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[00:00 - 01:47] Moderator: For helping put it all together and set things up, thanks so much, and thanks of course to you for coming. My goal here today is, is a pretty simple one. I want to take everyone's mind off the election for an hour, [laughs] and I think I'll be able to do that because I have a lot of good pictures, so [laughs] I'm-, it's a little hard on a day like today to focus so you guys can sit back, forget about the election and focus on this. My topic really is the ethics of preserving or extinguishing species. And my way into thinking about other species and appreciating other species is bird. How many bird watchers are out there? So we got some, some bird watchers here. So whether it's, uh, Yellow Warblers that are going to be coming back in the spring or, or Osprey, I love to go out and, and watch birds, enjoy birds. I can't do that, though, these days without remembering that birds are in trouble in the United States and around the world. The Fish and Wildlife Service in 2010 put out a report, and it said, "Nearly one third of US bird species are endangered, threatened or in significant decline." And of course, it's not just birds. Globally, 40 percent of all bird species, 42 percent of all amphibian species are declining in population. 100 percent of marine turtle species are threatened with extinction, according to again a 2010 report of the Secretariat of the Convention on Global Biodiversity. So what does this add up to? It adds up to the sixth mass extinction in the history of life on Earth. Here's Peter Raven et al [unconfirmed name], from a 2011 summary article.

[01:47 - 03:47] Moderator: Biodiversity is diminishing at a rate even faster than the last mass extinction at the end of the Cretaceous period. Possibly, two thirds of existing terrestrial species are likely to become extinct by the end of this century. People debate whether it could be more or less than that. Nothing serious that I've seen has suggested that we're not talking about that order of magnitude of loss of species. And of course, unlike the first five mass extinctions, this will be the first

one if it does go forward, that has been consciously enacted. So how do we want to think about this? Well, I put it in the context of the history of life on earth. Here, we have a graph of number of genera of marine organisms. And you can see that over time, over 550 million years or so, the process has been ever greater and greater. Evolution of diversity interrupted from time to time by, by mass extinctions. And this is the same story you'll get if you look at, at other kinds of organisms. So you could look at roughly the same period, the number of species of plants. And again, you can see an increase in, in numbers, in diversity, looking at all all organisms on the face of the Earth, number of families. This time, again, you can see the story of, of ever greater kinds. But it's not just the evolution of ever greater kinds. It's also new kinds of kind. So I still remember 25 years ago, my first botany class, being blown away, learning about the, the coevolution and the complex interactions between figs and species of wasps that help them, that help pollinate them.

[03:47 - 06:11] Moderator: Here's one of the simpler stories. And for each of hundreds of species of fig tree, there's a particular wasp. The wasp can't, can't typically can't exist without the fig. The fig can't get pollinated without the wasp. And, of course you're talking about insects and angiosperms there. So a good part of the evolution of diversity over the past 100 years certainly is captured, in a sense by that. More kinds, more complex interactions. Here's an example from the marine realm. Hugely complex interactions of a coral reef. I know nothing about such interactions, but I'm assured by people who know about them that they're very, very complex. And the upshot is many, many different kinds of species, great complexity. And you also have the evolution of the complexity of experience. So you have literally the evolution of the first subjects in nature. And then over time, especially once you start to get to the mammals complex behavior, learning, passing on and complex subjective behavior. So this is the story of earth, really. It's ever more kinds, more complex kinds, more complex interactions. And, and new ways of living on earth. When I think of species extinction, I try to put it in that context. So we are having we're looking at a radical diminution of all of this. And we're looking at again, the first time in the history of life on Earth that this will have been caused consciously, this time by people. The paleontologists tell us that life has taken anywhere from 5 to 20 million years to recover levels of diversity after the first five great extinction. But of course, that's involved there being habitat and resources there for life to work with. I haven't really read too much about this, but it seems to me this extinction could be different in the sense that we're not just, you know, we're not a meteor just hitting and causing a lot of disaster and then leaving nature to pick up the pieces.

[06:11 - 08:25] Moderator: We are instead systematically engrossing the resources of the world for our own use and systematically excluding other species. So I imagine a world where not only, you know, are we dropping on that graph that you saw earlier, but we continue that way indefinitely. That

seems to be the track we're on. Well, we can skip over this. It's basically looking at historical rates of extinction, current rates of extinction, future rates of extinction as modelled in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. You probably seen this and it gives you a sense this is a logarithmic scale. So it gives you a sense that yes, we are now and are rapidly moving into a very serious extinction event. What are the drivers and species loss? Well, relatively straightforward. The studies keep telling us the same thing over and over again in order of relative importance. Habitat loss, alien species, overexploitation, pollution and coming on fast. Climate change. These are the direct drivers of species loss. What are the, sometimes they're spoken of as indirect drivers. I don't think that's the best way to think of it. What are the ultimate drivers of the direct drivers of mass extinction? Well, it's, it's us. Ever more people consuming ever more resources per capita are essentially driving other species off the face of the Earth. Over the course of the 20th century, the global population grew four times. At a conservative estimate, the global world economy grew 12 times. So that is, is what's causing the sixth mass extinction. It's not usually put that way. Whether we're environmentalists or biologists we're usually focused on the direct drivers. But occasionally we remember yeah, this is really what's causing it. So here's the Wildlife Society Bulletin cover of a few years back, and you can see more of us, less of them.

