

**Endangered animals in wildlife tourism:  
A study of young female traveller attitudes**

Jenna Jussila

Bachelor's Thesis  
Degree Programme in Tourism  
2016



<b>Author</b> Jenna Jussila	
<b>Degree programme</b> Tourism	
<b>Thesis title</b> Endangered animals in Wildlife Tourism: A study of young female traveller attitudes	<b>Number of pages and appendix pages</b> <b>34 + 4</b>
<p>This thesis is built around the discussion of wildlife welfare and animal ethics in a tourism setting. Although not being properly explored by academics, the topic of ethical wildlife use in tourism has been increasingly raised in social media. Websites such as <a href="http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk">www.tourismconcern.org.uk</a> and <a href="http://www.righttourism.com">www.righttourism.com</a> among others are dedicated to promoting responsible wildlife tourism. As responsibility could be described as a megatrend, various businesses want to give consumers the impression of acting responsibly, although that might not be the truth. This raises the question of traveller attitudes towards wildlife use in tourism.</p> <p>The theory part of the work begins with the conceptualisation of wildlife, biodiversity and wildlife tourism. The scarcity of animal ethics studies particularly in the tourism field is given a notion. Following is a case of endangered wildlife use in tourism: controversial elephant tourism in Thailand. The second theory part addresses the possibility of actual existence of a green tourist, or ecotourist. Despite the number of research conducted on ecotourists' good intentions, little evidence exists on actual green behaviour in a holiday context. Using shades of green in the discussion of tourist behaviour, particularly in relation to their views on wildlife, is more preferable.</p> <p>The empirical part first introduces qualitative research method as a useful tool in the study of attitudes and views related to a somewhat controversial topic. Themed, open-ended interviews provide the means of generating discussion on wildlife welfare and animal ethics. Approximately 10 interview questions were preselected, following the three themes of (1) relationship to nature and animals, (2) wildlife tourism experiences, and (3) views on wildlife conservation. The recorded interviews were conducted in a quiet campus or café setting during two weeks in May 2016. The interviewees comprised a homogenised group with their similar demographic backgrounds: all four are female, Finnish, between ages 22 and 25. All are undergraduate tourism or business students at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. All of them have lived abroad, travelled as independent backpackers, and more importantly, visited tourist attractions featuring endangered wildlife.</p> <p>Wildlife welfare seems to be a familiar topic to this group of respondents. All were more or less sceptic towards the ethical use of wild animals in creating memorable tourism experiences. Although enjoying these experiences, some noted how unnatural it is for a wild animal to be in close contact with masses of tourists. Some boycotted zoos and aquariums altogether. The respondents were well aware of the controversial nature of Thai elephant tourism and told about both their positive and negative experiences. All respondents were sceptic towards supporting wildlife conservation while on holiday. They did not trust monetary donations would actually support endangered species. Most of them suggested that a concrete item donation such as food, medicine or other necessary supplies would be a more efficient way to show one's support for these animals in distress.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> wildlife tourism, endangered species, human-nature relationship, green values	

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
2	Wildlife and tourism .....	3
2.1	Wildlife tourism.....	5
2.2	Endangered animal case in wildlife tourism: Asian Elephant.....	7
3	The Green Tourist – urban legend or reality? .....	9
3.1	‘Could the real green tourist please stand up?’ .....	9
3.2	Our views on wildlife in a tourism context.....	12
4	Method .....	15
4.1	Qualitative research method .....	15
4.2	Target group and interviews.....	16
4.3	Reliability and validity.....	17
5	The results .....	19
5.1	Relationship to nature and animals .....	19
5.2	Wildlife tourism experiences.....	20
5.3	Attitudes towards wildlife conservation.....	23
5.4	Summary .....	28
6	Discussion.....	31
6.1	Conclusions and development ideas.....	31
6.2	Process evaluation.....	32
	References .....	33
	Appendices.....	35
	Appendix 1. Interview questions.....	35
	Appendix 2. Interview questions in Finnish.....	37

# 1 Introduction

Species loss, as well as increased natural disasters, shortage of clean water and the acidification of oceans are all serious warning signs – the Earth’s last cry of help. The discussion on economic growth has faced a new challenger, limits of acceptable growth. There is talk about the consequences from humankind excessively exploiting the nature, about the sixth extinction. Fortunately, particularly during the last two decades, nature and wildlife have gained more appreciation in the form of education, green movements and conservation organizations. Nevertheless, exotic, endangered animals and fragile ecosystems remain the highlights of tourist attractions – a fact that brings many possibilities but also numerous threats to these animals and their habitats. Endangered animals are often used as destination icons or otherwise as a means of attracting visitors. The entrance fees are then used partially for the conservation of the endangered star animal, or, as in many cases, to entirely different purposes. Animal ethics issues in various wildlife attractions are increasingly raising alarm, and some of those attractions are regarded as controversial, to say the least (e.g. the tiger temples and elephant sanctuaries of Thailand). Which of these attractions can be trusted to base their work on endangered wildlife conservation and which are focusing solely on monetary profits?

