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Ethics of Wildlife Control in Humanized Landscapes: A Response

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ABSTRACT: Animal protectionists John Hadidian, Camilla Fox, and William Lynn exhorted wildlife professionals to engage the ethical issues associated with wildlife damage management. After outlining several ethical principles, they raised three common “nuisance” wildlife scenarios to illustrate the ethical difficulties they believe need thoughtful consideration. Despite their honorable desire, their paper exemplifies why the substantive dialogue on the ethics of wildlife control has not been achieved. First, their presentation neglected to wrestle with the role of competing worldviews. Second, the authors avoided acknowledging how animal protectionists’ rhetoric and behavior has undermined the trust necessary for wildlife managers to engage in dialogue. I conclude by offering several ways animal protectionists can build the fund of good will essential to initiating dialogue and finding common ground.

KEY WORDS: animals, animal welfare ethics, biocentrism, dialogue, ethics, shepherdism, wildlife control, wildlife management, worldviews

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INTRODUCTION

In the 22nd Vertebrate Pest Conference Proceedings, John Hadidian of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), Camilla Fox of the Animal Protection Institute (API), and William Lynn of the Center for Animal Care and Public Policy (hereafter the authors) directed our attention to the activities of wildlife damage management (WDM) (Hadidian et. al. 2006). They contend that wildlife control in human-impacted environments raises ethical questions that have not been adequately addressed. The authors hope their article accomplishes two goals: 1) to stimulate a dialogue between wildlife managers, Wildlife Control Operators (WCOs), and animal protectionists and thereby end what they call the moral “quietude” surrounding the contemporary practice of wildlife management in the U.S.; and 2) to encourage dialogue about the ethical reasoning informing the creation of policies governing the implementation of wildlife control. The authors suggest that wildlife managers make ethical considerations a priority, if for no other reasons than because the public considers it important and that failure to engage in dialogue runs the risk of losing the public’s trust.

To jump-start the conversation, the authors relate three real-life wildlife control case studies, each involving a broad ethical issue deserving critical reflection. Ethical Case Study #1 highlights the debate over using lethal control as the primary means of mitigating coyote predation on livestock. The authors, quite predictably, oppose the use of Compound 1080 and other lethal devices for managing coyotes. They contend that the Marin County (California) program, which encouraged so-called non-lethal approaches to coyote (*Canis latrans*) control, serves as a preferable model for balancing the needs of sheepherders and the concerns of animal protectionists.

Ethical Case Study #2 raises the issue of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) decision to loosen the restrictions on lethal control of resident Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*). The authors argue that the USFWS failed to be sufficiently transparent about its decision

process, especially since the geese were only causing “aesthetic” problems.

Ethical Case Study #3 forces readers to decide whether a homeowner is ethically justified in killing a fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) simply for trespassing on her property. The authors suggest that the fox has a right to traverse the property and that it is ethically questionable to kill a fox simply to prevent potential harm.

In sum, the ethical questions raised by these case studies can be summarized as follows: 1) Should we control people or animals? 2) How transparent should government officials and WCOs be regarding their activities?, and 3) Do animals have value in themselves (intrinsic worth), or is their worth tied to their usefulness to us (instrumental worth)? The authors mention several other questions designed to focus attention to other important ethical issues, including: Are the values of one set of stakeholders more important than another when gridlock freezes movement on an issue? Are the values held by experienced professionals more important than those held by the public? What responsibility does a federal agency have to share information with the public? Although asserting there are no “correct answers” for every situation, it would appear that the authors certainly think that we can be certain of some wrong answers.

ETHICS OF DIALOGUE

The authors should be commended for raising a number of important questions about the ethics of wildlife damage management. Their questions are both legitimate and remarkably complex, involving a variety of competing interests. I do not dispute the importance or relevance of ethical discussions in the making of policy for wildlife damage management. I believe science has been diminished by the Kantian split between values and knowledge, as notably pointed out by Post Modern thinkers (Michener 2007). I also concur with their statement that “...ethics is a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary dialogue that uses reason and evidence to promote the health and well-being not only of people, but of animals and the rest of nature” (Hadidian et al. 2006: 501). As

legitimate as these perspectives are, perhaps the authors have neglected a critical procedural question namely, "What constitutes an ethical dialogue?" This question must be discussed, given the history of conflict between animal protectionists and wildlife managers.

