

# Whose Nature Is It?

Conflicts of interest between nature, people, and different groups in society

*Analysis and discussion exercise (approx. 15 minutes)*

## Exercise Description

Students explore how competing interests can come into conflict when natural resources and land are used — and how such conflicts affect both ecosystems and people.

### **BACKGROUND**

Natural resources such as forests, fish, farmland, and minerals are vital to both ecosystems and human societies. The same geographical area can be important to many different interests at once — as habitat for wildlife, as a workplace for local communities, as a resource for industry, or as a destination for tourists. When multiple interests or groups compete over the same resource or area, **conflicts of interest** arise, as different actors seek to use nature and land in different ways. These conflicts frequently lead to political tension and difficult trade-offs.

1. Divide students into groups of 2–4.
2. Ask each group to choose a species group from Biodiversity Call (e.g. cod fishes, whales, stony corals, primates, bees, or bears) or a habitat type (e.g. forests or wetlands), and identify which groups in society have an interest in that species or habitat and why. For example:
  - Commercial fishers rely on fish stocks for their livelihoods and food production
  - Farmers need land for growing crops and raising livestock
  - Local communities and indigenous peoples depend on nature for food, medicine, and cultural practices
  - Companies seek to profit from forestry, mining, and tourism
  - Tourists want to experience wildlife and natural landscapes
3. Ask groups to discuss:
  - What does each actor or societal group want?
  - Where do interests clash?
  - How is the species group or habitat affected?
  - Who wins and who loses when one group's interests are prioritised?
4. Given that conflicts of interest exist: ask groups to propose a solution that works as well as possible for all parties, for example by suggesting:
  - Regulations on how much fishing, hunting, or logging is permitted
  - Areas that should be protected
  - Seasonal restrictions to avoid disturbing wildlife
  - Ways to make activities more sustainable (reducing emissions, minimising damage, etc.)

5. Finally, each group presents to the class:
  - Which species group or habitat they chose
  - What conflicts of interest they identified
  - What solutions they proposed

## Note for Teachers

- Consider assigning specific species groups or habitats to each group to connect the exercise to other topics you are teaching, or to guide the direction of discussion. It can be particularly interesting to have two groups work on the same species or habitat, so the class can compare the solutions they arrive at.
- Encourage students to reason about compromise rather than looking for a single "right" answer.

## Purpose of the Exercise

To understand how the relationships between nature, people, and society can give rise to resource conflicts, and to practise analysing multiple perspectives and exploring possible solutions.