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Condors over Cattle: Managed Wilderness and the Pastoral Tradition in Northern Baja California

ANDREW PATTISON AND BRYAN B. RASMUSSEN

INTRODUCTION

This article explores the tension between conservation and pastoralism in the Sierra San Pedro Mártir National Park (SSPM NP), in Baja California, Mexico. The national park claims land that is both adjacent to and overlapping with pre-existing communal *ejidos* located principally on ecologically and economically marginal lands. The tension between park managers and cattle-grazing pastoralists could be described as a contest for limited natural resources in the SSPM NP region. At the core of this tension is a state-run environmental management bureaucracy that seeks to accrue land and resources while denying those resources for subsistence users. We examine this tension through the lens of wilderness, which we suggest provides a rhetoric and justifying logic, rooted in US-style conservation, for the capture of resources. Wilderness provides environmental managers with technocratic concepts, such as ecosystem services, wildlife conservation, and endangered species preservation, to capture and manage lands historically used and managed by local grazing communities whose land-tenure arrangements pre-date the gazetting of the national park. This conflict distills around two species, condors and cattle, that not only represent two fundamentally different ways of understanding land, land access, and land use, but open onto larger issues of global conservation that arise when conservation sees

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itself in competition with local people. We argue that this contest, far from being equal, illustrates an imbalance of power.

We situate our findings, including numerous interviews with grazers and environmental managers, within the well-established conversation on the contest, globally, between conservation and pastoralism. Our case here has much in common with stories of pastoral communities in the US Southwest (Pulido 1996; Sayre 2005) but also globally, such as in Africa (Brockington 2002; Turner 2022), where dominant policies, advanced by international conservation organizations and government agencies, prohibit pastoral and transhumance grazing practices for the sake of biological conservation. These policies as an approach to resource management rest upon a myth of wilderness, a conception of nature that is distinct from human activity and which maintains that the best way to protect and manage conservation areas is to keep people out (Brockington 2002, 47; Goldman 2020). Such policies frequently vilify people working and living in marginal places as “enemies of conservation” (Dowie 2009, xv) and push them into social and economic precarity, up to and including the erosion of historic land-tenure arrangements and direct exclusion. Analyses of these conflicts are often framed as “fortress conservation” (Brockington 2002) and as stories of “conservation refugees” (Dowie 2009). Trends in this literature, which Pulido (1996, 125) frames as “resource management as contested terrain,” include the privileging of Western-style, technocratic conservation science over traditional ecological knowledge (Dowie 2009, 110; Gómez-Pompa and Kaus 1992, 271–273; Goldman 2020; Luke 1999), and the privileging of wildlife over pastoral livestock (Brockington 2002; Dowie 2009).

We seek to make two important interventions to these trends in the conservation literature. First, we critique efforts by conservationists to make their policies more inclusive by adding more local control of resources in protected areas, sometimes called “community-based natural resource management” (Brockington 2002, 8), or co-management. What we call *exclusion by inclusion* describes an approach to co-management that brings local pastoralists into conservation only to make them party to their own exclusion.

Second, we put the SSPM NP in context of similar conservation stories that have played out both regionally, in New Mexico (Pulido 1996) and Arizona (Sayre 2005), and globally, in East and West Africa (Brockington 2002; Dowie 2009; Goldman 2020; Turner 2022), where management policies have pitted the traditional grazing of livestock such as cattle and sheep against the conservation of wildlife. Goldman (2020, 213) observes

that “critiques of community-based conservation” have exposed the ways that individual species-based conservation efforts also reveal the contradictions on which the wilderness idea is based. Here, we align ourselves with such critiques. We highlight the way in which the condor, which is used to justify limiting or excluding disfavored human activities such as livestock grazing, has become the newest face of dispossession, and we point to an approach to more authentic co-management in protected areas that transcends the overly simplistic wild/domestic binary view that drives much conservation policy and practice.

SIERRA SAN PEDRO MÁRTIR—A MARGINAL PLACE

Following the Mexican-American War (1846–1848), California was politically divided into the US state of “Alta” (or upper) California, and “Baja” (or lower) California, which is comprised of two Mexican states: Baja California and Baja California Sur. Sierra San Pedro Mártir National Park (SSPM NP) lies within the Sierra San Pedro Mártir (SSPM) mountain range, in the northern state of Baja California, roughly 100 kilometers south of the US-Mexico border and midway between the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of California. Baja’s politically produced border was layered atop its ecology to co-produce the SSPM’s status as a “relict biota” (Bojórquez-Tapia et al., 2004, 112), a scientific control or baseline of the pre-contact Californias that has informed both national and international conservation policy in the region (figure 1).

The SSPM belongs to the north-south cordillera of the Peninsular Ranges geomorphic province, which also includes Southern California’s San Jacinto Mountains, with which the SSPM largely shares its faunal and floral profile. The SSPM is the southern margin of the California Floristic Province (CFP), a Mediterranean-type region of immense geographic and biological diversity that extends from northern Baja to southern Oregon. The SSPM itself contains much of Mexico’s biodiversity: Essentially a “sky island,” its “percentage of endemics is surprisingly high for a country that is part of a continent” (Cartrón et al. 2005, 3; Garcillán et al. 2010, 4). Rare and endemic species and subspecies include numerous plants and rodents, a species of mountain rainbow trout, and the largest single population of bighorn sheep. This region is also believed to have been the southern limit of the California condor, which went regionally extinct in 1937 and was reintroduced in the 1980s. Along with the condor, the SSPM’s “undisturbed” fire regime exemplifies Baja’s relict



Figure 1. Sierra San Pedro Mártir National Park in Baja California, Mexico.

status: The SSPM remains “the only extant scientific control for experimental and comparative studies with which to inform and improve fire management policies” in the US, Mexico, and other regions globally that share the CFP’s climate (Minnich et al. 1997, 614) (figure 2).

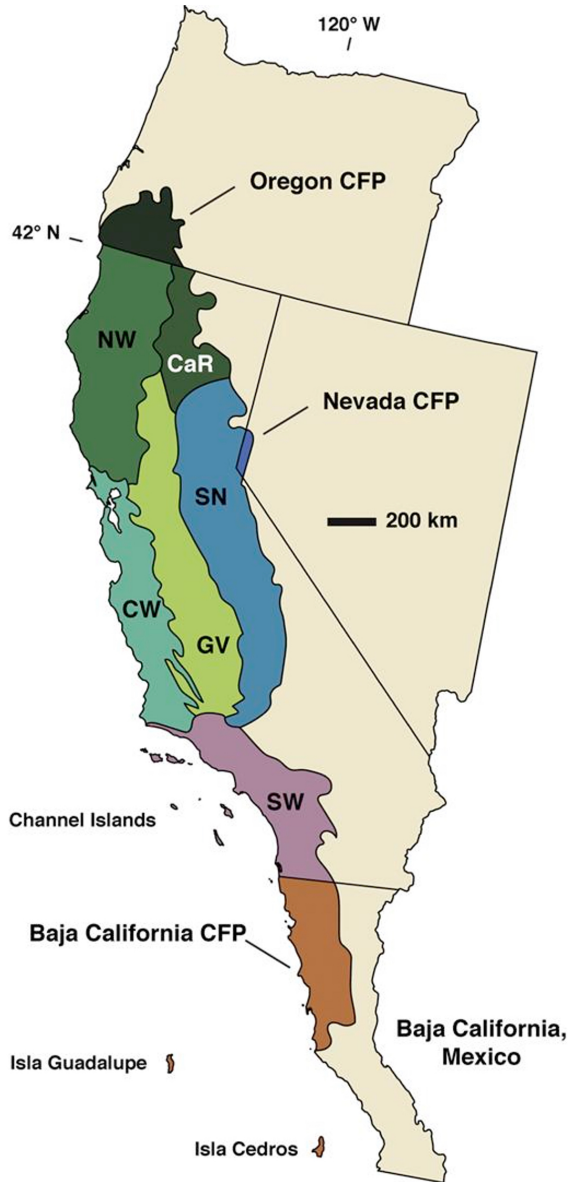


Figure 2: The California Floristic Province. From D. Burge et al., 2016, "Plant Diversity and Endemism in the California Floristic Province," *Madroño*, 63(2), April–June: 5. NW, Northwestern California Region; CaR, Cascade Ranges Region; CW, Central Western California Region; GV, Great Valley Region; SN, Sierra Nevada Region; SW, Southwestern California Region.

