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Birds Without Borders: Ecological Diplomacy and the WWF in Franco's Spain

ABSTRACT

The Spanish Doñana Biological Station, inaugurated in 1964, poses two historiographical puzzles. First, it was the first large project of the World Wildlife Fund, which is usually seen as a response to the very specific post-imperial challenges of African parks. Second, it was the first non-alpine park in Spain, and although it was designed and inaugurated in the midst of Francisco Franco's nationalist dictatorship, it was an explicitly transnational project. This paper approaches Doñana's unique story through the concept of ecological diplomacy. It points to the diplomatic strategies mobilized by a small group of ecologists with managerial and financial skills. Promoting Doñana, British ornithologists presented it as an African wilderness, which created tensions with Spanish ecologists, themselves colonial scientists. Ecological diplomacy, moreover, refers to a characteristic period between conservation diplomacy and environmental diplomacy. In it, conservation was understood as the top-down management of foreign territories for research purposes. While this can be partly understood as the globalization of the Swiss model for conservation, it arrived in Spain through the mediation of the French Tour du Valat station and of English ecology. Finally, stressing the ecological dimension of this type of conservation diplomacy helps in

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The following abbreviations are used: ADENA, Asociación para la Defensa de la Naturaleza [Association for the Defense of Nature] (WWF in Spain); CSIC, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas [Spanish National Research Council], Madrid; EBD, Estación Biológica de Doñana [Doñana Biological Station], Seville, Spain; IBP, International Biological Program; ICONA, Instituto para la Conservación de la Naturaleza [Institute for the Conservation of Nature], Spain; IUCN, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Gland, Switzerland; NP, Max Nicholson's Papers, Woodson Research Center, Fondren Library, Rice University, Houston, Texas, USA, <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/ricewrc/00224/00224-P.html>; UN, United Nations; UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; WWF, World Wildlife Fund.

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studying the role of the science of ecology and its transformations. As Doñana became a national park, the WWF's early emphasis on research was replaced by a new attention to recreation. Max Nicholson's participation in the International Biology Program granted him an opportunity to favor this model when Doñana became a national park.

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KEY WORDS: ornithology, World Wildlife Fund, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Julian Huxley, Max Nicholson, Francisco Franco, Doñana, diplomacy

Coto de Doñana is an area in the southern tip of Spain, to the west of the Guadalquivir's mouth in the Atlantic, formed by dunes, marshes, and low-tree forests. It is populated by deer, boar, and lynx—*coto* means private hunting area. It also hosts a wealth of reptiles and birds, some stopping there during yearly migratory journeys from Africa to northern Europe. In 1964, the Biological Reserve of Doñana, was inaugurated after an agreement between the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Francisco Franco's government. In 1969, the Reserve was extended to adjacent zones and given the status of national park. The history of Doñana's conservation poses a double historiographical paradox. First, given the WWF's initial focus on African nature, it seems surprising that the Fund's first major project was intra-European. Some of the most prominent founders of the WWF had been active in the pre-war "Oxford school of imperial ecology," as historian Peder Anker named the group of ecologists gathered around Arthur Tansley, who in 1935, coined the word "ecosystem."¹ As did their peers from other European powers, British ecologists paired with hunters and royals to preserve "big game" reserves. They did so by keeping natives out of African hunting sanctuaries, a goal that gradually shifted toward conservation of natural lands.² After the Second World War, many of these conservationists mobilized scientific and institutional authority to manage post-colonial territories. Against this background, historians of

1. Peder Anker, *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire, 1895–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

2. David Anderson and Richard H. Groves, eds., *Conservation in Africa: People, Policies and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); John M. Mackenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1988), 261–94; Bernhard Gissibl, Sabine Höhler, and Patrick Kupper, eds., *Civilizing Nature: National Parks in Global Historical Perspective* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); Rachel Adam, *Elephant Treaties: The colonial legacy of the biodiversity crisis* (Hannover, NH: University Press of New England, 2014), 33–39.

conservation have been intrigued by the Fund's choice of Doñana.³ Nevertheless, they have not pursued the puzzle further. Here I suggest that the British imagination of Doñana as an African landscape coupled with the existence of personal networks made the nature reserve possible. Given the Spanish (minor) colonial status at the time of the creation of the Doñana Station, this case helps complicate the picture of post-war conservation.

The second paradox involves Spanish conservation. Doñana was a rarity within the Spanish tradition of national parks, inaugurated in 1916 and largely limited to protect alpine landscapes with a focus on recreation. Doñana was the first in Spain geared toward animal protection and research.⁴ Moreover, whereas former parks had stressed national nature, it seems surprising that the nationalist Francoist regime employed the rhetoric of internationalism in Doñana, presented as a gift toward the international conservationist community. Spanish biologists joined forces with British and Swiss ecologists and ornithologists to save border-crossing birds. The historiography of nature conservation in Nazi, fascist, and other dictatorial regimes has stressed the links between nature conservation and autarkic nationalism (and expansionism).⁵ For instance, the language of "redemption" was deployed in both Mussolini's Italy and Franco's Spain to accompany the retooling of the landscape. Economic and social redemption included a vision of improved nature, combining wilderness and productive technology in some nature parks.⁶ Doñana, on the contrary, was born in direct opposition to developmental plans as a site for pursuing ecology at an international level; Sarah Hamilton stresses this novelty in her account of Doñana, one of the few available in English.⁷ In this paper, I approach the most international of Spanish national parks as a product

3. Martin Holdgate, *The Green Web: A Union for World Conservation* (Oxon, UK: Earthscan, 1999), 85; Alexis Schwarzenbach, *Saving the World's Wildlife: WWW—The First 50 Years* (London: WWF, 2011), 95–98.

4. Santos Casado, *Naturaleza patria: Ciencia y sentimiento de la naturaleza en la España del regeneracionismo* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2010); for later developments, see Sarah Hamilton, *Cultivating Nature: The Conservation of a Valencian Working Landscape* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018).

5. David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape and the Making of Modern Germany* (London: Pimlico, 2007).

6. Marco Armiero and Wilko Graf von Hardenberg, "Green Rhetoric in Blackshirts: Italian Fascism and the Environment," *Environment and History* 19 (2013): 283–311; Lino Camprubí, *Engineers and the Making of the Francoist Regime* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014), 1–3 and 103–35.

7. Sarah Hamilton, "Environmental Change and Protest in Franco's Spain, 1939–1975," *Environmental History* 22 (2017): 257–81.

of ecological diplomats, the doings of a small group of people who brought together scientific and managerial expertise and who used their positions of power to pursue a science-based conservation agenda.

