

## Commercial use of wildlife for conservation

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In December 1990, at its General Assembly meeting in Perth, Western Australia, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) carried a resolution entitled "Conservation of wildlife through wise use as a renewable natural resource" (see Appendix). Running to two pages and comprising many clauses and caveats, the crucial part of the resolution is that given in Article 1 "*. . . that ethical, wise and sustainable use of some wildlife can provide an alternative or supplementary means of productive land use, and can be consistent with and encourage conservation, where such is in accordance with adequate safeguards . . .*".

Article 5 refers to the need for the development of guidelines for such use. This was the origin of the workshop's goal.

Wildlife can be defined as undomesticated native animals and uncultivated native plants. The commercial use of wildlife may be in the form of harvesting from the wild, ranching or farming. It can be consumptive or non-consumptive and involve a wide range of plant and animal taxa in both terrestrial and aquatic environments. Use can be made of live as well as dead products, both locally and as an export.

Sustainability can be defined as the capacity for long-term maintenance of harvests that do not reduce the species' geographic range or existing patterns of genetic variability, or radically alter community structure and function.

It should be noted that the commercial use of wildlife is in no way a novelty, with fisheries and forestry providing two striking examples of established commercial use. What **is** new (or newer), is the notion of identifying conservation benefits from wildlife harvesting, and the possible introduction of hitherto unexploited species for a conservation gain.