

## ATTITUDE OF LATVIAN PEOPLE TOWARDS WILDLIFE

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**Abstract.** *The wildlife values orientation and attitude towards wildlife has become a hot topic nowadays in Latvia because the management of preservation and conservation of wildlife must be based on the understanding of the general public. Furthermore Latvia is considered to be one of the more densely forested countries in Europe with 50 % of its territory covered with forest.*

*This article examines the wildlife values orientation of different groups of people from six regions of the country towards wildlife. Catherine M. Hill, Amanda D. Webber, Nancy E. C. Priston studies of conflicts in society about wildlife (2017) show that these conflicts rise because of different values between different human groups. Wildlife value orientation framework used in this study is taken from early studies of Fulton, Manfredo and Lipscomb (1996), which was later developed by Teel, Dayer, Manfredo, Bright (2005).*

*According to the data of a nationwide survey conducted by the author all respondents are divided into “utilitarians”, people who consider that wildlife exists for human use and enjoyment; “mutualists”, people who consider humans and wildlife live side by side as parts of one big family, “pluralists” who share both the “utilitarian” and the “mutualist” point of view and take one or the other side in different situations and “distanced”, people who lack well - formed value orientation, indicating very little interest.*

*Respondents were categorized into four wildlife value orientation types based on their responses to 24 statements. The wildlife value orientations among different groups of people were compared according to their age, gender, education, level of income, place of living and place where their childhood was spent. The attitude of people with different wildlife values and general attitude of all people towards hunters was established.*

**Keywords:** *attitude, Latvian people, utilitarian, mutualist, wildlife.*

### Introduction

One of the basic principles of modern wildlife conservation and wildlife management is that nature deserves to be protected not only for its utility but also for the unique values of people (Mykra, Vuorisalo, & Mykra, 2015). Value orientation theory of Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck (1961) constitutes that all societies must answer a limited number of universal problems, and solutions for these problems are limited as well and universally known but different depending on the particular culture. These problems include people's relation with each other, with time, with nature and the environment. But the base

for it is taken from the values concept of Florence's husband Clyde Kluckhohn (1951) who defined value as a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection of available modes, means and ends of action (Kluckhohn, 1951). It is important that people feel their own cultural beliefs and practices as normal and natural but those of others are considered as strange. As an outcome of four questions (time, humanity and natural environment, relation to other people, motive for behaviour) Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck set up three possible orientations: mastery (people can and should have total control over the forces of nature and the super-natural) harmonious (people can and should control partially but not totally by living in a balance with the natural forces) submissive (people cannot and should not control natural forces but, rather are subject to the higher power of these forces) Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961). Despite the fact that the theory of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck of universal values which was later developed by Rokeach (1973), Hofstede (2001), Schwartz (1992) is mostly appropriate to explore different cultural groups, it is viable especially because only few societies are homogenous and the idea of total controllers, harmonious and submissive people is well rooted in the consciousness of the society. Wildlife value orientation theory was found to be functional for examining people's intercourse with wildlife. Wildlife value orientation framework is taken from early studies of Fulton, Manfredo and Lipscomb (1996) later developed by Teel, Manfredo (2010). The framework of cognitive hierarchy was taken to generalize across situations from values to beliefs, attitudes and norms, and end up with behaviours (Rokeach, 1973). Fulton, Manfredo and Lipscomb stated that wildlife value orientations are defined by the pattern of direction and intensity among a set of basic beliefs regarding wildlife as fundamental value orientations have been defined as clusters of interrelated fundamental values (Fulton, Manfredo, & Lipscomb, 1996).

Wildlife value orientations are often measured on bipolar scales such as utilitarian – protectionism and are thought of as the foundation upon which attitudes are built. In this study people were separated into four types according to their wildlife values orientation. "Utilitarian": these people are characterized by a view of human mastery over wildlife and a prioritization of human well-being over wildlife. Representatives of the Utilitarian type believe that wildlife should be managed for human benefit. "Mutualist": These people view wildlife as capable of relationships of trust with humans. They believe that humans and wildlife are meant to co-exist or live in harmony, and thus wildlife deserve rights similar to the rights of humans. "Pluralist": These people possess both value orientations mentioned above. "Distanced" people lack a well formed wildlife value orientation, indicating little interest in wildlife related issues. (Manfredo, Teel, & Bright, 2003). The different values constitute different attitudes. Attitudes

are commonly seen as evaluations of psychological objects on scales that run from positive to negative (Ajzen, 2001). Attitudes are usually resistant to change, especially if they are based on many beliefs, but a person's experience has a strong influence on his or her attitudes (Heberlein, 2012). Undoubtedly all three components of attitude as knowledge, emotions and behaviour are important. Several famous studies on people's attitude toward animals and knowledge of them were done in USA by Stephen R. Kellert (Kellert, 1984, 1990). Kellert's typology separated ten groups of people: Naturalistic (primary interest in an affection with wildlife and the outdoors), Ecologicistic (primary concern for the environment as a system, for interrelationship), Humanistic (primary interest in and strong affection for individual animals), Moralistic (primary concern for the right and wrong treatment of animals, with strong opposition to cruelty), Scientific (primary interest in the physical attributes and biological functions of animals), Aesthetic (primary interest in the artistic and symbolic characteristics), Utilitarian (primary concern for the practical and material values of animals), Dominionistic (primary satisfactions derived from mastery and control over animals), Negativistic (primary orientation towards active avoidance of animals due to dislike or fear), Neutralistic (primary orientation towards passive avoidance of animals due to indifference and lack of interest) (Kellert, 1984) and determined the groups by large scale (65) of attitude questions.