I have chosen the term “ecological diplomacy” for three reasons. First, to stress the diplomatic work performed by those ecologists and birdwatchers in Spain, Great Britain, and elsewhere who developed networks of international relations that served as venues of parallel or track-two diplomacy.⁸ Preserving distant lands required agreements involving foreign territories and could potentially bring together politically distant countries. This was particularly important for the Spanish dictatorial regime, which was coming out of a period of relative political isolation. In the 1947 Conference for the Protection of Nature in Brunnen, there was a Spanish delegate, but merely in the role of “observateur.”⁹ One year later, no Spaniard attended the founding meeting of the International Union for the Protection of Nature. Franco’s Spain had been banned from the United Nations (UN) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and thus cooperation with the International Union for the Protection of Nature (IUPN) was unlikely. In 1953, the US–Spanish agreements facilitated Spain’s integration in international institutions: it was accepted into UNESCO that same year and into the UN in 1955.

Spanish administrators welcomed new opportunities for reinforcing diplomatic ties with Western countries (and for receiving their currency). British–Spanish relations were particularly difficult in this period, including the territorial dispute around Gibraltar.¹⁰ Cooperation in this less contentious area seemed like a promising way to reinforce links. Spanish scientists, in turn, often capitalized on the regime’s hunger for cooperation, using their international collaborations to strengthen their own position at home.¹¹ As was common in the Cold War and other periods, the internationalist rhetoric of science served as a diplomatic tool advancing national goals. For centuries,

8. Glenn E. Schweitzer, *Scientists, Engineers and Track-Two Diplomacy: A Half-Century of US-Russian Interacademy Cooperation* (Washington DC: The National Academies Press, 2004).

9. Johann Büttikofer, *International Conference for the Protection of Nature* (Basle: Provisional Union for the Protection of Nature, 1947).

10. Carolina Labarta, “Reino Unido y España: Unas relaciones marcadas por el contencioso territorial,” in *Historia de la política exterior española en los siglos XX y XXI*, Vol. 2, ed. Marta Hernández Ruíz (Madrid: CEU, 2015).

11. Lino Camprubí, Xavier Roqué, and Francisco Sáez de Adana, *De la Guerra Fría al calentamiento global: Estados Unidos, España y el nuevo orden mundial* (Madrid: Libros de la Catarata, 2018).

Doñana had been a place where royal aristocracy received prominent visitors to join them for hunting trips. In more recent democratic times, Spanish presidents have often vacationed there and hosted international guests from Mikhail Gorbachev to Angela Merkel. The Francoist regime also used it as an opportunity to improve its image abroad.

Second, ecological diplomacy points to a specific period between conservation diplomacy and environmental diplomacy. Historians of “conservation diplomacy” have viewed it as an integral part of international relations since at least the late nineteenth century. It included treatises regulating shared resources, from rivers to animals, particularly migratory species.¹² Historians of “environmental diplomacy,” in turn, refer to more recent developments, when in the Cold War *the* global environment became a tool for international relations between the two blocs or within allied countries. For instance, the Nixon Administration deployed environmental diplomacy as a means of shifting the agenda of national and international politics away from economic inequality and development.¹³ And the global environment forged and dissolved alliances within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and between NATO and Soviet countries.¹⁴ From the 1920s on, and particularly in the post-war international conservation regime organized around UNESCO and the WWF, conservationists aimed at protecting certain enclaves around the world reframed as animal habitats. The Swiss model of nature parks, devoted to scientific research rather than to recreation, found strong supporters in Great Britain and was globalized in different contexts, from the Belgian Congo to the Galapagos.¹⁵ Global models, however, are not universally applied, but locally

12. Kurkpatrick Dorsey, *The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy: U.S.-Canadian Wildlife Protection Treaties in the Progressive Era* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998); Marc Cioc, *The Game of Conservation: International Treaties to Protect the World's Migratory Animals* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009).

13. J. Brooks Flippen, *Conservative Conservationist: Russell E. Train and the Emergence of American Environmentalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); Stephen Macekura, “The limits of the global community: The Nixon administration and global environmental politics,” *Cold War History* 11, no. 4 (2011): 489–518.

14. Jacob Darwin Hamblin, “Environmentalism for the Atlantic Alliance: NATO's Experiment with the ‘Challenges of Modern Society,’” *Environmental History* 15 (Jan 2010): 54–75; Simone Turchetti, *Greening the Alliance: The Diplomacy of NATO's Science and Environmental Initiatives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

15. Patrick Kupper, “Translating Yellowstone: Early European National Parks, Weltnaturschutz and the Swiss Model,” in Gissible et al., *Civilizing Nature* (ref. 2), 123–39. Stephen Bocking, “Nature on the Home Front: British Ecologists' Advocacy for Science and Conservation,” *Environment and History* 18 (2012): 261–81; Raf De Bont, “A World Laboratory:

adopted. The Doñana case is particularly interesting because the Swiss model did not influence it directly; its promoters stressed similarities and connections to the French biological station Tour de Valat.

Third and last, ecological diplomacy stresses the role of science in the design, implementation, and management of conservation strategies. Many of the environmental historians and historians of science quoted in this paper have studied this connection. What I want to emphasize, however, is that changes in how ecology was understood coevolved with priorities in park management. In the case of Doñana, the creation of the National Park in 1969 and its insertion in the International Biology Program was followed by increasing tensions between research and recreation. Although in 1964 the WWF had favored research, now some of its scientists proposed nature tourism as part of a total ecology, which included the management of human resources.

“MORE AFRICAN THAN AFRICA”

After the Second World War, international conservation was among other things a way of managing post-colonial territories. Julian Huxley, the famous English biologist turned international organizer as the first Director General of UNESCO, sought ways to continue the British civilizing mission in a decolonizing world.¹⁶ At the core of this program was “thinking globally” in the neo-Malthusian terms of overpopulation and resource management.¹⁷ In this, he joined those British imperial officials who were active in building a post-war world order once the empire had lost its hegemony.¹⁸ Huxley’s progressive eugenic ideals for the future of humanity saw in nature recreation both a moral and an economic value. Perhaps inspired by his experience as a zoo manager,

Framing the Albert National Park,” *Environmental History* 22 (2017): 404–32; Elizabeth Hennessy, “The Politics of a Natural Laboratory: Claiming Territory and Governing Life in the Galapagos Islands,” *Social Studies of Science* 48 (2018): 1–24.

16. Glenda Sluga, “UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley,” *Journal of World History* 21, no. 3 (2010): 393–418.

17. Yannick Mahrane, Marianna Fenzi, Céline Pessis, and Christophe Bonneuil, “From Nature to Biosphere: The Political Invention of the Global Environment, 1945–1972,” *Vingtième Siècle: Revue d’histoire* 113, no. 1 (2012): 127–41.

18. Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

his techno-optimism celebrated humans as the stewards of the world, including animal evolution and geological engineering.¹⁹

In 1931, Huxley had been one of the founders of the London think tank Political and Economic Planning. There he worked together with the founder of the British Trust for Ornithology and prominent Oxford imperial ecologist, Max Nicholson. They promoted a technocratic vision of natural resources, aiming at reorganizing the national economy in accordance with the principles of ecology.²⁰ Nicholson increased his involvement in resource management during the war and, from 1943, became very active at the British Nature Conservancy, which he eventually came to lead after Tansley's death. From there he helped reorganize national parks in the United Kingdom seeking to make research, finances, and recreation compatible.²¹

The two friends did much to structure some of the leading institutions of nature conservation at an international level. In 1948, they joined a number of American and European researchers in creating the IUPN, which in 1956, became the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). It specialized in scientific research for conservation, while other UN programs dealt more directly with resource extraction and political negotiation.²² With this argument, Huxley was able to secure UNESCO's funding for sustaining the Union in its first years. However, the Union faced important financial difficulties. This motivated Huxley, Nicholson, and others to establish the World Wildlife Fund in 1961. Its goal was raising money to sustain institutions devoted to conservation as well as particular natural enclaves, mostly in recently independent territories.²³

And yet, the Fund's first big project took place in southern Europe rather than Africa; of the about \$2 million the Fund secured in its first four years,

19. C. Kenneth Waters and Albert van Helden, eds., *Julian Huxley: Biologist and Statesman of Science* (Houston: Rice University Press, 1992); R. S. Deese, "The New Ecology of Power: Julian and Aldous Huxley in the Cold War Era," in *Environmental Histories of the Cold War*, ed. J. R. McNeill and C. R. Unger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 279–300.

20. Julian Huxley, *Memories II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 210–11. Anker, *Imperial Ecology* (ref. 1), 202–08.

21. David Elliston Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain: A Social History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994[1976]), 227–44; Anker, *Imperial Ecology* (ref. 1), 229–32.

22. A. K. Wöbse, "'The world after all was one': The International Environmental Network of UNESCO and IUPN, 1945–1950," *Contemporary European History*, 20, no. 3 (2010): 331–48; Schwarzenbach, *Saving the World's Wildlife* (ref. 3), 36–38.

23. Schwarzenbach, *Saving the World's Wildlife* (ref. 3), 99.

Doñana was the largest single payment.²⁴ “The challenge of Doñana,” Nicholson said in retrospect and likely with some exaggeration, “contributed more than any other single factor to the foundation of the World Wildlife Fund in 1961.”²⁵

This section argues that this choice was the result of a web of personal connections and that it required Africanizing Doñana. In 1952, biologists Francisco Bernis and José Antonio Valverde visited the property of Mauricio González-Gordon, hunter, aficionado ornithologist, and one of the aristocratic owners of the Coto de Doñana. They banded migratory species there and decided to launch the Spanish Society of Ornithology, in coordination with the British Trust for Ornithology. They also devised a (successful) strategy to invite Franco to hunt the next year and convince him to halt the forestry projects that threatened Doñana, which they described as “Europe’s hunting and zoological paradise.”²⁶

González-Gordon was half-English, fluent in that language, and well connected both at home and abroad. He was more than happy to host and entertain international distinguished visitors in his hunting dominions as well as in his cherry wineries of Jerez. In 1952 and 1956, he invited Guy Mountfort, author of the *Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* (1954), to visit him at Doñana with a small group of scientific and amateur ornithologists; this was a time in which the two groups had not yet departed from each other.²⁷ Mountfort brought with him prominent bird enthusiasts from the economic, artistic, and military British elite. For instance, accompanying him on both trips was war hero and big game hunter turned film maker Viscount Allanbrooke, who had been head of the British Army and Churchill’s advisor.²⁸

24. Holdgate, *The Green Web* (ref. 3), 85; Schwarzenbach, *Saving the World’s Wildlife* (ref. 3), 95–98.

25. Max Nicholson, “Coto de Doñana: The Present State of Play,” NP, C.87, 1977(?).

26. Aquilino Duque, *El mito de Doñana* (Sevilla: Fundación José Manuel Lara, 2004 [1977]).

27. Mark V. Barrow, “On the Trail of the Ivory-Bill: Field Science, Local Knowledge, and the Struggle to Save Endangered Species,” in *Knowing Global Environments: New Historical Perspectives on the Field Sciences*, ed. Jeremy Vetter (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 135–61; Raf de Bont, “Poetry and Precision: Johannes Thienemann, the Bird Observatory in Rossitten and Civic Ornithology, 1900–1930,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 44 (2011): 171–203; Stephen Moss, *A Bird in the Bush: A Social History of Birdwatching* (London: Aurum Press, 2013), 150–222; Etienne S. Benson, “A Centrifuge of Calculation: Managing Data and Enthusiasm in Early Twentieth-Century Bird Banding,” *Osiris* 32 (2017): 286–306.

28. Field Marshall Lord Alanbrooke, *War Diaries, 1939–1945* (London: Phoenix Press, 2002).

In 1957, González-Gordon and Mountfort organized a more ambitious expedition. Its explicit aims were to send botanical specimens to Kew, conduct research on ecological distribution and ecosystems, and study the singing and nesting behavior of certain bird species.²⁹ But the underlying project was popularizing Doñana among affluent European bird-lovers who were willing to donate funds to create a nature reserve there; the next section of this paper analyzes how was this idea born and the difficulties to implement it. Huxley and Nicholson joined the expedition. With them were the main public figures of British ornithology. Erik Hosking, perhaps the best-known bird photographer of his time, accompanied Allanbrooke to help him produce a film about the place. The young ornithologist James Ferguson-Lees, Nicholson's assistant and editor of *British Birds*, together with bird ecologist Phil Hollom, ensured that the British Trust for Ornithology was well represented in the expedition.³⁰ Non-British members included the acclaimed American bird painter Roger T. Peterson.

Most of these travelers had first learned about Doñana in a late-nineteenth-century account of a hunting expedition titled *Wild Spain*. In it, following the British travel literature romanticizing and orientalizing Andalusia, the authors presented Doñana as “more African than Africa.”³¹ This imagination was reproduced in the 1957 expedition. Allanbrooke did so most explicitly, borrowing the title *Wild Spain* for his own film.³² And Mountfort titled his widely publicized book about the trip *Portrait of a Wilderness*.³³ In it, Doñana emerged as untouched and undiscovered nature. If scientists and the public had imagined Africa as both a *terra nullius* and a *terra incognita*, Doñana had to fit into that picture.³⁴ Mountfort knew well that the place had been managed by generations of guards. They had cleared forests to prevent wildfires and introduced new species, such as deer and pine. An expert publicist and best-seller ornithologist, however, Mountfort was most explicit about creating

29. Huxley, *Memories II* (ref. 20), 181–84.

30. Max Nicholson, “1957 Spanish Expedition,” NP, C.79, 1957.

31. Abel Chapman and Walter J. Buck, *Wild Spain: Records of Sport with Rifle, Rod and Gun, Natural History and Exploration* (London: Gurney and Jackson, 1896), 1.

32. On the rich relationships between technology and wilderness in photography and film, see Matthew Brower, *Developing Animals: Wildlife and Early American Photography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

33. Guy Mountfort, *Portrait of a Wilderness: The Story of the Coto Doñana Expeditions* (London: Hutchinson, 1958), xi; Nicholson, “Coto de Doñana” (ref. 25).

34. Hellen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

a “mystique” that presented Doñana as an “unaltered space.”³⁵ This image, he insisted, was more palatable for English and Dutch birdwatchers and potential donors.

