

Wildlife Managers: Boundary Workers between the Human Community and the Wilderness

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This research focuses on wildlife managers, such as game wardens and land management supervisors, who as government agents, manage the boundary between humans and the wilderness while at the same time holding a personal stake in controlling wilderness areas in the United States. Looking through the eyes of these managers, the paper examines their childhood socialization and education to the belief that as wilderness stewards they should govern from a perspective that maximizes their own personal enjoyment of the wilderness, including the tradition of hunting. Other hunters and animal-rights advocates contest methods of control exercised by wildlife managers. This paper examines wildlife managers' solidarity amid conflict, their motivations for choosing their work and the important role they play in the central struggle over the interpretation of wilderness and life-and-death environmental issues, such as the regulation of animal population levels. It demonstrates how their solidarity as a work group mitigates the conflicts they face at the price of narrowing their perspective on non-human animals.

I became interested in studying the work of wildlife managers after I relocated to northwestern Pennsylvania from Lake Bluff, Illinois. Lake Bluff is a rapidly growing suburb of Chicago where there is no hunting because there is insufficient undeveloped land and wildlife to make it feasible. In Lake Bluff, I belonged to an activist group, "Open Lands," that attempted to slow down habitat depletion. Through negotiation with land developers, the group worked to save small pieces of forest or wetland, where birds, ducks, a few deer and some pheasants could live. While this organization continues to lose land to developers, it has created a number of refuges.

Bradford, Pennsylvania is different. It is rural, and its population is shrinking. There are heavily forested areas where wild animals live, and hunting is a major recreation as well as economic force. I was curious about the types of laws and methods of conservation management that were in place

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in northwestern Pennsylvania. Therefore, in 1996, I attended a seminar on deer management conducted by the Pennsylvania Game Commission and hosted by the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford. The seminar audience was comprised of local citizens as well as students, many of whom were hunters. To my surprise, interactions during the question-and-answer period were filled with heated controversy over beliefs, values, and methods of conservation. I wanted to understand, from their own perspective, more about the experiences and interactions of the men and women whose work it was to conserve wilderness. Why was there so much conflict? What were the problems that concerned them? Why did they choose this occupation? How were they educated? What did they do on the job? How did they interact with the animals? I wanted to share the information I would collect with city dwellers, who might enjoy nature programs, go on bird walks and visit national parks, but who did not experience wilderness as a central part of their environment.

There are many reasons we all have a stake in the wilderness. First, the existence of wilderness proves that humans have not exhausted all natural resources. The quality of animal life in wilderness areas is a measure of our success at maintaining the natural balance in spite of the changes we have wrought. Wild animals, in that sense, function for our society as indicators of well-being, like canaries formerly kept in coal mines. Second, there are ethical reasons. Wilderness is contiguous to human society. Many believe that we should no more turn away from human cruelty to animals in the wilderness than we should from the atrocities of the Holocaust. Cruelty is a pattern of behavior that, if left unchecked in society, must eventually reach each and all of us. Even urban apartment dwellers need to be aware of what their children are taught about wildlife because future generations may live in closer contact with wildlife or lose this opportunity entirely.

METHOD

I began research on this topic in 1998 by taping the educational presentations of five land management officers at a northwestern Pennsylvania deer seminar. I also taped the question-and-answer session that followed. I remained after the program and chatted with each officer about the conflicts that had surfaced during the seminar. All reacted to the angry dialogues saying that they were “used to them” because, as one officer put it, “hunters are ignorant about scientific land management procedures.” A recently retired state game warden attending the program overheard my conversations and gave me the names of two land management supervisors and three game wardens from other counties in Pennsylvania to contact. He also invited me to accompany him to a local forested area where he said he would be willing to illustrate and share

his beliefs about and experiences with managing local wilderness areas. I took him up on his offer.