Dialogue is a conversation between two or more parties for the purposes of convincing the other party to one's point of view. Ethics is involved because persuasion can either be manipulative (i.e., propaganda) or honest (i.e., teacher to student). Rogers suggests that persuasion is moral when it seeks to convince by means of rational thought and accurate information, while avoiding scaremongering (Rogers 2007). I would add that ethical dialogue requires forthrightness (i.e., that parties acknowledge their agendas, past errors, and be willing to cooperate with the opposition when agreement is found). Most readers will concur that dialogue that follows the aforementioned principles would be ethical, as the parties would respect the dignity of their opponents by not misconstruing their ideas.

Nevertheless, even when ethically practiced, dialogue has limitations. The common claim that disputes would end if only the parties could just better "understand" each other is naive. While dialogue can (and frequently does) lead to conflict resolution, it is not a necessary outcome. For dialogue can (and does) increase conflict, because the participants now understand the extent to which they disagree. Dialogue can also confuse onlookers. There is a tendency in the Western world for onlookers, when confronted with opposing views, to split the difference and say the truth is in the middle. While compromise is an important political value, it is not a helpful intellectual one, as it can hinder the search for truth. I call this tendency toward intellectual compromise the "Academic Fallacy." Onlookers must be admonished that truth may very well be closer or even identical to one side of the debate than the other (cf. Jacoby 2008). If you doubt the existence of the "Academic Fallacy", then consider the following ethical question: "Where lies the compromise truth between the opposing values of American Civil Rights and Hitler-style Fascism? Nevertheless, when animal protectionists and wildlife managers dialogue, both sides need to be sure that they are distinguishing between compromise as a political tool and compromise as intellectual slothfulness.

EVALUATION

With this basic understanding of dialogue and its limitations in hand, let us evaluate the authors' call for dialogue. In a fundamental way, the article exhibits a remarkable lack of appreciation for why wildlife managers might be resistant to dialogue with animal protectionists. In short, the authors have been tone-deaf to the complexities inherent in cross-cultural communication. I will now explain why their paper exemplifies their lack of understanding.

The first barrier to dialogue occurred when the authors ignored the role that worldviews play in the dispute. Since worldviews are complex intellectual constructs, it is certainly understandable why the authors may have chosen to avoid it (cf. Hadidian 1998). However, substantive dialogue requires attention to world-

views, no matter how difficult the task. Failure to address worldviews neglects engaging the critical question of why a dispute even exists.

WORLDVIEWS

A worldview is a philosophical term that refers to the way people construct reality. Just as a paradigm helps scientists organize data (Kuhn 1996), worldviews help people make sense of their moral and intellectual environment. However, worldviews do more than just organize ideas. They also identify what is wrong with the world and provide a vision of what would characterize a better one. It is our vision of progress, as informed by our worldview, that empowers us to work to solve problems. For example, many people in the Western world believe poverty, violence, poor health, and poor environmental stewardship, etc. stem from human ignorance. They believe that if education was universal, everyone could free themselves of those problems. Unsurprisingly, adherents of the education worldview espouse rigorous education standards and lobby legislatures to raise education funding in order to provide the services needed to "educate" the ignorant public.

Unfortunately, people are not always aware of how their perspectives have been shaped by their worldview. This ignorance hinders dialogue, because awareness of one's worldviews helps identify one's own biases as well as improves understanding of the opposition's perspective. If the parties in a dialogue do not know their own views, it is unlikely they will properly appreciate their opponents'. To illustrate, imagine a carpenter who asks his assistant to hold up the red painted board. Unbeknownst to both of them, the assistant is wearing red-tinted glasses, which colors everything red. Even though both the helper and the carpenter want to cooperate, the glasses impede their efforts. Instead they will be arguing and attacking each other about which board is truly red, all the while oblivious to the glasses' effects. My point is that if the authors want to dialogue, then they should have explicitly delineated their worldview and pointed out areas where animal protectionists and wildlife managers agree, using terms meaningful to both sides.