Minnich et al. (1997) divide the SSPM into three distinct geographic segments: a broad western slope rising 1,800 meters from the Pacific coast and dominated by coastal sage scrub, Sonoran Desert, and chaparral ecosystems; a highly faulted, nearly vertical eastern escarpment jutting 3,100 meters above the San Felipe Desert to the east; and, between these, a high plateau characterized by two key ecological features that lie within official boundaries of the SSPM NP— an intact, mixed conifer forest exhibiting a pre-colonial, largely unmanaged fire regime, and a series of large, ecologically sensitive, wetland meadows of more than 500 hectares each (Minnich et al. 1997, 629).

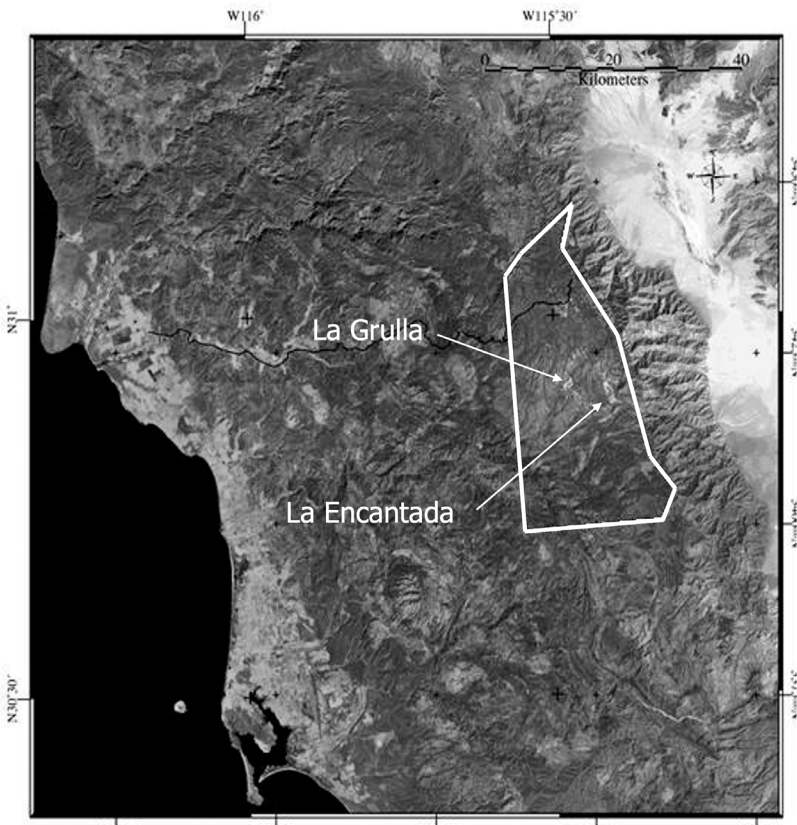


Figure 3. Official polygon of the Sierra San Pedro Mártir National Park. The large high meadows of La Grulla and La Encantada are visible. From Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas, Camino al Ajusco No. 200, 2006, Programa de Conservación y Manejo Parque Nacional Sierra de San Pedro Mártir, México (La Colonia Jardines en la Montaña, Tlalpan C.P. 14210, México, D.F.).

These meadows capture 90% of all precipitation as winter snowfall in a region characterized by a stark seasonal wet-dry period and a long-term drought cycle, where seasonal precipitation varies from as little as 265 millimeters in drought years to 650 millimeters in wet years (Minnich et al. 1997, 621–622). Water scarcity and seasonal fluctuations in regional water availability make the land more suitable for subsistence grazing than large-scale ranching or water-intensive agriculture, and have led to the transhumance seasonal tradition of cattle drives up into the mountains, and into the SSPM NP, for pasturage. Long-term climatological forecasts from Mexico's agriculture and rural development agency (SAGARPA) predict further aridification, and suggest future conflicts between conservation, agriculture, and pastoralists over increasingly scarce resources in this already marginal place (figure 3).

The region may represent what Sayre (2017) calls “marginal” lands: that is, lands “peripheral to other, more lucrative types of land,” where land-based people “are often (although not always) socially marginalized as well” (3). And while only very thinly populated, regional communities and environmental administrators alike claim ownership over scarce resources in this economically unproductive landscape. Environmental administrators, whom we label ecomanagers, borrowing from Luke (1999), take the form of urban-based government agency employees, environmental non-governmental organization (NGO) staff, and university researchers working to maintain and expand the administrative operations of environmental protection of wilderness sites far from urban centers. In doing so, they make claims about the need to conserve such marginal lands for the sake of wildlife habitat, ecosystem services, and, to a lesser extent, tourism.

For their part, local pastoral cattle-grazing communities, peripheral in their own way to the urban centers of the border and coasts of Baja, claim water and grassland resources within the SSPM NP based on historic land claims. Many grazers belong to *ejidos*, a state-supported agrarian land-tenure system or commons dating to the socialist land reforms of the Mexican Revolution (1911). Grazers’ “weak or uncertain land tenure arrangements” (Sayre 2017, 3), key characteristics of marginal lands, are made weaker by state agencies that use ecological science to support exclusionary governance policies in service of a wilderness symbolized by the image of reintroduced condors soaring high overhead. And so while the SSPM region may be geographically and socioeconomically peripheral to coastal urban centers, it is ecologically central from the perspective of conservation.

SIERRA SAN PEDRO MÁRTIR AND ITS PROTECTIONS

The forests of the SSPM range have been protected since 1923, when they were declared forest reserves. In 1947, a portion of the SSPM constituting “one of the most pristine protected natural areas in Mexico,” which includes its high-elevation forests and meadows, was declared a national park. With an area of 72,910 hectares, SSPM NP is Mexico’s fourth-largest national park. SSPM NP’s stated mission is the protection of ecosystem services, including climate regulation and carbon capture provided by the forests; water capture and availability for coastal agriculture provided by the meadows; and wildlife habitat best represented in its role as “the last stronghold of the California condor” (Programa de Conservación 2006, 12). In 1951, all previous concessions to private companies for logging were invalidated. Sheep grazing was prohibited in 1964. Since 1975, the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) has operated an observatory within the park. Mexico’s General Law of Ecological Equilibrium and Environmental Protection (LGEEPA), passed in 1988, formally prohibited all natural resource extraction activity in the park, including cattle grazing. Park use is currently restricted to scientific study and tourism, which is estimated at 3,000 to 4,000 visitors per year (Programa de Conservación 2006).