Between 1999 and 2001, I attended three additional deer management seminars where I met four officers who were newly hired. I questioned them on the education they had received and the programs they had attended. I also enlisted the aid of students. Jennifer Wallace and Ben Grice assisted with interviewing, shared personal experiences and contributed valuable insight into the world of Pennsylvania wildlife managers. I accompanied two students on hunting expeditions. One student invited me to his home to meet his mother, a retired game warden, who operates a horse farm. In addition, I spent time observing at a local inn during four hunting seasons. Sometimes I was included in hunters' conversations and got to listen to their concerns about loss of habitat and stock, which they blamed on poor game management practices. I reviewed literature on conservation issues given to me by the various respondents or circulated by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. I also read articles written about or by game wardens and conservation officers in areas across the country, such as Florida, Maine, Mississippi, Massachusetts and Montana, to broaden my understanding of the attitudes and values of wildlife managers. I conducted in-depth interviews with a total of 15 wildlife managers and 8 hunters. I had casual conversations with approximately 10 other wildlife officials and 30 other hunters. I recorded the interviews, transcribed and coded them, and took notes following casual conversations. Eventually concepts emerged from this grounded inductive research.

Finally, in January 2001, I was contacted by a corrections officer who had become an undergraduate in the College of Natural Resources at the University of Minnesota, pursuing a new career in wildlife conservation. We began correspondence that gave me additional insight into the narratives of the professionals involved with managing wilderness.

As I studied my data, I found theories related to community and social solidarity particularly helpful for understanding the work of wildlife managers. Durkheim (1964) argues that the collective consciousness of a society is comprised of a body of shared beliefs that give members a sense of belonging and a feeling of moral obligation to the society's demands and values. Wildlife managers' participation in common activities based in dominant institutions, government and hunting, give them social solidarity. Their goals, values and beliefs emanate from these institutions. But wildlife managers are part of a larger community of humans whose boundary between wildlife and wilderness they manage.

DEFINING WILDERNESS/WILDLIFE AND THE WORK OF WILDLIFE MANAGERS

Wilderness

Defining the term *wilderness* is difficult because virgin territory does not exist and “wilderness” is thus an ideal left to the imagination. For this discussion, I define *wilderness* as “an area essentially undisturbed by human activity together with its naturally developed life community” (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* 1977:1341) or some semblance thereof – since these life communities have been altered by humans. Wildlife managers manage wilderness areas. Wilderness areas are “large tracts of public land maintained essentially in a natural state and protected against introduction of intrusive artifacts (e.g. roads and buildings)” (1341). Wilderness is distinguishable from “nature” in that all life is a part of nature.

Maintenance presupposes our ability to control nature. Thus, ironically, Cronon describes wilderness as “the place where, symbolically at least, we [humans] try to withhold our power to dominate” (1995:87). Yet the government argues it needs to control and police wilderness areas to protect them. Although there may actually be some withholding of human domination, Nibert (2002), Helford (2000), Kahn (1999), Clow (1995), Harpley and Milne (1995), Starkloff (1995), and Schnaiberg and Gould (1994), among others, decry the human domination of wilderness and wildlife. As Bell argues, “For all its moral attractions as a realm free of politics, wilderness is nevertheless deeply political” (1998:232). Only specific people get to define which land is to be developed, which is not, which animals are killed and in what numbers, and so on.

Wildlife

Wildlife is defined as living things that are neither human nor domesticated, especially mammals, birds and fish hunted by man (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1977:1341). Because they are considered “things,” wild, non-human species are held on a level with minerals as constituents of the land existing to serve the needs of humans as sources of aesthetic enjoyment, sport and food. Because contemporary U.S. culture does not consider wild non-human animals equal to humans, it has traditionally excluded them from its communities. Animal-rights advocates, such as Masson and McCarthy, find that “humans often behave as if something like us were more worthy of respect than something not like us” (1995:86). They argue that animals are subjects who feel pain, love and anger, and are violated by being treated as objects.

