analysis of common frames*

219 The most common frame, seen in approximately three-fourths of articles (77.2%, $n =$
220 183), discussed how COVID-19 was bad for the environment because it caused a decrease in
221 revenue and funding for wildlife tourism operations and conservation, with media making
222 observations that “[t]ravel restrictions stemming from the pandemic have crippled Africa's
223 tourism sector and removed a key funding stream for conservation, law enforcement, and other
224 efforts.” (*Targeted News Service*, April, 29, 2021) (Table 1). Also central to this discourse was
225 the idea that the physical lack of people was bad for the environment, wildlife tourism, and
226 conservation, with reports observing that “[t]raditionally, tourists and guides have also been

Table 1. How Covid's impact was framed broadly

Thematic code	# Articles (%)	Example quote
<i>Covid is bad for the environment (money is not there)</i>	184 (76.3%)	"The conservation and tourism sector has been significantly affected by the loss of income from tourism, caused by worldwide lockdown measures and international travel restrictions, due to the COVID-19 pandemic." <i>African Press Organization</i> , July 15, 2020
<i>Covid is good for the environment (people are not there)</i>	52 (21.6%)	"Whilst international travel has been placed on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic; the world's wildlife has been able to flourish in both land and seas with the absence of mass tourism." <i>Oman Daily Observer</i> , June 17, 2020
<i>Fewer people is bad</i>	69 (28.6%)	"...and nature was able to flourish in places as the streets emptied of traffic." <i>The Guardian</i> , December 30, 2020
<i>Fewer people is good</i>	25 (10.4%)	"With fewer people out and about, the world is seeing a resurgence of animals." <i>CNN</i> , April 26, 2020

227 additional eyes and ears in the field; their presence was a poaching deterrent." (*India Blooms*
228 *News Service*, May 2, 2020). The overall idea that COVID-19 was good for the environment was
229 seen in 21.9% of articles ($n = 52$), with the New York Times providing a representative example:
230 With flights canceled, cruise ships mothballed and vacations largely scrapped, carbon
231 emissions plummeted. Wildlife that usually kept a low profile amid a crush of tourists in
232 vacation hot spots suddenly emerged. And a lack of cruise ships in places like Alaska
233 meant that humpback whales could hear each other's calls without the din of engines.
234 (*The New York Times*, April 1, 2021).

235
236 Discursive choices in these texts alternately presented the presence of tourists as both harmful
237 and essential to wildlife conservation.

238 Descriptions of a relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and the state of "nature"
239 was also relatively common (Table 2). Most often this took the form of concern that the
240 pandemic would add to or worsen a myriad of existing pressures and stresses on wildlife
241 populations (23.6%, $n = 56$), with articles suggesting "... the pandemic will exacerbate existing
242 pressures on ecosystems caused by climate change, logging and mining activities, forest fires and
243 land conflicts." (*New Scientist*, March 10, 2021). There were also concerns about people directly
244 transmitting the disease to vulnerable wildlife (13.5%, $n = 32$). Finally, "nature" was framed in
245 opposition to human presence in several instances, with a lack of tourism being described as

246 giving nature a break (11.4%, n =27), wildlife being depicted as moving into human spaces
 247 (11.4%, n = 27), nature as “healing” or reclaiming human-dominated space (6.8% and 3.0%
 248 respectively).

Table 2. How nature was framed

Thematic code	# Articles (%)	Example quote
<i>Wildlife under stress from other things as well</i>	56 (23.2%)	"Expanding human settlements, a changing climate that makes resources scarcer, and poaching have contributed to declines in wildlife populations." <i>Bizcommunity.com</i> , May 10, 2021
<i>Concern about tourists giving Covid directly to wildlife</i>	31 (12.9%)	"There are fears that coronavirus is deadly to the gorillas, so Bwindi rangers now wear face masks, use hand sanitiser, and keep their distance from the animals." <i>The Telegraph</i> , October 7, 2020
<i>Unclear how good tourism is for wildlife generally</i>	27 (11.2%)	"Sustainable operations are struggling alongside those that do little or nothing to prevent problems such as the tourism-induced feeding disruptions." <i>The Globe and Mail</i> , March 18, 2020
<i>Wildlife in human spaces examples</i>	27 (11.2%)	"We've seen fish-eating birds return to the clear waters of Venice, wild boar roaming the streets of Bergamo, and of course the feral mountain goats of Llandudno." <i>Impact News Service</i> , April 16, 2020
<i>Wildlife in human areas as good</i>	15 (6.2%)	"...emboldened foxes are strutting along residential streets as if they own them, and the cast of critters in Springwatch has never seemed healthier." <i>Belfast Telegraph</i> , June 20, 2020
<i>Wildlife in human areas as bad</i>	9 (3.7%)	"...living in fear of a second attack as big elephants herds are increasingly visiting his village in search of food and water" <i>The Chronicle</i> , July 8, 2020
<i>Covid gives nature a break</i>	21 (8.7%)	"...some animals appeared to enjoy the respite from visitors." <i>Postmedia Breaking News</i> , March 11, 2021
<i>"Nature is getting a break" is a misconception</i>	9 (3.7%)	"These 'good news' stories of animals roaming freely were what we all craved at the time, but they overshadowed a more unfortunate reality." <i>CNN</i> , August 10, 2020
<i>Nature reclaiming space</i>	16 (6.6%)	"Park officials across Thailand have recorded increased sightings of dolphins, dugongs, reef sharks and primates, some with their young, and in places they normally avoid." <i>The Straights Times</i> , April 25, 2020
<i>nature is healing</i>	7 (2.29%)	"Nature is healing became a popular online refrain." <i>New Scientist</i> , March 10, 2021

249
 250 Considering the proposed benefits of wildlife tourism revenue towards conservation
 251 efforts, it is not surprising that the most common frame in this discourse, aside from large-scale
 252 framing of impacts as positive or negative, was centered on effects on funding (78.5%, n = 186)
 253 (Table 3). Tourism revenue as critical funding for conservation activities or natural spaces was
 254 commonly mentioned (59.9%, n = 142), with articles making observations like “[m]any

255 conservation activities rely directly on revenue from tourism, and the money tourism brings in
256 also provides a financial incentive for governments and local communities to protect wildlife.”
257 (*Newstex Blogs*, April 13, 2020). Some articles emphasized the loss of tourism livelihoods for
258 the people who live in these natural areas (46.8%, $n = 111$), highlighting “...the potential scale
259 of the crisis after tourism collapsed and philanthropic donations plummeted, impacting the
260 livelihoods of hundreds of frontline rangers and the thousands of other people who work in and
261 around conservation.” (*The Independent*, August 3, 2020). Following on from these concerns
262 were suggestions that communities who live in these natural areas need other more diverse
263 sources of income (16.9%, $n = 40$) and concerns that a slow-recovering tourism industry would
264 lead to catastrophic and irrevocable losses to landscapes, wildlife populations, and communities
265 (16.0%, $n = 38$).