Reaching northern European benefactors required one step beyond the Africanization of Doñana; it involved the appropriation of migratory birds. The goal was to save northern European birds by securing them access to their African winter quarters. A WWF 1966 brochure was most explicit in pleading to save “our migratory Dutch birds.”³⁶ In this game between conservation and appropriation, southern Spain served as the border between Europe and Africa. The pervasive image of Doñana’s alleged wild nature was precisely what made it a target for international conservationists.³⁷ Africanizing Doñana also fit squarely into the postcolonial regime of conservation that inspired the WWF. It presented Africa as a territory to be protected from the outside.

That Spain had not been a British colony but was still a colonial metropolis itself created telling tensions. Valverde, who had conducted research in the area and guided the 1957 expedition, resented that his British colleagues presented Doñana as a land untouched by humans and unknown to scientists until their own arrival. This, he deemed, obscured the centuries-long human management of the marsh as well as his own current work and that of others.³⁸ The tension here was clear: bringing in international scientists could help Valverde to foster his own vision for Doñana against contending developmentalist projects at home, as well as to advance his scientific investigations, but it also meant opening the door to competing accounts of the scientific work at Doñana.³⁹

Valverde was himself an active colonial scientist and conservator. He had conducted ecological research in Spanish Guinea (today Equatorial Guinea) and the Spanish Sahara (today, Western Sahara). In 1970, he became known to

35. José A. Valverde, *Memorias de un biólogo heterodoxo: Tomo II: En el Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas* (Madrid: V&V/Quercus, 2003), 27; Max Nicholson a J. Castroviejo, 9 Mar 1977, NP, C.82.

36. “Hinojos, een veilige vluchthaven voor vogelvrijen,” 1968, EBD, Hinojos-Artrain, 1968–1970; see also, Max Nicholson, “Draft,” 25 Mar 1963, NP, C.86.

37. William Cronon, “The trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (1996): 7–28.

38. José A. Valverde, *Memorias de un biólogo heterodoxo: Tomo IV: La aventura de Doñana: Cómo crear una reserva*, (Madrid: V&V/Quercus, 2003), 27.

39. This ambivalence toward collaboration with foreign scientists was common to other Spanish scientists of the period; see Oliver Hochadel, “Palaeoanthropology in the periphery: An introduction,” *Dynamis* 33, no. 2 (2013): 281–95.

the wider public for capturing a group of gazelles from the Sahara and shipping them to the Almeria desert in southern Spain. The goal was to save them from extinction and help them reproduce in the Acclimation Center belonging to the Spanish Institute for Colonization. Valverde, the colonial scientist, would some years later resent once again what he understood as British chauvinism. Ecological diplomacy included crafting and negotiating discourses and imaginations.

THE SWISS-FRENCH MODEL OF CONSERVATION

Another prominent member of the 1957 expedition was Luc Hoffmann, a Swiss man who had inherited the chemical emporium Hoffmann-La Roche. He devoted his wealth to study and protect migratory birds in the Camargue, southern France's most famous wetland. In 1947, he bought land there and opened the ornithological station Tour du Valat. Ten years later, this station would be the model followed in Doñana. Tour du Valat was attached to the French Société d'Acclimatation, a member of the IUCN that had just changed its name for one with less colonial overtones: Société Nationale de Protection de la Nature. In 1953, Hoffmann joined forces with Mountfort and Nicholson, who by then represented the IUCN. They designed a plan for the protection of the Camargue against projects for diverting the Rhone River and for draining the wetlands for rice plantations. For this, Tour du Valat signed an agreement with the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) by which the station became a "biological reserve."⁴⁰ They also reached out to foreign donors, insisting that the problem was international because it affected migrating species—an argument they would later extend to include Doñana.⁴¹

The concept of a biological reserve responded to the tradition of Swiss conservationism with which Hoffmann was familiar. Since before the First World War, Paul Sarasin and others promoted natural parks in Switzerland and elsewhere that were not primarily devoted to recreation but closed to tourism and reserved to scientific research, particularly in ecology.⁴² After the

40. C. Bressou, "Actes de la Réserve de Camargue, n 27: 1950–1953," *La Terre et la Vie* 101, no. 1 (1954): 3–16.

41. Nicholson to Nylon, 14 Sep 1957, NP, C.80.

42. Patrick Kupper, "Science and the National Parks: A Transatlantic Perspective on the Interwar Years," *Environmental History* 14, no. 1 (2009): 58–81; Gina Rumore, "Preservation for Science: The Ecological Society of America and the Campaign for Glacier Bay National

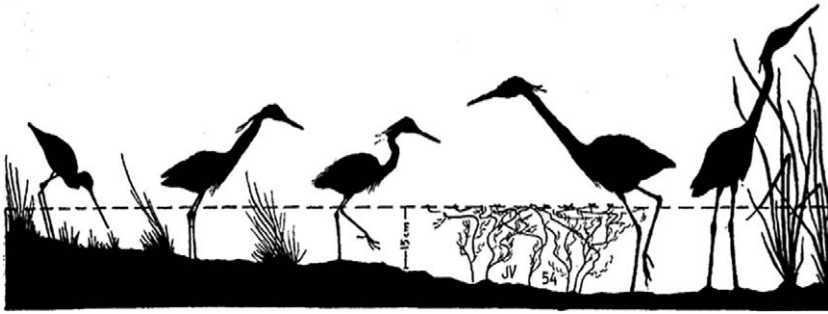


FIG. 1. Aquatic birds in La Camargue. *Source:* Hoffmann, “An Ecological Sketch” (ref. 49). Reproduced with permission requested to from of *British Birds*.

Second World War, Swiss conservationists were active in launching a series of international initiatives to extend this model of conservation.⁴³ Following this model, Hoffmann and his colleagues in Tour du Valat regarded tourists as an invasive species comparable to rice, and hoped to limit visits to ornithologists.⁴⁴ Bird conservation, they argued, needed to target not particular species but the habitats in which they reproduced and fed.⁴⁵ Doñana followed this model in more than one way.

Designing the Doñana Reserve, Hoffmann and Nicholson capitalized on the international prestige of Tour du Valat by making explicit both similarities of and connections between the two places. Regarding similarities, the wetlands of Doñana were also threatened by rice plantations in the Guadalquivir River.⁴⁶ Regarding connections, Hoffmann showed that the Camargue’s flamingos also spent time in the Guadalquivir marshes every year (see Fig. 1).⁴⁷

Monument,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 45, no. 4 (2012): 613–50; Kupper, “Translating Yellowstone” (ref. 15), 123–39; Raf de Bont, “Borderless Nature: Experts and the Internationalization of Nature Protection,” in *Scientists’ Expertise as Performance: Between State and Society, 1860–1960*, ed. Evert Peeters, Joris Vandendriesche, and Kaat Wils (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2015), 49–65.

43. For these efforts, and some of the collaborations and tensions they generated, see Holdgate, *The Green Web* (ref. 3), 18–21.