BIOCENTRISM VS SHEPHERDISM

Although the authors neglected to state their worldview, I believe they hold to a variant of biocentrism (Taylor 1986). The biocentric view emphasizes the commonalities among creatures. It espouses a democratic perspective that says no creature has rights to land or existence over any other creature. Biocentrism disdains any use of wildlife as a resource, as this would violate the animal's *prima facie* right to life. To a biocentrist, killing an animal just because it impinges on human interests is morally analogous to killing your neighbor just because he played the radio too loud. This view, which shares similarities with Buddhist ethics, encourages separation of humans from animals and defines "natural" as "non-human." Since humans are typically identified as the source of human-wildlife conflicts (cf. Rutberg 2007), biocentrism calls for humans to minimize their impact on the earth in every way possible, even if the cost of such behavior is extraordinary.

Let's contrast biocentrism with the neologism 'shepherdism', the worldview I believe to be held by most wildlife managers. Shepherdism accepts the reality of human power but seeks to integrate that power into a comprehensive view of human-nature relations. This view believes that humans should use their power to responsibly care for the earth and mitigate the imbalances that inevitably occur due to human activity (Howard 2006). Shepherdism rejects the idea that use equals abuse. What is good for animals is conceived as applying first to the continuation of the species rather than to the future of any individual animal. Shepherdists understand that death and predation are a normal part of the natural order. Humans, as natural members of the biosphere, may utilize animals (e.g., hunting), provided that the entire ecosystem and species diversity is protected. Humans are considered to be just as much a part of nature as animals, and a demand for humans to distance themselves from the realities of nature is not only impossible but improper, as it will lead to our neglect of nature and the environment that sustains all life (cf. Pergrams and Zaradic 2008). Shepherdism recognizes that humans have caused great harm to the environment, but also knows that the environment has caused great harm to humans. The key is to balance interests, knowing that the earth sustains both humans and animals, a perspective analogous to that of Native Americans and other more holistic worldviews. Furthermore, shepherdism claims that the distinction between intrinsic and utilitarian value is a false dichotomy (Anderson and Terrell 2003). It observes that even the practice of wildlife watching, an activity animal protectionists usually allow, expresses as much a utilitarian view of wildlife as that which values animals for their fur.

Assuming the two positions have been properly characterized, I believe that awareness of these conflicting worldviews will help us understand why dialogue has not occurred in a way pleasing to the authors. As an adherent to the shepherdist view, I will detail why the authors' request for dialogue raises a number of concerns that I believe hinder the atmosphere needed for substantive dialogue.

The first problem exhibited by the authors' paper was their characterization of wildlife managers as being too quiet concerning ethics. Normally, when people seek dialogue they break the ice by commending something positive in their opponent's position. There are also two different ways to engage in argumentation. The first, called *in pejorem partem*, means that one interprets the opponent's view in the worst possible light. The second is called *in meliorem partem*, which means to interpret the opponent's view in the best possible light. I suspect that most people would prefer their respondent to interpret their position in the best possible light. Yet, by characterizing wildlife managers as neglectful of ethical issues, the authors chose a less flattering understanding of their opponents (see also HSUS 2004). More importantly, the authors' criticism is patently false, as it stems from a misunderstanding that silence entails neglect. Their mistake is understandable because their worldview, with its principles of anti-use and anti-interaction, limited their ability to "see" how ethics permeate wildlife

manager behavior. The reason why wildlife managers rarely mention ethics is because doing so would be stating the obvious. It is like saying one needs to acknowledge the existence of air in order to talk. Just consider a typical year for wildlife managers. They have to create or recommend policies that balance the rights of species, habitat, property rights, public safety, public tolerance, cultural values, and legislation, all while doing this work with limited if not shrinking budgets. Furthermore, in recent years they have been saddled with the scrutiny of animal protectionists, who often contribute nothing to the wildlife agency's budget but instead choose to criticize, protest, lobby, and sue the agency's attempts to manage the diversity of their constituents. From this perspective, should anyone be surprised if wildlife managers would not be seeking dialogue with people who regularly, in the opinion of wildlife managers, impede and mischaracterize their work?

