

Tolerance for Predatory Wildlife

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Can individual tolerance toward predators affect the success of predator conservation?

Comments

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Predators and Tourism Increase Intolerance? A. Treves and J. Bruskotter Perspective in Ecology "Tolerance for Predatory Wildlife" (2 May, 344: 476) suggest that intolerance for predators do not fit into the conventional view of perceived threats for livelihoods but instead by complex social factors. Although the above perspective focuses in jaguars, wolves, lions and bears, the same reasoning is perfectly applied to other economical contexts and different human-wildlife interactions. Nature tourism is a growing industry attracting a significant number of people to exotic places to see wildlife and, of course, many predators are on the main "menu". However, close proximity to predators in a continuous way may increase attacks as shown for jaguars by (1). With more people vacationing to remote places with the purpose to see predators in the wild, more accidents will occur and these can be caused either by sheer opportunistic predators (2), a possible type of Pavlovian conditioning of predators used to forage on human corpses (3) and the association made by predators between food stimuli and humans (4). Acceptance of predators in close vicinity to humans, either suburban, farms, natural parks or even enclosed fenced structures, do depend from several social factors. The possibility of serious or lethal accidents will influence that acceptance since even some unsuspected species may kill (5). The problem here is also a dual perception of the risks involved: a) people that do live in close proximity with potential dangerous predators will feel some kind of impulse to defend their lives and b) people that just visit places to see predators could cause, involuntarily/indirectly, more close encounters with locals and increase accidents while decreasing tolerance levels. Culling should indeed be a last resource option but, primarily, avoiding the causes that do lead to accidents should be the priority. Unfortunately, many killings of predators result precisely from the absence of sound and appropriate measures to significantly decrease the level of human-wildlife conflicts.

References 1.M.F.C. Neto et al., Wild. Environ. Med. 22(2), 130 (2011).

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Submitted on Wed, 09/17/2014 - 21:11

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