[08:27 - 10:41] Moderator: So this brings us to the main question of the talk here- How should we think about this? How should we think about the sixth mass extinction? And today I want to talk about two basic ways to talk about this. The first one you'll, you'll be familiar with already. The sixth mass extinction of life on Earth is an immense loss of valuable resources. This is the way the issue is mostly talked about today. So to go back again to that third global biodiversity outlook that I quoted from earlier 2010, "Biodiversity underpins the functioning of ecosystems, which provide a wide range of services to human societies, which loss has major implications for our current and future wellbeing." They go on to talk about this. "Food, fibre medicine, filtration of pollutants. They're threatened by declines and changes of biodiversity." And, you know, this is this particular document. But it could be looking at the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment of 2005. I could be looking at one of the latest issues of nature or science on this is how this loss tends to be talked about. Culture, and, you know, so and then people try to broaden it out a little. Cultural services such as spiritual and religious values, opportunities for knowledge and education, as well as recreational and aesthetic values are also declining. Changes and finally something like this. Changes in the abundance and distribution of species may have serious consequences for human societies. Well, this is one way to talk about this. There's a certain amount of truth, I think, in this way, of talking about species loss. I think we are foreclosing human possibilities through extinction and loss of wild lands. Still, I want to argue that this is an insufficient way of talking about this problem. And it's

insufficient for several reasons. And just to, I think a symptom of this insufficiency is the dullness of this language.

[10:41 - 12:49] Moderator: It's bureaucratic, it's managerial. It might be getting at some truth, but this is not a call to arms. I don't think. Did you? Did you feel yourself nodding off slightly as I was reading them? Well, I started to nod off, so I, and I think that's symptomatic of larger problems. So let me talk about them. The problem with this way of talking about things, first, it keeps the focus on us, on our wants and our needs. And it locates the loss in the sixth mass extinction in a failure to meet those needs. But this seems perverse to me, since our efforts to satisfy our needs is precisely what is driving the problem. And successfully limiting extinction will almost certainly mean reining in our own self-interested activities and limiting the overproduction of human selves, who will inevitably be somewhat self-centred and focussed on our own well-being. So I see that as a problem with this language. It's focused on, on us. Second, the concept of resource strongly implies substitutability and hence the possible acceptability of the sixth mass extinction, at least to some degree. Now, it's not a logical implication of the concept of resource that there certainly are and can be resources that you cannot substitute for. I don't think you can substitute for oxygen in this room, for instance. But, you start talking about resources and it's natural to talk about substitutability. Even quite valuable resources may be liquidated if doing so will further human well-being and there are substitutes available. Or if the costs of presenting, preventing extinction are too high. So, you know, we think about the penguins down, down in Antarctica and they're nice and they're a resource, right? I mean, you can make cute children films talking about penguins, and there's a whole industry taking rich people down there to snap photos of them, and people make money off that.

[12:50 - 14:57] Moderator: But let's get real for a second. I mean, that's valuable, but how much, how much do you want to give up, to keep penguins down in Antarctica? Well, you can take lots of pictures of it. It might well be something that you're willing to trade off. That's what resource use gets you thinking. It gets you thinking in those terms. So to focus on resource use means a focus on the short term with some attention maybe to the next couple decades, perhaps at best the next century or two. But many species have existed for millions or even tens of millions of years, and could potentially exist and evolve for millions more. The ornithologists tell us that the subfamilies of cranes have been around for about 35 million years, and that the genera have been here for perhaps 20 million. So if we extinguish a species of crane, we're intervening in a long term historical event their. Resource use does not help you understand or capture that. I don't think. Ending such ancient careers to a present centred resource consumption seems an important part of what is so wrong about the sixth extinction event, at least to me. Now, none of this means that resource talk is, is totally irrelevant. Resource talk can help us capture some of what we are going to lose in the sixth

mass extinction event. And hence, I think it's necessary. But resource talk can't capture, and in many ways systematically blinds us to important meanings of the sixth extinction event. In particular, it blinds us to the independent histories and the intrinsic value of other species. Attending to these seems likely to be particularly important if we hope to understand what it means to end these independent histories. Well, at this point, you might ask, well, are there any alternatives?

