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Exploring Wild Animal Values In The U.S.

A 50-state survey explored the social perspectives on U.S. wild animal management, and found a shift towards the sentiment that wild animals deserve social and moral consideration.

The article below is alarming and figuring out where your state agency composition values are will be the determining factor in wildlife management in the future. The animal rights activist are making a silent but steady push to destroy the scientific methods currently used to control the eco system. The harvesting of animals is the most effective way for a thriving eco system. The bleeding hearts will destroy the eco system leading to more disease and the extinction of many species. The circle of life has a purpose and the circle must not be altered. The Traditionalist must become active to save our heritage of the past, present and into the future.

Sincerely,

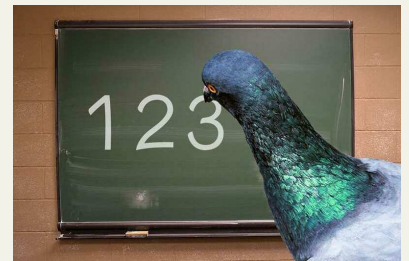
Brian Kanke,
President Zoo Pharma Dynamics, Inc.

When it comes to managing wild animals, different stakeholders may have different views on management interventions, policies, and other important approaches. As a result, conflicts may arise that affect how management decisions are made. To understand the social context of such conflicts, this survey explored U.S. residents' opinions and attitudes about wild animals and wild animal management. The authors also surveyed employees at the 50 state-based fish and wildlife agencies across the country to understand how they're responding to changes in public attitudes.

In particular, the survey investigated people's core social values toward wild animals. These values reflect different dimensions of "dominance" and "mutualism." Dominance-oriented people view wild animals as subordinate to humans, while mutualist-oriented people see them as companions deserving of rights. The authors categorized U.S. residents in all 50 states according to four main values:

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Did You Know?



■ Pigeons can do math.



■ Giraffes can hum, but only at night.



■ Cows have best friends.

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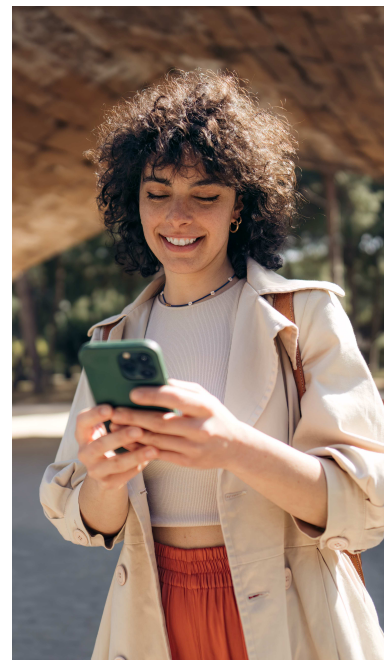
TRADITIONALISTS



MUTUALISTS



PLURALISTS



DISTANCED

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- **TRADITIONALISTS:** These people are high in dominance and low in mutualism. They believe wild animals should be managed to benefit humans. 28% of the sample fell into this category.
- **MUTUALISTS:** These people are low in dominance and high in mutualism. They feel that wild animals deserve social and moral consideration, including rights. 35% of the sample fell into this category.
- **PLURALISTS:** Pluralists are high in both dominance and mutualism, and they may endorse either approach depending on the situation. 21% of the sample fell into this category.
- **DISTANCED:** These people are low in both dominance and mutualism and give little thought to wild animals. 15% of the sample fell into this category.

The researchers investigated whether indicators of modernization (e.g., education, urbanization, and income) were related to different value orientations at the state level. They found that states with higher proportions of people with bachelor's degrees and states with higher incomes had more Mutualists and fewer Traditionalists. This suggests that as states become more modernized, attitudes toward wild animals begin to shift in their favor.

According to the authors, these shifting values are relevant for wild animal professionals. They illustrate this issue by showing how the composition of Mutualists and Traditionalists in a state is linked to state-level support for various management issues. For instance, individuals were asked about their opinions on the lethal control of predators

(e.g., wolves killing animals used for food or coyotes killing companion animals). Mutualists generally opposed lethal control while Traditionalists were more supportive of it. Importantly, the composition of value types in each state was strongly related to support for lethal control within that state. So, the researchers suggest that states' different approaches to wild animal issues can be explained by the variation in values across those states.

The project also investigated what the researchers called "wildlife-related recreation," which includes activities such as wild animal viewing, hunting, and fishing. The researchers found that hunting and fishing rates within a state were strongly related to the state's value composition. For states with a high proportion of Mutualists (about 40%), rates of hunting were very low (less than 5% of people indicated having hunted the year before). Interestingly, fish and wildlife agencies are mostly funded by selling hunting and fishing licenses, but the demand for those licenses are decreasing. To address this, 54% of respondents across all states believed that agencies should rely equally on license revenues and public taxes.

How are value orientations related to trust in fish and wildlife agencies? One previous study suggested that Mutualists view these agencies as having more traditional values and, in turn, have lower levels of trust in them. The current survey supports these findings — while trust in fish and wildlife agencies overall was higher than trust in federal and state governments, states with more Mutualists tended to have lower overall levels of agency trust. Fish and wildlife agencies have responded to this by updating their approach to become more inclusive and widen their reach. This,

however, may be creating a backlash from the Traditionalists, as trust among Traditionalists tended to decrease as more Mutualists entered their states.

When fish and wildlife agency employees were asked to share their organization's core values, they commonly indicated the values of protecting nature, serving as experts, and showing compassion towards wild animals. But, there were also some meaningful differences in the agencies' priorities. While some agencies prioritized meeting the needs of the public (named the clientele model), others valued meeting the needs of wild animals (named the expert model). The expert model agencies valued science and innovation and focused on protecting animals' habitats. The clientele model agencies, on the other hand, valued tradition and politics and focused more on recreational opportunities for humans.

Unsurprisingly, if the agency scored higher on mutualism, then their employees were more likely to see their agency as more in line with the expert model. Additionally, expert model agencies were also seen as more accountable and adaptable by their employees. However, 87% of agency employees were either Traditionalists or Pluralists.

The agency survey also showed that 91% of agency employees were white and 72% were men. Given the diverse U.S. population, the researchers argue that wild animal management organizations need to adapt by understanding racial and ethnic differences in how people

relate to wild animals. For instance, white individuals in the survey had the highest proportion of Traditionalists (33%), almost twice that of Hispanic and Asian individuals (16%-17%). Meanwhile, white respondents were also more likely than any other race to say they had fished, and more likely than any other race except for Native Americans to say they had ever hunted. This suggests that adopting less Traditionalist approaches may help agencies meet the demands of all U.S. residents.

This report indicates that values towards wild animals are dynamic and may continue to change in the future. For people who work in wild animal management, this means it's important to think about the values and cultural trends within their state when making strategic decisions, as well as how things may change in 30 years. As a takeaway for animal advocates, given that U.S. residents are increasingly adopting more Mutualist values, now is the time to push fish and wildlife agencies to move away from human-centric Traditionalist approaches and instead treat animals as equal stakeholders in management practices. ■

SUMMARY BY: ERDEM OZAN MERAL | ORIGINAL STUDY BY: MANFREDO, M.J., SULLIVAN, L., ET AL. (2018) | PUBLISHED: DECEMBER 13, 2022





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