CONDORS

With a population of less than 4 million, northern Baja and the SSPM region in particular are notably underdeveloped relative to Southern California, with a population of 24 million. However, its relative underdevelopment is precisely what makes it scientifically significant and worth conserving, especially as a reintroduction site for endangered California condors. The California condor is believed to have been extirpated from the northern region of Baja, Mexico, in the 1930s, though sightings were reported in the 1970s, and by 1987 the species was extinct in the wild across its entire range (Farnsworth 2015; Buchanan 2020; Rare Condors Believed to Be in Mexico 1971). A joint US-Mexico condor reintroduction program began at SSPM NP in 2002, the fifth site in this program and the first in Mexico. In this way the park emblemizes the relationship between conservation efforts in the US and Mexico (figures 4 and 5).



Figures 4. and 5. Condor #98 in the Sierra San Pedro Mártir, 2017.
Photos by B. Rasmussen.

CATTLE

The SSPM's history of conservation should be understood in the parallel context of cattle grazing in the region, because while the condor project benefits from the region's marginality, it also increases socioeconomic precarity for longtime pastoralists. The SSPM has played a central role in transhumance or seasonal pasturage for cattle grazers, and so it is useful to define marginality in the SSPM in terms of rangeland science: "relatively unproductive (in both ecological and economic terms), sparsely populated, and inhospitable" (Sayre 2017, 1)—characteristics that have defined the status and history of the region's socioeconomic opportunities and conflicts. The SSPM's present-day transhumance culture and economy support pastoralism but not ranching (Minnich et al. 1997; Castillo-Muñoz 2016; Cartrón et al. 2005).

As Sayre (2017) observes, pastoralism differs from ranching in a few ways. Pastoralism is characterized by collective rather than exclusive or private use of land, it is aimed at subsistence rather than production of marketable surplus, and it is "keyed to the variability of rainfall and forage availability" (Sayre 2017, 190): According to Widstrand (1975), as quoted in Sayre (2017, 190), pastoralists' attunement to seasonality allows families "to survive physically and socially and to maximize the chance of their surviving prolonged droughts and other risks." Pastoralism in Baja dates at least to the arrival of Spanish missionaries to the peninsula in 1769. Indigenous Kiliwa in service of the missions led cattle drives into the high meadows during summer months, introducing the transhumance tradition that persists today (Minnich and Franco-Vizcaíno

1998, 106). Families descended from these Spanish-era grazers continue to rely on small-scale seasonal cattle grazing of varying intensities for their subsistence (Minnich et al. 1997, 642). Some own as few as 5 to 10 cattle, while others as many as 300.

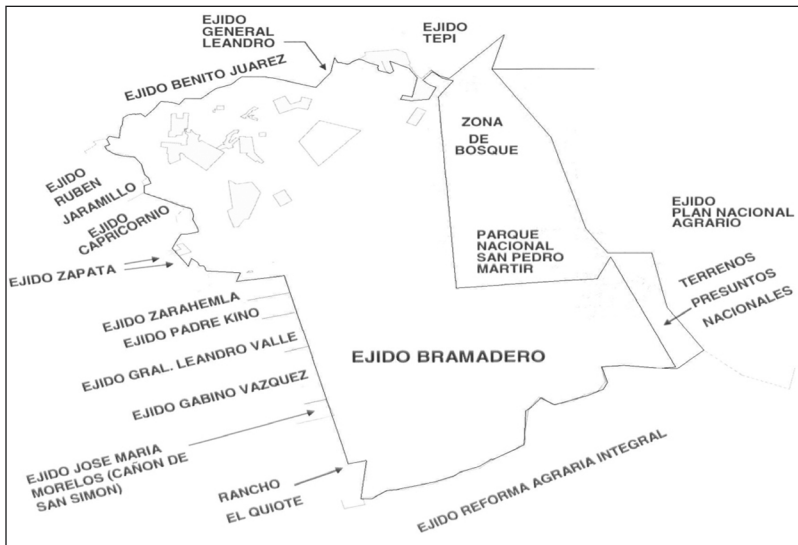


Figure 6. *Ejidos surrounding the Sierra San Pedro Mártir National Park. From Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas, Camino al Ajusco No. 200, 2006, Programa de Conservación y Manejo Parque Nacional Sierra de San Pedro Mártir, México (La Colonia Jardines en la Montaña, Tlalpan C.P. 14210, México, D.F.).*

CONFLICTS

Ongoing frictions between the largest *ejido*, the Bramadero, and park administrators are the result of a failure to adjudicate the superposition of the SSPM NP in 1947 over existing *ejido* lands, and the subsequent prohibitions on cattle grazing, which directly impact *ejidos'* economic survival (Programa de Conservación 2006, 62) (figure 6). Though frequently criticized in the region's history of conservation, cattle grazing in the mountains has been historically modest (Minnich and Franco-Vizcaíno 1998, 106; see also Cartrón et al. 2005). In 1910, there were 21,000 head of cattle in all of the SSPM; in 1940 only 2,788 (Minnich and Franco-Vizcaíno 1998, 105). The wetland meadows of La Grulla,

La Encantada, and Vallecitos have for centuries served as pasturage for grazers. Some *ejidatarios* claim the meadows do not belong to the park, while the official park map situates these meadows squarely within its boundaries. Pastoralists have answered attempts to police grazing with blockades and armed resistance. Relations currently hold to a simmer largely because, in an effort to reduce tensions, park administrators tolerate grazing on an informal basis. Grazers' current access to the meadows, in particular, remains at the whim of park administration, an unequal relationship over the "contested terrain" (Pulido 1996, 125) in the SSPM NP that is emblematic of grazers' socially and economically marginal status. According to the SSPM NP's management plan, "All this constitutes a problem not yet resolved" (Programa de Conservación 2006, 62). Grazers' unequal relationship with park administrators and contested access to park resources signal that management of SSPM NP falls short of truly community-based conservation.

METHODS

We visited the SSPM region three times between January 2019 and January 2020. Our time was spent in Ensenada, in SSPM NP, and in the region in between. We conducted over 30 semi-structured interviews with Mexican government employees of federal and state environmental and related agencies, university researchers, employees of relevant NGOs in the region, and a diverse selection of local private landowners/users. Some of these locals were cattle grazers (some of whom also engage in formal ranching), and some were local farmers. Not all of these locals involved with cattle grazing/ranching were members of the local *ejidos*, but many were. To find our interviewees, we conducted a modified snowball sampling technique, starting with members of the park's advisory committee. When needed, we were assisted in our interviews by a local university Spanish-English bilingual translator. The interviews were professionally transcribed in Spanish and English and we used MAXQDA software to analyze the transcripts for emergent themes. Our interview questions included themes such as structures and authority in the park (i.e., regulations and protocols), ecology and biodiversity, conservation policies, stakeholder relations, and the customs and economics of grazing/ranching in the region.

MANAGING WILDERNESS

Here we introduce what we call *managed wilderness* to explain how state power wields scientific and technical (in this case ecological) information in the contest for management of land and resources in SSPM NP. We build on Pulido (1996, 125), and others, to begin from the perspective of environmental justice concerns that stem from “resource management as contested terrain.” We will show that the underlying logic of mainstream, US-influenced, environmental management efforts of the SSPM NP rest on the assumption that wilderness needs to be protected, not just from private extractive industries like logging and mining, but from a local land-based ranching and grazing community whose subsistence use of this land pre-dates the SSPM NP. The displacement and exclusion of existing resource users by urban bureaucratic administrators is based on the myth of a primeval land where the only acceptable activities are scientific study and tourism. We tell “a social as well as an ecological story” (Sayre 2005, xv) of this land in order to interrogate wilderness-based environmental management that is pushing a marginal community into precarity.