In modern society, where contradictory information is targeted at consumers from various sources, we are forced to interpret information more critically. Businesses doing green wash exploit the good will of consumers with bogus certificates and empty promises. It makes it difficult for consumers to make the right choices if they so wish. Furthermore, as animal welfare and animal ethics in a tourism setting are not commonly addressed in public debate, it is challenging for the wildlife tourist to know how to effectively vote with their wallets. Reflecting on these issues, and having noticed the topic gain attention in social media, has made me wonder what other wildlife tourists really think about it. Not the green tourists or ecotourists – as I do not see myself as one either – but others that I could put myself in the same category with: twenty-somethings, budget backpackers, travel junkies. Are they concerned about wildlife welfare at their chosen holiday attractions?

What finally triggered me to focus my thesis on endangered wildlife in tourism was National Geographic’s Photo Ark, featuring portraits of over six thousand endangered species. Photo Ark founder, National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore says: *‘I want people to care, to fall in love, and to take action.’* (Photo Ark 2016). I agree that an image speaks more than a thousand words, and indeed, Photo Ark demonstrates the colourful, endangered diversity of nature in an awe-inspiring manner.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how aware wildlife tourists actually are in the responsibility of the attractions they visit – concerning wildlife welfare and endangered species conservation. Academic literature already offers guidelines to conservation management but as we have seen with many other responsibility trends within various industries, pressure for the companies to follow green guidelines often generates from customer demand. The thesis and the related study explore the possibility of demand for more responsible wildlife tourism, as well as attempt to create a more comprehensive understanding of the present state of human-animal relationships in tourism.

Following the introduction, the theory base begins with introducing wildlife as a concept. Biodiversity will be discussed as it is affected by tourism, not least through the use of endangered wildlife in tourism. Consumptive and non-consumptive wildlife tourism will be separated, the latter being the focus of this thesis. Consumptive wildlife tourism such as trophy hunting and zoos does not seem relevant to the topic of wildlife welfare in tourism. The focus will be on non-consumptive wildlife tourism for the sake of the author's respective view towards wildlife and nature in general. Furthermore, an example case of endangered wildlife use in tourism is in order.

The second theory part investigates the mystery of Green Tourist – is it merely a trendy word or a real indicator of changing values? The word's origin will be discussed, with the notion of different levels of green thinking, i.e. shades of green. As with any value or attitude, with green values there are not just two opposite sides to take, either. The motivations for green behaviour are debated as well, in order to better understand what truly triggers people to make responsible or green choices while on holiday. After all, a holiday is mainly about fulfilling personal needs, so then how much care for mother Earth – in this case endangered species – can you fit into your itinerary? Finally, different value orientations towards the use of animals in tourism are explored, from dominionistic to protectionistic view.

A qualitative research method shall be used for the purposes of this thesis. Structured but open-ended interviews are part of the implementation plan in order to generate open discussion. The interviewees are all previous wildlife tourists having visited destinations from Thailand's elephant sanctuaries to African safaris. The reliability and validity of the research, with a reflection on my own relationship to wildlife, will be analysed in the methodological chapter. Results and summary close up the empirical part of the thesis. Finally, conclusions with ideas for future research will be presented.

## **2 Wildlife and tourism**

Encounters with the wild represent to us an escape from our everyday lives and responsibilities into a place where time is our own. Wild animals symbolise freedom and pleasure to us – especially animals that appear playful and careless, such as dolphins. Generally the term ‘wild animal’ to us means not the ants, squirrels and birds in our backyards but rhinos and elephants on the savannah, penguins in Antarctica, whales and dolphins in the vast oceans. We imagine wild animals in a non-urban remote setting as something very unfamiliar, mysterious and emotive. (Bulbeck 2005, xx.) Unfamiliar, mysterious and emotive is how we could describe the ultimate travel experience as well. After the basics of wildlife, biodiversity and endangered species, this chapter explores the use of endangered wildlife in a tourism context.

### **Wildlife**

So what exactly can be defined as wildlife? Clearly the definition is large-scale, with all the wild creatures imaginable existing on Earth. According to Hunter (1990, in Newsome, Dowling & Moore 2005, 1), the term *wildlife* was first included in major dictionaries in 1961. It was first used in 1913 in a book called *Our Vanishing Wildlife* – already at the first time of its use having an ominous touch to it. This publication primarily defined wildlife as a game species as well as other vertebrate species perceived as subject to human harvesting. Later definitions include all non-domesticated vertebrates and even invertebrates and plants. As Hunter suggests, this ambiguity over the term *wildlife* creates problems in the debate around wildlife management. (In Newsome, Dowling & Moore 2005, 1.) For the purposes of this thesis, wildlife is taken to mean all non-domesticated vertebrates, thus solely focusing on wild animals. However, this is not to suggest that invertebrates and plants should be any less important within the concept of wildlife. The author acknowledges the profound relationships, even interdependencies, between species groups in an ecosystem.

### **Biodiversity**

As a result of cities expanding and rural areas diminishing, urban-dwellers’ connection to nature has greatly diminished. As the urbanization continues to expand, so does the search for the novel and exotic, for all kind of biodiversity which is absent in the urban areas. As such, the increasingly homogenised i.e. globalised world has put diversity in nature and culture – two highly sought-after aspects in tourism – under a threat. (Fennell 2013, 17.)