44. G. Tallon, “La réserve naturelle de Camargue et le tourisme,” *La Terre et la Vie* 101, no. 1 (1954): III–17.

45. Anna-Katharina Wöbse, “Framing the Heritage of Mankind: National Parks on the International Agenda,” in Gissibl et al., *Civilizing Nature* (ref. 2), 140–56.

46. Camprubí, *Engineers* (ref. 6), 77–102.

47. Luc Hoffmann, “Station de Bagnage de Camargue,” *La Terre et la Vie* 109, no. 1 (1962): 34–77.

That flamingos thrived in both wetlands in their travels between African and northern Europe provided the first opportunity for cooperation. Knowing that Valverde had studied flamingos in Doñana, Hoffmann invited him to Tour du Valat in 1954. And, after the 1957 expedition, Nicholson took Valverde with him to spend some months at the Nature Conservancy.⁴⁸ Finally, the three authors published a series of articles in *British Birds* illustrated by Hosking's pictures and devoted to comparing both wetlands. In the first article, Nicholson, Ferguson-Lees, and Hollom drew similarities between the two marshes and the common perils that jeopardized their continuity. Hoffmann devoted the second article to describing the Camargue's ecology. The third, written by Valverde in Spanish and translated by Nicholson into English, did the same thing for Doñana.⁴⁹

This series of articles was the first step in a campaign to collect funds and political allies to turn Doñana into a biological reserve. Peter Scott, a well-known painter of wildlife and rising TV star in the United Kingdom, invited Valverde to explain in two important conferences the significance of Doñana to northern European migratory birds.⁵⁰ When the WWF was launched in 1961, Scott was very active in its fundraising activities and designed its famous logo—perhaps a precedent of what has come to be called “Panda diplomacy.”⁵¹ He campaigned furiously for Doñana. He would later declare with satisfaction that the first ten years of the Fund had specialized in wetlands, his own preferred niche.⁵² When the funds started to arrive, the institutionalization of Doñana followed the model of Tour du Valat. But that still required more diplomatic work.

Valverde's good scientific and personal connections with José María Albaréda facilitated the agreement between the WWF and the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), the Spanish equivalent to the CNRS.⁵³ Albaréda was a pharmacist and a soil scientist, which made him well aware of the

48. Valverde, *Memorias: Tomo IV* (ref. 38), 38.

49. Max Nicholson, James Ferguson-Lees, and P. Hollom, “The Camargue and the Coto Donana,” *British Birds* 50, no. 12 (1957): 497–519; Luc Hoffmann, “An Ecological Sketch of the Camargue,” *British Birds* 51, no. 9 (1958): 321–50; José Antonio Valverde, “An Ecological Sketch of the Coto Donana,” *British Birds* 51, no. 1 (1958): 1–23. A reduced version of this last paper had helped Nicholson in writing the chapters devoted to Doñana in Mountfort's *Portrait of a Wilderness* (ref. 33); Nicholson to Valverde, Aug 1957, NP, C.79.

50. Valverde, *Memorias: Tomo IV* (ref. 38), 61

51. Jamil Anderlini, “How the Panda became China's Diplomatic Weapon of Choice,” *Financial Times*, 3 Nov 2017.

52. Schwarzenbach, *Saving the World's Wildlife* (ref. 3), 98

53. Valverde, *Memorias: Tomo II* (ref. 35).

conditions required for ecosystems to exist.⁵⁴ He was also a founding member of Opus Dei—and likely inspired some sections of the Opus Dei doctrinal book, *Camino*.⁵⁵ In keeping with the public face of Spanish Catholicism at the time, Albareda did not accept evolution.⁵⁶ According to Valverde, an agnostic, this duality between science and obedience caused Albareda great pain and posed an obstacle to an otherwise fluid friendship.⁵⁷ And yet, it did not prevent Albareda from granting Valverde the CSIC's support to carry on with the WWF program.

But Valverde not only needed to negotiate at home; his efforts to advance the Doñana Reserve project took him to the highest levels of diplomacy. As part of the negotiations between the CSIC and the WWF, the latter's first president, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, asked Valverde to write for him a letter to General Franco. Once Prince Bernhard had signed the letter and sent it to Franco, the secretary of the Spanish dictator asked Valverde to draft a response to be signed by the General.⁵⁸ In the following months, Valverde was charged with drafting both ends of an ongoing correspondence that certified an agreement that he had helped to prepare. Part of the job of the scientific diplomat, it seems, was writing letters to oneself.

After several bureaucratic difficulties, the agreement was finally implemented in 1964. The WWF and the CSIC joined forces to purchase some 6,700 hectares from three owners (aristocratic hunters, bird lovers, and supporters of the project) and inaugurated the Doñana Biology Station with Valverde as its first director (Fig. 2). The model of Tour du Valat, although effective in this first phase, posed its own challenges when the question of Doñana's economic sustainability came up some years later. This set the local context for a wider dispute between different notions of ecology and conservation.

MANAGING THE EARTH'S SYSTEM: RESEARCH AND RECREATION AT DOÑANA

Further agreements involving the WWF and the CSIC secured more hectares for the Reserve. And yet, perils jeopardizing its wildlife came from outside its

54. Antoni Malet, "José María Albareda (1902–1966) and the Formation of the Spanish Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas," *Annals of Science* 66, no. 3 (2009): 307–332.

55. Camprubí, *Engineers* (ref. 6), 41–76.

56. Clara Florensa, *Els discursos sobre l'evolució en el franquisme (1939–1967)* (PhD dissertation, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2017).

57. Valverde, *Memorias, Tomo II* (ref. 35), 210.

58. Valverde, *Memorias, Tomo IV* (ref. 38), 65–66.

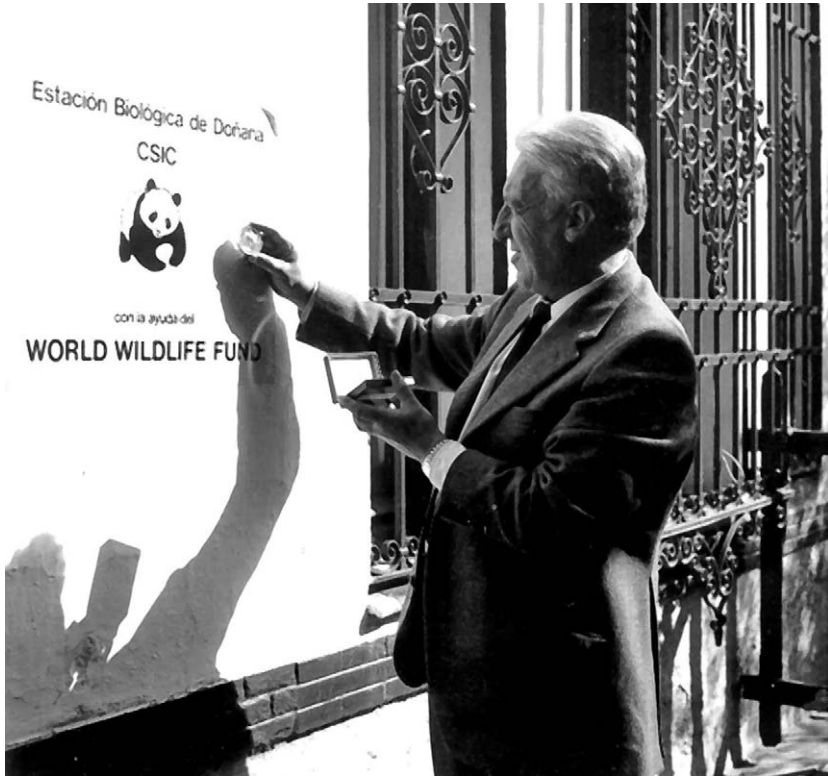


FIG. 2. Valverde inaugurating the Reserve, 1964. *Source:* Reprinted with permission of CSIC-EDB.