Wildlife Managers

In view of these conflicting beliefs, who has say over the wilderness? “Who has say” is a question of rights that emerges from concepts of community. In the view of Tönnies (1988), a community has solidarity through tradition and sentiment on one hand and impersonal contracts on the other. Law represents a general type of social contract that exists within communities. Wild animals are not regarded as part of our community, yet we regulate them. The relationship is largely one-way. Non-human animals do establish patterns in how they obtain food and shelter that collectively function much like the traditions of a human community. Theoretical biologists have modeled these patterns in terms of territories and economies (Stamps, 1994). Human animals believe that they own the animal territory and often convert it for their own use. Because, in the long run, human interests have prevailed over those of non-human animals to such an extent as to endanger the human quality of life through an imbalance of nature, humans have begun to include non-human animals in their community’s periphery by giving them limited rights recognized by human courts. They have appointed wildlife managers, i.e. game wardens and, more recently, conservation or land management experts, as enforcers to regulate both humans who encroach on animal territories and the animals who live in them

Game wardens mostly serve as police or law enforcement agents. They guard against violations in hunting such as killing more than the allowed quota, hunting without a license, hunting out of season, or using improper weapons. Literature written by or about game wardens focuses mainly on the excitement, adventure and danger they face when stalking other humans, i.e. poachers in the wilderness (Curtis, 1998; Graham Jr., 1987; Palmer and Bryant, 1985; Parker, 1983). Palmer and Bryant conclude that game wardens are “strikingly similar in attitudes, demeanor and dramaturgical skills to city police officers” because both consider their work to be professional and dangerous (1985:133). Law enforcement degrees are generally required.

State and federal agencies also hire conservation officers. This position generally requires a degree in ecology as well as law enforcement. The job of conservation officer varies with the type of area patrolled and the needs of that area as well as the specialization and education of the officer. These agents patrol wildlife areas to prevent “game” law violations, investigate reports of damage to property—including damage to crops by wildlife—and compile biological data. They report the condition of fish and wildlife in their habitat, the availability of food and cover and the suspected pollution of waterways. Agents recommend changes in hunting and trapping seasons and the relocation of animals out of overpopulated areas to obtain balance of wildlife and habitat. They also implement approved control measures, such as trapping

beavers, dynamiting beaver dams and tranquilizing and relocating deer, bear, cougar and other non-human animals. They survey area populations and record hunters' total "bag" counts to determine the effectiveness of their control measures.

Both game wardens and conservation officers enlist the aid of sporting groups in such programs as lake and stream rehabilitation and game habitat improvement. They assist in promoting hunter safety training by arranging for material and instructors. They give talks to civic groups, school assemblies and sports organizations to disseminate information about wildlife and department policies (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1991).

CHILDHOOD SOCIALIZATION OF WILDLIFE MANAGERS

My interviews, consistent with the biographies of officers from other areas of the country, find that wildlife managers are men and women who generally come from geographical and cultural backgrounds that are rural and involve a tradition of hunting and fishing. Their work augments and enlarges the hunting experiences already a part of their lives. For example, Bob, an undergraduate from Minnesota studying fish and wildlife, commented that city people without a hunting background do not like to work in rugged outdoor conditions:

I hunt and fish. I like the food. It is how I was brought up on the farm. My father is an avid hunter.... I attribute my ethics to him. Most of the law enforcement graduates that come out of the Metro area will not work in rural areas for long. A young man at work used to be a c.o. [conservation officer] on Mille Lacs Lake. He quit after a year because he said he didn't like being on the lake all the time, being wet and cold, and smelling like fish. He grew up in the city. He quit to move back.