Table 3. How funding was framed

Thematic code	# Articles (%)	Example quote
<i>Tourism as funding for nature parks</i>	142 (58.9%)	"That revenue, and the protection afforded to the parks as a result..." <i>The Telegraph</i> , January 10, 2021
<i>People have lost tourism livelihoods</i>	112 (46.5%)	"...and potential loss of income for people who work to protect these species could cause enduring damage." <i>Newstex Blogs</i> , March 26, 2020
<i>Need to broaden/diversify revenue streams</i>	40 (16.6%)	"...conservationists will have to find new and more diverse sources of funding to protect them." <i>The Christian Science Monitor</i> , June 26, 2020
<i>Concern that a slow to recover tourism industry will damage or wipe out landscapes or communities</i>	37 (15.4%)	"Without tourism, everything's reaching a point of no return." <i>The Independent</i> , March 9, 2021; "...economic recession and changes in people's behavior may prevent a full recovery of the tourism, cultural and recreational activities that usually happen inside parks." <i>CNN</i> , April 26, 2020
<i>Nature pays for itself through tourism</i>	4 (1.7%)	"Conservation has proven that it pays for itself in Africa." <i>The East African</i> , April 4, 2020; "As a result, we believe that wildlife should pay for its upkeep and protection." <i>The Sunday Mail</i> , March 12, 2021

266
267 Finally, concern over “poaching” of wildlife was very prevalent in this discourse (65.1%,
268 $n = 157$) (Table 4). Multiple mechanisms were noted as potentially leading to an increase in
269 poaching, from loss of income leading to destitution necessitating bushmeat consumption as a

270 means of survival (30.7%, $n = 74$), to loss of funding for tourism operators and governments
271 leading to cuts in conservation-related law enforcement (21.2%, $n = 51$). Tourists were
272 mentioned repeatedly as “eyes on the ground” with their absence creating opportunities for
273 poaching (17.0%, $n = 41$). Finally, poachers were sometimes presented as poised to take
274 advantage of the general chaos created by the pandemic and its effects (12.0%, $n = 29$).

Table 4 How poaching was framed

Thematic code	# Articles (%)	Example quote
<i>Poaching concern</i>	157 (65.1%)	"The loss of nearly all tourism revenue may lead to a near-term surge in poaching..." <i>Newstex Blogs</i> , April 13, 2020
<i>Money from tourism ceasing = more poverty = more poaching and bushmeat</i>	74 (30.7%)	"But as that income evaporates, there's a high chance desperate communities around national parks will turn to poaching and logging..." <i>Newstex Blogs</i> , May 20, 2020
<i>Money from tourism ceasing = less gov/conservation revenue = less law enforcement</i>	51 (21.2%)	"But conservationists fear an explosion of illegal hunting if organizations are forced to lay off wildlife rangers and suspend surveillance programs." <i>Iran Daily</i> , May 5, 2020
<i>Fewer tourists creates opportunities for poaching</i>	41 (17.0%)	"Lack of tourists and rangers had left "fewer eyes on the animals", which was putting them in peril." <i>The Times</i> , August 13, 2020
<i>Smugglers/poachers taking advantage of the chaos</i>	29 (12.0%)	"Fears are growing that organised crime syndicates involved in the ivory and rhino horn smuggling could also take advantage of the chaos." <i>The Telegraph</i> , April 20, 2020

275

276 3.3 Textual analysis: Identities, relationships, and presuppositions

277 Several identities were constructed in the discourse: scientists and conservationists, tour
278 operators and park managers, tourists, park rangers, government actors, and the “community”.
279 These groups were each granted varying levels of agency, empathy, and humanity by how they
280 were (or were not) treated either as a source of information or a subject to be discussed, and by
281 the language used to represent their choices, actions, and state.

282 Scientists and conservationists were repeatedly quoted as sources of information, but also
283 as harbingers of potential catastrophe. These groups “warned” and “urged,” they “fear” and
284 expressed “concern” and “worry” for the state and future of wildlife conservation, or the
285 potential of threats like poaching to expand during COVID-19. Scientists were particularly cited

286 for their observations, their beliefs about the world and what might come to pass, and the impact
287 of their work to collect data or conserve nature. Conservationists were framed as working
288 tirelessly in the face of challenges, as not giving up, as having “championed” wildlife tourism.
289 Together, these groups were constructed as experts and heroes, and as being central to the
290 creation of a new vision for the future (e.g., “the pandemic creates urgency for conservationists
291 to be creative and responsive, even while overcoming the many practical challenges,” *Newstex*
292 *Blogs/Mongabay News*, May 20, 2020).

293 Tourists were described almost entirely in quantitative, numeric, or similar terms, often in
294 relation to the money they bring with them. Tourists were “fewer,” and their “declining”
295 “numbers” mean reduced “revenues” or “dollars.” Park managers and tour operators were quoted
296 throughout, often with their affiliations and locations or companies listed, and their concerns and
297 actions recorded. Often, they were used both as a source to provide information on their own
298 experience and to describe local, regional, or even global realities (e.g., “In the 23 years since
299 founding Volcanoes Safari, Praveen Moman has weathered a range of crises in the region around
300 Rwanda and Uganda...” *Newstex Blogs/Mongabay News*, April 13, 2020; “According to Alice
301 Gully, co-owner Aardvark Safaris ... Africa is on the verge of a humanitarian crisis,” *The*
302 *Telegraph*, November 30, 2020). In almost all other cases, park or conservancy managers and
303 tour owners or operators were described as being “force[d] to... lay-off staff” (e.g., in both *Iran*
304 *Daily*, May 5, 2020, and *Belfast Telegraph*, June 20, 2020).

305 Governments were discussed in general (“...European and North American governments
306 telling their citizens not to travel...” *The Telegraph*, April 27, 2020) and sometimes with respect
307 to specific offices or individuals. Aside from decisions to start or end lockdowns around
308 COVID-19, government action was largely absent given the scale of the global crisis and

309 suffering. Governments were described as focusing on the direct impacts of the pandemic on
310 health and the economy, in some cases at the expense of conservation spending, as losing
311 revenue intended to pay for park rangers or other operations, and occasionally as committing to
312 “scale up efforts to boost the tourism sector” (*Eturbo News*, June 13, 2020) through waiving fees
313 or taxes, or very rarely through direct spending efforts. Governments outside of the US and the
314 UK were particularly described as being limited by their need to service outside debts, thus
315 severely constraining domestic spending on aid.