SSPM NP may be a Mexican national park, but it operates a lot like national parks do in the US. That is to say, its existence is rooted in a conception of wilderness, defined as pristine nature, rather than in conceptions of economic use of resources like timber, minerals, grassland, water, etc. (Programa de Conservación 2006 1.1, 1.2, 4.6, 6). Invented in the nineteenth century, the idea of wilderness is a major constituent of mainstream US conservation, institutionalized as a cultural value by its champions (Beinart and Coates 1995, 46; Pulido 1996, 22, 127). The setting aside of large tracts of charismatic land from economic exploitation and resource extraction for wilderness has often been defended on the force of transcendental rhetoric promoting the mythological condition of nature “primeval” (Wilderness Act 1964), pristine, and “raw” (Leopold 1949, 188), appealing to Americans’ national (and sometimes nationalistic) pride in their landscape (Taylor 2016).

However, wilderness has, from the first, operated as a hegemonic economic imperative for the capture and management of natural resources, frequently at the expense of longtime local users who have, in some cases for centuries, accessed and managed those resources (Pulido 1996). An economic analysis of wilderness would emphasize the convergence of elite “business and recreation interests, and political opportunities”

around what counts as wilderness and how to manage it (Taylor 2016, 391). In such an analysis, wilderness necessitates the management of resources or, in other words, rules delimiting use and economic activity, defined by a government that functions like a private business. In the case of national parks, resource use is defined not as extractive value, but as wildlife habitat (e.g., condor and bighorn sheep), ecotourism (e.g., entrance fees, eco-lodges, camping permits), ecosystem services (e.g., water availability, climate regulation), and scientific-study value (e.g., ecological baselines) (Leopold 1949; Beinart and Coates 1995, 78, 84; Taylor 2016; Simonian 1995; Pulido 1996). Other uses such as grazing and subsistence hunting and fishing are criminalized, in part, because they are believed to threaten pristine wilderness, but, more to our argument, because they represent competition for resources and resource management (Taylor 2016, 396, 285–289).

The story of the grazers of the SSPM NP region fits into a historical trend of removal, displacement, and economic marginalization in the name of natural resource conservation. The tendency of wilderness by definition to criminalize subsistence users can be said to be its inherent and perhaps original environmental injustice, dating to the removal of Indigenous people from their traditional cultural lands (Spence 1999). More broadly, land-based people, in many but not all cases Indigenous, were shut out of, or relegated to marginal jobs within, new economic markets that arose from the “commercial development, increased availability, and expanded tourism” promoted by elite conservationists (Taylor 2016, 330, 357).

In a more contemporary case, analogous to the SSPM NP, Pulido (1996) examines the Ganados del Valle of northern New Mexico, a communal land arrangement of low-income Hispanos organized in the 1980s to promote rural economic opportunities centered on sheep grazing. Like cattle in the SSPM range, sheep grazing in the Sangre de Cristo range in northern New Mexico dates to a Spanish pastoral subsistence economy centered on communal access to grazing land. Much of that land is now wild elk habitat under the control of state resource agencies that collect license fees for hunting and fishing. The members of Ganados del Valle, shut out of an economic market Pulido calls the “wildlife industry,” have proposed transhumance sheep grazing in ecologically sensitive high-elevation meadows, but these proposals have met with hostility from wildlife managers. The result is “a general climate of disrespect and distrust between rural sheep grazers and public

resource agencies” (Pulido 1996, 156, 133). As in the SSPM NP, where communal *ejidos* collide with wilderness and wildlife administration, the story of the Ganados del Valle reveals that wilderness is best understood less as a quality of place than as an approach to land management intended to ensure the legitimacy and reproduction of a wilderness industry at the expense of local subsistence users, and thus cannot be separated from questions of inequality and marginalization (Pulido 1996, 147, 156).

ECOMANAGERIALISM

Echoing the history of wilderness in the US, government agencies and university researchers in the SSPM NP call for the need to conserve and protect wilderness and its wildlife from local economic and social activities. To understand how conservation excludes local resource users in this context, we frame the capture and management of wilderness as a resource through Luke’s critique of “ecomanagerialism” (Luke 1999). Ecomanagerialism refers to a technocratic form of environmental management carried out by professionals schooled in technical frameworks and methods, such as environmental science and public policy, that emphasize empirical measurement and administrative procedures well beyond the understanding of non-experts (Rice 2007, 525; Luke 1999, 1–4).¹ Ecomanagers, charged with the protection and conservation of the physical environment, also protect the dominant economic and political interests that surround that environment. Ecomanagerialism represents a kind of “monopolistic power” of bureaucratic or “statist” capital (Sayre 2005, xx–xxiv) wielded not only against the typical forces of capital such as large-scale agriculture and ranching, but also against the small-scale economic activities of local communities.

In SSPM NP, ecomanagerialism crystallizes around the protection of a reintroduced endangered species, the California condor. The condor program becomes what Sayre (2005, xxiii), in an analogous context, describes as “symbolic capital” that derives its value from its rarity relative to other species in the region and justifies state management. But this justification necessarily excludes small-scale economic activities such as local pastoralism. In showing how these forms of capital interact in SSPM NP we hope to reveal how the symbolic value of the condor is socially constructed as a remnant of a pristine (relic) wilderness, thus obscuring

how state management and its ecomanagerial justifications may be hindering the development of more equitable partnerships between ecomanagers and local land-based communities.

RESULTS

Drawing on our semi-structured interviews from the field, we aim to uncover the effects of wilderness management on individuals of the local community. We present below the findings from our field interviews in the region to tell a story of economic and environmental justice wherein the US model of wilderness parks and wildlife protection, which we call managed wilderness, has generated serious social and economic costs in the form of nudging a marginal community closer to precarity, including a form of exclusion we call exclusion by inclusion. To give structure to our analysis, we have organized the individuals we spoke with as grazers (i.e., pastoralists and ranchers) and ecomanagers (i.e., park managers and biologists). And we have organized the friction between grazers and ecomanagers around three visible conflicts: over the history and definition of park boundaries, over the role of cattle and cattle regulations in the contest for access to and use of park resources, and over the condor program as the embodiment of US-influenced resource management.

Park Boundary

The foundational legitimating premise for all ecomanagerial policies in SSPM NP, as we were told by a university research biologist based in Ensenada, is that SSPM NP is “a natural park. It’s not a ranch.” All policy decisions flow downstream from this claim, including “in the long term” that “the cattle must be removed.” However, the boundaries of the park have been historically contested (see Minnich et al. 1997). A survey was conducted in 2013 with the goal of rectifying the disagreement between the park managers and some members of neighboring *ejidos*, but as of summer 2019, says the same researcher, grazers had yet to accept the official limits of the park. A researcher sympathetic to the grazers told us there was a “contradiction” in the park polygon, and that the *ejido* Bramadero maintains that “the park stole a portion of their land.” Another researcher put it this way: “They still think that’s their land, but I think

that's not their land anymore, but nobody really told them, and nobody gave them the compensation."

However, grazers' refusal to accept the official polygon reveals a deeper problem of understanding between the park administrators (i.e., ecomanagers) and grazers, one so fundamental that one grazer could tell us, while standing in La Grulla, a meadow that sits squarely within official park boundaries, that "this is not the park." Grazers' understanding of the park boundary seems to be tied not to administrative maps, but to the movement of cattle. They consider transhumance, or the seasonal movement of cattle up and down the mountain, not to be in conflict with the park boundaries, because this mode of travel by definition does not cross the park boundary. The movement of cattle and horses differs fundamentally from that of scientists or tourists traveling by car on roads that cross a line on a map. One grazer told us, "Since there's no entrance for cars or anything like that [into the high meadows like La Grulla] things are preserved." Another explained that their father and grandparents "would guide the cattle up the mountains...they didn't go in car or wagon, they would go on horseback guiding the cattle up the trail," which is why "they've never had a need for a permit, because they don't need to cross through the national park." Put simply, grazers assert, "That's where we go, so [the park] doesn't control us there.... The people who have land up there, they go up and down. They don't need any permit to do that."

