
Human-animal conflicts and social dimension

Wild fauna conservation and increasing outdoor recreational activities: how to coexist?

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Outdoor recreational activities have expanded significantly in recent decades due to four key factors: (i) diversification of activities, (ii) greater accessibility through technical advancements, (iii) proliferation of routes enabled by GPS tracking and social networks, and (iv) a growing urban population seeking connection with nature. While these activities bring notable social and economic benefits, they also increase human disturbance affecting wild fauna. Research highlights the impacts on sensitive species including behavioural changes (e.g. fight or flight response), physiological stress, and reduced fitness and reproduction success. In Europe, most studies have focused on winter disturbance in high-altitude areas (e.g. skiing, snowshoeing), leaving gaps in knowledge about other activities and contexts, such as plains, wetlands or low-altitude forests. To mitigate such impacts, “tranquillity areas” have been established across Europe, supported by regulatory or voluntary initiatives. These areas rely on awareness campaigns to educate outdoor enthusiasts about minimizing wildlife disturbance. However, their effectiveness remains poorly evaluated, with limited studies on their acceptability and success, especially outside winter context (e.g. Phasianidae species).

Within the LIFE20 IPE/FR/0019 program, an innovative method was developed to assess tranquillity areas in the Grand Est region of France that presents varied ecological contexts and outdoor recreational activities. This approach includes: (i) surveys to gauge acceptance among recreational users and tourism professionals, and (ii) the dashboard providing a standardized monitoring tool adaptable to various ecosystems and activities. Preliminary data are being collected and this presentation will address: (a) current knowledge about human-wildlife interactions, (b) the tranquillity area concept in Europe, and (c) initial insights from the proposed assessment method.