fences and required stronger political power than the CSIC could offer. First, the Ministries of Public Works and Agriculture insisted in extending irrigation infrastructures for rice crops, which meant potentially dangerous shifts in the water and salt budgets of the marshes. The Ministry of Industry, in turn, had favored the creation of several chemical factories nearby, and air pollution was a concern for ornithologists. Finally, the Ministry of Information and Tourism planned new roads crossing the Station to serve the increasingly overcrowded beach tourism that surrounded Doñana, exerting extra pressure on its aquifers. These menaces made it obvious that for the Reserve to be viable, the entire territory surrounding it had to be integrated into a single sustainable plan. The creators of the Reserve proposed to put it under the protection of a branch of the Ministry of Agriculture devoted to nature conservation. For that, Doñana had to go beyond its Biological Reserve status and become a national park.

In early 1969, Valverde and Hoffmann teamed up with the rising star of Spanish wildlife film, Felix Rodríguez de la Fuente, to create the Association for the Defense of Nature (ADENA), the Spanish branch of the WWF.⁵⁹ ADENA's main goal was to channel the international donations devoted to Doñana. In keeping with the WWF's strategy of recruiting allies among the industrial and political elites as well as the aristocracy, ADENA's presidency went to the then Prince Juan Carlos.⁶⁰ His love for hunting—which he shared with Franco, whom he had taken to Doñana on several occasions—and his political status made him into a valuable ally for the WWF. From this new political position, and after a series of meetings with Franco and his ministries, the government approved the Doñana National Park later in the year.

Testifying to the international dimensions of this speedy decision, the decree announcing the Park presented it as “a benefit to the Spanish people and a generous gift from Spain to the International Year for the Conservation of Nature and its Resources.”⁶¹ Although it might have referred to the 1970 European Conservation Year, this mention was a clear allusion to the IUCN and the International Biological Program (IBP, 1964–1974). Modeled on the International Geophysical Year, the IBP aimed to foster systems ecology at a global scale. For that, it promoted a turn toward big science, understood as the gathering of big data through international data sharing. While the IBP failed to standardize and centralize biological data, it contributed to the shift in its understanding of ecosystems in terms of cybernetics, thermodynamics, and mathematical models.⁶² It also helped reframe ecosystems in terms of a global interconnected environment, the biosphere, and the “carrying capacity” of “spaceship earth.”⁶³

59. On Rodríguez de la Fuente, see Carlos Taberero, “‘La libertad de todos los seres vivos’: Naturaleza, ciencias naturales y la imagen de España en la obra de Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente,” *Arbor* 192, no. 781 (2016): a345.

60. From Antonio Valverde to Luc Hoffmann, 24 Apr 1968, EBD, ADENA; J. A. Valverde, “Informe de actividades 1969,” Sevilla, 15 Jan 1970, EBD, Comité Directivo, resúmenes actividades 1963–1972.

61. Ministerio de Agricultura, Decreto 2412/1969, *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 257 (27 Oct 1969).

62. Elena Aronova, Karen S. Baker, and Naomi Oreskes, “Big Science and Big Data in Biology: From the International Geophysical Year through the International Biological Program to the Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) Network, 1957–Present,” *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 40, no. 2 (2010): 183–224; Elena Aronova, “Geophysical Datascape of the Cold War: Politics and Practices of the World Data Centers in the 1950s and 1960s,” *Osiris*, 32 (2017): 307–27.

63. David C. Comenan, *Big Ecology: The Emergence of Ecosystem Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Sabine Höhler, *Spaceship Earth in the Environmental Age, 1960–1990*

The understanding of the global environment in terms of productivity reproduced at a global scale the linkage between political economy and resource ecology that Huxley and Nicholson had been promoting for decades. Within the IUCN, this view led to an increasing tendency from the late 1950s to stress tourism as a way to pay for parks, as opposed to the previous exclusive focus on research. Nicholson, still active at the IUCN and the head of the British Nature Conservancy, became convener of the IBP's Section on Conservation of Terrestrial Communities. This new position granted him an opportunity to implement his own ideas of global sustainable productivity. Nicholson favored a top-down approach in which ecosystem scientists would be in charge of managing conservation at a planetary level by computing relationships between primary and secondary productivity and thinking economically about how to sustain them in ways compatible with human well-being. This technocratic vision was eventually defeated by local, national, and international alternative views and postcolonial shifts in the UN's power structure.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, it played a very significant role in the future of Doñana. And it did so in opposition to some of the WWF's (and the Reserve's) founding principles.

Valverde, a member of the IBP, attempted without success to turn the Doñana Station into one of the IBP's main centers.⁶⁵ While there might be economic reasons for his failure, Nicholson made explicit on different occasions that the Doñana researchers led by Valverde focused solely on "secondary productivity," and that this was of little use to the scale his section of the IBP wanted to incorporate.⁶⁶ Nicholson appreciated the ecological approach of Valverde and his students and collaborators, which was still sometimes developed in coordination with researchers at Tour du Valat.⁶⁷ And yet he lamented their exclusive attention to trophic communities at the expense of more

(London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015); Sebastian Dutreuil, *Gaia: hypothèse, programme de recherche pour le système terre, ou philosophie de la nature?* (PhD dissertation, Université de Paris, 2016).

64. Simone Schleper, *Life on Earth: Controversies on the Science and Politics of Global Nature Conservation, 1960–1980* (PhD dissertation, Universitaire Pers Maastrich, 2017).

65. José Antonio Valverde, "Propuesta para incluir a la EBD como Estación Internacional de Campo para el Programa Biológico Internacional," Sevilla, 14 Mar 1966, EBD, Comité Directivo, resúmenes actividades 1963–1972; Holdgate, *The Green Web* (ref. 3), 94–97.

66. Nicholson to J. Castroviejo, 9 Mar 1977, NP, C.82; Nicholson, "Doñana: History of a struggle" (draft), 3 Mar 1978, NP, C.85; Nicholson, "Coto de Doñana" (ref. 25).

