

Abstract

Urban Wildlife and People: Opinion and Challenges of Living Together

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Abstract: Humans and wildlife have co-existed in urban environments for as long as human settlements have existed. The expanding needs of the growing human population lead to transforming urban areas at unprecedented rates. An existential conflict emerges between humans and wildlife due to overlap of lands and demand from both sides. Understanding the linkages between human and animal interactions is nowadays of critical importance. The lack of implementation of urban residents' attitudes toward urban wildlife by local governments can lead to poor integration of conservation measures. The aim of the study was to evaluate the perception of urban citizens, concerning their knowledge about the presence of wild animals in the city, conflict situations and opinions on the mitigation strategies of human-wildlife co-existence. We performed a questionnaire survey conducted in 2020 in Krakow, the second-largest city in Poland. Out of the total collected 888 surveys, the opinions of the respondents were equally divided among positive and negative approach towards residing with wildlife in the city. The most common nuisance wild animals in the city were identified by the respondents were wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), northern, white-breasted hedgehog (*Erinaceus roumanicus*) and stone marten (*Martes foina*). The problems caused by these animals included mainly destruction or damage to properties, anxiety and road collisions. Most residents (64.75%) were unaware of any institution that can help with dealing with a conflicted wild animal, although the majority (80.97%) agreed that there is a need for such information campaigns. The study provides further evidence of the benefits of perception study research and its influence on the management of such conflicts.

Keywords: urban wildlife; perception; opinion; human-wildlife conflict; human-wildlife co-existence; survey

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