One grazer's challenge even linked the movement of cattle to land-tenure arrangements. He not only protested the exclusion of the grazers from the park, but contested the movement of the ecomanagers and tourists across the communal *ejido* property that surrounds the park. "This may be your park," he said, "but everything around it is communal property. You don't want me to enter your park. I don't want you to go through my communal property. Use a helicopter to get to your park because you are not going through here." The *ejido* boundary, this grazer maintains, is at least as valid as the official park polygon. He is responding to ecomanagers' proposal to "increase the buffer zone of the park," as one conservation scientist explained, "because there are so many species that need to be preserved." The buffer zone is intended to increase the administrative reach of the park without expanding the park's official boundaries. This grazer's petition to build an ecotourism lodge had been rejected for being "within the [administrative] limits of the national park, not for being inside the park, because we're not in the park, but we are within the limits."

In response to ecomanagers' adherence to an inviolate park boundary that excludes grazers, one *ejido* representative suggested that the park "shouldn't be an island." Grazers, reports this representative, "are in the same regions as the natural protected areas." Therefore, says one researcher sympathetic to the grazers, "you can't just set aside other people's interests," especially in "areas where people have been using the resources for a long time." In reality, says this same researcher, the "park's role permeates toward the outside, and it benefits the neighboring communities," or it imperils them. In other words, ecomanagers cannot exclude grazers' priority claims and traditional understandings of ownership without social and economic repercussions to the local community that, in other contexts, have resulted in unintended environmental pressures on protected areas (Brockington 2002).

This boundary dispute exposes something even more fundamental than a contested geospatial definition of the boundaries of the park. Ecomanagers' exclusion of local land-based resource users is a contest of symbolic species. On the one hand, cattle, which represent the interests of longtime resource users, pre-date the gazettement of the national park, and whose movement, tied to the historical pattern of transhumance, guarantees grazers' claim to the land. On the other hand, the preservation of favored species—crystallized, as we will see, in a condor reintroduction program that crosses the US-Mexico border—symbolizes the international influence of conservation programs.

Cattle and Cattle Regulations

In this section, we explore the implications of ecomanagerialism through the lens of cattle. We describe ecomanagers' use of ecological science to justify their control and preservation of wilderness as a resource, and how this technocratic approach is perceived and contested by grazers as exclusionary resource management. We argue that ecomanagers' cattle regulations, along with other forms of bureaucratic capture including ecotourism and fire management, threaten to push local resource users from marginality to precarity.

For ecomanagers, cattle represent the park's chief ecological threat. Cattle compact soil, erode streambanks, contribute to nitrogen loading of meadow streams which threatens an endemic trout, introduce exotic species, and spread disease among wildlife. Ecomanagers' assessment of cattle as ecosystem threats stems from the interpretation of SSPM as an

intact, remnant ecosystem relatively free of human disturbance, which they argue is important for preserving species, like the California condor, and for serving as a baseline for conservation (Minnich et al. 1997; Barbour et al. 2002, 462; Bojórquez-Tapia et al. 2004, 112; Evett et al. 2007, 318). This interpretation has led to the implementation of various policies and practices to define, capture, and regulate legitimate use of the park. The effect of these policies and practices has been to prohibit or limit grazers' park use and access, as well as to frame grazing and the grazers themselves as illegitimate and even as threats to the park.

Ecomangers have sought to justify cattle exclusions empirically, but they admit that "we haven't collected data." They cannot say with certainty that "the environment has changed because of the cattle," says one conservation biologist, whose work has informed the current SSPM NP management-plan revision process. Analyses of experimental cattle exclusion zones in the sensitive wetland meadows like La Grulla and La Encantada, where ecomangers say cattle do the most harm, are inconclusive with regard to cattle impacts. Ecomangers sometimes invoke carrying capacity as a way of definitively determining cattle impacts in the park, but studies have thus far not been completed. Complicating the matter, says Richard Minnich, are aerial data showing no long-term "change in the herbaceous cover nor the water courses" in the meadows. Minnich's data confirm one grazer's observation that "all those problems [blamed on cattle] are due to lack of rain. This affects everything." As a result of these inconsistencies, it is clear that the role of cattle grazing on the annual productivity of the meadows relative to other factors, such as annual rainfall, is far from settled.²

Nevertheless, despite these unknowns, ecomangers continue to target grazing as the prime threat to the park: "In the long term, the cattle must be removed from the natural park." Regulatory approaches to cattle grazing have ranged from total interdiction (cattle regarded as a "plague" and therefore removed and destroyed) to unofficial, unenforced tolerance, to, more recently, the highly regulated, scientifically informed holistic grazing or sustainable grassland management. Holistic grazing simultaneously delegitimizes traditional grazing while seeking to recruit cattle for ecosystem services and sustainability.

Other bureaucratic functions of the park that affect the grazers are ecotourism and fire management. Park managers provide ecotourism certificates to a small number of grazers to guide scientific expeditions or serve in a conservation capacity, programs that one administrator says

“also give [the grazers] resources.” However, at the same time, certification reinforces ecomanagers’ interpretation of the park’s legitimate function as a laboratory where, say park administrators, “the only thing you can do...is research.” Fire management policy has similarly shaped ecomanagers’ relationship to grazers. On the one hand, multiple ecomanagers accuse grazers of threatening ecosystem integrity by carelessly starting fires while working in the park. On the other hand, the SSPM NP is engaged in an experimental program of controlled burning in collaboration with UC Davis that seeks to recruit “the surrounding people...in the conservation and management action.” As with holistic management and other scientifically informed grazing programs, the cases of ecotourism and fire management show that ecomanagers seek to delegitimize seasonal transhumance cattle grazing while also recruiting grazers for officially sanctioned conservation work.

Through ecological interpretations that justify absolute cattle prohibitions in the park, ecomanagers regulate the park as a resource for exclusive use by science while limiting grazers’ traditional economic livelihood. Recruiting cattle for grassland management and grazers for guide services and fire management is a more indirect form of regulatory capture. This approach recognizes that excluding grazers entirely is not sustainable, and aims instead to involve those who make their living from the park in policymaking. However, because unregulated economic activity is “legally incompatible” with current park policy, ecomanagers put new controls in place to address the economic injustices caused by their own regulations. Grazing is scientifically reframed as “regenerative livestock management” and grazers are re-educated to become grassland managers and conservationists. The aim of this approach is to capture and regulate cattle grazing and grazers within the park’s logic and to turn them into instruments of ecomanagerialism, while claiming that the benefit is for the people involved. In this way, grazing and grazers are reintroduced into bureaucratic legitimacy via state-controlled means only to reduce grazers’ economic autonomy over their traditional resources, with the ultimate intent to greatly reduce grazing. We call this form of ecomanagerial bureaucratic capture and regulation exclusion by inclusion.

Grazers, for their part, interpret ecomanagers’ capture of the park as an effort to exclude them from a resource, and in doing so, they expose the ecological justification for park management as an exclusionary

business model. “The park is a business,” observes one grazer, “just not for us.” Grazers see management of the park as specifically targeting their economic activity while sanctioning other economic activities: “They don’t allow any investment from the rancher.” Grazers attribute this experience of economic precarity directly to the park’s business model: “We would be better off removing ourselves as ranchers and looking for something else to do, because without [access to] the national park we cannot have cattle.” They attribute loss of economic security directly to the park’s conservation policies. One grazer reports that the communal landowners were promised some economic benefit from the condor project and broader scientific work in the park in the form of commensurate ecotourism, but insist “they never fulfilled their promises.” To grazers, prioritizing conservation efforts like the condor reintroduction project is a violation of their historical land agreements without proper compensation.

