



# SEEING RED, BUT ACTING GREEN?

Experimental evidence on the impact of biodiversity conservation videos on charitable donations & affect

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## Background

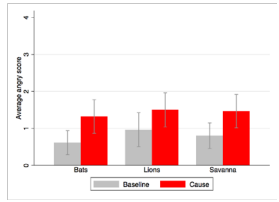
- The 6<sup>th</sup> mass extinction is real - the average rate of vertebrate species loss was 100 times the historical background rate over the past 100 years.
- Audio-visual media is a powerful tool to raise environmental awareness, financial resources, and policy support.
- Does media content impact pro-social behaviour towards nature and experienced affect? Why should we care?
  - Organizations often tell stories of charismatic flagships (e.g. lions, polar bears or pandas) because they may generate greater sympathy and support, but risk excluding 'less-loved' species from the conservation agenda.
  - Videos rarely include information on adverse human impacts on species. Can making our impacts on the natural world salient create positive behavioural change?

## Results

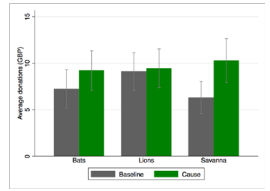
- Media content impacts affect:**
  - Cause content (with the anthropogenic source of endangerment) increases anger, interest, sadness & sympathy – i.e., media content on the human-made causes of biodiversity loss causes complex, mixed emotion states.
  - Charismatic species (Lions) elicit higher happiness, but not sympathy, compared to non-charismatic species (Bats).
- Media content impacts donations:**
  - Cause content increases the amount donated, conditional on having decided to donate - but not the probability of donating.
  - Charismatic species (Lions) increase the probability of donating conditional on having decided to donate - but not the amount donated.
  - Those who donated to charities in the past (outside the lab) donated higher amounts & were more sensitive to the Cause treatment.

## Methods & Materials

- We ran two lab experiments to measure the impact of media content on affect (Study 1) & charitable donations (Study 2).
- We constructed six videos using an ordered sequence of photos and a scripted voice-over with conservation-relevant information. Specifically, we crossed media content on the species/habitat type, and the anthropogenic cause of endangerment.
  - Each baseline video featured either a charismatic species (Lions), or a non-charismatic species (Bats), or a complex biodiversity habitat composed of the two (Savanna).
  - Each video with Cause content contained an additional photo & a line of voice-over stating the anthropogenic cause of endangerment from illegal hunting and trade (one for each species/habitat).



Study 1: Impact of Cause content on anger across species/habitats



Study 2: Impact of Cause content on donations across species/habitats

Shreedhar & Mourato (2018)

## Policy implications

- Use charismatic species to expand the donor base, but diversify the range of species & habitats in appeals.
- Make the anthropogenic cause of endangerment salient & clear. Field testing to check external validity.