According to Ghilarov (1996 in Mercer 2013, 130) the term *biodiversity* first appeared in 1980 in the publications of Lovejoy and second by Norse and McManus. Lovejoy used it to describe species totals, whereas Norse and McManus focused on the genetic and ecological diversity. Today the concept of biodiversity works as a synonym for biological diversity, that is, at its simplest, the variety and richness of all components in the nature. It is defined in the 1992 United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as ‘*The variability among living organisms from all sources... and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems*’ (Mercer 2013, 130). The 1992 convention came into force the following year as a legally binding treaty between some 50 countries, because of the growing concern over species loss resulting from overconsumption of land and water resources. (Mercer 2013, 130.) Additional to the conservational nature of CBD, it also aims to sustainable use of biodiversity and to just, equal distribution of goods from genetic natural resources (Toivonen 2012, 206).

In practice, biodiversity generally has been hard to define. The functional diversity of ecosystems and the structural characteristics of habitats are often considered when defining biodiversity. The evolution of biodiversity, however, is monitored in CBD with e.g. the following indicators: species, habitats, acreages of conservation areas and areas of sustainable use, followed by species’ endangerment trends and the structure of marine food webs. This insinuates the complexity and widespread character of the concept of biodiversity. The concept itself has motivated researchers into focusing on a wider array of species and habitats as well as highlighted the significance of genetic variability. New research has been directed towards uncommon species groups in order to establish a better assessment of the total amount of different species. (Toivonen 2012, 203-204.)

### **Endangered species as indicators of biodiversity**

There are over 79 800 species listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Red List for endangered species. Over 23 000 are threatened to go extinct: 41% of amphibians, 34% of conifers, 33% of reef building corals, 25% of mammals and 13% of birds. With the Red List barometer (figure 1) it can be quickly assessed how severe the loss, i.e. endangerment trend, of a species is. It is a crucial indicator of the state of biodiversity, both globally and locally. The IUCN Red List is not merely a list of species and their status, but it also provides information on range, population size,

habitat, use and trade, threats and conservation actions. It is used by government agencies, the wildlife department, conservationist NGOs (non-governmental organisations), the education department, students and the business community. (IUCN Support 2016.)

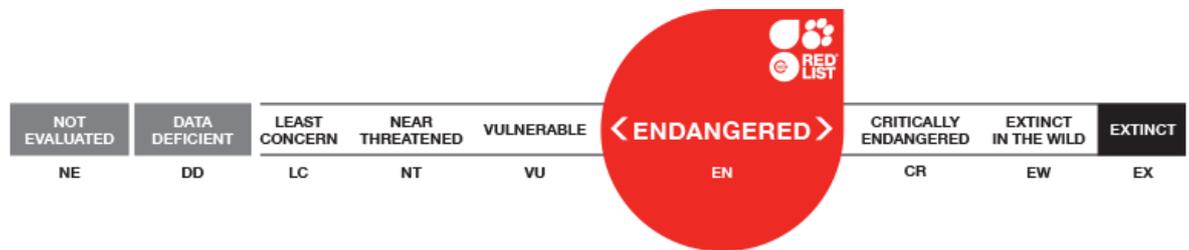


Figure 1. The IUCN Red List barometer for endangered species (IUCN Support 2016)

The IUCN Red List reassesses the status of some species and has good news to tell as well: due to conservation efforts, there has been downlisting (i.e. improvement in conditions) of a number of species. However, the list remains a crucial tool in helping to identify species needing specific recovery efforts and to identify key sites and habitats that need saving. (IUCN Support 2016.)

## 2.1 Wildlife tourism

The concept of wildlife tourism includes widely differing activities from species specific such as swimming with dolphins to broadly based African safaris. More importantly, wildlife-based tourism is divided into consumptive and non-consumptive activities, where the latter represents activities that “do not result in the intentional death or removal of animals from the wild” (Markwell 2015, 258). Even though zoos and aquariums are commonly recognised as partly non-consumptive wildlife tourism, they have a smaller role in this particular work for their controversial nature of removing wild animals from the wild to be captive in unnatural environments. (Markwell 2015, 258-259.)

### The role of animal ethics studies in a tourism context

A remarkably small amount of academic literature exists on wildlife welfare in tourism. Cohen (2009 in Fennell 2012, 3) argues that only recently has human-animal interactions as a topic of tourism studies begun to form. While ethics as a topic in tourism has only been discussed for a short period of time, ethics in the use of animals in tourism is even more recent. Figure 2 by Fennell aims to illustrate the volume of research fields between

tourism, animals and ethics. The most crucial note to be made from the figure is the significantly small amount of ethics within animal research in tourism studies. (Fennell 2012, 6-7.)

