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## Point and shoot

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### Killing African animals may help conserve them

TOURISM is a ready source of hard currency for developing countries, but can tourist dollars encourage landowners to protect wildlife? Nature-, green- or eco-tourism has certainly taken off across the developing world since its inception in the 1980s. In many parts of Africa, photo-safaris and other forms of tourism that don't involve killing animals have been hailed as an alternative to hunting.

But whether such non-consumptive use can provide the kind of revenue countries need without having to resort to upsetting any Western bunny-huggers remains to be seen. Because, according to data on wildlife and tourism in Kenya that Mike Norton-Griffiths, a former environmental consultant based in Nairobi, recently published in *World Economics*, tourism isn't as profitable as one might hope.

AFP



Be cruel to be kind

While Kenya has a number of nature reserves, most of its wildlife lives on privately owned land, and killing or exporting such animals has been banned since 1977. Before that, landowners might have made money through ranching, hunting, tanning, taxidermy, curios and allowing animals on their land to be captured for sale or export. Mr Norton-Griffiths and Mohammed Said of the International Livestock Research Institute estimate that today the industry might be worth some \$600m annually.

At present, however, landowners make around \$5 per hectare per year from their wildlife—comparable to agricultural returns on only the driest, most marginal land. Where landowners rent an area for wildlife-viewing to a single tour company, they may average \$10 per hectare. In the Mara area—which draws much of Kenya's safari trade—rents can rise to \$50 per hectare. However, in 95% of the land where wildlife is found, it nets landowners no money at all.

While tourism is popular in Kenya, it still provides few incentives for people to protect wildlife rather than turn their land over to agriculture. Suppose one owned a goat, but was not allowed to use it in any way: no slaughter, no milk, meat or skin. Suppose, further, that breaking these laws meant risking death or imprisonment. In fact, the only way of making money out of the goat would be if a passing minibus with a load of tourists happened to drive past and photograph it. Not many people would keep goats.

No wonder that despite millions spent to conserve Kenya's wildlife, stock has declined by 70% since 1977. More than half of the most productive rangelands in Kenya, which used to hold most of the country's wildlife, have been converted to agricultural production.

Some animal-welfare charities see Kenya as a great African success story: even if wildlife isn't being conserved, at least animals are not being killed or captured. Attempts last year to allow some consumptive use were met with heavy resistance by such organisations, thus raising fears that Kenya would lose its "ethical" tourist base if it were to allow anything to be shot.

The best way of conserving wildlife is to make it worth landlords' while. Tourism can help up to a point. But most tourists will not travel more than a few hours from their hotel to see animals. Real wildlife tends to flourish far from people, hotels, roads and swimming pools: large-scale tourism and real wildlife are not compatible. New thinking about how to support wildlife conservation is needed in Kenya.

Rich-country conservationists need to be less squeamish about killing animals. They ought to support developing countries' efforts to create incentives for their landowners to protect wildlife—even if it means sometimes shedding animals' blood.