

RUTGERS

School of Criminal Justice

Wildlife Crime Meeting

**Defenders of Wildlife, Washington, DC, June
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**Introduction to Environmental Criminology
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Criminology and wildlife crime

- ▶ Criminologists have not been interested in wildlife crime. They have been preoccupied with crime in the streets and in deprived neighborhoods.
- ▶ Most criminological theories seek to explain why some young people become criminally-inclined. These theories focus on factors in their **make-up or backgrounds**
- ▶ They neglect **offender decision making** and how **situational** variables help determine this process

Environmental Criminology: A new Approach

- ▶ **Environmental criminology** has developed new theories to explain the interaction between criminal dispositions and crime opportunities:
 - Routine activity theory
 - Crime pattern theory
 - Bounded rational choice theory
- ▶ The theories are complimentary not competitive.
- ▶ They underpin the practical approach of **situational crime prevention**, which guides much of our wildlife crime research at Rutgers.
- ▶ Situational crime prevention seeks not to reduce criminal dispositions only to **reduce opportunities for crime**. There are more than 250 evaluated applications (see: www.popcenter.org)

Situational prevention assumes that...

- ▶ Opportunity plays an important part in every form of crime – no exceptions
- ▶ People **decide** to use these opportunities to **benefit themselves** – not always financially but also for a host of other reasons – sexual pleasure, for revenge, for prestige, for dominance.
- ▶ Their decisions can be influenced by changing the **opportunity structures** – the social and physical contexts – that help frame the decisions
- ▶ Dispositions and opportunities might be equally important in causing crime but it is easier to reduce opportunities than dispositions. And the results are much more **immediate**

Analytic principles of situational prevention

- ▶ Opportunity structures must be studied by focusing on highly **specific** kinds of crime:
 - poaching is too broad
 - even tiger poaching would be too broad
 - poaching tigers from Indian tiger reserves would probably be sufficiently crime-specific.
- ▶ An analysis must be undertaken of the **modus operandi** – how the crime is committed, step-by-step – and the **facilitating conditions** at each step in the process.
- ▶ This analysis will reveal a series of **pinch-points** where prevention might be focused.

Some key concepts

- Crime concentrations (80/20 rule): hot spots, repeat victims, risky facilities, hot products
- CRAVED theft model: Hot products are: Concealable, Removable, Available, Valuable, Enjoyable, Disposable
- Crime scripts and modus operandi
- Organized crime vs. criminal entrepreneurs
- Certainty of punishment more effective than severity
- How crime is committed more important than why
- The journey to crime
- Think thief
- The problem-solving research model
- 25 techniques of reducing opportunities under 5 broad categories:
 - increase the difficulties of crime
 - increase the risks
 - reduce the rewards
 - remove provocations and temptations
 - remove excuses for crime
- Displacement and diffusion of benefits

Ways in which our studies have used situational prevention and environmental criminology

- ▶ Parrot poaching and illegal fishing studies used CRAVED
- ▶ Parrot poaching studies used script analysis and the distinction between criminal entrepreneurs and organised crime
- ▶ To identify preventive ideas most of our studies used the 25 techniques of situational prevention
- ▶ Our comparison of 28 Indian tiger reserves was guided by the risky facilities concept
- ▶ Discussions of all our findings have been informed by accumulated knowledge of displacement and diffusion of benefits

Ranger patrols

- ▶ Decades of research have shown that “random” police patrols are not effective
- ▶ Police are more effective when they focus on crime hot spots
- ▶ Rangers cannot be effective when if they simply try to arrest offenders at these hot spots
- ▶ They need to understand and change the conditions that create these hot spots
- ▶ This depends on a greatly strengthened analytic capacity and greater community outreach
- ▶ It will not be enough simply to increase the number of rangers

The Rutgers program of work

- ▶ Our wildlife work has mostly been focused on poaching, it has been unfunded and has depended on the labor of doctoral students – 4 of whom have now obtained their degrees and assistant prof positions at research universities
- ▶ Most of this work, but not all, has used available data.
- ▶ Most of it has been published or is In Press in criminology journals – We have been trying to show that wildlife crime is a viable and rewarding topic for criminologists

We need to network with biologists and conservation scientists

- ▶ “Cold calls” on experts in other fields often not productive – need to offer them something tangible
- ▶ I hope that our program of work to date can convince conservationists and biologists that we can really help in serving conservation
- ▶ An important goal of this meeting is to reach out to this constituency in the hope we might be able to partner with some of these experts
- ▶ This will help our work become more attuned to practical needs and realities and ultimately be more useful

The need for research funds

- ▶ Much has been accomplished through the labors of our grad students – but they soon depart with their degrees to other universities.
- ▶ We need money to fund post-doc fellowships in wild life crime research. Adding one fellowship per year for the next three years would be ideal
- ▶ Funds also needed for field research. Only a certain amount can be learned about problems and how to solve them from reading published reports and analyzing available data
- ▶ The usual funders of criminal justice research rarely fund studies on mostly overseas problems – especially not on topics such as wildlife crime

Thank you for coming and please keep in touch with us!

The beautiful



And the less so