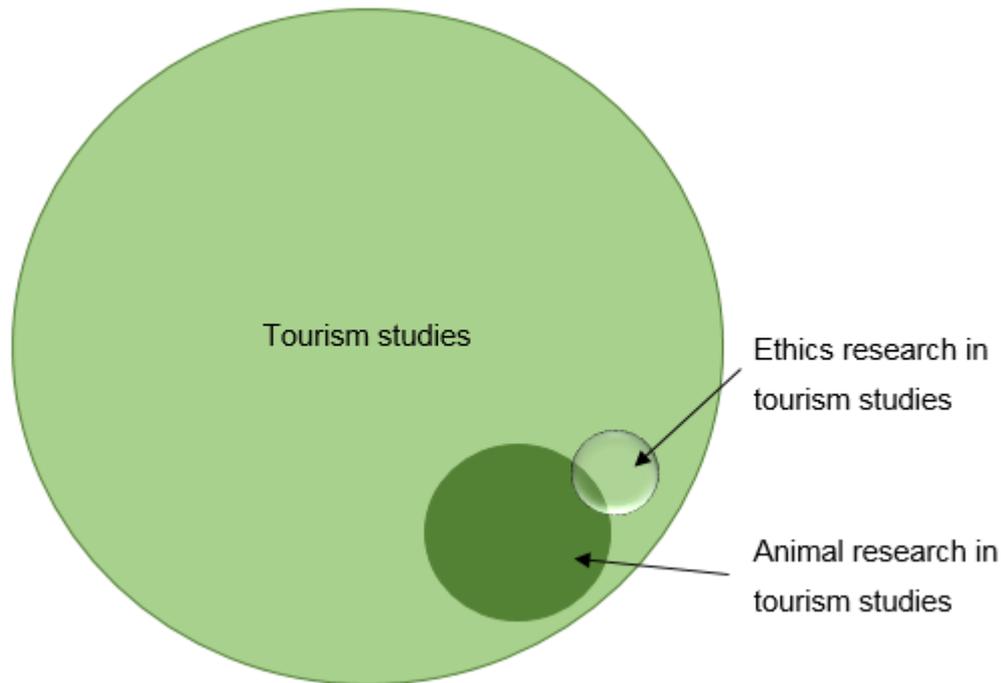


Figure 2. Relationship between tourism, animals and ethics in tourism studies (Fennell 2012, 7)

Generally researchers have been unfamiliar with the theory and methodological bases of other, unfamiliar science fields. Suspicion and negative attitude towards interdisciplinary co-operation dominates on various fields of science. Interdisciplinary research projects may be disregarded as being semi scientific or applied projects. Lummaa, Rönkä and Vuorisalo (2012, 263-266) press the importance of all-encompassing or at least widespread examination of research problems as science develops. This is especially crucial within applied studies such as animal ethics in tourism. (Lummaa et al. 2012, 263-266.)

The severity of negative impacts to wildlife specifically from wildlife tourism has come to daylight through the studies of Berman et al., 2007 and Sandbrook & Semple, 2006, among others. According to them the growing interest in the rare and exotic has exposed previously untouched areas to the devastating effects of tourism. As such, the very popularity of the species that attracts visitors to a destination may well contribute to the loss of that species. (Markwell 2015, 259.) However, as Higginbottom and colleagues (Higginbottom et al., 2003; Orams, 1997; Wilson & Tisdell, 2003 in Markwell 2015, 259) say, well managed, i.e. responsible wildlife tourism has the possibility to generate direct conservation outcomes such as increased funding, education, political support and sociocultural initiatives for endangered species of concern.

## 2.2 Endangered animal case in wildlife tourism: Asian Elephant

Impacts of wildlife tourism on the Asian Elephant in particular is the topic of this sub-chapter. This example of wildlife use in tourism was specifically chosen for its remarkably popular but at the same time controversial nature. It works as background information to support the comments on responsible vs. irresponsible elephant tourism in Thailand in chapter 5.2. *Wildlife tourism experiences.*

Elephant riding is an increasingly popular tourism activity, particularly in Asian countries such as Thailand, Cambodia and Nepal, among others. The elephant is the largest land mammal, a social, intelligent and emotional creature – thus extremely appealing to us humans. However, being a wild animal, the elephant is to be treated with dignity and respect. Sadly, this is not the case with many trekking elephants which are often mistreated and tortured during their training. Captivity generally prolongs the lifespan of an animal but elephants, however, die younger in captivity than in the wild. It is a clear indicator of poor habitat conditions and stress. (Tourism Concern 2014.)

To make a wild animal such as an elephant obedient and controllable by humans it often has to suffer deprivation of food and sleep, social isolation, beatings with the ankus or billhook and physical restraint by shackling. The training required to make elephants safe around people include young elephants being torn from their mothers, then being entrapped and abused with nail-spiked sticks in order to crush their spirits and make them submissive to humans. This traditional ritual is called *phajaan* in Thai. Elephants that are forced to carry people all day round suffer from spinal problems, infected blisters from the carrying chair and lack of social interaction with other elephants. In addition to physical diseases, many elephants display a distressed behaviour outside tourist visiting hours. These behaviours include swaying from side to side as well as pacing. (Tourism Concern 2014.)

While the cruelty of *phajaan* is evident and it must be stopped, a couple of issues complicate an outright ban. Often in Asia, the alternative to elephant trekking is a return to the wild with the inevitable risks of getting poached for ivory, exported illegally to zoos in foreign countries and struggling to survive in a continuously diminishing habitat with human intervention. Other alternative is physical toil in the (often illegal) logging industry. Consequently, until it is safe for elephants to return to their natural habitats, a temporary compromise solution could be responsible elephant tourism. For example in Thailand there is both responsible and irresponsible elephant tourism. With an estimated population

of less than 30 000 individuals left in the wild, tourism could play a crucial role in the conservation of this highly fragile, endangered species. (Tourism Concern 2014.)