[14:57 - 17:04] Moderator: And I hasten to add. Yes there is. There are alternatives to thinking about this. You can think about it in a more fundamentally ethical way. Here I'd like to quote from Aldo Leopold a short piece that's in your version of a Sand County Almanac. Most likely it's called 'On a monument to the pigeon'. And it's a little toss that he gave back in 1947 when the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology dedicated a plaque to the last passenger pigeon. Here's a little bit about what Leopold said. And as I read this, I'd like you to contrast it to the resource talk that you've just been hearing. Leopold starts. "We have erected a monument to commemorate the funeral of a species. It symbolizes our sorrow. Men still live, who in their youth remember pigeons. Trees still live, who in their youth were shaken by a living wind. But a decade hence only the oldest oaks will remember. And at long last only the hills will know. There will always be pigeons in books and in museums. But these are effigies and images, dead to all hardships and to all delights. Book pigeons cannot dive out of a cloud to make the deer run for cover or clap their wings and thunderous applause of mast laden would. Book pigeons cannot breakfast on new mown wheat in Minnesota and dine on blueberries in Canada. They know no urge of seasons. They feel no kiss of sun, no lash of wind and weather. Skip a little bit. It is a century now since Darwin gave us the first glimpse of the origin of species. We know now what was unknown to all the preceding caravan of generations, that men are only fellow voyagers with other creatures in the odyssey of evolution. This new knowledge should have given us by this time a sense of kinship with fellow creatures, a wish to live and let live, a sense of wonder over the magnitude and duration of the biotic enterprise."

[17:05 - 19:23] Moderator: Now, some of that is quite poetic. Some of that, strictly speaking, might be a bit of a personification of nature that you might not want to follow. But I think you can see that Leopold is trying to evoke what that species was. Something about its history, something about its ecology. Something about what it means for us to intersect with that story, and to have let things go so drastically wrong. He's, he's moving towards an ethical view of what this means. And I think we need that. We don't want to give that up. Everything in our society moves us in the direction of talking about these kind of problems in terms of resource use. But if we lose sight of the ethical aspects of things, we will have become blinded to what the most important effect. So how should we think about the sixth mass extinction? I answer, it's a great wrong. It's a terrible injustice. It's an injustice perpetrated by people on other species. There are more ways you can put this. They all get

at some different aspects of the ethical question, but there are ways to, to get at. Other species have great intrinsic value will be, which will be lost if they are extinguished. Depending on the distinction between instrumental value, resource value and some intrinsic value. Other species are morally considerable and we should take steps to avoid their extinction. Human beings have a duty to extinguish other species, perhaps not just because there's some preference that's been expressed, but maybe some duty grounded in what other species are. Other species have a right not to be extinguished by people. You might say the sixth mass extinction. Extinction is interspecies genocide a great crime against nature. You might say humanity needs to end its war on nature. If you look around and that sort of language makes sense to you about how we're displacing other things.

[19:24 - 21:36] Moderator: So there are many different ways to talk about this. Let me just focus on making the case for, for one of these. And I'm making the case now that other species have a right to continue existence. Right centre on the three R's, respect, restraint, and resources. To assert a right of some kind, typically for a person is to claim that people should respect some person, act with restraint toward him or her, and allow him or her a fair share of resources. I think that's essentially what asserting a right comes down to. Rights promote human flourishing. In a society that respects rights, people have the opportunity to live better lives and be more than they otherwise would. And they have the opportunity, most importantly, to live together in justice with one another. So I propose that we shift from saying rights are key tools for enabling human flourishing to the following. Rights are key tools for enabling the flourishing of all life, human and non-human. And then I'd like to go on and assert wild species have a right to continued existence free from anthropogenic extinction. [pauses] Now, the question then might be, well, what justifies that? And before I get into the justification let me just ask you, before we get into the, the details of the argument for it, how many of you believe that last statement? Wild species have a right to continue existence, free from extinction by us. Raise your hand if you agree with that. Okay. Raise your hand if you don't agree with that. You think there is no such right. People, raise your hand if you're not sure. Okay. So, I mean, most of us in this room will...

[21:38 - 21:38] Speaker 1: Can you define the right?

[21:38 - 21:39] Moderator: Can I define a right?

[21:41 - 21:42] Speaker 1: [unintelligible] because of my right.

[21:45 - 23:54] Moderator: I would define a right as a justified claim that other people respect my important interest. How's that? So I'm saying wild species have a right in that sense. Well, we'll go into more of the details about it. But, you know, at least for the start, this seems to resonate with,

with people. Some people will disagree. And so you want to be able to, to argue with them. You want to be able to try to convince them otherwise. So let's say you're a skeptic. What might justify such an inscription of of rights to the species Arctic tern, for instance? Well, in justifying human rights, we tend to focus on what people are, and we argue that we should respect people because of what they are. And certain key characteristics keep coming up when philosophers and others try to justify human rights. We talk about respect for human rationality, for free will, for autonomy, for human creativity. And most of us feel that these indeed are wonderful capacities and they deserve to be respected, preserved and enhanced through securing people's rights. So now what I'd like to say is, in the same way, we can argue that we should respect other species for what they are. In general, species are the primary examples and repositories of organic nature's order, creativity, and diversity. They represent many millions of years of activity and achievements, and therefore they possess immense quantities of DNA coded adaptive knowledge. The organisms comprising species show incredible functional, organizational, and behavioral complexity. Every species, like every individual human being, is unique. It has its own history and its own destiny. All this, I think, supports the view that species generally possess great intrinsic value, and hence that they possess certain rights which help affirm and defend that value. In the end, all these species are what they are, and what they are is good.