Animal protectionists' lack of transparency regarding their ultimate goals constitutes a second barrier to substantive dialogue regarding human-wildlife relations. Specifically, do animal protectionists want to end consumptive use of wildlife, or just limit the suffering involved in those activities (cf. Fox and Papouchis 2004)? If the latter, what would constitute a reasonable endpoint or level of suffering that would be acceptable? Let's consider how this problem was exemplified by the animal protectionist group ProPAW's (Protect Pets and Wildlife) efforts to pass the Question 1 "Ban Cruel Traps" Ballot Initiative in Massachusetts in 1996. They argued that the law was needed to protect animals, pets, and children from these cruel and indiscriminant devices. The initiative, which successfully passed, sought to ban body-gripping traps (footholds and snares) and further restrict the use of conibear-style traps. The HSUS supported this draconian initiative with a \$50,000 donation (Howe 1996). Ironically, ProPAW activists specifically exempted snap traps, commonly used for mice (*Mus musculus*) and rats (*Rattus norvegicus*). The question raised by shepherdists is, "Did this exemption mean that ProPAW deemed snap traps humane?" If that was what animal protectionists intended, why did the HSUS publication *Wild Neighbors* fail to mention snap traps for controlling rats (Hadidian et al. 1997)? In a televised debate (Yorke 1996), I asked Peter Teraspolski (an initial signatory of the petition), that since rat traps were exempted in the proposed ban, did he consider the traps humane? My purpose was to demonstrate the slogan, "ban cruel traps" was misleading, in that it should have been written, "ban some cruel traps." Unfortunately, he wouldn't answer on camera. Perhaps we should understand this exemption as an example of political expediency to avoid angering the powerful pest control industry. But, if that assessment is accurate, how does that kind of expediency encourage the open atmosphere needed for true and ethical dialogue? Shepherdists still need to know if the animal protectionists are looking for a day when they can ban snap traps, too.

A third barrier to dialogue is the way that Question 1 undermined the validity of the ProPAW's claim that it would reduce animal suffering caused by trapping. First, the law forced trappers to use equipment that inflicted

more suffering than some of the traps that were banned. For example, common traps for Eastern moles (*Scalopus aquaticus*), being body-grip traps, were banned; yet, toxicants were not. Should one conclude that toxicants are more humane, safer for children and pets, and more environmentally responsible than mole traps? Consider the Tomahawk Bailey Beaver Live Trap[®]. Beavers (*Castor canadensis*) caught in Bailey traps frequently suffer from hypothermia because they cannot escape from the cold water (Vantassel 2006). Did the ban's supporters really want us to think that the Bailey is more humane than a submerged 330 body-grip? (translocation is not a legal option in Massachusetts). The ban also prohibited the use of snares, even when set for live capture, as can be done for beaver and coyote. Did the ban's proponents actually believe that the Collarum[®] is a cruel and indiscriminant device? (Huot and Bergman 2007; note that the author has had a long-standing business relationship with Alan Huot, the Collarum[®]'s manufacturer). Second, the law raised questions about their concern for the environment, as it provided no mechanism to allow banned traps to be used to protect threatened species, such as the common tern (*Sterna hirundo*), from predation (Mostello 2007). In light of these problems and others, should it surprise the authors that wildlife managers are not falling over themselves to enter a "dialogue"? How can wildlife managers enter dialogue with a movement whose political behavior exemplifies such glaring inconsistencies?

