

Human-Wildlife Interactions for Tourism: A Systematic Review¹

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Abstract

Due to the complexity of wildlife encounters for tourist purposes, the extant literature indicates a diverse and fragmented view from which integrated implications are difficult to obtain. This paper aims to synthesize the key findings of prior research on the topic of human-wildlife interactions in natural places for tourism. The methodology of systematic review was used to search for, appraise and analyze the relevant research evidence. A total of 47 English-language academic journal articles, published between 2003 and 2018, with online access to full texts in the database of Hospitality and Tourism Complete have been reviewed. Thematic analysis was adopted to synthesize the textual data. Results indicate that the reviewed articles cover a wide geographical spread, diverse wildlife species and interaction types, and various research focuses including ecological impacts, human dimensions, and management issues of wildlife tourism. The interactions between wildlife and human systems in the context of tourism constitute a complicated social-ecological system, in which both the humans and animals can be affected positively and negatively. Management and scientific research provide the nexus between the ecological and human dimensions of wildlife tourism. While opportunities for sustainable development abound, challenges are not to be neglected. This paper presents the first overarching review in English of what has been and what is needed to be done in terms of both wildlife tourism research and practices and proposed a conceptual framework that supports a systems approach to human-wildlife interactions. Researchers are recommended to be mindful of the interdependent nature of the systems involved in wildlife tourism and undertake more studies in an integrated approach to examine the broader ecosystem impacts and address the global issues of conservation and biodiversity protection. Meanwhile, continued research within the realm of ecological impacts or human dimensions is encouraged to help develop better-fitting management schemes and harness the potential of tourism as a savior for wildlife and contributor to tourist psychological well-being.

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