[23:55 - 25:50] Moderator: I think it's a fatal mistake to take human beings as the template for all natural goodness, and decide what has importance or ultimate value, what shall live and or die based on these things similarities to us. Now, so I want to assert a species right to continued existence. And certain things will follow from that most general of rights. I think, uh, one thing would be a right to a certain amount of habitat. I think another would be a right that human beings not degrade the resources that those species depend on. But the fundamental right is a right to continued existence. Now, even though people in this room are not objecting to this assertion of rights, other people certainly have. Certainly, if you get in front of a room of philosophers who tend to care a little less about species than a room full of biologists. They will have things to say about this. Here's Tom Reagan with one possible objection. The rights view restricts inherent value and rights to individuals because species are not individuals. The right to you does not recognize the rights of species to anything. So this kind of argument says rights only makes sense when you, when you talk about them in terms of an individual, either an individual human being or perhaps other kinds of complex individual organism. So maybe dogs, individual dogs have rights or or gorillas or something. Because they can be harmed because they have interests. But does the species, anybody know the scientific name for Arctic tern? I'm blanking on it. Does, does the species Arctic tern have an interest in its continued existence?

[25:51 - 28:05] Moderator: Some people would say no, it's just, you know, there's a history there, but, but it really doesn't make sense to talk about harming the species itself. Other people focus less on the idea of the oddness that are. Groups might have rights, and instead they just focus on the oddness that anything besides human beings might have rights. So for some people, the idea of talking about any, anything besides a human being having rights simply doesn't make sense. Human beings, after all are the beings who can talk to one another, communicate, assert their rights. And it just doesn't make sense. So those are probably the two most important philosophical objections to this sort of, of approach. In response to these kind of objections, proponents have argued convincingly that species are not just random collections, but they're real entities with a persisting historical identity, even if that identity is maybe a little open ended. Proponents have noted that biologists often speak and write about human actions harming species. So, for instance, you might pull up a report on the sage grouse and it might say the failure in recent decades to preserve sufficient sage grouse habitat has harmed the grouse and led to a steep decline in its numbers. We've all read that kind of stuff. Some proponents of reasonably argued that species persistence through time, instantiating forms, generation after generation is analogous to individual organisms goal directness, and thus the species manifest a sort of interest in their own persistence. So people have tried to argue, well, the species sort of are like individual organisms in various ways, so they can be harmed. They do have interests. Now, I think this way of responding to objections to species rights is a mistake, because it assumes that in order to assert rights, you have to fit anything that you want to assert rights us into a certain template. The template that developed out of rights for individual human beings.

[28:06 - 30:20] Moderator: I don't think justifying a species right to exist depends on making the case that species have interests, or on showing that a species extinction harms it in the way that an individual organism may be harmed. There's more to value in the world than tightly integrated individual organisms. We should also value the diversity of life itself. For me, the bottom line is that these natural kinds are good times. The flourishing of the diversity of life is a great good. While the anthropogenic extinction of species ripping holes in the tapestry of life is a great and preventable evil. Hence, these species have a moral right to continued existence. Restricting rights just to us is, in my view, selfish, and it lacks any convincing rational justification. The question here is, are other species worth our moral consideration? Are they worth our respect? Our restraint? And I think they are. Now, there's a lot more to say about this. We can get into the details of the philosophical arguments in the question period, if you like. But in the end, I think we really face a choice here. It's a choice between finding the language to articulate a grave, moral wrong being perpetrated by humanity against other species, or retreating into the kind of resource talk that we've already seen is inadequate to the task in front of us. More fundamentally, it's the choice between creating a society

which makes a place for the rest of creation, or one that continues to aggressively push it aside and take ever more of the world's limited habitat and resources for ourselves. So to put it in a sort of a Northern Colorado context, we know that we still have places like this beautiful, short grass prairie of the kind you find to the north and east of Fort Collins. And we know that that if you preserve this habitat, you can have large buntings, our our state bird, and you can have prairie dogs, and you can have all the animals that feed on prairie dogs, the foraging hawks and the badgers and everything else.

[30:21 - 32:25] Moderator: Or you can have this. Now, I'm not saying it's wrong to have, well, I am saying it's wrong to have this [laughs], but I'm not saying it's wrong to have some town. Some neighborhoods, some houses, some farms. People have a right to be here too. But when it gets to the point where we are taking it all, it's gone too far. Other species have a right to be here. This is just a map that I stole, graphic that I stole from Dave Theobald. It's housing density along the Front Range, 1960 to 2040. And from 2000 onwards, I believe it's projections. And you can see us growing, right? Um, this is not right. It's not right. Even if you didn't care about animals or other species, it's it's probably not the way to create the kind of societies that we want to live in. It's not going to create a better Front Range for people either, but it's really not right when you remember that other species are on the landscape with us. They deserve some of the water, some of the land. So, what's the upshot of all this? Well, I want to leave plenty of room for, for your questions and comments, but I just want to come back to this distinction between resource talk and ethical talk and make one final plea that we need to talk about this in terms of ethics. If all we have is resource talk, then we don't have the ability to talk about what's most important here. And we don't have the ability to articulate what might actually be necessary to end the sixth mass extinction on Earth. So again, I just want to give you a few quotes from the 3rd Global Biodiversity Outlook. Remember, this is a, from a group that's working very hard to try to curb biodiversity loss.