The fourth barrier to communication arises from the authors' lack of appreciation for the way worldviews shape our understanding of data. Ban proponents claimed that legislation was needed to protect children and pets from the dangers of traps. Yet, does any informed person really believe that a foothold poses a greater risk to children or pets than a Hancock-style beaver trap? More to the point would be the way animal protectionists deflate the significance of wildlife damage, in a manner inconsistent with the way pet injuries are used against trapping. In political terms, the framing of an issue is called "spin." Consider the following comment regarding deer-strikes: "*One should not overstate the significance of the problem; animal-vehicle collisions cause <0.5% of traffic fatalities of humans nationwide, and most of them are associated with high-risk behavior, e.g. failure to wear seat belts and riding motorcycles, especially while not wearing a helmet*" (Rutberg and Naugle 2008). I have no doubt the authors have accurately stated the statistics regarding human death related to deer strikes. But how would they react if a trapper used the same language to defend trapping against the opposition of pet owners? "One should not overstate the significance of pet injuries due to footholds; amputations on pets due to trapping account for <0.5% of pet amputations nationwide, and most of them are associated with high-risk behavior, e.g. trespassing on private property, and failing to keep pets leashed." I trust the point is clear, even though the actual number of trapping injuries to pets is most definitely lower than 0.5%. True dialogue requires that political demagoguery and fear-mongering be removed from press releases and fundraising letters. Furthermore, animal protectionists must debate being fair to the facts. For example, the authors state that killing

deer will not end the damage they cause (a claim also made with geese; HSUS 2004). Aside from the obvious error of such a statement (it seems to me that the extinction of a species would end any and all damage from that species), it mischaracterizes the goals of wildlife managers. In effect, the comment bespeaks a critical lack of understanding of the perspective of wildlife managers. The shepherd model holds that the goal of deer harvesting is not the elimination of damage per se but its reduction to socially tolerable levels, while maintaining species' viability. Adherents of the shepherd model understand that people who value deer as a resource, rather than as just a pest, will tolerate deer problems more willingly.

ETHICAL CASE STUDIES

Let us turn away from past arguments to consider how acknowledging one's worldview influences one's answer or solution to the three scenarios presented by the authors. Before discussing these case studies, I would point out that their decision to select these three species exemplifies their worldview. Note how they chose iconic species. Why didn't they choose the striped skunk, pigeons, and nutria? Aren't the problems raised by these less popular species just as comparable and just as important, but lacking the excessive emotionalism tied to the "sexy" species?

In the first case study, the authors claim that the Marin County, California, non-lethal program was working. However, Larsen demonstrated that the authors should be less sanguine about the program's results (Larsen 2006). Her findings, although tentative due to lack of uniform record-keeping procedures, suggest that under the Marin program more coyotes were killed than if the Wildlife Services program had continued. Furthermore, I consider the coyote example a poor discussion choice, because it is clouded by the ethics surrounding the use of federal funds to resolve private issues. But to answer their question, "Are the values of one stakeholder group more important than another when gridlock freezes movement on an issue", the shepherdists would answer "Yes!". They would justify this opinion on two grounds. First, just as a medical doctor's opinion concerning the fitness of an athlete has more value than the opinion of a fan, so biologists and wildlife control experts should have greater standing on the management of wildlife. Second, shepherdists question how much stake a fan has concerning the viability of an athlete. Similarly, why should someone in Washington, D.C., Sacramento, CA, and Boston, MA consider himself/herself a stakeholder regarding a Nebraska landowner's management of his property, assuming the overall environment is not harmed?

The goose case study is more enlightening, because the authors first blame wildlife agencies for causing the problem, and then they accuse them of not being more forth-telling about their decision to loosen restrictions on culling geese. What is interesting is that the authors don't provide their preferred solution. They know full well that agencies are loathe to discuss pending goose culls, because of the circus-like atmosphere that arises with protests and likely litigation. Consider their statement

that the goose problem is largely aesthetic. This is another attempt to diminish the significance of the damage caused by geese (minimizing wildlife problems is a standard tactic by animal protectionists; see Scott 1977). Why don't they criticize the public for its unending need to have perfectly manicured lawns and shallow ponds that create perfect habitat for geese? Instead of acknowledging that humans have created habitat for many species (Oleyar 2007) including geese, they prefer to emphasize how we have removed habitat, thereby blaming wildlife managers for the problem (HSUS 2006). Why did they fail to explain when a goose cull was justified? Should a landowner have to wait until someone slips on the goose dropping-covered sidewalk, sustains an injury, and then sues the landowner for negligence, before a cull is justified? Will the HSUS or API provide lawyers to defend the landowner who was sued because of delays required to resolve the problem in a so-called humane way? In answer to their question on transparency, I think the USFWS has been very transparent.