Image 1. Tourists bathing with elephants at Hug Elephant Sanctuary in Chiang Mai, Thailand (Viitanen, M. 11 October 2015)

Elephant viewing, bathing and feeding in open environments (often in sanctuaries as in image 1) is considered generally responsible elephant tourism. It is suggested that a more responsible way of elephant riding – although it is recommended not to practice it altogether – is to sit alone behind the elephant's ears, reducing the weightload and avoiding the painful blisters from the carrying chair. The rides should not be damaging to the elephant's spine if the duration is not more than one hour and the elephant is allowed breaks between the treks. The elephants should be allowed most of their time socialising and playing with each other in an expanse wetland area. (Tourism Concern 2014.)

### **3 The Green Tourist – urban legend or reality?**

*'It must be remembered that tourists are seeking an escape from their everyday existence. While on vacation, they do not want to be burdened with the concerns of the normal world.'* (McKercher 1993 in Dolnicar 2015, 142.)

In agreement with this notion, and despite the extensive research conducted on them, there is still little evidence of the actual existence of green tourists, or ecotourists, environmentally friendly tourists, sustainable tourists or biocentric tourists. Neither is there common understanding of this group's potential market size or characteristics of the typical green tourist. (Dolnicar 2015, 141.) Accordingly, this chapter is dedicated to the complex, somewhat distorted concept of green tourist. Different values are given attention while attempting to better understand the motivations to act green in a holiday context. Additionally, instead of simply trying to distinguish the green tourist from the mass tourist, the focus is on exploring the different shades of tourists' green thinking, particularly in terms of attitudes towards wildlife.

#### **3.1 'Could the real green tourist please stand up?'**

One factor to the vagueness of the concept of green tourist is the way of studies conducted attempting to profile green tourists. Approximately a third of studies focus on tourists in parks and protected areas. About 20% of studies investigate tourists in popular eco-destinations, whereas another 20% focus on tourists who stay in eco-lodges. While tourists who wish to minimise their environmental impact are likely to visit parks, protected areas and eco-destinations, the reverse conclusion is unlikely to be true: not everyone who visits an eco-destination, a park or a protected area, not everyone who stays at an eco-lodge, is a green tourist. These empirical studies conducted mainly during 1990-2010 have not succeeded in truly profiling the green tourist, also the definitions vary greatly. Consequently, a solid, commonly accepted definition of a green tourist has yet to be established. Additionally, research around green tourists can be either intentions or outcome based, while the majority of studies to date is focused on intentions. Very little, if any, steady proof exists on green tourists actually behaving in a green manner in a holiday context. (Dolnicar 2015, 141-142.) Interestingly, the first real examples of tourists' concern with green issues, at least among British tourists, regarded wildlife welfare. It was because of the media and animal welfare pressure groups that these issues raised in tourists a response of some degree. By the end of the 1990's tourists were less likely to:

- buy souvenirs made from animals
- take photographs with monkeys and bears kept in captivity
- attend bullfights or events with a reputation of cruelty towards animals

(Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 185.)

The emergence of the green tourist has been based on two arguments driven from research: (1) the rapid growth in demand for holidays referred to as *ecotourism* as evidence of tourists' heightened environmental awareness, and (2) the emergence of the green consumer in general as well as in a tourism context. (Cater 1993; Mintel 1994; Fennell 1999; in Telfer & Sharpley 2008, 163-164). Interestingly, Mintel (2007, in Telfer & Sharpley 2008, 163-164) found in a more recent study that although green consumerism is increasing, consumers buy eco-friendly products more likely to feel good about themselves than for altruistic motivations.

### **50 shades of green**

As Swarbrooke and Horner (2007, 180) argue, one cannot discuss green tourists with the assumption that they are a homogenous group. Tourists have different personalities and views of their own that distinguish them from other tourists. It is therefore recommended to use different shades of green when discussing the complex group of green tourists. After all, as can be seen from table 1, there is much variation between the dark green tourist and the one with absolutely no hint of green. Table 1 demonstrates the level of interest in green issues, as well as readiness to sacrifices, in direct relation to examples of tourist behaviour. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 180-182.)

Table 1. Shades of green tourist (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 182)

Not at all green	*Read about green issues and sustainable tourism from holidays brochures	No sacrifice made because of views	Shallow interest in all green issues	Large proportion of the population
Light green	*Consider green issues and attempt to reduce normal water consumption in destinations with scarcity of water			
	*Consciously seek information on a particular green issue, more active involvement in the issue, join a pressure group	Some minor sacrifices made because of views		
	*Use public transportation to get to the destination and to move around during holiday			
Dark green	*Boycott hotels and resorts with a poor reputation on green issues *Buy a conservation or volunteer holiday	Major sacrifices made because of views	Deep interest in all green issues, or deep interest in one issue particularly	Small proportion of the population
Totally green	*Not take holidays away from home whatsoever so as not to harm the environment as a tourist			

As there are different levels of green thinking among tourists, there is no exception regarding wildlife use in tourism. Next we focus on the differing values specifically towards wildlife in tourism.

### **3.2 Our views on wildlife in a tourism context**

Wild animals have played significant, diverse roles in tourism for centuries. Wild animals have been used for transportation, attraction (dead or alive, wild or captive), souvenirs and components of ethnic cuisine. They have contributed to tourism as destination icons and ambassadors of nature. (Markwell 2015, 1.) Over time a major shift has occurred in the way humans regard animals, and more recently, the changing of attitudes seems to be getting more volume. As Fennell suggests, the tourism industry cannot afford to ignore these changing values and attitudes. (Fennell 2012, 9.)