[32:25 - 34:22] Moderator: It's written by people who care as much as you and I do about this. And people who desperately want to articulate the means necessary to deal with it. So, effective action to address biodiversity loss depends on addressing the underlying causes or indirect drivers of that decline. Great. Let's, let's get to what the the underlying problem is and try to deal with it. This will mean they say, much greater efficiency in the use of land, energy, fresh water, and material. Greater efficiency. Use of market incentives, Strategic planning and the use of our land, inland waters and marine resources. Again, you start to read that and you start to fall asleep a little bit. Not saying we don't want to use market incentives to try to preserve biodiversity, or that we don't need strategic planning and how we use land or that we don't, we couldn't use greater efficiency and put it to good use preserving biodiversity. My point is just that all of those things which essentially add up to being

more efficient, are not enough to stem the sixth extinction event, which is being driven by ever more people consuming, producing, wanting ever more stuff. So this sort of view is articulated by Larry Summers, late 1990s, then the U.S. Secretary of Treasury. We cannot and will not accept any speed limit on American economic growth. It is the task of economic policy to grow it as rapidly, sustainably, you throw that in. Rapidly, sustainably and inclusively as you throw these few things. This is what's important. We want to grow as fast as possible. That's what you just got through hearing for the past year in the presidential election. A little more from Larry. "There are no limits to the carrying capacity of the Earth that are likely to bind any time in the foreseeable future."

[34:23 - 36:22] Moderator: Climate change? What's that? That's not bumping up against limits. There isn't a risk of an apocalypse to global warming or anything else. The idea that we should put limits on growth because of some natural limit is a profound error. Well, at least I'm guilty of a profoundly, at least I'm being profound up here, [laughs] not a shallow, stupid error. It's a profound error. Now, when you take this, which is, I mean, this is just stating very obviously what the vast majority of people believe what our political system is designed to achieve, et cetera et cetera. Ever more growth. I put it to you that increased efficiency is not going to be enough to protect what we want to protect. Certainly, it's not going to be enough to preserve other species on the landscape, in the context of a system which demands ever more. We'll get more efficiency, but that efficiency will be used primarily to benefit people, to give people more of what they want. We need the idea of limits, and the idea of limits can only come into play if you bring in the moral way of looking at things, the ethical way of looking at things. So, what would be the implications of recognizing a species right to exist? Well, you'd have to make a detailed case for this, but, but let me give my suggestions here. I think it implies a 50/50 sharing of earth's main terrestrial ecosystems, and it should imply a further targeting of the richest, biodiversity rich areas for extra preservation. It means saying give nature half. I think it means strictly limiting our use of other key resources that other species need. I think it means strictly limiting the kinds of pollution that degrades habitat and resources that other species need to survive. Well, how are you going to do all this?

[36:24 - 38:11] Moderator: This is the toughest part. It means the transition from the endless growth economy to a steady state economy, one where instead of going for ever more, for ever more people, you're going for a sufficiency for a certain number of people. And finally, it means humanely stabilizing and then gradually reducing overall human numbers. Without that, you will not end the sixth great mass extinction of life on earth. Now, all of this is a pretty tall order. And a lot of it is, you know, sort of turn our world upside down to try to, to try to move in that general direction. But I think that that's what we need. Well. And I think that's what we need in order to to deal with this problem. For a lot of people, this would be a very scary prospect. The idea of moving towards a, a future

where we aren't endlessly more wealthy. But I think it opens up prospects for. for a more beautiful world. I think it opens up prospect for us taking care of our fellow creatures on earth, instead of consigning them to oblivion. I think it's a better world to raise our children. And, and finally, I think it's a world that we owe the other species of life honor. So with that, I conclude and let's, let's open it up to some questions. [applause]. Did I, did I at least take your mind off the election for happiness? [laughs]. Okay. Yeah.

[38:18 - 38:33] Speaker 2: So I guess my my reason for not raising my hand. Obviously, I don't believe that we have the right to [inaudible].

[38:33 - 38:33] Moderator: Mm-hmm.

[38:33 - 38:43] Speaker 2: My question is, though, by having by framing in terms of rights, which have a long political history associated with specific kind of government...

[38:44 - 38:44] Moderator: Right.

[38:45 - 38:55] Speaker 2: ...unique to the West, is it, do we have to put it in terms of, of rights, all, you know, universally across the globe or that culture exists?