Dave, a warden who grew up in Jackson, Mississippi, said his parents taught him to hunt and fish when he was quite small. As a boy, he "sold bullfrogs to local restaurants for pocket money." Later on he learned decoy carving, bird calling and taxidermy (Reed, 1991:88). Tim, a land management officer in northwestern Pennsylvania, also went hunting and fishing at a young age. He said he accompanied his father and brothers to their camp each hunting season. "When I was little dad took me up there to teach me about hunting. When I was older, we met all the guys, drank beer and told last year's hunting stories." And Rod, a game warden in Florida's Kissimmee Prairie, where hunting is not allowed, still has a deep knowledge of the prairie and its

“wild things’ that can be traced to a boyhood spent hunting [and] trapping...” (Graham, Jr., 1987:107).

Female officers also come from rural areas and have hunted game. Reflecting traditional hunting society standards in the U.S., usually their mothers did not hunt, and, in most cases, they had to persuade their fathers or brothers to take them along. Maine’s first female game warden said her “father taught her to shoot and occasionally took her hunting with him” (Graham, Jr., 1989:18). Sue, one of the first female game wardens in Pennsylvania, also stressed the importance of hunting in her youth, “obviously for food, but also as a recreational activity.” And, although her mother did not take an active part in the kill, she too accompanied the family on the hunt.

MOTIVATIONS AND VALUES

Preserving the Quality of Life for Humans

Wanting to improve the quality of life for both humans and animals is what those I interviewed and read about say motivated them to become wildlife managers. What in their minds constitutes “quality” and “improvement” depends on their system of values. Kempton (1999) groups environmental values into three broad categories: 1) religious, 2) anthropocentric, and 3) biocentric. Religious bases contain specific religious teachings, including a God-given right to kill or the attribution of a spiritual force to nature. Anthropocentric values include preserving the environment for descendants, the utility of wilderness and the beauty of wilderness. Biocentric values range from a vague feeling of oneness between humanity and wilderness to the idea that wilderness has rights and deserves justice. However, even informants with militant biocentric views also argue using anthropocentric utilitarian language. There are different foci but no sharp dividing lines between the categories. Most wildlife managers in my study have strong anthropocentric values based on tradition and the preservation of wilderness areas for their descendants. More specifically, the anthropocentric value of preserving the wilderness for descendants unifies the wildlife management community and links their interests with groups as diverse as hunters and animal-rights activists.

According to my respondents, the preservation of the wilderness for hunting activities is a way of improving the lives of humans. Hunting experiences in the wilderness are said to bring family members closer together and provide lasting memories. Larry, a Pennsylvania land management officer, said:

I took up this work to save my children’s heritage. I have always hunted with family. It’s tradition. It’s our children’s heritage.

The country was settled this way. This is Appalachia after all! It's part of our history. It is a wonderful experience we must continue to share with our children.

Field and Stream journalist Sam Curtis agrees that most wildlife managers would not trade their job for any other line of work because their work contributes to the preservation of tradition and “the joy that comes from helping a kid get his first deer, the satisfaction that comes from protecting natural resources for their kids and grandkids” (1998:56).

Mary, a commissioner for a Pennsylvania state game agency, also feels hunting with family and friends is an asset to human life:

There is more than just the killing part to the hunting experience. It is challenging because you are putting yourself up against ‘Mother Nature.’ But the whole [hunting] experience is being outside and bonding with family and friends. This type of bonding experience is unique and cannot be easily replicated by interactions in other types of activities.

Asked why she didn't just go for a walk if being outside with family and friends is the primary experience, Mary explained:

It is not the same as being on a walk. It is very hard to compare to anything else. I find that when we are hunting or trapping, we are more observant of wildlife signs. Hunting involves much more preparation and cooperation. Reliving the experience afterward with family and friends is an entire spiritual experience.

This shared appreciation serves to unify the community of wildlife managers despite differences in duties or locale.

Preserving the Quality of Life for Wildlife

Another important aspect of the jobs and shared motivation for choosing this type of work, according to wildlife managers, is to improve the lives of wild animals. Managers say that humans have the right and moral obligation to control the wilderness, so they work to preserve certain species by helping to improve their habitat and to control what they argue to be overpopulation. They argue that whenever the population of prey animals, such as deer, gets too large, the animals starve to death. Formerly predators regulated numbers, but since humans have eradicated many predatory species, wildlife managers

believe that humans must now take the place of the disappearing predators in order to maintain wildlife habitat.

