

## The Ethics of Species

We are causing species to go extinct at extraordinary rates, altering existing species in unprecedented ways, and creating entirely new species. More than ever before, we require an ethic of species to guide our interactions with them. In this book, Ronald L. Sandler examines the value of species and the ethical significance of species boundaries, and discusses what these mean for species preservation in the light of global climate change, species engineering, and human enhancement. He argues that species possess several varieties of value, but they are not sacred. It is sometimes permissible to alter species, let them go extinct (even when we are a cause of the extinction), and invent new ones. Philosophically rigorous, accessible, and illustrated with examples drawn from contemporary science, this book will be of interest to students and researchers of philosophy, bioethics, environmental ethics, and conservation biology.

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Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-02346-8 - The Ethics of Species: An Introduction  
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## An Introduction

RONALD L. SANDLER  
*Northeastern University*



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[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,  
 Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press  
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107023468](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107023468)

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First published 2012

Printed and bound in the United Kingdom by the MPG Books Group

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data*

Sandler, Ronald L.

The ethics of species / Ronald L. Sandler.

p. cm. – (Cambridge applied ethics)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-02346-8 (hbk.)

1. Environmental ethics. 2. Bioethics. 3. Species. 4. Biodiversity.

5. Nature – Effect of human beings on – Moral and ethical aspects. 6. Human – animal  
 relationships – Moral and ethical aspects. 7. Conservation biology – Moral and ethical  
 aspects. 8. Mass extinctions – Moral and ethical aspects. 9. Genetic engineering – Moral  
 and ethical aspects. 10. Climatic changes – Moral and ethical aspects. I. Title.

GE42.S263 2012

179'.1–dc23

2012013413

ISBN 978-1-107-02346-8 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-65870-7 Paperback

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**To**  
**Elijah Reed Sandler**  
**and**  
**Ruth Sydney Sandler**

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## Preface

Our technology provides us with enormous and wide-ranging power with respect to species. We are causing species to go extinct at extraordinary rates, altering existing species in unprecedented ways, and creating entirely novel species. More than ever before, we require an ethic of species to guide our interactions with them and our choices regarding them. Central to an ethic of species are accounts of the value of species and the ethical significance of species boundaries. Developing these is the core theoretical project in this book. The core applied issues are what the value of species and ethical significance of species boundaries imply for species preservation under conditions of global climate change, modification of existing species (including ourselves), and engineering novel species. Species and the individuals that comprise them possess myriad varieties of value that need to be appreciated and considered in action, practice, and policy contexts. But species are not sacred. They do not have absolute or unconditional value, and they are not untouchable. It is sometimes permissible to alter them; it is sometimes permissible to let them go extinct (even when we are a cause of the extinction); and it is sometimes permissible to invent new ones. In fact, sometimes we ought to do these things, in just, caring, compassionate, and ecologically sensitive ways.

## Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Northeastern University and the Department of Philosophy and Religion for a sabbatical from teaching during the fall 2010 semester to write the first draft of the manuscript for this book. I am fortunate to be a member of such a supportive and collegial department.

All or portions of the manuscript were read by John Basl, Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, Phil Cafaro, Katie McShane, Christopher Preston, Allen Thompson, two anonymous Cambridge University Press reviewers, and students in my spring 2010 Ethics and Emerging Technologies course, fall 2011 Environmental Ethics course, and fall 2011 Inquiry Seminar. I am grateful to them all for the many constructive comments, criticism, and suggestions that I received. The book is much improved as a result of their engagement with it.

Some of the material in this book draws from research that I have done with John Basl on artifacts and Judith Crane on species. I am deeply appreciative of the contributions they have made to my understanding of those topics. I am fortunate to have collaborators who are so philosophically astute and such good fun.

Jennifer Haskell, Carol Larson, Haden Quinlan, Luke Simon, and William Sisk provided valuable research assistance on this project. I am privileged to work with such motivated and capable students.

Most of all, I thank my family. Without the love and support of my wife, Emily, this book, like all good things in my life, would not have been possible. The book is dedicated to my children, Elijah and Ruth. Their wonder and enthusiasm toward the world make every day an unpredictable adventure. I love them everywhere and all the time.