Wildlife have generally been regarded as a resource for humans. Even conservation efforts have traditionally based on wildlife's use to humankind. Today's modern aesthetic and ethical values of wildlife are still competing with the traditional, more utilitarian values, such as medicinal, agricultural and industrial values. Our attitudes towards wildlife seem to derive from two different worldviews. Worldviews are a fascinating, wide topic itself, but the two most common worldviews can be divided according to whether or not we put humans at the centre of things. The human-centred, i.e. anthropocentric worldview that dominates most Western industrial societies, predominantly regards nature as a pool of resources which humanity has the freedom to use for its own purposes (Miller 2004 in Newsome, Dowling & Moore 2005, 2). An ethic of using and consuming is strong in how humans relate to nature and animals. The key principles of the human-centred worldview assume that the Earth has an unlimited resource supply and that humans are the planet's most important species and that they are in charge of, and unaffected by, the nature. Whereas the life-centred, i.e. ecocentric worldview recognises biodiversity as a vital element for all life on Earth. It believes that nature is for all species and that people are not in charge of or unaffected by nature. The popular phrase 'People need the Earth, but the Earth does not need people' by Miller (2004, in Newsome, Dowling & Moore 2005, 2) is in the core of the life-centred way of thinking. Miller suggests that a healthy economy is dependent on a healthy environment. The backbone of this idea is that human survival, life quality and economies have a direct relationship and dependency to the rest of the natural world. (Newsome et al. 2005, 2.)

According to Newsome et al. (2005, 92-93) how we view wildlife is based on our value orientations. Those orientations provide us with beliefs about our relationship to wildlife, such as the importance of wildlife. Many different cultural perspectives exist on viewing wildlife, for example, Western vs. Eastern and indigenous vs. non-indigenous. While there is much literature on value orientations toward the environment and wildlife, the view of wildlife in a tourism context seems to derive from four key universal values. These core values are demonstrated in figure 3. (Newsome et al. 2005, 92-93.)

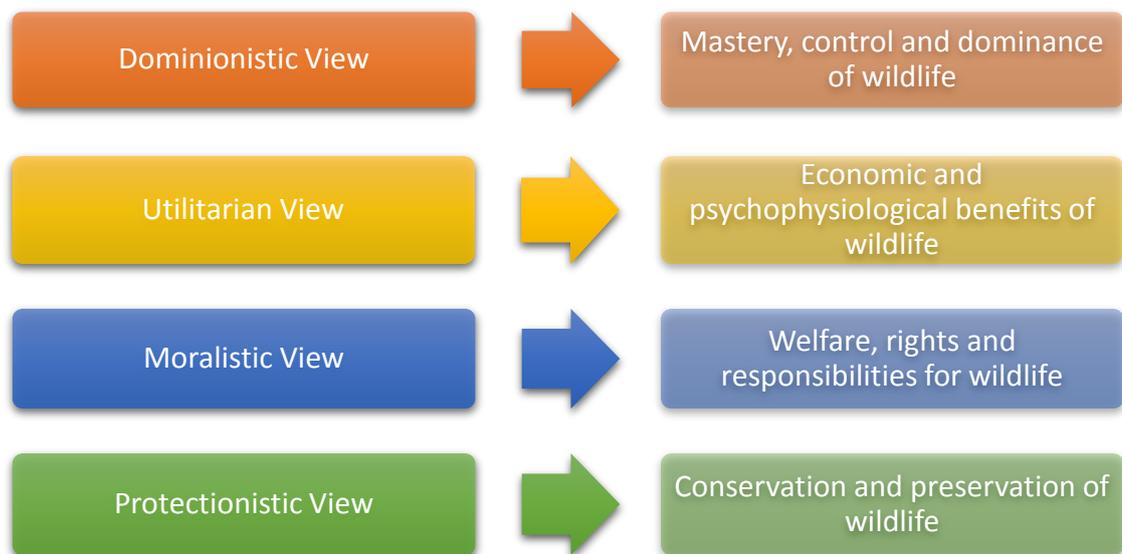


Figure 3. Four key determinants of our view of wildlife in a tourism context (Newsome et al. 2005, 93)

According to the dominionistic view, which seems to be common in many societies, animals in wildlife tourism are subordinate to humans. It is based on a human-centred, anthropocentric worldview of human dominion over other species. This view that wildlife can and should be controlled is the most popular within wildlife tourists who practice hunting. Dominionistic view of wildlife is commonly present in zoos, aquariums and wildlife parks where confinement, artificial environments and animal performances demonstrate the mastery and control people have over animals. Of concern has been the negative influence such settings may have on tourists' attitudes towards wildlife, whether these encounters have the ability to reinforce attitudes of mastery over animals and nature. On the other hand, conservation and preservation of endangered species is a primary objective at some of these facilities. (Newsome et al. 2005, 93.)

The second view closely related to dominionistic view is the utilitarian view towards wildlife. It is a very descriptive view of wildlife tourism for its nature of benefiting humans. Firstly, wildlife tourism provides economic income to tourism providers, but also important

psychophysiological and emotional benefits to all wildlife tourists. The utilitarian view is slightly more respectful towards wildlife than its predecessor, however, it is similarly considered anthropocentric for its focus on the 'use value' of animals instead of recognising any intrinsic value of animals themselves. (Newsome et al. 2005, 94.)