Concerning the fox in the yard case study, why didn't the authors discuss the role of private property rights (Schlager and Ostrom 1992)? What if the woman had a severe phobia, and the mere thought of the fox's continued presence gave her panic attacks? Would she have to get a permit, to prove that she had such a mental condition, before she could have the fox killed? Perhaps animal protectionists would recommend fencing as the solution. But what if the owner is too poor, and how should we evaluate the environmental impact of fencing on the free movement of wildlife? Shouldn't we be concerned about environmental justice, too?

I agree with the authors' comment that the term "pest" is morally simplistic. Only those who lack a connection with the animals would flippantly call them pests. I contend that a driving cause behind the growing pervasiveness the term "wildlife pest" actually comes from the evangelistic efforts of animal protectionists. It is their worldview that forces people to see an animal in only two ways, either as iconic symbols of natural and pristine beauty that must be left alone by humans, or as pests. Through their rejection of animals as a resource, the biocentrists actually diminish the value of animals, because whenever human-wildlife conflicts arise, there is no third way to appreciate them. In contrast, the shepherd model would understand the observation of "too many deer" to be like saying one has too much money. Too many deer becomes an opportunity to utilize the resource. Furthermore, a key cause behind the growth of certain wildlife populations, such as deer, and geese, is that our society has lost its connection with the earth, as exhibited by urban sprawl and declining rates of human participation in outdoor activities (Pergrams and Zaradic 2008). I believe that wildlife damage management exists in many situations because wildlife management, through hunting and trapping, has been prohibited. While there are many reasons behind the growth of the public's opposition to wildlife management, animal protectionism has played a part in undermining the public's appreciation of the role of hunting and trapping. I agree that some problems with wildlife are self-inflicted (e.g., uncapped chimneys, free-ranging pets). But many others have been

self-inflicted, not by the wildlife managers, but by those who proclaim a gospel of "don't touch, don't handle". Wildlife managers sought to return wildlife to sustainable numbers, knowing that they could be hunted, and knowing that doing so helps a lot more non-game species. Animal protectionists like the animals but prohibit the means to manage them, or encourage them because they deny our role in the ecosystem.

Turning to concrete concerns, there are several reasons that could be used to question the genuineness of the authors' call for dialogue. The first problem is their use of misleading rhetoric (Fox and Papouchis 2004). Sound bites and slogans are great for fund-raising and rallying the troops for political battle, but they impede dialogue by poisoning the honesty required to build the trust that allows substantive dialogue. I have no doubt that animal protectionists find the foothold indiscriminant. The problem is all traps are indiscriminant under the animal protectionist definition. The same can be said for their use of the emotive term, "cruel." By what standard do they call a particular trap cruel? The fact is, all traps cause injury, including cage traps. I consider cage traps to be very cruel devices, if the trapper does not use them properly (Vantassel 2007). Another rhetorical flourish is the claim that wildlife populations are self-limiting and do not require human management. What animal activists neglect to say is that "self-limiting" is a code word for habitat destruction and starvation. Perhaps they fail to mention it because they realize that even the uneducated public would consider habitat destruction and starvation as negative events. A second issue is the unscientific language of "lethal" versus "non-lethal". Animal protectionists are always requiring wildlife managers to "prove" that this or that policy won't harm the species. Yet, why doesn't the animal protectionist industry engage in the research required to prove that these so-called non-lethal techniques are actually non-lethal? I fail to understand how excluding a squirrel from its preferred location, a warm attic, and forcing it to find new shelter in the middle of December constitutes a non-lethal technique. Has anyone proved that such a newly evicted squirrel does not freeze to death? I think it would be more honest to call the exclusion technique "less-lethal", because I think it reasonable that some squirrels might survive (Gates et al. 2006). Furthermore, the issue of cruelty, of which Wayne Pacelle says "Cruelty to animals is wrong and inexcusable" (Pacelle 2007), also raises its ugly head. Have the animal protectionists proven that evicting a squirrel from an attic, its preferred habitat, into the nearby tree, is less cruel than just euthanizing it? Note that I have not even begun to discuss the issue of cost to the property owner. There are plenty more examples of these kinds of real-world questions that could be asked.