316 Despite being central to the events and consequences described, the “local community”
317 was invoked, with very few exceptions, in abstracted terms. This moniker was applied to
318 everyone living near wildlife and associated tourism operations. Their existence was constructed
319 over and over again as one to be pitied, and sometimes also monitored and controlled. They were
320 constructed as being “reliant” and “dependent” on tourism revenue, as “desperate” and
321 “starving” in its absence. Their distant suffering was most often presented as a potential threat to
322 wildlife, nature, and the gains to-date of conservation efforts. This construction was so
323 naturalized in the discourse that it was at times collapsed into a single sentence: “In countries
324 heavily dependent on wildlife tourism, communities have been hit hard by the pandemic with
325 widespread job losses, posing a threat to the animals they live alongside” (*Belfast Telegraph*,
326 June 20, 2020). Notably, and in stark contrast to the scientists, conservationists, or tourism
327 operators described above, local community members are exclusively viewed as a subject to be
328 discussed, rather than contributors to a conversation. In the entire archive, a person suffering in
329 this way is quoted exactly once:

330 I'm not proud of it [hunting threatened deer and turkey species] and even wish I wouldn't
331 have done it, but what else would I do?" he told CNN. "Before the pandemic, we could
332 rely on tourism or the work in archaeological sites to earn money and buy food with. But
333 now, we have nothing. (*CNN.com*, September 30, 2020)

334
335 This economic precarity, while considered unfortunate, is treated as a given in this discourse and
336 its omnipresence in communities living near wildlife is never questioned.

337 The primary exception to the construction of local community members as largely
338 passive is the identity of community members who are also “rangers”. In contrast to other local
339 people, rangers were constructed as “essential” and “critical” to wildlife protection, through their
340 ability to surveil and enforce anti-poaching efforts. They are described as “frontline workers,”
341 and as “wildlife’s first responders”. The inherent risk to personal safety and sacrifice associated
342 with working as rangers were often centered in the discourse. Rangers are described as
343 “trekking” into the “bush”, as having to stay away from their families for extended periods of
344 time, and as facing down “dangerous” “criminal syndicates”. This risk is underlined by mentions
345 of rangers losing their lives in the line of duty. Thus, rangers, unlike other local community
346 members, are constructed as deserving directed and concrete help in the form of fundraising
347 campaigns, and donated PPE supplies, food, and gear. In this discourse, rangers are thus
348 presented as being the good locals, as “role models in their community” (*The Telegraph*, October
349 1, 2020). While often discussed in broad or abstracted terms, rangers were also granted a
350 marginal degree of individuality and agency in ways that were almost entirely withheld from
351 other community members, best captured by individual rangers being named and quoted in 6
352 articles.

353 As implied above, the final group identity we will discuss here is that of the organized
354 criminal element. Wildlife crime in this discourse – poaching or sometimes “bushmeat
355 poaching” – is perpetrated by “gangs”, “networks”, and “syndicates” whose operations are
356 “international” and “organized”. The criminal identity is constructed with a similar level of
357 abstraction as that of communities, but with a sinister edge. “These are ruthless, organised and

358 merciless groups who use every possible lever they can to make money from the natural earth,”
359 one quote states. In another example, a switch in modality was used to describe the supposed
360 actions of “poachers” upon finding the remains of a giraffe: “Three to four poachers probably
361 surrounded the giraffe at night and used flashlights and horns to stun it, like a giant rabbit in
362 headlights. Then one would have hacked at its hamstrings with a machete to bring it down, the
363 rangers said” (*The New Zealand Herald*, August 24, 2020). Wildlife crime is thus portrayed as a
364 lurking, faceless threat.

365 Despite the efforts to contrast the identities of “local communities” with “criminal
366 syndicates,” the language of “poaching” was used throughout to collapse these groups. The fate
367 of the giraffe above for instance is described thusly: “About a tonne of meat was cut off the beast
368 - worth an estimated US\$1000 - and wheeled away on bicycles to be eaten at home and sold in
369 local markets as beef. Even its testicles were cut off and taken, most probably for a traditional
370 Chinese erectile dysfunction remedy” (*The New Zealand Herald*, August 24, 2020). Here, a more
371 certain modality is used to portray a range of motivations for the killing from subsistence, to
372 serving local food markets, to catering to a luridly described international smuggling market.
373 However, describing a group who will take hunted meat home on their bicycles to feed their
374 households as part of a ruthless international crime syndicate feels absurd. At times, people
375 facing precarity are described as being vulnerable to being exploited by the criminal element, of
376 being “lured” into poaching behaviors (“unscrupulous middlemen will increasingly take
377 advantage of people with limited options and thereby gain access to this illegal material” *The
378 Star (South Africa)*, May 16, 2020). In several cases, one clause of a sentence acknowledges the
379 essential needs of local communities, while the next clause denies their reasonable right to meet
380 these needs (emphasis added):

381 people, *driven primarily by the need to feed themselves* in the absence of tourism income,
382 *will take advantage* of the sudden lack of footfall in the forests. (*Newstex Blogs*, April 13,
383 2020)

384
385 At times like these, people who might *otherwise think twice about turning to crime*, will
386 take greater chances and *exploit the situation*. (*Impact News Service*, May 2, 2020)

387
388 Using various constructions, the reality of those living in these localities were collapsed into
389 broad abstractions – with actions framed as those of a desperate community or nefarious criminal
390 – which were then further collapsed into a single identity defined by the threat communities pose
391 to wildlife. This collapse of identity is encapsulated perfectly in the statement “the danger to
392 wilderness from the scourge of human needs and greed is graver than ever” (*Newstex Blogs*,
393 October 30, 2020). The needs (and greed) that pose a danger are almost always framed as those
394 of the local communities, rather than those of other actors, whose needs are not similarly
395 dismissed or erased.

396 Together, these various identities (scientists, conservationists, community members,
397 rangers, tourism operators) and the relationships established between them constructed the
398 pandemic crisis in relation to wildlife and tourism in terms of markets and legality. Several
399 presuppositions are inherent within this construction, and these are repeated throughout the
400 discourse. First, there is the presupposition implied by the collapsing of the community/criminal
401 identity. Namely, that if the problem is crime, then the solution is the application of law,
402 represented here by surveillance, enforcement, and punishment. In several articles, extreme
403 precarity and economic vulnerability is acknowledged within the same paragraph, or even
404 sentence, as the need for more law enforcement. The motivations of need and greed are further
405 collapsed as the problem to be addressed:

406 Wildlife hotspots devoid of the usual level of surveillance would allow both subsistence
407 poachers and criminal networks to encroach on land that might ordinarily be avoided,

408 killing even more animals and flooding the wildlife trade market. (*The Independent (UK)*,
409 July 16, 2020)

410 "The impact on livelihoods has been extreme. People are trying to survive. There will
411 have been an increase in activity during the pandemic in the coastal areas." Stephens
412 added that CapeNature has been working closely with law enforcement to keep poaching
413 under control. (*Mail & Guardian*, March 16, 2021)

414 Despite the acknowledgment of genuine and profound need in these areas, addressing those
415 needs as a means to prevent poaching was discussed much more rarely. Wildlife resources were
416 to be protected, policed, and secured for the future, regardless of the present needs of
417 surrounding communities. As one source stated "The depletion of charismatic species like
418 elephant, rhino and lion will in turn impact wildlife tourism in the future ... You lose the animals
419 and you lose the income." (*Mail Online*, October 17, 2020).

