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Freizeitaktivitäten im Lebensraum der Alpentiere. Konfliktbereiche zwischen Mensch und Tier

(Title translated into English: Leisure activities in Alpine habitats.

Conflicts between man and wildlife)

Edited by: Paul Ingold

Publisher: Haupt Verlag, Berne, Switzerland, 516 pp. (In German)

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In many countries, the growing popularity of outdoor activities increases the potential for conflicts between the interests of recreationists and the needs of wildlife. Hikers, bikers, hang gliders, skiers, snowboarders, hunters, berry-pickers, photographers, just to name the more common activities, frequent scenic and 'natural' landscapes. Regionally, recreationists have become one of the top concerns in wildlife conservation. The Alps are the major central European recreational playground. Tourism has replaced agriculture and forestry as the dominating sector of local economies. Millions of visitors frequent the Alps and their wildlife habitats every year. Tourism and outdoor activities are increasingly seen as serious threats to local wildlife populations. The effects range from short-term behavioural responses to encounters with humans, such as escape flights, to longer-term effects at the population level. Areas frequented by humans may be lost as habitats even if the habitat structure remains unchanged.

Many conservation practitioners find negative effects of human leisure activities on wildlife 'obvious'. Unluckily, for many species these effects are hard to demonstrate in a scientifically rigorous way. Individual response and population-level effects may vary with a great number of inter-related variables, such as the number, sex and age of the animals, the proximity, type, intensity, cumulative number of human activities, and the temporal and spatial availability and distribution of food and cover.

In most cases, controls are not available, experiments not acceptable, and the problem is urgent. As a conservation biologist in the Alps, I receive several requests a year to assess the effects of a case of 'disturbance' on wildlife. Typical contexts are plans for new forest roads or ski-lifts. I can explain potential effects in general terms, consider the size and distribution of affected versus undisturbed habitats, argue for precaution. But well documented case studies are a stronger argument than plausibility.

Therefore, the book edited by Paul Ingold fills an important gap, and provides valuable guidance to conservationists, land use managers, and also scientists involved in disturbance studies. The book is structured in four parts. Part I is setting the stage by pointing out that man has been shaping Alpine landscapes and wildlife habitats for hundreds and thousands of years, and introduces the

Alps as a refuge for wildlife and a cultural landscape alike. Part II presents the new forms of human land use in the Alps: leisure, sport, and tourism, that have become major economic factors. Here, the reader will find valuable information on the latest trends of most outdoor activities in the Alps. Part III provides insight into the theoretical foundations of 'disturbance ecology', summarises research results on wildlife disturbance, and describes potential effects of the various leisure activities. In part IV, finally, general recommendations are provided on how to tackle disturbance problems. Specific measures are listed for the various outdoor activities, illustrated by numerous case study summaries. An appendix with an extensive bibliography adds to the usefulness of the book.

The book is the first extensive summary of this important topic, and readers will welcome the efforts of Paul Ingold and the many contributors, who are all conservationists experienced in the problems of studying and solving man-wildlife conflicts. Despite the focus on the Alps, and Switzerland, much of the book applies to other geographic areas as well. One important point, however, is neglected by the book: the role of hunting in human disturbance of wildlife. Hunting may make habituation to the most harmless and well behaved hikers impossible, and hunted and unhunted populations of wildlife may respond totally differently to encounters with humans. For full understanding of the problem, a solid chapter on the effects of hunting on wildlife behaviour would have been vital.

Nevertheless, the book is a valuable and timely summary of the topic. Despite the wealth of information the book offers, it also reveals that disturbance of wildlife remains a topic difficult to study in a scientifically rigorous way.

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