Wildlife managers thus connect preservation with hunting. Though laypersons might expect the duties of wildlife preservation to conflict with hunting, wildlife managers make plain the vital link between the two and, thereby, further solidify their community identity. Roy, a veteran Pennsylvania conservation officer, explained:

We are not against deer. We love 'em. We do care about these animals. We want to balance the population. There are no predators left. We are the predators now. Hunters are needed to replace the predator. Whitetail deer and beaver compete for food, so do snowshoe hare. People get real emotional when they see deer starved to death. We check road kills. We open her up and check the insides. I have been doing this for 21 years and never saw triplets, or even one-year-olds having babies. The deer population is not getting enough to eat. We are trying to help. There is not an effective means of birth control. If you put [birth control] drugs in deer and they die and other animals eat them they will absorb these drugs.

His confidence in using “we” to represent all wildlife managers is plain here. Sue agreed that hunting enhances life for wild animals, sharing Roy’s perspective precisely:

Hunting has an extreme impact on population and habitat. Deer destroy raspberries, blackberries, wildflowers and other plants that are essential to the deer and other wildlife. Because the deer can reach six feet up to trees and other vegetation, the land becomes over-browsed, leaving nothing for the other animals. Deer also impact themselves and other species. Hunting is the only way to manage the deer herd.

When asked what would happen if hunting were not allowed, Mary argued:

Well, you can let Mother Nature run its course, but then you’ll have a mass die-off or big peaks and low peaks characterizing the deer population. Hunting allows the deer population to be more of a straight line. It is to the benefit of some wildlife that

we hunt. Wildlife is a renewable resource that will continue to exist if we hunt responsibly.

Many outside the field of wildlife management disagree with this rationale, arguing that hunting is ineffective. They assert that hunting hinders conservation or that there is not really an overpopulation problem. In addition, because there are also other stakeholders, such as logging, oil and tourism industries that vie for control of wilderness areas and drive out wildlife, there is great concern from many citizens that wildlife is not a renewable resource (Bell, 1998). What to do about this causes conflict for newer wildlife managers who are uncertain over how to take all these interests into account. Bob said:

I have grappled with the whole environmental crisis for quite a few years now. How do I do my part? There is a newly emerging field in Field and Wildlife called "Human Dimensions of Natural Resources." Basically it takes a holistic view of the issue and asks stakeholders' views and tries to include them in the planning process. It is a melding of social and resource issues. I didn't realize it was such a big deal until we started to discuss values. Boy, is there a difference in views!

Law and order, in the eyes of wildlife managers, is the solution to differing opinions. For experienced respondents, the area of conflict was how to keep hunters happy so they would continue to hunt, bringing in revenue to secure the jobs of wildlife managers, while at the same time getting the hunters to follow the rules and laws made by these management officials.

"Fair" laws, Dave argued, will better animals' lives. "If hunting and fishing are done in the spirit of fair chase and within the confines of the laws, wildlife will be enhanced" (Reed, 1991:87). Jim, a warden who works for Montana's Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, also believes more hunters need to follow the laws. "I don't think there was anywhere near the waste or the abuse of the resource that there is today...poachers are attacking our trophy gene pool" (Curtis 1998:54-56).