420 Complementing the law enforcement framework, was a discourse deeply embedded
421 within the market logics of neoliberal conservation. "Wildlife" and "wildlife conservation" were
422 described as an "industry" ("the wildlife industry is worth a lot to the economy" (*The Guardian*,
423 December 30, 2020; "our important and lucrative tourism and wildlife conservation industry"
424 *Bizcommunity.com*, May 20, 2020). This industry is noted for its ability to provide "financial
425 incentives for governments and citizens to protect the wildlife around their communities."
426 (*Newstex Blogs*, April 13, 2020). The pandemic was noted for bringing the vulnerability of this
427 system into sharp relief, but "Even before the current pandemic, conservationists ... were
428 increasingly concerned about the need to diversify revenue sources ... to encompass a wider suite
429 of nature-based products and enterprises" (*Newstex Blogs*, May 20, 2020). The language of
430 business and marketization was naturalized throughout this discourse as the dominant means of
431 understanding wildlife value, threats to wildlife, and the need to conserve.

432 The logic of this framework meant that, despite noting the vulnerability and precarity of
433 neoliberal conservation approaches, made apparent during times of crisis, potential solutions or
434 paths forward were essentially all couched in market terms (“The economic value of these large
435 protected areas is enormous... The challenge is to monetise that.” *Financial Mail*, October 15,
436 2020). The crisis created by the pandemic was noted as an “opportunity” to “question inherited
437 assumptions”, “reform our industry infrastructure”, and create “more resilient and effective
438 strategies” (Newstex Blogs and Bizcommunity.com, May 20, 2020). However, if the crisis was a
439 failure or disruption of marketization, the solution was almost always presented as more or
440 different marketization: carbon or biodiversity offsets, tax breaks for tourism, or general calls for
441 “innovation” and “technology”. At times these suggestions were described in terms that insisted
442 they were indeed something new (emphasis added):

443 The time has come for *fresh and ambitious thinking*. For example, creating debt-for-
444 nature financial products that drastically reduce hard currency loan repayment obligations
445 in developing countries, in return for establishing equivalent local currency wildlife trust
446 funds to support in-country conservation for generations to come. (*The Independent*,
447 August 1, 2020)

448 “Here’s a *radical idea*: The model could be scaled up through sponsorship from large
449 donors or companies such as Disney.” (*Robb Report*, September 13, 2020)

451 Hardly radical, these suggestions served to reaffirm neoliberal frameworks as inevitable or
452 commonsense.

453 At other times, a variety of social values were appropriated into this neoliberal framework
454 (e.g., that of sustainability, resiliency, inclusivity, and gender equity). These values were woven
455 together in high-minded rhetoric with the language of marketization:

456 Only through collective action and international cooperation will we be able to transform
457 tourism, advance its contribution to the 2030 Agenda and its shift towards an inclusive
458 and carbon neutral sector that harnesses innovation and, embraces local values and
459 communities and creates decent job opportunities for all, leaving no one behind. We are
460 stronger together. (*National News Agency Lebanon*, August 25, 2020)

461

462 To help with recovery, the report pushes countries to mitigate the socio-economic
463 impacts of the crisis, in particular women's employment and economic security,
464 maximizing the use of technology in the sector - including investment in digital skills,
465 especially for the unemployed. The report promotes competitiveness and resilience
466 throughout the tourism value chain, supporting the development of tourism
467 infrastructures and quality services. It suggests that boosting sustainability is necessary,
468 as well as the formation and coordination of alliances to restart and transform the sector
469 to achieve Sustainable Development Goals; "ensuring tourism's restart and recovery puts
470 people first and work together to ease and lift travel restrictions in a responsible and
471 coordinated manner" (*EFE Newswire*, August 25, 2020)

472
473 The appropriation of diverse social values into neoliberal discourse can serve to legitimize and
474 naturalize markets as the primary (or only) framework through which values can be realized
475 when deployed by powerful actors or the state (68). When used by certain powerful actors, such
476 as the state, these values can be stripped of meaning and used to justify regressive political action
477 (69).

478 Neoliberal presuppositions were also enforced through assertions in the discourse that
479 governments are inherently unable to solve these problems ("Though conservation is often seen
480 as a public good, governments can't be relied on to fund the protection of wild spaces" *Financial*
481 *Mail*, October 15, 2020). The lack of public funds in non-Western countries to address the crisis
482 or protect the commons is similarly naturalized ("With little government funding, [Africa]'s
483 national parks largely depend on tourism revenue to run their operations and care for the animals
484 and plants that thrive there." *Eturbo News*, June 13, 2020). This presents the lack of available
485 funds for conservation as an inescapable reality rather than the result of policy choices at
486 multiple levels by a range of actors. The inevitability of this is further reinforced by an absence
487 of questioning of existing international debt terms and relationships ("Lots of these countries are
488 already spending anywhere between 30 and 70 per cent of their revenues on servicing external
489 debt, says Gallagher. Natural resources represent one of the few reliable sources of income."
490 *New Scientist*, March 10, 2021). In contrast, government action is praised when in relation to

491 supporting and maintaining the surveillance and enforcement system described above (“National
492 governments and conservation NGOs have worked throughout the crisis to maintain deploying
493 wildlife rangers and surveillance teams across Africa” *The Independent*, July 16, 2020) or in
494 supporting markets and the “solution” they represent (“Rwanda has rallied behind a regional plan
495 of action that leverages greater technological adoption, and private sector engagement to boost
496 recovery of the tourism sector” *Science Africa*, June 24, 2020).

497 The construction of the predominantly North American and Western European audience
498 for this discourse belied assertions elsewhere as to the inability for governments to serve an
499 important role in solving social problems:

500 “African countries need tourists for employment, conservation, anti-poaching, education
501 and healthcare. There is no furlough in Africa, no government support...” (*The Telegraph*,
502 November 30, 2020)

503
504 The difference lies in how people respond to the economic shock of losing their
505 livelihood. Social safety nets are a widespread feature of many industrialised economies,
506 keeping the poor and vulnerable from destitution, and the importance of the welfare state
507 has never been more obvious than during the pandemic. In the UK, for example, the
508 government’s furlough scheme guarantees that people unable to work will receive 80% of
509 their income. But citizens of many low-income countries simply don’t have such back-up
510 from their governments, leaving them incredibly vulnerable. For many, the forest and the
511 ocean will provide their safety net. (*Impact News Service*, April 16, 2020)

512
513 This audience is constructed as one watching this narrative and its tragic, and “inevitable”
514 consequences, from a privileged and protected distance. Potential actions, when offered, were
515 limited to donating to non-profit funds, or participating further in markets:

516 “If you are looking for an original Christmas gift for that special someone who cares
517 about the planet, this fine art print sale may just be the ticket.... "It’s a chance to get a
518 great piece of art and contribute to a really important effort that affects us all," Groo
519 says. ... The timing is perfect, coming at the end of a very long year when many of us
520 have had the chance to step back and reflect on the things that really matter in life.”
521 (*South China Morning Post*, November 27, 2020)

522

523 This consume-to-serve framing, including donation requests, was seen repeatedly and
524 presented market as the best or only way to support conservation engagement (e.g., “Planning a
525 safari trip could help save endangered species” *Belfast Telegraph*, June 20, 2020).