The people's attitude toward hunting is explored in different studies around the world and is influenced by long existing values as well as current social economic factors. In the developing countries wildlife generates economic, social, and ecological benefits for people and hunting is important part of family supplies (Larson, Conway, Hernandez, & Carroll, 2016). The group of scientists in India exploring people's attitude towards wildlife conservation found out that majority of people despite the low level of education supported wildlife conservation if there is no associated cost and the attitude toward forest protection staff was largely positive. (Rohini, Aravindan, Anoop Das, & Vinayan, 2017). Cost is a key word changing people's attitude towards hunting which can be considered a recreational element in Western countries and the food provider and saver from wildlife destroying crops and attacking livestock in developing countries. (Larson, Conway, Hernandez, & Carroll, 2016). Because of this there is a challenge to balance the conservation of wildlife from the one hand and needs of local residents from the other. Hunters could play an important role in this process because of their closeness to the nature and this nowadays means a lot considering that people all around the world have become more and more urban. Hence their interactions with nature is decreasing (Manfredo, Teel, & Bright, 2003) and people living in the cities interact less with wildlife and are less positive towards hunting and hunters than people from rural areas using natural resources, including wildlife. Thirty or forty years ago, most of the studies evidenced that

people supported hunting in general (Kellert, 1984). Nowadays, most of people do not support hunting if it is done only for recreation, and other motives are needed, for example, obtaining game meat (Fischer et al., 2013).

### **Empirical research**

Wildlife values orientation as well as pro or anti-hunting attitude establishment is the result of a combination of different factors like influence of family, education, role-models, experience during childhood, and influence of education and environmental organizations, which is explored in this article. Four objectives were set up for this study:

Objective 1: To discover wildlife value orientation of Latvian people.

Objective 2: To discover wildlife value orientation of hunters in Latvia.

Objective 3: To discover the attitude of Latvian people with different value orientation toward hunting and hunters.

Objective 4: To discover the attitude of hunters with different value orientation toward hunting and hunters.

Before the empirical research two hypothesis were constructed:

H1: Hunters mainly belong to the “utilitarian” type of wildlife value orientation while other people belong to the “mutualist” type.

H2: Representatives of the “utilitarian” type from both groups, hunters and non-hunters, have more positive attitude towards hunting and hunters than representatives of other types.

Taking into consideration that this research has three objectives, and to keep the survey optimally short, 26 questions were created to identify wildlife value orientation and two general questions C 1 and C 2 to measure the acceptance of hunting and attitudes towards hunters were set up.

There are five planning regions in Latvia – Riga, Kurzeme, Zemgale, Vidzeme and Latgale, but the sixth region Pierīga (the area around the capital of Latvia) was added because many people live in this area in private houses and are closer to wildlife than inhabitants of the capital. The mixed method of internet survey, telephone survey and direct interviews was introduced to gather residents’ opinions mainly the internet because 79 % of Latvian households had internet access (csb.gov.lv, 2018, a). Wildlife value orientation and attitude towards hunters were measured directly as self - reported assessments on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from very negative (1) and somewhat negative to neither/nor to somewhat positive and very positive (5). The part of questionnaire where attitude towards hunters were questioned was constructed in a way allowing to calculate the maximum of points possible totally and then compare it with the real scores for every type of wildlife value orientation – utilitarian, mutualist, pluralist and distanced. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a representative sample of

people from different age groups and refined for survey implementation. The survey was conducted from January 10<sup>th</sup> to February 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2018 and 1600 answers were recognized as valid. 202 respondents identified themselves as hunters, which exceeds the proportion of hunters/non-hunters in Latvia where there are approximately 22 000 hunters out of 1 92.9 thousand inhabitants (csb.gov.lv, 2018, b). Therefore both groups hunters and non-hunters were analysed separately. The sample represents the opinion of Latvian people proportionally from all regions mentioned above.

## Results

Respondents were separated according to four types of different wildlife value orientation. Only respondents who had scored 70 % of the maximum resulting score were included in one or the other group. Respondents who scored less were separated in the fifth group shown as ‘others’. The main type of wildlife value orientation for hunters was “utilitarian” (table 1) while the main type of wildlife value orientation for non-hunters was “mutualist” (table 2).