[38:56 - 40:00] Moderator: Well, I mean, that's a good question. It's a question that comes up just when we're talking about people, right? This is conflict between our ideals of respecting other people and their ways of life, etc. And saying people should be able to choose how to live and the ideal of a universal set of human rights that every society should guarantee. So the relativism issue is going to come up even before we get into rights for other species. I don't know. I'd be interested to know what what other people thought. I mean, I I would want to argue that every other species has a right against anthropogenic extinction. And the cultures which, like our own, which are busy extinguishing CC are committing a great injustice. Maybe other people would want to argue that, you know, some some cultures, some societies care about nature, some don't. And that's okay.

[40:03 - 40:14] Speaker 2: I don't think about whether or not they care or not. It's about how you frame the message to, you can get some thinking in terms of conservation.

[40:15 - 40:15] Moderator: Mm-hmm.

[40:15 - 40:25] Speaker 2: Is it, you know, rights and justice or is a deeper spiritual kind of connection outside of the realm of [unintelligible]?

[40:28 - 41:39] Moderator: Yeah. I mean, you get it a bunch of things here. What is the question? Whatever we believe and however we articulate our concern for nature, aren't there going to be different ways to reach out to different groups? And I think you're right about that. Right. Language is one kind of language very important in the modern world, not just in the United States or the West, but throughout the world. But there are other ways of talking about in terms of spiritual connection, in terms of stewardship, in terms of, in terms of us all being related or part of the single community. I guess I like to talk about it in terms of rights, partly because of the kind of people I'm talking to you. I mean, we live in a society where rights are the the coin of the realm in terms of talking about morality, to assert an important important moral claims is usually to make a claim in the language of rights. There might be a way to argue for what I want to argue for here, leaving rights aside but, but I'm not sure there is.

[41:43 - 41:57] Speaker 2: Using some niceties here stemming from the major culture dichotomy that's become public. So we don't feel as though we are animals anymore, and that the non reliance upon them means we're kind of on our own.

[41:57 - 42:55] Moderator: Yeah. I mean that's-, that seems to be part of it. It seems like we're moving farther and farther into these, these other kinds of worlds, whether it's our virtual world or on the computer, whether it's-, they're very, you know, human constructed landscapes like CSU here. You know, we're sitting in this building and we walk on a land in this city, managed for us, etc. I think people might have thought very differently about this and different times when you walk out your door and you were in nature for a long way from that. But I don't know. I don't know how much of, of where we're at in terms of species extinction can be laid at the door of our ideas, and how much is just part of our, our technology. Maybe with the most wonderful ideas in the world, given the kind of powerful technologies we have, we have we just be hearing more? I'm not sure about that.

[43:05 - 43:11] Speaker 3: [unintelligible].

[43:13 - 43:20] Moderator: Mm-hmm.

[43:23 - 43:35] Speaker 3: Maybe [unintelligible] rethink [unintelligible] back to that very one [unintelligible].

[43:42 - 44:26] Moderator: Yeah. Well, I mean, I'd love to be able to argue that we should content ourselves with 20 percent and leave 80 percent for nature. I think the latest speaker I saw protected areas relatively with, relatively strong protections around the globe. Something like 11.5 percent of the landscape is designated for that. And I think the land that we farm and raised cattle on are more

like 35-40 percent of, of potential land use. I think that might be leaving out some of the Arctic waste and stuff. Anyway, my point is just we're a long way from leaving half for nature. So that's just sort of coming out there as a vast improvement on where we're at right now.

[44:29 - 44:39] Speaker 4: Use it for fire [unintelligible] that you have a right to an existing [unintelligible] project extension or just [unintelligible].

[44:40 - 45:04] Moderator: I'm arguing for freedom from anthropogenic extinction. Species don't have a right to be taken out of the evolutionary continuum and preserved forever. And, you know, just now know that, that the vast majority of species that have lived on Earth are extinct now. I don't think we have a duty to go and preserve every last species.

[45:05 - 45:15] Speaker 4: So then when you were saying earlier, now that, you know, humans have developed in mind. If you don't even have the right application.

[45:16 - 46:06] Moderator: No. No, we don't. We've, I mean, we've evolved to have tremendous, there's a sense in which we've evolved out of nature. There's a sense in which kind of students think that and environmentalism is about reminding people. You know, we're still part of nature, and you forget about that. You can be harmed. But we've evolved to the point where we can sit in a room like this and discuss ethics. And that implies things like, you know, I'm not going to murder everyone at this table, steal all your land and resources, and use it to have 12 children and support them by my poor wives or something. I mean, ethics assumes that we're not, we're not just about maximizing our genetic output.

[46:09 - 46:12] Speaker 5: But do you think humans are capable of that? We won't be very good.

[46:13 - 46:18] Moderator: I think we're capable of it. I mean, are we capable of doing the right thing? Sometimes?

[46:18 - 46:33] Speaker 5: We think you [unintelligible] more like we have so far [unintelligible]. I think I agree with that [unintelligible].