526 Finally, news articles in this study frequently collapsed nuance and complexity into a
527 narrative of globalism, by representing reality as repeating an exact pattern of identities and
528 relationships all over the globe, in the same way, at the same time. In many articles, examples
529 were pulled from regions and nations from all over the world, in very different social and
530 ecological contexts. These were sometimes listed, one after another in a single paragraph, or
531 even sentence, as a means of illustrating the inevitable normality of these patterns of
532 relationships and the conclusions implied:

533 There were reports of increased poaching of leopards and tigers in India, an uptick in the
534 smuggling of falcons in Pakistan, and a surge in trafficking of rhino horns in South Africa
535 and Botswana. (*The New York Times*, April 1, 2021)

536
537 From the Nepalese Himalayas where tigers patrol the snowy peaks to the lush forest
538 homes of mountain gorillas in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, national parks
539 emptied as Covid-19 spread around the world in 2020. Billions of pounds of ecotourism
540 revenue – crucial to the livelihoods of many communities that live alongside biodiverse
541 areas – dried up as people were locked down. Some parts of Latin America, Asia and
542 Africa recorded spikes in poaching and human-wildlife conflict amid mass redundancies
543 of park rangers and reduced enforcement capabilities. (*The Guardian*, December 30,
544 2020)

545
546 In Costa Rica, a new ecotourism initiative to help conserve the once-common white-
547 lipped peccary - similar to a wild boar - has seen few visitors. Meanwhile, the white-
548 lipped peccaries are increasingly endangered because of the hunting of the large animals
549 and deforestation. In Namibia, a cheetah conservation centre can no longer rely on tourist
550 visits to help fund operations. In Gabon in March, the government closed its great ape
551 parks to tourists because of COVID-19, as have other African countries. The closures
552 have drained funds from efforts to protect critically endangered gorillas and other great
553 apes. In Sumatra, ecolodges can't provide their usual support to a sanctuary for nearly
554 extinct Sumatran rhinos and a nearby elephant hospital. In the wading pools, swamps,
555 marshes and rainforests of northern Cambodia, tourists used to visit in hopes of catching
556 sight of the critically endangered giant ibis, characterized by their height and silver-tipped
557 wings notched with black crossbars, and other wildlife. (*Windsor Star*, July 2, 2020)

558

559 This rhetorical style served to reify the identities, relationships, and assumptions presented above
560 and throughout the discourse as obvious, ubiquitous and inevitable.

561 **4.0 Discussion**

562 In this study we explored the identities, relationships, and representations produced by
563 text-based news media regarding wildlife tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic. Findings
564 reveal consequences of current media practices for the production and reproduction of dominant
565 neoliberal ideological understandings of wildlife conservation. In particular, we discuss
566 implications of the ways in which agency and specificity are granted or withheld from particular
567 groups and how nuance and complexity are collapsed. We further explore the ultimate
568 implications of these patterns for opportunities for resistance or even reform.

569 First, we understand news media production in this analysis to be social practice – it is a
570 way of acting in the world, situated within a particular social and historical context which it both
571 shapes and is shaped by (Fairclough 1995). Media production has always been subject to
572 complex and at times contradictory incentives. It is at one time, entertainment and commodity,
573 political and cultural, aesthetic and informative (Fairclough 1995). The content analyzed in this
574 discourse was produced primarily in Westernized cultures (the United States and the United
575 Kingdom) and was focused on conservation in non-Western settings (primarily on the continent
576 of Africa). In this way, our article corpus reflects long-term historical trends in news production
577 toward globalization and concentration of ownership (Bielsa 2008). Elsewhere and here, this
578 institutional reality has resulted in a homogenized and Westernized media landscape – with

579 a few (Western) organizations... shap[ing] news content, either indirectly through the
580 imposition of what is considered newsworthy, which areas are given priority, or from
581 what angle events are portrayed (their vast agenda-setting powers); or directly through the
582 provision of journalistic products to their subscribers” (Bielsa 2008 p. 349).
583

584 This process means that Western lenses largely determine what stories are told and how they are
585 framed, shaping both perceptions of what the problem is in wildlife conservation, and the
586 audience's ability to envision solutions (Bielsa 2008).

587 The corpus included both articles published by legacy media newspaper outlets as well as
588 emerging online publications and copy produced by news agencies. Pre-existing trends in news
589 media and journalism (i.e., the need to quickly churn out new content and the concomitant
590 reliance on news agency copy and pre-established source relationships) were exacerbated by the
591 pandemic (71,72). The lack of nuanced accounts of community experiences or voices may
592 indeed reflect these realities – unable to travel themselves, and likely already reliant on particular
593 “elite” sources which were accessible remotely, journalists produced content based on
594 information immediately available to them. Such practices have been documented elsewhere and
595 reflect both a “rational” economic decision within an increasingly competitive and precarious
596 journalism industry, as well as a fundamental failure of journalism as a whole to accurately cover
597 issues (73).

598 As such, news media here reproduced dominant neoliberal framings of conservation not
599 as an overtly ideological project but more likely because the dominance of this worldview makes
600 it logistically and intellectually easy to both produce and consume. Fairclough (1995)
601 distinguishes between the purposeful use of “rhetorical devices to persuade” and the way implicit
602 ideology acts in a text: not “‘adopted’ but taken for granted as common ground between reporter
603 and/or/ third parties and audience,” (p. 45). Thus ideology is made invisible, or naturalized and
604 given the powerful position of being presented as “common sense” or “how things are”
605 (Fairclough 1995, 2006). The discourse analyzed here did just this for several assumptions core
606 to neoliberal environmental and wildlife conservation. Namely, throughout the discourse

607 reporters communicated that marketization is the best means of making decisions about the fate
608 of wildlife and that market incentives will most effectively produce good environmental citizens
609 out of those living in developing economies (74), but that simultaneously, militarization and
610 surveillance are critical for securing and supporting this system (38).