The third, moralistic view focuses on animal welfare and rights and human responsibility towards wildlife. It criticises the way wildlife tourism industry uses, exploits and manipulates wild animals for the sole purpose of entertaining tourists or for economic benefits for the tourism provider. While still reflecting the two human-centred views discussed above, the moralistic view implies the lack of moralistic considerations at an industry level as well as the disregarded responsibilities of an individual tourist. (Newsome et al. 2005, 94-95.)

The fourth view is the most modern of them all: the protectionistic view. Providers and consumers in the wildlife tourism industry who have a strong protectionistic view of wildlife are increasingly evident. Their major motive for a tourism activity is the conservation and preservation of species. The settings providing these activities include wildlife reserves and zoos involved in breeding and release programmes of endangered species, as well as various 'into-the-wild' programmes which combine conservation to tourism. One example is the mountain gorilla ecotourism programme developed with the International Gorilla Conservation Programme. This protectionistic view of wildlife generates from an ecocentric worldview only in case it acknowledges the intrinsic value of wildlife. This intrinsic value is the value of wildlife itself, independent of human valuing. Whereas in other cases – particularly in the developing countries – the motive for conservation is initiated with the motive of welfare of people, depending on the welfare of wildlife. Wildlife tourism is perceived as a way of generating income for the communities desperately in need of income, located in areas inhabited by endangered species. Such wildlife tourism programmes have the ability to both provide alternative livelihoods to some locals and introduce means of benefitting economically from conservation. (Newsome et al. 2005, 95-97.)

Newsome and his colleagues recognise a general, emerging shift in these values from utilitarian to protectionist. In the context of wildlife, it has been argued that the higher value people have towards wildlife, in particular towards certain species, the more probable it is to be motivated to protect and conserve that particular species. (Newsome et al. 2005, 95-97.) The heterogeneity of the wildlife tourism market is supported by a study of stingray viewing tourists by Semeniuk et al. (2009). Two dominating tourist groups were recognised: the ecotourists (protectionists) that supported conservation fees and measures to protect stingrays and the mainstream tourists (utilitarian) that put more value on the novelty of the activity than the welfare of the animals. (In Fennell 2012, 193.)

## **4 Method**

This study investigates how aware wildlife tourists of a certain demographic group actually are of the responsibility of the attractions they visit – concerning wildlife welfare and endangered species conservation. An understanding of their relationship to nature and animals in general is an expected result of the study as well. This chapter introduces the method of research, the respondents and nature of the interviews conducted. Following that is the chapter of results and summary.

### **4.1 Qualitative research method**

According to Kananen (2014, 17), qualitative research aims to profoundly understand a somewhat unknown phenomenon, whereas quantitative research aims to measure the frequencies and variability of a phenomenon previously studied. Hence for this particular thesis, qualitative research method is the appropriate one. The author aims to gain understanding of attitudes on wildlife welfare and conservation and has not come across comprehensive academic literature related to the phenomenon. Observing tourist behaviour on site in a wildlife attraction would have been extremely fascinating for the author, providing an authentic situation to study how tourists regard wildlife. However, as Kananen (2014, 66) suggests, observation is not the appropriate method when studying human thinking (read: attitudes) since thoughts cannot be studied from outside of the object. Instead, for the purposes of this thesis, open-ended, thematically structured interviews are the fit implementation method. Open discussion is much needed when studying the complex world of ethics and attitudes. As such, crucial to this study is to understand a few characteristics and the validity of an interview situation.

Primarily, being a face-to-face situation between two or more persons, an interview has the possibility of generating false interpretation, which contaminates the reliability and validity of the research. The respondent may give information depending on the situation, not necessarily truthfully. Received information may also be twisted or turned to suit the interviewer's own advantage. Secondly, there is the complexity of spoken language and multi-meaning of words. Much can be said with saying nothing at all. Non-verbal, say body language, can also communicate something entirely different than spoken words. Finally, much of the gained information depends on the interviewer's abilities. Sensitivity and a knack for "reading between the lines" are necessary. In order to gain valid information, the interviewer must, starting from the first seconds of an interview situation, build an atmosphere of trust with a respectful, interested attitude. The respondent's opinions shall not be

questioned, nor shall the interviewer present opinions of his/her own. (Kananen 2014, 71-73.)

## 4.2 Target group and interviews

The respondents of this study comprise a somewhat demographically homogenised group. All of the four interviewees are female, between 22-25 years old. All are Finnish, undergraduate tourism or business students at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, acquaintances to the author. All four have either studied or worked abroad in addition to their leisure travels so it could be said that all of them are travel-oriented at the least. Before this study, the author was not aware of the attitudes towards wildlife or towards nature of these particular acquaintances – only that they had taken part in non-consumptive wildlife activities (or activities seemingly less harmful to wildlife) during their travels. Preceding the interviews, the author had not discussed animal welfare, wildlife conservation or responsible wildlife tourism with the respondents. Nor was the author familiar with their views on ecotourism, or green tourism. They were selected simply by their previous partaking in a semi-consumptive or non-consumptive wildlife activity. All interviewees have been given random aliases in order to protect their anonymity: Madeleine, Esther, Priscilla and Amanda. The interviewees and their ages are presented in table 2. It also shows the date, place and duration of the interviews conducted.