It should be noted that ecomanagers do not see their own approach to resource conservation in the same terms. For their part, ecomanagers interpret grazers’ anticipation of economic return for wilderness protection as greed and exploitation. They see grazers as freeloaders who “bring the cattle [into the park], because this way they don’t have to give them food or water.” To conservationists, grazers are driven principally by money: “If they don’t see money, they care less [about the land].”

In an effort to claim legitimacy within the park’s business model, grazers position themselves in relation to the park by using the logic of ecomanagers. Where ecomanagerialism defines grazers as threats to the park, grazers position themselves as stewards. Grazers claim that cattle “are part of the ecosystem,” the “same as the deer.” Cattle, they insist, “were from there.... The entire park was their park.” One prominent grazer says cattle “have helped in the conservation of the park with fighting fires” by consuming fire fuel. He warns that “taking out the cows will trigger an accumulation of organic material that,” when a wildfire begins, “will raze the entire forest.” This claim “is probably not correct,” says Minnich, but it shows that grazers recognize technocratic principles like fire management and use them to include cattle as an essential ecosystem service.

Park policies are leading to a shifting economic and social landscape. One grazer insists that “there has always been livestock and ranching in these mountains.” It’s their “way of life.” But with the national park,

now it's a business. We no longer have anything to do with it there, and I don't know why—it's a national park, fine, but why are they taking us out, out, out? One way or another, but they keep pushing us further and further toward the edge, until other people come in who we don't even know. One way or another, other people who you don't know who come in looking for business—I don't know.

Aggressive efforts to exclude cattle from the park, including their direct removal and destruction, have moreover resulted in conflict between and among *ejidos*. For example, some grazers report that cattle in La Grulla and La Encantada were removed because of tuberculosis. The cattle were never replaced and most grazers never saw compensation. "Now, people with money have their cattle back, but not the small ranchers." This has driven a wedge between wealthier grazing families and smaller-scale pastoral families who see cattle "more like pets."

Grazers have resorted to both legitimate and illegitimate means of mitigating their precarity. Ecotourism, at present, provides limited and inconsistent alternative income. To our knowledge only one grazer, who provided service on all of our trips into the park, seems to have been certified as a guide. Some grazers have turned to agriculture. But in at least one case, this has had negative environmental and social consequences in the form of inter-*ejido* conflict over illegal watershed diversions that rob both local communities and downstream agriculture.

Mostly, though, grazers continue to bring cattle into the park illegally. Despite their own prohibitions, ecomanagers informally tolerate grazing, in part because they lack the resources to control it, but also because they recognize that grazing is "not just a legal problem, it's a social problem, too," most vividly demonstrated by incidents, related to us, of armed resistance in response to cattle injunctions. By continuing to allow grazing, ecomanagers find themselves in the position of having to violate their own policies in order to avoid further social unrest, and are forced to manage the precarity that their own policies have created. To the extent that grazing might be sanctioned in the new SSPM NP management plan as holistic grazing or sustainable grassland management, we see this as an attempt to capture, police, and control grazing and grazers through exclusion by inclusion.

Condors over Cattle

We have explored the implications of ecomanagerialism through the lens of cattle, examining how ecomanagers use cattle to capture the park as a resource. Here, we examine the implications of US-influenced resource management through the lens of condors. For ecomanagers, condors serve as symbolic capital of wilderness preservation and justification for ecomanagerial bureaucracy. The relationship between condors and ecomanagerialism in the park is perhaps neatly captured by the park's signs, which all feature condors. In what amounts to an ecological priority claim, against grazers' historic claims, ecomanagers claim northern Baja for condor territory. They claim that historic protections in the SSPM region dating to 1923's forest protections have preserved the park as "the last stronghold of the California condor" (Programa de Conservación 2006, 12)³: a relic ecosystem or fragment of the condor's historic habitat that once included all of Southern California and northern Baja. Ecomanagers claim that the region's "climate conditions are ideal" for the bird and therefore the perfect reintroduction site. This interpretation provides ecomanagers with not only a charismatic species to represent SSPM NP as a baseline ecosystem, but a self-justifying logic for the expansion of the business of conservation.

In terms of conservation, says Minnich, condor reintroduction is "the best thing" to have happened to the park. But it may also be true that reintroduction is the best thing that has happened for ecomanagers: The condor necessitates managerial intervention, including permanent, increasingly international scientific presence. "At the beginning," says a condor researcher, "we were living in tents, then in trailers, and then finally...the field station. Then, the San Diego Zoo helped us make it more comfortable." The condor project also supports and justifies the presence of additional conservation scientists other than condor researchers: "Many researchers go up to the park to perform their studies," one ecomanager told us. Scientific presence can then become a form of symbolic capital to promote ecotourism: "The visual part is very important," says this same ecomanager. And ecotourism, in turn, promises to generate real capital through increased park entrance fees.

Condors have also served to delineate authorized and unauthorized uses of the park. For example, grazers have historically been blamed for the condor's initial disappearance in the 1930s, whether because of overgrazing (Koford 1953) or overhunting (Farnsworth 2015). Today,

“condors’ greatest threat,” according to researchers, is lead poisoning from hunting by grazers. A single carcass contaminated with fragments of lead bullets can poison many condors, which has led to hunting prohibitions. These prohibitions extend the park’s sphere of influence beyond its official boundaries: “I mean, they fly,” says one researcher, which is to say, a carcass doesn’t have to be in the park for condors to eat it. Grazers also leave trash: Researchers recount an incident in which they rescued a condor with its head stuck in a tin can they said was probably left by grazers. And grazers, it is reported, pose more direct threats, including shooting condors outright “because they thought they took the [cattle] calves,” and lighting fires to burn them out. In this way, the condor turns grazers into enemies of conservation (Dowie 2009, xv).

Just as condors serve as a symbolic species for ecomanagers, cattle serve an important symbolic function for grazers. Cattle support grazers’ historical priority claims. Says one grazer, “There have always been cows.... The first ones who arrived to make an infrastructure were the ranchers, even before there were roads.” Grazers point out that the condor program is a new development in park conservation, one that threatens them existentially. As a counterclaim to ecomanagers’ ecological priority claims, grazers claim that the condor is an *introduced* rather than *reintroduced* species. “They said it was a reintroduction of something that was already in existence here, but we had never seen it.” Grazers deny the existence of condors prior to the reintroduction program as a way to assert historical priority. To grazers, condors are simply an extension of park bureaucracy, and claims of the condor’s ecological connection to the SSPM NP conflict with over 200 years of transhumance. Cattle further symbolize grazers’ economic autonomy. Grazers argue that cattle self-regulate: They “move around themselves.” Grazers see no difference between cattle’s autonomy and their own: Cattle, they say, “knew all the paths”; “They’re used to climbing up on their own,” and “it’s the same way with us.” Furthermore, grazers understand that their transhumance tradition justifies their right to the park: “The people who have land up there,” says one grazer, referring to *ejido* families, “go up and down; they don’t need any permit to do that.”

While transhumance reflects their sense of economic self-determination, cattle regulations represent an indignity that not only removes that autonomy, but threatens them with extinction. They understand that their economic security is tied to the continued presence of cattle. “Life is very expensive right now,” reports one grazer. “There’s no other work

available. People work in livestock.” Says another, “With the current policies, we will die and everything ends with us.” Instead of condors as endangered species, grazers see themselves as the species of most concern, using the ecomanagerial language of conservation and extinction to assert their social and economic relevance: “We’re dinosaurs too,” says one grazer. “We’re a species in danger of extinction.” And like endangered species, they are especially vulnerable to changes in the landscape: “At any moment they can run us off.” This same grazer understands that condor preservation and protection is a zero-sum game, because “the cattle raising gets lost” in the effort to conserve the landscape and preserve the condor.