611 In the course of naturalizing this ideological framework, the discourse grants and
612 withholds agency and specificity to/from particular actors. Scientists, tour operators,
613 businesspeople, and conservationists are given names, job titles, locations, and the right to voice
614 their own experiences as well as to make concrete statements about the world. Those living near
615 wildlife however are rarely granted the same level of respect, due diligence, or humanity, and of
616 those who are it is generally those working in supporting roles under the actors listed above
617 whose voices are likely to be elevated. Researchers working in and with these communities have
618 documented the complexity and diversity of experiences with and attitudes toward both tourism
619 and Western conservation efforts (22,23,75). Individual values and motivations within these
620 communities complicate the idea that the tourism industry can easily create ideal environmental
621 subjects as an intrinsic part of their market operations (66,74). Instead, community conservation
622 efforts, as well as undesirable actions (such as poaching), should be understood in their social-
623 ecological context, with a focus on both historical and present-day patterns of power and
624 (in)justice (23,35,37,38).

625 This media discourse analysis reveals the vulnerability and precarity of current neoliberal
626 conservation models, but also the assumptions about the problems faced and potential solutions
627 that are implicit to such a worldview. The idea that crisis represents an opportunity – to
628 reevaluate, to reform, to alter the present trajectory – was noted several times in these articles.
629 However, the solutions that followed served to emphasize only the degree to which neoliberal

630 ideas have been internalized and naturalized (14), and thereby capture any energy or effort that
631 might otherwise be available for such a project of reimagining. Moments of crisis can indeed
632 represent opportunities for new narratives and imaginaries to proliferate but only if alternative or
633 resistant discourses are available which resonate with people (65). Neoliberalism has been noted
634 to be particularly resilient to such challenges in the face of its own failures, often appropriating
635 values and language from other frameworks, as is seen in this case study (Fairclough 2006).
636 Indeed, the seemingly perpetual nature of crisis in modern life can serve to normalize that crisis
637 in discourse, which is in turn used to argue for more neoliberal solutions (76). Though absent
638 from the global media discourse examined here, resistance has been repeatedly noted elsewhere,
639 including on social media and in decolonial local environmental organizing (48,77,78).

640 **5. Conclusion**

641 Despite being questioned in the academic literature, the supremacy of neoliberal
642 assumptions in mainstream news media discourse, even in the face of extreme disruption and
643 precarity, is worrying. Narratives and discourse both reflect and shape social practice, policy
644 priorities and approaches. Narratives that are dominant can become naturalized and internalized
645 to the point that the ideological assumptions underlying them become difficult for the public to
646 see or question. Critical discourse analysis is one means of surfacing these assumptions and their
647 prevalence. The news media coverage of wildlife tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic
648 described here is one that centers a particular (Western, neoliberal) perspective and erases the
649 nuance and complexity of lived experiences of communities living with wildlife. In this collapse,
650 the humanity of those communities is obscured, allowing for the audience to distance itself from
651 the suffering described and to accept the harsh prescriptions which are presented as givens,
652 namely the need to discipline and punish unsanctioned uses of wildlife, even in the face of

653 starvation. If we are to move toward more justice-oriented and decolonial approaches,
654 conservation science and practice should not ignore the dominance of these narratives in
655 mainstream discourse or the potential consequences of this dominance for public understanding.
656

657 References

- 658 1. Bigger P, Dempsey J, Asiyanbi AP, Kay K, Lave R, Mansfield B, et al. Reflecting on
659 neoliberal natures: an exchange. 2018 Mar 1.
- 660 2. McCubbin SG, Hovorka AJ. Visioning African lionscapes: Securing space, mobilizing
661 capital, and fostering subjects. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*. 2020 Dec
662 1;3(4):1053–73. doi:10.1177/2514848619878167
- 663 3. Apostolopoulou E, Chatzimentor A, Maestre-Andrés S, Mora MR i, Requena-i-Mora M,
664 Pizarro A, et al. Reviewing 15 years of research on neoliberal conservation: Towards a
665 decolonial, interdisciplinary, intersectional and community-engaged research agenda.
666 *Geoforum*. 2021 May 20;124:236–56. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.05.006
- 667 4. Bluwstein J, Moyo F, Kicheleri RP. Austere Conservation: Understanding Conflicts over
668 Resource Governance in Tanzanian Wildlife Management Areas. *Conservation and Society*.
669 2016 Jul 1;14(3):218. doi:10.4103/0972-4923.191156
- 670 5. Adams WM. Sleeping with the enemy? Biodiversity conservation, corporations and the
671 green economy. *Journal of Political Ecology*. 2017 Sep 27;24(1):243–57.
672 doi:10.17863/cam.9333
- 673 6. O'Connor S, Langrand O. Can wildlife pay its way in Madagascar? *PARKS*. 1994;17.
- 674 7. Eltringham SK. Can wildlife pay its way? *Oryx*. 1994 Jul;28(3):163–8.
675 doi:10.1017/S0030605300028519
- 676 8. Thompson DM, Serneels S, Kaelo DO, Trench PC. Maasai Mara—land privatization and
677 wildlife decline: Can conservation pay its way? *Staying Maasai? Livelihoods, conservation*
678 *and development in East African rangelands*. 2009;77–114.
- 679 9. Baldus RD. Wildlife: can it pay its way or must it be subsidized. *Best practices in sustainable*
680 *hunting: A guide to best practices from around the world*. 2008;12–6.
- 681 10. Damiens FL, Davison A, Cooke B. Professionalisation and the spectacle of nature:
682 Understanding changes in the visual imaginaries of private protected area organisations in
683 Australia. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*. 2022 Oct
684 18;25148486221129418. doi:10.1177/25148486221129418
- 685 11. Brandon S. The business of saving cheetahs: Cheetah ecology and the diverse politics at
686 work in human wildlife conflict (HWC) interventions in Namibia. *Environment and Planning*
687 *E: Nature and Space*. 2022 Nov 7;25148486221135008. doi:10.1177/25148486221135008
- 688 12. Cousins J, Evans J, Sadler J. Selling Conservation? Scientific Legitimacy and the
689 Commodification of Conservation Tourism. *Ecology and Society*. 2009 Apr 21;14(1).
690 doi:10.5751/ES-02804-140132

