Protected areas and Livestock Keepers’ Rights

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How to destroy biodiversity in protected areas?
Easy! Just ban traditional grazing there.

Grazing bans in western India
Grazing ban in Kumbalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan
no more sheep and goats
less food for leopards and wolves
Grazing ban in Gir Lion Sanctuary, Gujarat
no more livestock as prey
lions stray out of sanctuary
Grazing restrictions in Desert National Park, Rajasthan
less dung fewer insects
fewer Great Indian Bustards
And grazing bans erode the biodiversity of traditional livestock breeds that have developed there, and the livelihoods of local people.

This is against CBD article 8j “…respect, preserve and maintain… traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.”

Pastoralists husband biodiversity
Pastoralists have created many livestock breeds. Herds retain wild genetic traits that have disappeared from high-performance breeds: disease and drought resistance, behavioural traits, and hardiness.

Pastoralism is a valuable reservoir for livestock genetic diversity in times of climate change. Domestic herd animals enhance the landscape and represent important bio-cultural heritage. Pastoralists and their herds must have legal recognition, training and capacity-building to improve their biodiversity management. Without support, pastoralist systems are doomed to disappear, with serious implications for animal genetic resources, rural livelihoods, sustainable crop cultivation and wild biodiversity.

Falling through the cracks
Pastoralist production system must be recognized. It maintains domestic animal diversity and provides ecosystem services.

Wildlife conservationists scorn pastoralist livestock as "domestic" animals – enemies of the environment and wildlife.

Animal scientists compare pastoralist breeds with high performance breeds

But there is a fluid border between domestic and wild animals: pastoralists’ livestock retains many characteristics of wild animals

Livestock Keepers’ Rights
Rights of pastoralists and other small-scale livestock keepers to maintain their role in in-situ conservation of domestic animal diversity

- Developed by LIFE Network (www.lifeinitiative.net) in 7-year multi-stakeholder dialogue
- Recognition of pastoralists as creators of breeds
- Dependency of traditional breeds on conservation of ecosystems
- Backed by African and other G77 countries in the Global Plan of Action of International Conference on Animal Genetic Resources in Interlaken

Fighting a grazing ban in Kumbalgarh, Rajasthan

<1950 Kumbalgarh = traditional summer grazing ground of Raika camel pastoralists
1970s Kumbalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary established
1999 Forest protection committees ban non-local animals from forest (nomadic Raika are not "local")
2002 NGO Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan files High Court petition requesting grazing rights be reinstated
2003 Court decides in favour of Raika
2004 State Government refuses to issue grazing permits
2005 Raika file another petition requesting grazing permits
2006 State Government refers case to Supreme Court
2007 Supreme Court asks Chief Wildlife Warden for recommendation
Warden recommends ban on ALL grazing in Sanctuary

Entering the Kumbalgarh Sanctuary

Young pastoralists are rare

Lobbying at the Interlaken Conference, 2007

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