[46:38 - 48:46] Moderator: Well, I mean, there's. Plenty of evidence that we're not that way and that we're selfish. On the other hand, the people of this country, almost 40 years ago, in 1973, passed the Endangered Species Act, which many legal scholars have argued provides a de facto legal right to continue the existence for all native species. So, and for all the fact that we haven't done everything we should under the ESA, it's been a tremendous tool to, to protect the people, people

have put in a lot of effort to try to preserve species. And, you know, it's interesting, even, even when we went in 10 years after we passed ESA and we said, "Look, this act says that we have to keep species on the landscape no matter what the economic cost." So the original ESA is that, that's too extreme. We can't do that. Let's set up a committee. And it's a member, you know, six members of the president's cabinet. And in extreme situations, they can decide to let a species go extinct if there's a good reason for that. Well, within a few years, people were calling that the God's Squad. And the God Squad has never met and decided to let the species go extinct. Even in administrations that had no great love for the environment. There's something that just about anybody can understand is wrong. If you take the time to think about this, and especially if you have the responsibility to decide to select a few people. Most people recognize that the problem is so much of the damage that we're doing, we just do it by flicking on the lights or driving our car, and you know, the polar bears go away and we don't see it. If somehow we could set up a system where we had to choose that, I think people probably would choose the right thing. But I don't know. Yeah.

[48:47 - 49:16] Speaker 6: I wonder, it's like [unintelligible] populations that are enormous. The principle that [unintelligible]. They almost don't have the rest of American style, but there's so much of the population. So I don't know if the take away then they're right to [unintelligible].

[49:23 - 49:24] Moderator: Mm-hmm.

[49:24 - 49:39] Speaker 6: If you don't like that [unintelligible]. I don't, I don't know how we can afford that. We are very [unintelligible].

[49:48 - 49:57] Moderator: Yes. So you're bringing up the possibility that maybe all of this sounds good, but maybe we've just gone too far down that road and we can't grant these rights.

[49:59 - 50:05] Speaker 6: [unintelligible] if you don't have one [unintelligible]. But how and...

[50:06 - 50:07] Moderator: How could it work?

[50:12 - 50:12] Speaker 6: [unintelligible].

[50:13 - 51:25] Moderator: Yeah. I mean, you bring up good points. Making, if we took a right against anthropogenic extinction seriously, that would indeed limit human rights in certain way. Now, you know, it would mean different things in different places, and it would probably look more reasonable in some places than others. For me, it's very reasonable to say to a rancher, you know what? I know this is an imposition, but you just can't, you can't do what you want to do on this piece of land

because that will extinguish the last of this species. Even if that cost him money. But people get ranchers and developers get very angry about that. But at least I think that's reasonable. But now, compare that with a case where you're saying to someone, you know, you can't feed your kids because you're not allowed to take this last piece of land? Well, that's asking for quite a bit more, isn't it? And for many people, that wouldn't be reasonable. So asserting species rights to continued existence is making a claim on people and asking them to give up a certain amount of their freedom of action.

[51:26 - 52:45] Moderator: I think just as, you know, in some other cases, we might talk about where we extended rights to human groups. I think we would benefit from that in a larger sense. And I have to just add one thing about population, because you brought that up. Easy enough to imagine cases where we want to sort of limit people's rights to have tons of kids in order to protect the environment or for other reasons. The reality is that even if you don't want to go there with anything that's coercive, simply bringing the freedom to choose how many kids to have to women and couples around the world would do a tremendous amount to decrease to decrease population growth. I think I saw figures over the past six months of 215, 220 million couples around the world that, uh, want contraception. Don't have it. Imagine if you've got all those people, the contraception they want, and they could they could choose how many children to have. That would make a huge difference and make make this a lot more manageable. So don't want to give the people the sense that the only way to deal with population is in a coercive way. Eric.

[52:47 - 53:02] Eric: The conservation of species [unintelligible] and [unintelligible] with possibilities [unintelligible].

[53:11 - 54:13] Moderator: Well, I don't know. I mean, it's awfully hard for me to imagine a scenario where we kill ourselves off. I I, you can see scenarios where an awful lot of people die, but there are so many of us, and we're so clever at finding ways to deal with our problems. So, and carrying capacity, you know, I that's a tricky one. I mean, it seems like there's good evidence that we're in overshoot mode for a number of, in a number of important ways. And so people will say, yeah, we're bumping up against carrying capacity. But then the various technical fixes, they might work for a while. Tough, tough to know what is sustainable overall population on the world is for, for human beings. But we know beyond the shadow of a doubt that we're crowding other things out. So that's what I tend to, to focus on.

[54:16 - 54:25] Speaker 7: What is the idea of limits to growth quite popular? Not too long ago I do a book called Small and Medium [unintelligible].

[54:26 - 55:49] Moderator: Or Team Oscar back in the 1970s. You have some offers? Yeah. It seems as if Limits to Growth was a big part of environmentalism in this country and abroad in the 1960s and 70s. And then I don't know what-, how we got out of that. We sort of got more into the Ronald Reagan, you know, you can keep growing. It'll just get better and better and better. And environmentalists seem to have bought into that. I pick up my Sierra or Audubon magazine. I don't, I don't see serious discussions of how we might cut back a little bit on our demands, and we need more room for other species. I see, you know, I see just a more refined kind of consumerism. So it's sort of the eat your cake and get thin kind of school of conservation. I don't think it's working. And I think we should really talk more seriously about limits to growth, even if we don't even care about other species. I think if all you cared about was just providing enough for people around the world to live happy lives, you look what happened in New York and on the East Coast a week ago. I don't think we're moving in that direction. So let's get back to limits to growth.