THE WORK OF MANAGERS

Negotiating With Hunters

Much of the work of wildlife managers involves negotiating conflict. Many recent conflicts between hunters and wildlife managers in the Pennsylvania area, center on harvesting female deer. Hunters say doe should not be killed because they are the breeders and preserve the species. Researchers who write

about wildlife management, such as Dizard (1994) and Wright (1992), discuss such conflicting views between hunters, conservationists and protection agents. Some suggest hunters may have an additional motive for resisting the directive to shoot doe. Arluke and Sanders (1996), Baker (1993) and others say hunters want wild animals as trophies to display on their walls to symbolize human domination over nature. Antlerless doe do not provide trophy antlers. Wildlife managers know this. During a seminar, Tom, an experienced Pennsylvania game warden, asserted:

I wish I could promise you all [hunters] you'd get deer like these [shows slides of large antlered buck], but we have an over-browsed deer range. Hunters are partly to blame because they won't harvest doe is the problem. Older guys won't kill if they see only three deer all day. They are afraid they will use up the deer population. And young kids don't want to sit on a stump all day waiting for a large buck. They want a fast kill...like in computer games.

Conflicts between hunters and wildlife managers also exist over methods of land management such as fencing and burning, which are blamed by hunters for the migration and loss of deer population. Hunters consider the number of allowable days for hunting too few to accommodate the hunting community. In fact, the Pennsylvania Game Commission recently announced that it is changing the traditional deer season to better accommodate all hunters, especially young ones. According to Dave Drakula, a Pennsylvania sports journalist,

The commissioners approved a series of proposals that recognize changes in today's hunting society. Foremost is establishing Saturdays as opening days for an early three-day muzzleloader antler-less hunt in October and the regular, statewide antler-less season in December. This change in opening day will enable many sportsmen and sportswomen to have more time to hunt and lessen the days taken off of work. For the younger hunters, this extra day will enable them to hunt with a parent or guardian (2000:15).

Despite these negotiations and the fact that women's participation in hunting is increasing (the number of women hunters rose from 1.75 million in 1989 to just over 2 million by 1997), fewer people overall are hunting (McCombie, 1999). In my visits to local motels where hunters congregated, they

complained that there were “just not enough buck left for an enjoyable hunt” and “they did not want to kill doe.”

Conflict may also exist within the wildlife management community over what policy is best. While those I interviewed and read about share a confidence in upholding hunting laws, practices can differ from theory. Matthew, a Pennsylvania game warden, for example, expressed sympathy for a law-breaking hunter: “I had this one individual who I arrested many times for poaching deer. He just couldn’t help himself while hunting. He was obsessive, compulsive. Kind of hooked on game.”

Interacting with Hunted Animals

Arluke and Sanders argue that “although animals have a physical being, once in contact with humans, they are given a cultural identity as people try to make sense of them, understand them, use them, or communicate with them. They are brought into civilization, and transformed accordingly and their meaning is socially constructed” (1996:9). Wilderness managers do construct meanings for the wild animals they control: they define these animals as resources (game) for humans to use as food or recreation.

Thus, Art, a newly hired conservation officer, has constructed a belief system:

Animals do not have rights. Rights are man-made sets of rules. Animals do not have that man-made set of rules, but that does not mean that an animal should suffer. Killing an animal should be done quickly and effectively for the fastest kill possible. They don’t have rights, but they are entitled to humane treatment.

Art may or may not share this perspective with other wildlife managers; however, potential differences in belief systems about animals do not threaten the cohesiveness of the community as long as they continue to share values related to hunting and law enforcement.

I observed that wildlife management officers rated animals according to the kind and level of enjoyment hunters got from killing them. Large antlered buck are trophy quality and greatly valued. Short-lived abundant species such as doves do not have much value, except as recreation (target practice). All of the descriptive phrases and labels (for example, “game totals,” “calculated harvest” and “huge allocation”) used by the Pennsylvania Game Commission in a 1997 bulletin about how to manage deer might be used to describe edible crops. Mark, a Pennsylvania conservation officer, rationalized killing doves by labeling them “short lived and easily replaceable,” and, therefore of lesser value:

In the case of doves, hunting is not used to manage the species, but it does not impact on the species and it provides recreation. The large majority of the dove population dies each year. Whether they are hunted or not, they will be removed from the population anyway.