Condor preservation has real, on-the-ground impacts on grazers. In addition to cattle exclusions, the grazers’ footprint is being eliminated from the park as new condor infrastructure is built. Instead of cabins that once served to shelter grazers in spring and summer, the park has a designated area with a comfortable field station for condor research. Grazers feel this exclusion acutely: “The observatory has its infrastructure, the national park has its infrastructure, the military has its infrastructure, the condor has infrastructure. All of them, including us, are residents of San Pedro Mártir and in some way we all have something to do with it, even before they arrived. The only ones who no longer have an infrastructure is us.” “We don’t have a warm house,” they go on. “We don’t have a place anymore.” Ironically, the park’s historical museum now sits on the exact site where a grazer’s hunting cabin once stood. The precise reason for this cabin’s removal is contested. However, by exhibiting historical artifacts of the grazing tradition, the park includes transhumance symbolically, while excluding grazers in fact.⁴

DISCUSSION

The story of the grazers operating in and around SSPM NP belongs to a global story of conservation that Brockington (2002) calls “fortress conservation” and Goldman (2020, 154) refers to as “enclosing eden.” Globally, pastoralists are evicted in the name of wildlife conservation that is couched in terms of “co-management” (Brockington 2002, 8; Dowie 2009, xxiii; Goldman 2020, 156). As a result, local resource users, sometimes evicted outright, are pushed into conditions of economic precarity (Brockington 2002, 6; Dowie 2009, 34) that transform them

from traditional stewards into “enemies of conservation” who come to regard wildlife and wildlife conservation as existential threats (Dowie 2009, xv, 32; Brockington 2002, 20). This approach to ensuring the integrity of places of high conservation value excludes “the most disempowered” land users (Sayre 2017, 166), while empowering ecomanagement, science, and ecotourism, and is analogous to cases described regionally (Sayre 2005; Pulido 1996) and globally (Guha 2000; Beinart and Coates 1995; Turner 2022; Brockington 2002; Dowie 2009; Goldman 2020).

Luke’s (1999) ecomanagerialism helps us understand the underlying logic and mechanisms of how this global trend has worked in the SSPM NP as well as the limits of this approach for creating authentic co-management. Our examination of ecomanagerialism explains how park policies designed to protect natural resources like wilderness and wildlife also “protect the dominant economic and political interests that surround those resources” (Rice 2007, 525), creating environmental and economic injustices that Pulido explains through the logic of “resource management as contested terrain” (1996, 125). In our case, ecomanagers such as park administrators, scientists, and conservationists define the terrain of the SSPM NP as a relic ecosystem in order to bring it under technocratic control. However, the “technical acumen and administrative practice” (Luke 1999, 11) that emerge from ecomanagers’ definition of the park “work to the detriment of marginalized communities” (Pulido 1996, 184), such as grazers, who are excluded outright from the resource-rich high meadows or experience *exclusion by inclusion* in the form of science-informed holistic grazing or sustainable grassland management. Both forms of exclusion erode land-tenure agreements that pre-date the gazettement of the national park and threaten local resource users with economic precarity.

Our results show that challenges to co-management are as fundamental as disagreements about what terrain should be included within the park’s administrative boundaries. In other words, what is the land that we seek to co-manage? In analogous cases of the administration of protected areas in East Africa—in the Mkomazi Game Reserve in Tanzania and the Amboseli National Park in Kenya (the latter created in 1948, the year after the SSPM NP was gazetted)—new boundaries introduced by international conservation NGOs, unrecognizable to Maasai pastoralists of Amboseli, restricted movement (Brockington 2002, 16, 33), curtailed hunting (Dowie 2009, 38), and legally excluded livestock from historical

grazing lands (Goldman 2020, 154–155; Dowie 2009, 38). As in the SSPM NP, ecomanagers in East Africa have drawn administrative maps over grazers' traditional boundaries, and thereby delegitimized ways of understanding geography that connect humans to place via long-standing relationships with cattle, discounting the possibility for what Goldman has called “knowing and being with nature otherwise” (2020, 5, 68). In doing so, ecomanagers not only have ignored pastoralists' traditional understanding of place, they have also failed to recognize pastoralists' challenge to their own exclusion based on that understanding (90, 95). As Goldman has shown and we believe our results corroborate, this failure is a critical impediment to authentic community-based resource management and a lost opportunity for co-stewardship.

We have further shown that ecomanagers' knowledge claims about the terrain in question, while presented as scientific certainties, are in fact frequently based on unknowns. For example, ecomanagers in the SSPM NP invoke data and technical concepts such as carrying capacity to justify the exclusion of grazing. However, no longitudinal studies regarding cattle impacts exist and carrying capacity studies, even if they could quantify sustainable grazing in the high meadows,⁵ were never completed. Brockington's (2002, 79) prescient *Fortress Conservation* relates an analogous case of a Tanzanian game reserve, where uncertain knowledge claims with regard to “the precision and scale of the data” leave open the possibility of “alternative” explanations other than pastoral grazing for ecological degradation, such as drought.

In the absence of the currency of real ecological data to justify their exclusionary policies, ecomanagers wield symbolic capital, as represented by the condor. The condor/cattle contest represents what Sayre, examining an analogous contest between another bird—the masked bobwhite—and cattle in an Arizona nature reserve, calls a “structural tension between competing forms of land use and capital accumulation” (2005, xlvii), in which each species “symboliz[es] a system of values that devalues the other.” Like the bobwhite, the condor's symbolic value derives from “its rarity relative to other species of wildlife; its relation to cattle grazing, both objectively and subjectively; and its identification” not “with the state of Arizona,” but with SSPM NP and the Alta/Baja California ecological continuum (Sayre 2005, xxiii). And like the managers of the Arizona reserve, ecomanagers in SSPM NP represent condors as symbolically outside of market considerations, while simultaneously characterizing land-based people making a subsistence living as a danger

to the condor's habitat. In reality, though, the real work of the condor as a symbolic species may mask ecomanagerialism's "business environmentalism" (Taylor 2016, 27), which operates within a market modality in its approach to resource acquisition even as it sells itself as a refuge from that modality. In this way, ecomanagers might be said to represent those capitalist elites of the early American conservation movement that promoted an image of nature as separate from social and economic relations in an effort to privatize desirable wild spaces (Taylor 2016). This approach to resource management is not creating effective community-based conservation partnerships at SSPM NP, perhaps because it is "a model inappropriately borrowed from the United States without contemplation of Mexico's needs" (Simonian 1995, 160). But its proximity to, and ecological status as "remnant" of, California has perhaps determined the US-style conservation approach that ecomanagers have taken, as well as facilitated the US expansion of the symbolic condor reintroduction program into Mexico.

The idea of nature as separate from society is foundational to wilderness conservation in the US (Cronon 1996; Goldman 2020; Merchant 2013; Taylor 2016). However, the question of whether SSPM NP in fact represents a baseline of California wilderness is no small matter. As Sayre (2005) says, an ecological baseline may be necessary, but it "runs the risk of implying that some 'original' static condition existed, against which all subsequent change must be evaluated. Such a reification of what was always a dynamic environment is a socially constructed myth" (xxxv–xxxviii). Sayre calls this the *sociospatial form*, or social production of nature spaces. In other words, we produce the idea of wilderness and wild spaces that we need to protect. Cronon (1996, 16) points to the proof of this social production of wilderness and "its thoroughgoing erasure of the history from which it sprang. In virtually all of its manifestations, wilderness represents a flight from history." In recognition of this erasure, grazers we spoke to wonder why they pose such a threat to the park if it has remained so well preserved despite the presence of cattle. Moreover, we might ask, if there have been grazers and cattle in the park for 200 years, is the park truly wild?