- 691 13. Frawley T, Finkbeiner E, Crowder L. Environmental and institutional degradation in the
692 globalized economy: lessons from small-scale fisheries in the Gulf of California. *Ecology*
693 *and Society*. 2019 Jan 22;24(1). doi:10.5751/ES-10693-240107
- 694 14. Machaqueiro RR. Environmentality by the United Nations Framework Convention for
695 Climate Change: Neoliberal ethos and the production of environmental subjects in Acre and
696 Mozambique. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*. 2020 Jun 1;3(2):442–61.
697 doi:10.1177/2514848619835134
- 698 15. Earley SK. Deadwood: People, place, and neoliberal forest policy in British Columbia,
699 Canada. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*. 2023 Mar 27;25148486231165447.
700 doi:10.1177/25148486231165447
- 701 16. Sander B. The importance of education in ecotourism ventures: lessons from Rara Avis
702 ecolodge, Costa Rica. *International Journal of Sustainable Society*. 2012;4(4):389–404.
- 703 17. Larm M, Elmhagen B, Granquist SM, Brundin E, Angerbjörn A. The role of wildlife tourism
704 in conservation of endangered species: Implications of safari tourism for conservation of the
705 Arctic fox in Sweden. *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*. 2018;23(3):257–72.
- 706 18. Higginbottom K. *Wildlife tourism*. CRC for Sustainable Tourism. 2004;1(1):1–301.
- 707 19. Lindsey P, Allan J, Brehony P, Dickman A, Robson A, Begg C, et al. Conserving Africa's
708 wildlife and wildlands through the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. *Nature ecology &*
709 *evolution*. 2020;4(10):1300–10.
- 710 20. Higginbottom K, Tribe A. Contributions of wildlife tourism to conservation. *Wildlife*
711 *tourism: Impacts, management and planning*. 2004;99–123.
- 712 21. Wolf ID, Croft DB, Green RJ. Nature conservation and nature-based tourism: A paradox?
713 *Environments*. 2019;6(9):104.
- 714 22. Törn A, Siikamäki P, Tolvanen A, Kauppila P, Rämetsä J. Local People, Nature Conservation,
715 and Tourism in Northeastern Finland. *Ecology and Society*. 2008 Feb 28;13(1).
716 doi:10.5751/ES-02202-130108
- 717 23. Dawson N, Grogan K, Martin A, Mertz O, Pasgaard M, Rasmussen LV. Environmental
718 justice research shows the importance of social feedbacks in ecosystem service trade-offs.
719 *Ecology and Society*. 2017 Aug 10;22(3). doi:10.5751/ES-09481-220312
- 720 24. Reynolds PC, Braithwaite D. Towards a conceptual framework for wildlife tourism. *Tourism*
721 *management*. 2001;22(1):31–42.
- 722 25. Weaver DB. The evolving concept of ecotourism and its potential impacts. *International*
723 *Journal of Sustainable Development*. 2002;5(3):251–64.
- 724 26. Krüger O. The role of ecotourism in conservation: panacea or Pandora's box? *Biodiversity &*
725 *Conservation*. 2005;14:579–600.

- 726 27. Bateman PW, Fleming PA. Are negative effects of tourist activities on wildlife over-
727 reported? A review of assessment methods and empirical results. *Biological Conservation*.
728 2017;211:10–9.
- 729 28. Higginbottom K, Northrope C, Green R. Positive effects of wildlife tourism on wildlife.
730 Queensland, Australia: CRC for Sustainable Tourism Gold Coast. 2001.
- 731 29. Clements H, Cumming G, Kerley G. Predators on private land: broad-scale socioeconomic
732 interactions influence large predator management. *Ecology and Society*. 2016 Jun 15;21(2).
733 doi:10.5751/ES-08607-210245
- 734 30. Johnson OEA, Zalik A, Mollett CS, Sultana F, Havice E, Osborne T, et al. Extraction,
735 entanglements, and (im)materialities: Reflections on the methods and methodologies of
736 natural resource industries fieldwork. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*. 2021
737 Jun 1;4(2):383–428. doi:10.1177/2514848620907470
- 738 31. Hiraldo R. Resisting workers’ disalienation: The making and survival of capitalist
739 conservation in Niombato, Senegal. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*. 2021
740 Dec 1;4(4):1441–61. doi:10.1177/2514848620960405
- 741 32. Neumann R. Disciplining peasants in Tanzania: From state violence to self-surveillance in
742 wildlife conservation. In: *Violent Environments*, Nancy Peluso; Michael Watts. Cornell
743 University Press; 2001. p. 305–27.
- 744 33. Büscher B, Fletcher R. Destructive creation: capital accumulation and the structural violence
745 of tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. 2017 May 4;25(5):651–67.
746 doi:10.1080/09669582.2016.1159214
- 747 34. LaRocco AA. Infrastructure, wildlife tourism, (il)legible populations: A comparative study
748 of two districts in contemporary Botswana. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*.
749 2020 Dec 1;3(4):1074–95. doi:10.1177/2514848619877083
- 750 35. Ntuli H, Sundström A, Sjöstedt M, Muchapondwa E, Jagers S, Linell A. Understanding the
751 drivers of subsistence poaching in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area:
752 What matters for community wildlife conservation? *Ecology and Society*. 2021 Feb
753 18;26(1). doi:10.5751/ES-12201-260118
- 754 36. Koot S, Büscher B, Thakholi L. The new green apartheid? Race, capital and logics of
755 enclosure in South Africa’s wildlife economy. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and*
756 *Space*. 2022 Jun 28;25148486221110438. doi:10.1177/25148486221110438
- 757 37. Dunlap A, Sullivan S. A faultline in neoliberal environmental governance scholarship? Or,
758 why accumulation-by-alienation matters: Vol. 3. 2020 Jun 1;3(2):552–79.
759 doi:10.1177/2514848619874691
- 760 38. Otsuki K. The violence of involuntary resettlement and emerging resistance in
761 Mozambique’s Limpopo National Park: The role of physical and social infrastructure.

- 762 Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space. 2023 Mar 1;6(1):240–58.
763 doi:10.1177/25148486221089161
- 764 39. Massé F, Lunstrum E. Accumulation by securitization: commercial poaching, neoliberal
765 conservation, and the creation of new wildlife frontiers. *Geoforum*. 2016 Feb 1;69:227–37.
766 doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.03.005
- 767 40. Fairclough N. *Media Discourse*. London: Edward Arnold; 1995.
- 768 41. Borriello A. ‘There is no alternative’: How Italian and Spanish leaders’ discourse obscured
769 the political nature of austerity. *Discourse & Society*. 2017 May 1;28(3):241–61.
770 doi:10.1177/0957926516687419
- 771 42. Wodak R, Meyer M. *Methods of critical discourse studies*. Sage; 2015.
- 772 43. Fairclough N. Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research. *Methods*
773 *of critical discourse analysis*. 2001;5(11):121–38.
- 774 44. Van Leeuwen T. *Critical discourse analysis*. *Discourse, of course: An overview of research*
775 *in discourse studies*. 2009;277–92.
- 776 45. Wodak R. *Critical discourse analysis, discourse-historical approach*. *The international*
777 *encyclopedia of language and social interaction*. 2015;1–14.
- 778 46. Dupuits E. Water community networks and the appropriation of neoliberal practices: social
779 technology, depoliticization, and resistance. *Ecology and Society*. 2019 Jun 6;24(2).
780 doi:10.5751/ES-10857-240220
- 781 47. Newton M, Farrelly T, Sinner J. Discourse, agency, and social license to operate in New
782 Zealand’s marine economy. *Ecology and Society*. 2020 Jan 16;25(1). doi:10.5751/ES-11304-
783 250102
- 784 48. Burnett S. ‘Without white people, the animals will go!’: COVID-19 and the struggle for the
785 future of South African conservation. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*. 2022
786 Jan 11;25148486211069884. doi:10.1177/25148486211069884
- 787 49. McIlwain L, Holzer JM, Baird J, Baldwin CL. Power research in adaptive water governance
788 and beyond: a review. *Ecology and Society*. 2023 May 1;28(2). doi:10.5751/ES-14072-
789 280222
- 790 50. Fairclough N. *Language and Globalization*. New York: Routledge; 2006.
- 791 51. Fairclough N. *Language in New Capitalism*. *Discourse & Society*. 2002 Mar 1;13(2):163–6.
792 doi:10.1177/0957926502013002404
- 793 52. Xiong T. Discourse and marketization of higher education in China: The genre of
794 advertisements for academic posts. *Discourse & Society*. 2012 May 1;23(3):318–37.
795 doi:10.1177/0957926511433786