[55:50 - 56:03] Speaker 8: Yeah, I do have some [unintelligible] about whether. These types of ideas. The thinking [unintelligible].

[56:11 - 56:11] Moderator: Mm-hmm.

[56:11 - 56:28] Speaker 8: Population. There have to be an incentive. Actually resonated, especially during the US And I kind of think that would be good for. That's [unintelligible].

[56:31 - 57:24] Moderator: I agree, but I think it needs to shift if we want to protect these things. And, you know, I mean, we all live in, in both of those worlds, right? It's not as if people in here don't have to make rational decisions about how to use resources, get resources, etc., etc. I'm not holding myself up as someone who's beyond all that. But at the same time, I think people raise their hands when, when I asked you whether you thought other species have a right to be here. My guess is, most people in this room have at least some other species that they love, and they'd be very sad to see go. And we're also those people too. So, you know, capitalism is good in its place, but its place isn't like everywhere. And this place shouldn't be everywhere. Maybe that's the problem. This place has become everywhere.

[57:26 - 57:50] Speaker 9: I think this whole concept of race has been extremely skewed over the last century. As far as what are fundamental rights of living as opposed to we are starting to see luxuries as right, like [crosstalk] drive my car is right for you, but that's a luxury. You don't necessarily have to drive a car. That I think has to be argued as partially as fueling this whole right argument.

[57:50 - 59:25] Moderator: Yeah. And I think-, I mean, I'd like to kind of funnel that into my argument and say, maybe one way we can make room, ecological room for a right to existence for Arctic terns and prairie dogs, and everything else is to maybe look at what you just mentioned. Maybe some of the things we're taking is rights. We don't have to. We shouldn't take it, right? I've got a right to freedom of movement. Does that mean I have a right to cheap gas prices? By the way, did people notice birds did come up once in the presidential debate? Well, actually more than once, because we had Big Bird. But [laughs] there was, there was also a point in the second debate where President Obama and Governor Romney were debating energy policy. And the president governor said, "You know, up in North Dakota, his justice department went after some, forget whether it was a coal fired power plant or something, for killing 25 birds, 25 birds." So, you know, the idea that you'd let birds get in the way of cheap energy or building a coal plant or something. Just the height of ridiculousness, which it probably is to your average, you know, capitalist type and like, like Mitt Romney. Well, thanks for coming here today. Oh, one last question.

[59:26 - 59:31] Speaker 10: Can I refine on my question? What rights are they always backed by regulations?

[59:32 - 59:32] Moderator: Well, I-

[59:32 - 59:32] Speaker 10: And come to [unintelligible]

[59:35 - 01:00:17] Moderator: I mean, we could talk about moral rights and legal rights. And most of us would say people, just as people have certain rights, and even if they live in a state that doesn't recognize or protect those rights, they still have them. So most of us would probably say, you know, before the Emancipation Proclamation, African Americans still had a right to their freedom, but they were denied that they didn't have the legal rights. Well, after the Civil War, after the [unintelligible], they did get that legal right. So we want to keep that distinction between moral rights and legal rights, and sometimes say we need to improve our formal system of legal rights to take account of what we we think our moral rights are.

[01:00:19 - 01:00:29] Speaker 10: Because Ecuador is the only country I know that [unintelligible] nature in the constitution. Is that something that you're looking at as part of this [unintelligible]?

[01:00:31 - 01:01:26] Moderator: People have talked about Europe. We [unintelligible] the Ecuador's 2008 constitution talks about rights for nature, rights of other species to continued existence, rights to wild areas against pollution. It's very, now, you know, sometimes you can have very strong legal rights and they're not enforced. So there's, there's those sort of issues. But Ecuador and then

following them, Bolivia a few years later, I believe put something similar in their constitution. As I mentioned, legal scholars, some of them at least argue that the ESA goes halfway towards guaranteeing a legal right to continued existence, or more than halfway. So, and other people have argued that we want to move further in that direction and make that explicit. I think that would be a, a great idea. Well, guys, thanks so much for coming today. [applause]. Is everyone voting?

[01:01:27 - 01:01:27] Speaker 11: Yes.

[01:01:28 - 01:01:31] Moderator: Don't forget to vote. Vote for the bird. [laughs].

[01:01:35 - 01:01:38] Speaker 12: Right now, let's look at how to turn this off [unintelligible].

[01:01:40 - 01:01:41] Moderator: Well thanks, Joe.

[01:01:41 - 01:01:41] Speaker 12: Yeah.

[01:01:41 - 01:01:42] Joe: Sure.

[01:01:44 - 01:01:47] Speaker 12: Excellent. You know our-

END TRANSCRIPTION