Table 1 **Wildlife hunting is acceptable (hunters)**

Type	Negative	Neither/nor	Positive	Total
Mutualist	0.5%	0.0%	1.0%	1.5%
Utilitarian	0.5%	0.0%	25.2%	25.7%
Pluralist	0.5%	0.0%	10.4%	10.9%
Distanced	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	1.0%
<i>Others</i>	0.5%	0.5%	59.9%	60.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>97.5%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

25.7 % of respondents hunters had “utilitarian” type of wildlife value orientation, while 60.9 % were distant from any type. 97.5 % of respondents hunters considered that wildlife hunting is acceptable.

Table 2 **Wildlife hunting is acceptable (non-hunters)**

Type	Negative	Neither/nor	Positive	Total
Mutualist	19.7%	4.1%	2.8%	26.7%
Utilitarian	0.4%	1.6%	16.0%	18.0%
Pluralist	0.1%	0.3%	2.4%	2.9%
Distanced	0.9%	0.8%	1.4%	3.0%
<i>Others</i>	4.4%	10.0%	35.1%	49.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25.5%</b>	<b>16.8%</b>	<b>57.7%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

26.7 % of respondents non-hunters had “mutualist” type of wildlife value orientation, while 49 % were distant from any type. Overall 57.7 % of non-hunters considered that wildlife hunting is acceptable, and 16 % out of total percentage of the “utilitarian” type (18%) considered that hunting is acceptable.

**Table 3 Attitude towards hunters (hunters)**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neither/nor</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Total</b>
Mutualist	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	1.5%
Utilitarian	0.5%	1.0%	24.3%	25.7%
Pluralist	0.0%	0.5%	10.4%	10.9%
Distanced	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	1.0%
<i>Others</i>	0.0%	2.5%	58.4%	60.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>94.6%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

94.6 % of respondents hunters assessed hunters positively.

**Table 4 Attitude towards hunters (non-hunters)**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neither/nor</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Total</b>
Mutualist	21.5%	3.9%	1.2%	26.7%
Utilitarian	0.3%	4.1%	13.6%	18.0%
Pluralist	0.0%	0.6%	2.2%	2.9%
Distanced	0.6%	1.8%	0.6%	3.0%
<i>Others</i>	7.9%	19.0%	22.7%	49.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.3%</b>	<b>29.4%</b>	<b>40.3%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

40.3 % of respondents non-hunters assessed hunters positively. Around 30 % assessed them negative and the same amount answered neutrally.

**Table 5 Ratio between assertion "Wildlife hunting is acceptable" (C1) and attitude towards hunters (C2) (hunters)**

<b>C1 / C2</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neither/nor</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Negative</b>	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	100.0%
<b>Neither/nor</b>	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
<b>Positive</b>	0.5%	3.6%	95.9%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>94.6%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

95.9 % of respondents hunters having a positive attitude towards hunting had a positive attitude towards hunters.

**Table 6 Ratio between assertion "Wildlife hunting is acceptable" (C1) and attitude towards hunters (C2) (non-hunters)**

<b>C1 / C2</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neither/nor</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Negative</b>	84.9%	12.9%	2.2%	100.0%
<b>Neither/nor</b>	29.8%	60.4%	9.8%	100.0%
<b>Positive</b>	6.2%	27.7%	66.1%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.3%</b>	<b>29.4%</b>	<b>40.3%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

From respondents non-hunters, who positively assessed hunting, only 66.1 % positively assessed hunters and from respondents non-hunters who positively assessed hunting 27.7 % had an indifferent attitude. From respondents non-hunters with an indifferent attitude towards hunting 60.4 % had an indifferent attitude towards hunters but 29.8 % had a negative attitude.

### **Conclusions**

People’s attitudes are based on a few, stable values that they have. Wildlife value orientation provides meaning to people’s core values, and can be linked to specific attitudes towards hunting and hunters. Some see wildlife as a symbol of wilderness, some see wildlife as a vital part of their existence, and some consider wildlife as a place for recreation, a source of joy or income.

Latvia is a highly interesting place for such a research and although more than half of its population lives in cities, most of urban people still are rooted in the rural areas and hunting is a tradition, something that allows them to be closer to nature. Furthermore Latvia is a country interested in the development of wildlife conservation, eco – tourism, ecological land use and livestock production.

Living in the city means less contact with nature and less use of natural resources which leads to less utilitarian thinking of wildlife. As can be seen from the results the wildlife value orientation of Latvian people and hunters are different. Hunters had a more positive attitude towards hunters than non-hunters. Both groups generally consider that hunting is acceptable. The attitude towards hunting of non-hunters is more positive than the attitude towards hunters.

The understanding of public wildlife value orientation and attitudes towards hunters is important for coexistence with wildlife, for wildlife management and conservation. Acceptance and integration of hunting and hunters in the society is vitally necessary for both sides, hunters and non-hunters, in order to enjoy outdoor recreation and wildlife conservation.

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