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# Property Rights and Wildlife Utilisation:

generating incentives for conservation  
and economic development

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Arts in Economics** at Massey University.

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## *Abstract*

The accelerating depletion of natural resources (biological diversity) range from degraded ecosystems, endangered species, and loss of genetic resources. This depletion has raised concern over future human economic welfare among other things. Conservation strategies have been implemented to preserve remaining biological diversity. The focus of this thesis is on conservation strategies to halt the loss of wild species. Protected areas and trade bans are the most recognised conservation measures. These strategies have their limitations however. This study will argue that increasingly the preservation of remaining wild species will be through economic incentives, specifically at the local community level.

If we are serious about saving wild species, our behaviour towards the utilisation of wildlife must change. A recent innovative idea is to look upon conservation as a form of economic development. Strategies that can lead to the successful implementation of this concept include conservation partnerships that actively involve local communities especially in developing countries, and the commercial and sustainable use of wild species.

Underlying the effectiveness and efficiency of these strategies are property right institutions and markets. Economic theory argues that natural resources will be protected only if direct economic benefits accrue to those most responsible for the care of these resources. In essence, the wise management of biological diversity must generate conservation and economic development benefits. This study examines and discusses the above issues.

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