- 796 53. Vallas SP, Christin A. Work and Identity in an Era of Precarious Employment: How
797 Workers Respond to “Personal Branding” Discourse. *Work and Occupations*. 2018 Feb
798 1;45(1):3–37. doi:10.1177/0730888417735662
- 799 54. Babaii E, Sheikhi M. Traces of neoliberalism in English teaching materials: a critical
800 discourse analysis. *Critical Discourse Studies*. 2018 May 27;15(3):247–64.
801 doi:10.1080/17405904.2017.1398671
- 802 55. Fairclough N. Critical Discourse Analysis and the Marketization of Public Discourse: The
803 Universities. *Discourse & Society*. 1993 Apr 1;4(2):133–68.
804 doi:10.1177/0957926593004002002
- 805 56. Abbas J, Mubeen R, Iorember PT, Raza S, Mamirkulova G. Exploring the impact of
806 COVID-19 on tourism: transformational potential and implications for a sustainable recovery
807 of the travel and leisure industry. *Current Research in Behavioral Sciences*. 2021;2:100033.
- 808 57. Rondeau D, Perry B, Grimard F. The consequences of COVID-19 and other disasters for
809 wildlife and biodiversity. *Environmental and Resource Economics*. 2020;76:945–61.
- 810 58. Waithaka J, Dudley N, Álvarez M, Arguedas Mora S, Chapman S, Figgis P, et al. Impacts of
811 COVID-19 on protected and conserved areas: A global overview and regional perspectives.
812 2021.
- 813 59. Chapman CM, Miller DS, Salley G. Social disruption of the tourism and hospitality
814 industries: implications for post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery. *WHATT*. 2021 Jul
815 21;13(3):312–23. doi:10.1108/WHATT-02-2021-0038
- 816 60. Newsome D. The collapse of tourism and its impact on wildlife tourism destinations. *Journal*
817 *of Tourism Futures*. 2021;7(3):295–302.
- 818 61. Spenceley A. Building nature-based tourism back better: COVID-19 recovery, resilience and
819 sustainability. Report to the Luc Hoffmann Institute. 2020.
- 820 62. Cahyadi HS, Newsome D. The post COVID-19 tourism dilemma for geoparks in Indonesia.
821 *International Journal of Geoheritage and Parks*. 2021;9(2):199–211.
- 822 63. Fernando J. From the Virocene to the Lovecene epoch: multispecies justice as critical praxis
823 for Virocene disruptions and vulnerabilities. *Journal of Political Ecology*. 2020;27(1):685.
- 824 64. Carraro V, Visconti C, Inzunza S. Neoliberal urbanism and disaster vulnerability on the
825 Chilean central coast. *geoforum*. 2021;121:83–92.
- 826 65. Varvarousis A. Crisis, liminality and the decolonization of the social imaginary.
827 *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*. 2019 Sep 1;2(3):493–512.
828 doi:10.1177/2514848619841809
- 829 66. Tam CL. Branding Wakatobi: marine development and legitimation by science. *Ecology and*
830 *Society*. 2019 Aug 26;24(3). doi:10.5751/ES-11095-240323

- 831 67. Landis JR, Koch GG. The Measurement of Observer Agreement for Categorical Data.
832 Biometrics. 1977;33(1):159–74. doi:10.2307/2529310
- 833 68. Pereira C. Appropriating ‘Gender’ and ‘Empowerment’: The Resignification of Feminist
834 Ideas in Nigeria’s Neoliberal Reform Programme1. IDS Bulletin. 2009 Jan 26;39(6):42–50.
835 doi:10.1111/j.1759-5436.2008.tb00510.x
- 836 69. Speed S. Dangerous Discourses: Human Rights and Multiculturalism in Neoliberal Mexico.
837 PoLAR. 2005;28:29.
- 838 70. Bielsa E. The pivotal role of news agencies in the context of globalization: a historical
839 approach. Global Networks. 2008 Jul;8(3):347–66. doi:10.1111/j.1471-0374.2008.00199.x
- 840 71. Boumans J. The Agency Makes the (Online) News World Go Round: The Impact of News
841 Agency Content on Print and Online News. 2018.
- 842 72. Perreault MF, Perreault GP. Journalists on COVID-19 journalism: Communication ecology
843 of pandemic reporting. American Behavioral Scientist. 2021;65(7):976–91.
- 844 73. Johnston J, Forde S. The Silent Partner: News Agencies and 21st Century News. 2011.
- 845 74. Pandya R. An intersectional approach to neoliberal environmentality: Women’s engagement
846 with ecotourism at Corbett Tiger Reserve, India. Environment and Planning E: Nature and
847 Space. 2023 Mar 1;6(1):355–72. doi:10.1177/25148486221082469
- 848 75. Nolan C, Delabre I, Menga F, Goodman M. Double exposure to capitalist expansion and
849 climatic change: a study of vulnerability on the Ghanaian coastal commodity frontier.
850 Ecology and Society. 2022 Jan 26;27(1). doi:10.5751/ES-12815-270101
- 851 76. Huff A, Brock A. Introduction: Accumulation by restoration and political ecologies of repair.
852 Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space. 2023 Apr 25;25148486231168393.
853 doi:10.1177/25148486231168393
- 854 77. Menon A, Sowman M, Bavinck M. Rethinking capitalist transformation of fisheries in South
855 Africa and India. Ecology and Society. 2018 Nov 9;23(4). doi:10.5751/ES-10461-230427
- 856 78. Baptiste AK, Baptiste-Garrin R. Unearthing the decolonial environmental worldview
857 (DEW): The case of Jamaica. Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space. 2023 Mar
858 20;25148486231159299. doi:10.1177/25148486231159299
- 859