The question "is it wild" is best represented by the condor. Wild condors in the SSPM NP are used as evidence to confirm the park's status as a pristine relic, and therefore in need of preservation. This,

despite the fact that the park has apparently remained ecologically intact since well before the (re)introduction of condors in 2000. A wilderness park requires its wild species symbol. The condor provides this symbol for ecomanagers because it reinforces their self-justifying logic of conservation and management. However, ecomanagers' claim that SSPM NP is "the last stronghold of the California condor" is to some degree contestable. The condor's range has historically included northern Baja (Sumner and Dixon 1981), but this region may have represented only "members of an isolated resident population" (Wilbur and Kiff 1980, 856; see also Koford 1953, 12). Furthermore, condors may have historically extended their southern range to take advantage of cattle carcasses in the high meadows in summer (Koford 1953, 12). Most recorded condor sightings in Baja have occurred in the SSPM region, specifically in the high meadows. Neighboring regions with few or no condor sightings, such as the Sierra Juarez, "lack the high mountain meadows with *seasonally large numbers of cattle*" (Wilbur and Kiff 1980, 857, emphasis added). Thus the condors in the SSPM region both present and past have likely relied on cattle as a primary source of food. Prior to the reintroduction program in 2000, the last documented sighting in Baja is from July 1937 in La Encantada meadow of three condors "feeding *on a cow carcass*" (Wilbur and Kiff 1980, 859, emphasis added). These observations are anecdotally supported by our own field observations. In a late-spring 2017 visit to La Grulla meadow, before the cattle had arrived for the season, we observed no condors in the meadow, but numerous condors at the feeding station on the road to the park (figure 7). On a visit in 2019, after the arrival of cattle, we observed numerous condors on the wing above the meadow, but none at the station. It is reasonable to suppose that the presence of condors in the meadows, and in the SSPM region, at least in recorded history, has been connected to the presence of cattle. Therefore the claim that SSPM NP is "the last stronghold of the California condor" is contestable. What is not contestable, however, is that the condor, like the interpretation of SSPM NP itself as a remnant or relic ecosystem, represents an interpretation of wilderness that serves as a kind of "symbolic capital" (Sayre 2005, xxiii) that justifies ecomanagerial interventions. Though such capital is "socially constructed," over time it is "often taken for granted as natural."



Figure 7. Condors at a feeding station on the road to the Sierra San Pedro Mártir National Park, 2017. Photo by B. Rasmussen.

Our findings reported here represent field interviews we conducted with three dozen park managers, scientists, local grazers, and neighbors of the national park spread over a handful of visits between 2017 and 2020. While we believe we captured an accurate map of the social and ecological dynamics at play in and around the SSPM NP, we do not claim that we captured the voice of every stakeholder. Nevertheless, we hope with this article to raise awareness of the struggle facing the grazers who try to justify their economic livelihood and autonomy in a context of conservation dominated by an approach to national park management reliant less on confirmed data than on foundational myths of wildness and wildlife.

CONCLUSION

What, then, are the species of most concern? Once we have created a wilderness and restored its wild representative, how do condors, cattle, and people coexist? In the SSPM NP, conflicts over land use and

management can be viewed through the lens of a contest between two symbolic species, cattle and condors. Ecomanagers' capture of ecosystem resources for conservation is manifest in quasi-enforced grazing restrictions, park policies for ecotourism and fire management, and, perhaps most vividly, the preservation of the SSPM NP as a site for California condor (re)introduction. This approach has, in the case of the SSPM NP, pitted species conservation against the interests of local resource users, eroded historic land-tenure agreements that pre-date the gazetting of the national park, and pushed grazers from marginality into economic and social precarity. Grazers challenge ecomanagerial resource management by centering themselves as the species of most concern to argue for their own economic survival. Insofar as ecomanagers attempt community-based conservation to mitigate precarity, they do so by bringing grazers and grazing into alignment with park managerial aims. But we regard this as *exclusion by inclusion*.

Perhaps instead what we need is a more radical challenge to the ecomanagerial binary logic behind the hard distinction between wild and domestic species that has driven many of the conflicts in the region, because, as Pulido (1996, 161) suggests, "the hard work of environmentalism is not the creating of a wilderness, but the devising of new methods to achieve more ecologically and socially sustainable economic activities."

We propose to start this work by drawing on the complications in the condor's natural history itself. Farnsworth characterizes the condors that live in the mountains today as, at best, "semi-wild" (2015, n.p.). Getting "birds to behave as any other wild bird," as the researchers aim to do, requires paradoxically numerous interventions that include not only feeding stations supplied with food "vetted to make certain it did not contain bullet fragments" (Farnsworth 2015, n.p.), but also genetic manipulation: One member of the condor reintroduction project told us, "Some eggs or chicks were transferred from Boise, Idaho, so we could have a genetically healthy, diverse" population. It also includes further human interventions, such as rearing genetically selected condors with puppets, and tracking and tagging condors born in the wild. This kind of ecological conservation shows what Braverman (2015, 4) calls a "codependency between, and the co-production of, *in situ* [in places such as national parks] and *ex situ* [in zoos] conservation."

Braverman's "codependency" speaks to the larger challenge, leveled by Goldman (2020, 90, 141, 155), of artificial and ultimately counterproductive conservation practices tied to the division between

nature and culture on which wilderness- and wildlife-centered resource management is based. Conservationists often rely on the wilderness myth to bring meaning to its opposite, namely captivity, because “without the notion of captivity, wilderness...cannot exist” (Braverman 2015, 4). Rather than preserve the condor’s wildness, we might instead use the question “is it wild” to help drive inquiry into authentic community-based natural resource management that begins not with exclusion premised on scientific uncertainties, but rather with a recognition of land-based peoples’ existing and long-standing relationship to the place and its nonhuman life. Cows, say grazers, “are part of the ecosystem,” the “same as the deer.” One grazer calls them “creole cattle” because, though introduced to the region by Spanish missionaries, they have in a sense become native to the place: “The cattle were from there. You take them out, and they go back to their place.... It’s the same way with us.” How might “semi-wild” condors and “creole” cattle speak to each other in ways not currently available under a managerial regime premised on the binary logic separating wild from domestic species and conservation from land-based people? By putting condors into closer alignment with cattle, we might break down artificial distinctions between wild and domestic species in many conservation settings (Goldman 2020, 141–142). An approach that takes seriously land-based peoples’ understanding of themselves and their animals as essential to the integrity of the place might offer yet-unrecognized opportunities for more effective community-based natural resource management.

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NOTES

1. We note here that Guha's (2000, 41–43) idea of “scientific conservation” is aligned with ecomanagerialism.
2. Importantly, the park's own climatological forecast suggests that the region is undergoing long-term drying as a result of climate change.
3. “Históricamente, la sierra constituyó el último reducto del cóndor de California que habitó en la región hasta los años cuarenta del siglo pasado.”
4. For examination of the SSMP NP's practices of symbolic exclusion, see Bryan B. Rasmussen, “(Un)Making a Conservation Landscape: Repeat Photography and Environmental Narrative in Mexico's Sierra San Pedro Mártir National Park,” *Landscape Research*, forthcoming.
5. See Sayre (2017) on the shortcomings of using carrying capacity as a management tool.

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