67. José Antonio Valverde, "Anteproyecto para el establecimiento de la Reserva y Estación Biológica de Doñana," 1963, EBD; José Antonio Valverde, "Informe sobre actividades en 1966" and "Informe de actividades de 1971," EBD, Comité Directivo, resúmenes actividades 1963–1972.

comprehensive views that took into account energy inputs into the system by water, soil minerals, and biological productivity.⁶⁸

This scientific criticism reflected a managerial one. In the model of Tour du Valat, Doñana protected an entire habitat rather than endangered species. This was already a departure from former conservationist diplomats and high society donors, who were interested in saving charismatic species, like big mammals and colorful birds. And yet this notion of habitat was still too limited for Nicholson's understanding of ecosystems. He explicitly criticized the WWF and the early IUCN approach to conservation for failing to address the problems at the root of conservation: "energy, development and population growth."⁶⁹

This had immediate consequences on Nicholson's judgment about the Swiss model for conservation favored both at the Camargue and the Guadalquivir. As he reflected in the late 1970s,

In retrospect, the original emphasis on the unique scientific importance of Doñana failed to reckon with such numerous and powerful threats, which could not be held off on that ground alone. Regrettable as some may still find it, the safeguarding of so extensive and coveted a region in modern political and economic conditions depends absolutely on opening important parts of it and its natural treasures to visiting on a large scale under proper guidance and supervision to ensure that the ecological communities continue undamaged while the area contributes its fair share to the earning and cultural support of one of the poorer parts of Spain, to which it belongs.⁷⁰

Economic sustainability was an integral part of Doñana's ecosystem, according to Nicholson's holistic approach. And it demanded incorporating recreation as well as research. This was more in line with the North American tradition of nature parks and with what the IUCN was now favoring for African parks: the goal was no longer to keep people out.⁷¹ Already in 1966,

68. José Antonio Valverde to CSIC, "Cuestionario laboratorios científicos en España," Sevilla, 27 Nov 1965, EBD, División de Ciencias CSIC, 1965–1975; José Antonio Valverde, "Informe actividades 1970" and "Informe de actividades 1971 y 1972", EBD, Comité Directivo, resúmenes actividades 1963–1972.

69. Schwarzenbach, *Saving the World's Wildlife* (ref. 3), 164.

70. Nicholson, "The Rescue of Doñana" (draft, no date), NP, C.89; Nicholson, "Doñana: History of a struggle," (draft) 3 Mar 1978, NP, C.85.

71. William M. Adams, *Against Extinction: The Story of Conservation* (London: Earthscan, 2004); Ian Tyrrell, "America's National Parks: The Transnational Creation of National Space in the Progressive Era," *Journal of American Studies*, 46, no. 1 (2012): 1–21; Paul S. Sutter, "The

Nicholson had the IBP send Herbert Axell, his main collaborator at the British Nature Conservancy, to design hides and lagoons for managing visitors at Doñana.⁷² Valverde resented the visit as an unwelcomed foreign intrusion and insisted that “the main goals of the Station are: conducting research, conserving nature and scientific popularization; in that order of importance.”⁷³

With the creation of the National Park in 1969, the struggle between research and recreation worsened. The Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICONA), the newly created department within the Ministry of Agriculture devoted to conservation, was in charge of all Spanish national parks, now including Doñana. In the meantime, Valverde still controlled the Biological Station within it. But, as Nicholson put it, ecologists at the Station were slow in “getting the National Park part of the message”.⁷⁴

The institutional stalemate prevented much change in the following years. The WWF, still an important financial asset to Doñana, also pushed for recreation. Donors had been complaining for years about the lack of facilities for visitors and the difficulty in obtaining permission to enter the park.⁷⁵ In 1976, Hofmann approached the ICONA on behalf of the WWF and suggested that Nicholson could draft a managing plan for Doñana.⁷⁶ In less than a year, Nicholson presented his “Master Plan,” offering nature tourism as an alternative to both beach tourism and excessive agricultural and industrial development.⁷⁷ The WWF launched a massive campaign among its members to invite bird watchers from around the world to visit the Park.⁷⁸

As with early conservation efforts in colonial settings, the goal of Nicholson’s top-down approach was still managing foreign territories for the recreational purposes of his own social group: “the territory might be in Spain, but it wouldn’t be strange if about 30 to 40% of the visitors were British,” he stressed as in soliciting donors. But Nicholson added a post-colonial hint to the argument: it was also British speculators and tourists who were destroying wildlife in Spain, “and only with our money can we

Trouble with ‘America’s National Parks’: or, Going Back to the Wrong Historiography: A Response to Ian Tyrrell,” *Journal of American Studies*, 46, no. 1 (2012): 23–29.

72. Hoffmann to Nicholson, 3 Jun 1976, NP, C.82.

73. J. A. Valverde, “Resumen de actividades 1965–1966,” 1 May 1966, EBD, Comité Directivo, resúmenes actividades 1963–1972; Valverde, *Memorias, Tomo IV* (ref. 38).

74. Nicholson, “Coto de Doñana” (ref. 25).

75. Crawford H. Greenwalt to Castroviejo, 12 Jun 1978, NP, c. 82.

76. Hoffmann to Nicholson, 3 Jun 1976, NP, C.82.

77. Nicholson, “Master Plan: Draft,” 7 Mar 1977, NP, c. 87, C.84.

78. WWF, “Promotion of specialist group visits to Doñana National Park., Dec 1981, NP, c. 92.

hope to halt its destruction.”⁷⁹ Tourism was becoming an important source of revenue for the Spanish economy, and the new democratic government still capitalized on Doñana to sell its image abroad.⁸⁰ ICONA was able to convince the Spanish authorities to accept and implement the Master Plan. Since Nicholson’s global top-down approach to global conservation had been replaced at the IUCN by more regional views, he must have seen this as a significant diplomatic achievement.⁸¹

CONCLUSION

Readers may recall the 2012 scandal that shook the foundations of both the Spanish monarchy and the African big game business. King Juan Carlos I, chief of state after General Francisco Franco’s death, had an accident in Botswana. The media soon learned that he was there hunting elephants and accompanied by his alleged lover, a German princess. In the peak of the Spanish economic crisis, the news damaged the monarch’s reputation so badly that he publicly apologized—and abdicated only two years later. Moreover, a photograph of him posing with his rifle and a dead elephant added insult to injury for environmental activists around the world (Fig. 3). ADENA, the Spanish branch of the WWF, of which Juan Carlos had been Honorary President since its 1969 inception, retired that title immediately after the photo was published. The values of conservationism had certainly shifted in the forty years since the creation of ADENA, when Juan Carlos’s love of hunting and aristocratic connections were precisely what made him Honorary President.

As the photograph boosted public outcry worldwide and international organizations increased their pressure, the Botswana government passed a law banning all elephant hunting. Similarly to what other countries do to protect the rhinoceros against poachers, the government devoted international help to build military bases around national parks.⁸² In the summer of 2018, however, the Botswana Parliament decided to lift the ban. Among other things, they

79. Nicholson, “Draft,” 25 Mar 1963, NP, C.86.

80. A longer history of tourism in Spain as a diplomatic tool can be found in Neal M. Rosendorf, *Franco Sells Spain to America: Hollywood, Tourism and Public Relations as Postwar Spanish Soft Power* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

81. Kemi Fuentes-George, *Between Preservation and Exploitation: Transnational Advocacy Networks and Conservation in Developing Countries* (Boston: The MIT Press, 2016).