OLIVE BRANCH

In this brief essay, I think it should be apparent why I question the authenticity of animal protectionists' desire for dialogue. While the authors may personally desire dialogue, I wonder if they could keep their jobs if they participated in the kind of substantive dialogue suggested here. However, since my Christian faith demands that I

seek unity, I would like to proffer several avenues that animal protectionists could take to prove their willingness to enter substantive and ethical dialogue about wildlife management.

First, animal protectionists should invite members of the opposition to write in their publications and/or speak at their conferences. Furthermore, wildlife protectionists should be reaching out to NWCOs by attending their conferences and writing for their publications. Despite the sometimes uncouth behavior of WCOs, they are less ideologically entrenched than one's initial contact would reveal. They are happy to learn about techniques that are acceptable to the HSUS and other animal protectionist groups, provided they actually work in the real world. I know that if the HSUS or other animal protectionist organization wanted to dialogue with me, I could provide plenty of suggestions for reducing animal injury and stress during wildlife control and still maintain my shepherdist worldview. Unfortunately, I have never been asked, despite having published several articles on animal protectionist ideology (e.g., Vantassel 2008) and dozens on wildlife control (for a partial list see <http://nebraskamaps.unl.edu/home.asp>).

Second, animal protectionists need to demonstrate a real commitment to resolving wildlife damage problems. This commitment would need to move beyond iconic animals such as deer, and satisfy a variety of constituents, not just the wealthy. If they really want to solve problems, then they need to do two things. First, they must stop demonizing wildlife control equipment, such as footholds, and tell their donors about the good that footholds do, such as otter reintroduction programs. Trapping is a complex event that involves the skill of the user and the quality of the equipment. Banning footholds makes great headlines for fundraising, but it is morally simplistic. Next, they need to start funding research to provide best practices standards for excluding wildlife from structures. Many nuisance wildlife control operators refuse to employ exclusion (not to be confused with prevention) because they have never seen it work. That failure to work is why they rely on "trap and remove" before securing the building. If animal protectionists believe in exclusion technology, then they need to prove its efficacy (in all markets), and offer the training to WCOs so they will gain the confidence needed to use it. Furthermore, they must decide whether the poor, who cannot afford the high cost of exclusion technology, will be permitted the tools capable of removing wildlife from their homes. A corollary of this point is the issue of property rights. Animal protectionists need to decide what the ethics are regarding property rights. Does a property owner have the right to manage their property, and to what extent?

Third, animal protectionists need to be forthright concerning where they fall on the animal rights-animal welfare ideological spectrum. If they believe that hunting and trapping must end, then they need not worry about dialogue. Let's save everyone's time and begin the political struggle for the hearts and minds of the American public. If they do acknowledge the role of hunting and trapping, then they should decide what that role should be and publicly push for it. Given the

political history of the past 20 years, the authors should not be surprised if sportsmen and wildlife managers are suspicious of their motives. Wildlife managers and sportsmen would like to know whether the conclusions reached by the Best Management Practices trap study initiative (http://www.fishwildlife.org/furbearer_resources.html) is acceptable to animal protectionists. If not, then what will be acceptable? They must remember, however, that if they make the standard impractical, it is as good as pushing for an outright ban. Many sportspeople believe they have strong evidence to show that the humane questions proffered by animal protectionists are really red herrings to distract the public from the ultimate goal, namely to end the use of wildlife. The authors would do well to eliminate that fear, if it is false, by providing clear statements, both publicly and in their fundraising literature.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I hope the authors and their respective organizations are serious about their desire to engage in a substantive and ethically-guided dialogue concerning all aspects of wildlife management. I have painted with a broad brush but it is critical that the authors separate themselves from their co-belligerents so that greater clarity regarding their own views can be understood properly. Too much money has been spent fighting political campaigns and defending lawsuits. Wildlife agencies can no longer afford to fight these battles, but if their fears concerning the intentions of animal protectionists are correct, they cannot afford not to. Where we go from here is really up to the animal protectionists, for they are the ones who garner the media attention. Time will tell if animal protectionists are serious about substantive, honest, and respectful engagement. I can only cautiously hope that this offer will be taken up.

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