Similarly, despite the fact that Rod works in a sanctuary where hunting is prohibited, he used trivializing language to describe animals while reaffirming the role of law in protecting even these degraded life forms:

If you kill a little something to eat once in a while that's not so bad, but don't start wasting nothing, and don't start killing other stuff and telling people about it because if you do I'm going to have to come and put you under arrest. That sort of makes it bad, because like these sand hill cranes here, that's a federal matter (Graham Jr., 1987:112).

Interacting with the Public

Experienced wildlife managers hold seminars to educate the public. As previously discussed, the deer management seminars I attended were confrontational and full of conflict. Other seminar topics include gun safety and the needs of wildlife. The managers who present these latter topics say their experiences have been less problematic. Frank, a Pennsylvania land management officer, enjoys teaching: "With my job now, I really enjoy educating kids about wildlife. It is nice to speak to people about wildlife and give them an accurate picture of how animals in their environment interact." Marty, a Pennsylvania officer who considers himself a specialist in wildlife classes, talks about "the importance of introducing children to lessons from Leopold, the father of wild life management...a man who loved and respected nature and wildlife." Leopold (1968), an avid hunter, speaks about wilderness animals as objects.

I observed no animal-rights advocates at deer management seminars. But at every seminar I attended, I brought up the topic of animal rights and the need to find ways to manage wilderness without hunting. More recently, I mentioned a surgical sterilization program being used on Illinois doe as a possible "answer to overpopulation problems" (Pearsall, 2002:16). Wildlife managers responded to my comments with remarks including: "Oh, one of those! A tree-hugger! We knew there would be one here <laughing>." Others said, "I love animals too" and "our methods are the only ones that work." I did meet an animal-rights activist at a community environmental seminar at which a state forester spoke. Wildlife managers told me that they did not have much

interaction with proponents of animal rights. I suggested to Bob that perhaps there are better ways to introduce children to wildlife than through Leopold. Bob acknowledged that teaching people about wildlife is complicated:

A professor here is on an international committee of scientists to decide if fish have feelings, i.e. can they feel pain? It would seem easy at first, but after discussing it in class it is a very complicated process. My professor says that the current theory is that 'no they don't feel pain, but do perceive damage.' It is an ongoing discourse that will not see an end soon. There is just so little known about our brethren. With the more I learn, the more I realize what is not known...I could be a leader, educator, role model and then, if need, be a cop as a game warden/conservation officer...But, I'm not sure I know enough yet.

Dealing with Human Emotions

The job of wilderness manager involves witnessing a lot of animal suffering. Bob's reader in his Hunting and Fishing Traditions class, *A Hunter's Heart: Honest Essays on Blood Sport* (Petersen, 1996), acknowledges that wilderness managers will have conflicting emotions when dealing with the suffering and death of hunted animals. Arluke and Sanders claim that institutions that deal with animal control expect workers to be able to make and carry out life-and-death decisions concerning the animals in a rational manner. Since humans are capable of empathizing with non-human animals, this causes internal conflict for some workers who become emotionally involved with the animals in their care. There is "a conflict between rational necessity and sentiment, between treating creatures...as de-individualized things quite different from oneself...or as kin" (1996:105).

Rick, a Pennsylvania conservation officer, places the value of human laws establishing the right to recreate over animal suffering. He clarified:

We recognize that archers wound deer they sometimes do not kill, but rifle hunters do, too. The law says the surplus animals in the breeding population are to be harvested in the method known as hunting and archery is a type of recreation. A lot of people enjoy it. An archer goes out and hunts 20 or 30 hours and if he doesn't get the buck he wanted, that buck provided 20 or 30 hours of recreation.

Sue discussed animal suffering without anthropomorphic perspectives, focusing on the technical details of a clean kill. She stated firmly that bow hunting is not cruel and inhumane, “but I say that with some qualification. A bow hunter should practice frequently and become proficient. To do this the bow hunter must shoot the area where it will bleed, leading to hemorrhaging.” This respondent continued with some fairly graphic descriptions of the damage that could be caused to an animal by a bow hunter who lacked proficiency. However, she later asked that this information be deleted from the data.