82. Anti-poaching operations sometimes involve military deployment of Western troops; UK Ministry of Defence, “Defence Secretary praises troops about to embark on countering elephant

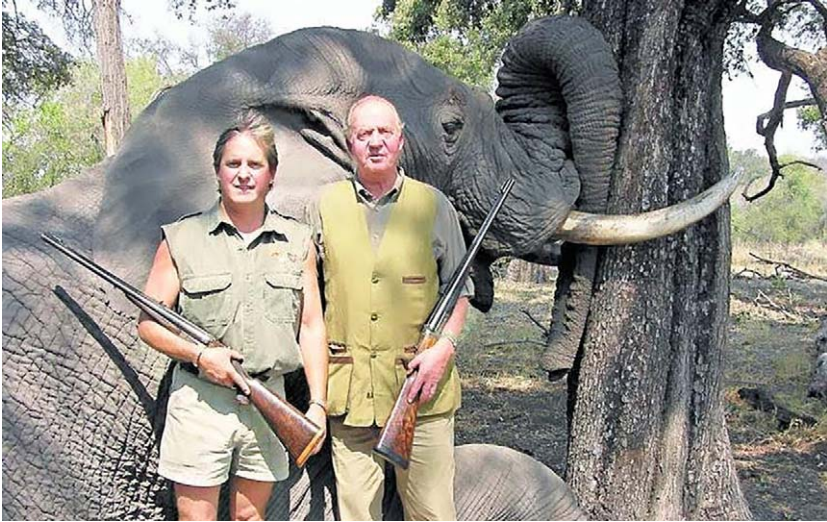


FIG. 3. King Juan Carlos I posing with his hunt in Botswana. The image was uploaded without credits to the website of the expedition organizer (Rann Safaris), and then quickly removed and the website cancelled. It has been widely reproduced in the media.

argued that elephant overpopulation was threatening human settlements, that income from game hunters was higher than that from camera-armed tourists, and that poaching is better combated by allowing controlled hunting—as neighboring countries like Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa continued doing.

The government accompanied the social media announcement of the ban-lift with the 2012 picture of Juan Carlos I and his kill. They did not feel the need to explain the meaning of their choice: Was it a way of inviting the former Spanish king and other elite hunters around the world back to the country to shoot elephants? Or perhaps a provocative reminder that, regardless of international outcries, Botswana is a sovereign power that can enact its own law?⁸³

The ongoing debates in Africa and the world about game hunting regulations, about the militarization of responses against poaching, and more

and rhino poaching operation,” *Gov.uk* (29 May 2018); <https://tinyurl.com/y6rc78jy> (accessed Jul 2020).

83. Republic of Botswana Government, “Parliament Adopts Motion to Lift Elephant Hunting Ban,” Facebook post, 21 Jun 2018; <https://www.facebook.com/BotswanaGovernment/posts/1719472494802068> (accessed Jun 2020). I asked the Government via Facebook, and the Community Manager limited his answer to assure me that they had meant no offense. This indicates that perhaps they just used the first picture they had at hand in their archives about the topic.

generally, about “green colonialism” recapitulate some of the tensions that have been at the core of nature conservation since the Second World War.⁸⁴ The rifts between international conservation goals and national sovereignty merged turbulently with questions about whether conservation should target species, ecosystems, national economies, or the global environment. This paper has looked for how these issues arose and were resolved around the Doñana wetlands.

In Doñana, it is clear “that national parks are more adequately understood as transnational parks,” and that local specificities are an integral part of this global history.⁸⁵ A small group of ecologists and ornithologists from several European countries developed a strategy to turn a former hunting reserve into a scientific one. While they shared scientific assumptions, they were more than an “epistemic community.”⁸⁶ They also had in common managerial and diplomatic skills, as well as the ability to reach donors and politicians, bringing them together around Doñana. This often required reimagining the park as an African wilderness, to which the yearly trips of migrating birds contributed.

Birds may not know this, but the borders over which they graciously fly are as real as the feathers in their bodies. Protecting migratory species poses a paradox. On the one hand, it means making them subject to national law: protection demands appropriation. On the other, for protection to be effective, relevant sovereign nations need to reach agreements. When the goal is protecting the habitats hosting these species, the international agreements required for conservation involve foreign territories. In the 1970s, bird protection led to institutional transnational cooperation between northern and southern Europe.⁸⁷ But long before that, managing foreign territories had been standard practice for imperial conservationists. Even after the empire was gone, or in places where it had never ruled, Huxley’s and Nicholson’s technocratic ideals were designed to work from above. They did not demand unconditional

84. A recent example among many: Alexander Zaitchik, “How Conservation Became Colonialism,” *Foreign Policy*, 16 Jul 2018). See also William M. Adams and Martin Muligan, *Decolonizing Nature. Strategies for Conservation in a Post-colonial Era* (London: Earthscan, 2003).

85. Bernhard Gissibl, Sabine Höhler, and Patrick Kupper, “Introduction. Towards a Global History of National Parks,” in Gissibl et al., *Civilizing Nature* (ref. 2), 1–27.

86. Peter M. Haas, *Epistemic Communities, Constructivism, and International Environmental Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

87. Jan-Henrik Meyer, “Saving Migrants: A Transnational Network Supporting Supranational Bird Protection Policy,” in *Transnational Networks in Regional Integration: Governing Europe, 1945–83*, ed. Wolfram Kaiser, Brigitte Leucht, and Michael Gehler (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 177–98.

democracy. Cooperation with Francoism does not seem to have been ever questioned within the WWF. And some decades later, the Fund closed a deal with Mobutu in Zaire, which triggered protests by other conservationists more directly concerned with human rights.⁸⁸ In his 1970 book, *The Environmental Revolution: A Guide to the New Masters of the World*, Nicholson imagined once again a world economy managed by ecologists.⁸⁹ His 1977 Master Plan for Doñana was very modest in comparison, and yet it aimed at making an entire region of southern Spain economically feasible.

In Nicholson's vision, ecology included humans—he famously integrated the biosphere with the technosphere. An ecologist's plan for a nature park needed to take into account soil productivity, but also revenue from tourism—in the case of Doñana, he hoped, British bird-watchers. By then, tourism in Spain had become a diplomatic tool. But the WWF had not always favored this source of revenue for Doñana. Having adapted the Swiss model of conservation from Tour du Valat, the Doñana Biological Station was for decades a research sanctuary. Ecological diplomacy coevolved with ideas and practices in the field of ecology and with the realities of political economy.

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88. Schwarzenbach, *Saving the World's Wildlife* (ref. 3), 99.

89. Max Nicholson, *The Environmental Revolution: A Guide to the New Masters of the World* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970).