

Public Abstract

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A Qualitative Investigation of the Urban Minority Adolescent Experience with Wildlife

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An increase in urbanization has contributed to an increase in the general public's isolation from traditional wildlife uses and led to changes in attitudes toward wildlife. Although the majority of people live in urban areas, urban wildlife has received relatively limited attention from public wildlife agencies. Ethnic minorities make up a significant percentage of the urban population in the United States, yet few studies have investigated the wildlife-related experience of these citizens. Using a grounded theory research approach, I identified 5 conditions in the lives of the study participants (i.e., attitudes toward wildlife, demographic characteristics, socialization, place of residence, wildlife encounters) which are important factors in shaping 5 general processes (i.e., connecting with wildlife, negotiating safety, selective engagement with wildlife, enduring wildlife, wildlife disconnect) that describe the differing experiences of urban African American and Latino adolescents with respect to wildlife. The implications of these findings suggest that urban African American and Latino adolescents will demonstrate differing levels of interest and engagement in wildlife management activities, ranging from active engagement in wildlife management issues to a complete disinterest in wildlife. Consequently, to foster an appreciation for the multiple values of wildlife and encourage active engagement in wildlife management programming, several conditions should be present in a developing child's life: 1) childhood access to and immersion in natural areas, 2) supportive mentoring from adults important in a child's life, 3) positive encounters with a variety of wildlife species, and 4) involvement in a variety of wildlife-related activities in a supportive environment.