In the event a wounded animal eludes the hunter, the game warden is expected to shoot it. Although no conservation officer spoke to me about rehabilitation or trying to save a wounded animal, I wondered if any could be saved instead of shot. After all, there are wildlife veterinarians in the area. When I asked Greg, a newly hired Pennsylvania game warden, he said that usually the animals were “too far gone,” and “had to be put out of their misery” or that it was “not feasible financially.”

Retired Pennsylvania game commissioner, John, said he felt great when he killed a large animal:

My first hunting experience with my dad was very intense. I think that everyone should experience it at one time or another. I think the larger the animal, the better the feeling. I mean, what a feeling! I think nothing can compare to the feeling you get after you shoot a 300-pound bear. I was so excited that I forgot I had to drag her out of the woods.

By contrast, some game wardens, like George, spoke of feeling bad but said they had to overcome such irrational feelings:

On many occasions I have had to pick up dead deer along the road, and I feel especially bad when I have to shoot an injured deer, but this is my job, and I have to stay realistic and not attach human emotions to the animals I work with. I never see these animals as just objects. They are a living and breathing animal that I have much respect for. I know they feel pain.

DISCUSSION

Wildlife managers are boundary workers between the human community and the wilderness. They manage interactions between humans and wildlife in the way they have been socialized and educated to consider most advantageous.

However, under our community system of normative rights and obligations, the wilderness has become a place of contested demesnes: Hunters have been given the right to kill wild animals for pleasure or food. Citizens may possess the wilderness for recreation. Non-human animals occupy the land and use its resources. In the absence of higher officials of government, the wildlife managers possess the wilderness as their own and have a personal stake in it. This places them as parties to the same conflicts (e.g. hunting), which they are supposed to mediate.

In the face of large-scale conflicts, wildlife managers exhibit the collective consciousness and social solidarity described by Durkheim (1964). The cultural approach to studying work as developed by Hughes (Soloman, 1968) examines the creation of social solidarity on a micro level through the social drama of wildlife managers' interactions. The drama is acted in terms of "problems" and the means evolved to control them. Given the problematic nature of their work, their apparent lack of concern is striking. Wildlife managers do not see themselves as performing emotional labor. Instead the legalistic and structured nature of the workplace mitigates the emotional conflict managers might otherwise have to feel. There is a moral order that routinizes their interactions with hunters, non-human animals and the public.

Some of the problems seen include the failure of wildlife managers' measures for stabilizing wildlife populations. But, the general public relies on wildlife managers' own assessment of their work and the success or failure of their measures is largely a matter amongst themselves. Hunters who object to ineffective programs are dismissed as being untrained in "scientific land management techniques." The emotional conflict over the killing of animals is even less noticeable. All wildlife managers believe it is necessary. In fact, since all managers interviewed were hunters, a firm belief seems to be a prerequisite for the occupation. Similarly, concerns over the rightness or wrongness of the laws they enforce is overwhelmed by their professional identity and relegated to occasional sympathy for a poacher. The only remaining significant problem is the tenuous political nature of their hold. As government appointees they can remain employed only so long as they are necessary. This would seem to be their most active concern and the programs of public education they administer actively stress the need for wildlife managers. On the basis of their profession, they dismiss those who would, through a growing realization of the "humanness" of wild animals, include wild non-human animals into the community.

Wildlife managers are sincere in what they do. They do this work to help animals and humans and to preserve wilderness because they "love" the wilderness and wild animals. They do not speak of needing or making large sums of money or a desire for great power. Wildlife managers are close to wild

animals and “by virtue of placing themselves at the ‘frontier’ between two different domains...have a better opportunity to combine perspectives” (Krupat, 1992). As my data show, new managers are beginning to question their relationships with their wild “brethren.” My hope is that managers will find a way to include non-human animals into the human community.

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