

## Human-animal relations in El Impenetrable National Park, an area of confluence of environmental conservation, tourism and livestock

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**Abstract:** Since 2011, in the area currently known as *El Impenetrable* National Park (Chaco, Argentina), certain animals were "protected" and became part of the attractions offered to tourists. This article aims to describe and analyze the relationships between humans and animals in the mentioned area, where environmental conservation and tourism converge with family livestock production. It is an ethnographic research carried out between 2021 and 2023 that encourages us to think about ways to reconcile conservation with human presence in the environment. The physical space of the park underwent changes linked to the productive activities' humans carried out there. The environmental conservation promoted seeks to eradicate the harmful hunting of "wild animals". Although such animal condition (wild) reflects separation between humans and nature, it is relative (it does not apply to all humans or to all animals) and permeable (through the physical movement of animals and humans across park borders and through the similar treatment that locals give to animals). Finally, the promotion of experiences with animals within the park prioritizes the presence of some to the detriment of others. The criteria of animal differentiation reveal a territorial and animal strategy aimed at transforming sources of income generation.

**Keywords:** Chaco, tourism, hunting, *La Fidelidad*, Parque Nacional *El Impenetrable*, wild.

### 1. Introduction

In Argentina, the creation of Areas Naturales Protegidas (Natural Protected Areas) began at the end of the nineteenth century and aimed at: 1) making effective the presence of the state in regions marginal to the agricultural and livestock model and 2) promoting development through settlement and tourism (Ferrero and Arach, 2019). Thus, with the conservation of nature, two problems were revealed:

- 1) borders between humans and nature were consolidated, "establishing the difficulty of their coexistence, and an ontological distinction that not only separates, but also forges in the territory distinctions of the category of nature versus society (translation by the author of this article)", and
- 2) local populations were excluded, they "became threats to nature and the cause of biodiversity loss" (translation by the author of this article) (Ferrero and Arach, 2019: 22-23).

This article is based on those problems. It aims to describe and analyze the relationships between humans and animals in Parque Nacional *El Impenetrable* [*El Impenetrable* National Park] (PNEI), an area of confluence of promotion of environmental conservation and of tourism and family livestock production. Its objectives are: 1) to analyze the relationships between conservation and hunting; 2) to

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