Table 2. Conducted interviews

Interviewee	Date	Place	Duration (min)
Madeleine, 23	12 May 2016	Casa Largo restaurant, Helsinki	26:15
Esther, 22	17 May 2016	Coffee House, Porvoo	28:13
Priscilla, 25	18 May 2016	Haaga-Helia Campus, Porvoo	12:28
Amanda, 24	19 May 2016	Home via Skype	22:19

The interviews were conducted face-to-face in a peaceful café or campus setting which enabled successful recording. All interviews were recorded in order to enable the author to return to the answers during analysis. After all, pauses, hesitation and sounds can provide additional information into the interview. The interviews were executed during two weeks in May 2016 and the interview language was Finnish. One interview was conducted via Skype. The questionnaire was thematically structured with open questions, providing a backbone for the interview. These questions were focused around three main themes: (1) relationship to nature and animals, (2) wildlife tourism experiences and (3) attitudes to wildlife conservation. Questions that could be answered with simply “yes” or “no”

were avoided because of their inability to bring comprehensive information into a qualitative study (Kananen 2014, 73-74).

### 4.3 Reliability and validity

The homogenisation of the respondent group may rise doubt towards the reliability of this study, hence during the process *study on tourist attitudes* in the work title was replaced with *study of young female traveller attitudes*, referring to the concise group of female students of age 22-25. However, it is that similarity of the interviewees' backgrounds that offers a chance to investigate possible differences in attitudes and values within a seemingly homogenised group. It has been fascinating to notice those different shades of green in a group of people with such similar demographic backgrounds.

The reliability and validity of this study comes under a further scrutiny with the fact that all the interviewees are acquaintances to the author. The risks that brings into an interview situation have to be addressed. The interviewees were asked to remain as honest as possible with their answers, regardless of what their perceptions of the author's own opinions were. Furthermore, they were reminded that there are no wrong or right answers in the discussion of personal opinions and standpoints. Emphasised was the *you* in the questions: *'What does ecotourist mean to You?'*; *'In Your own words, how would You describe your relationship to nature and animals?'* This was to prevent the possibility of the interviewees trying to respond with seemingly right answers or with answers that they thought might be in correlation to the author's own opinions. Additionally, the interviewees were encouraged to engage in any relating topic they had opinions of, regardless of that topic being excluded from the actual interview questions. This was to ensure the flexibility of discussion in order to enable the discovery of new standpoints and related issues to the phenomenon.

Finally, there are always risks with the credibility of a study when the researcher herself feels strongly opinionated towards the topic. To myself wildlife welfare in tourism, and in general, is an extremely important subject, one that really needs to be discussed. I have always had a close relationship to nature and animals. During my first five years – which I hear are the most crucial ones in a child's development – I did everything with our Labrador. We lived in the countryside where pets are usually allowed to be free. Being a curious child, with René the dog I had my first (unauthorised) adventures in the neighbourhood, wearing nothing but diapers. She never let her eyes off of me, according to my mother. A

saying *raised by the wolves* comes to mind. Whereas wild animals have always had a certain draw on me. It is their freedom and adventurous, daring lifestyle that intrigues me. That is why it is also hard for me to imagine them in confinement, without stimulation, simply entertaining humans. Endangered wildlife should be managed responsibly, with respect, until it is safe for them to return to the wild. Naturally, I have for a while wondered about what my peers think about the subject: how close or far are their views from my own? This kind of thinking is surely risky when creating interview questions and conducting the interview with someone familiar. That is why I took care in creating the questions and made sure to appropriately conduct an interview, without letting my own views affect the answers. Moreover, regardless of my own opinions, I have a strong appreciation for the truth in everything. I believe that in order to fully understand the big picture, one has to explore the different views people have related to the issue. Hence I would rather have the respondents of this study tell me they do not share my opinions on the issue if that is how they feel, rather than try to sell them my own views.

## 5 The results

The findings of the interviews are first introduced by the themes dominating the discussion, separating the respondents' answers from each other in a chronological order. It is recommended to read appendices 1 and 2 (Interview questions both in English and Finnish) before the following sub-chapters. Some questions that raised during the interview process are not included in the original question form. In order to help the reader follow the direction of conversation, direct quotations to questions and to the respondents' answers are italicised with quotation marks. The respondents' aliases are bolded when first introduced within a theme. Finally a summary of the findings is presented.

### 5.1 Relationship to nature and animals

**Madeleine's** relationship to nature had always been a close one. She saw nature as a place of relaxation, a place of troubled minds to find comfort in. She described herself as an animal lover and emphasised the importance of some occasional '*animal love*'. Madeleine described ecotourism as responsible travelling that does not burden the nature. She also related good conscience to ecotourism. She considered ecotourist as a clever, responsible tourist who thinks about nature and the destination country of travel.

**Esther** told about her experiences as a tour guide in Kenya as a changing point in her relationship to nature. The hectic lifestyle of an excursion guide with a prestigious Finnish tourism operator made her want to spend her days off in nature, away from people. In Kenya she fell in love with the local nature and wildlife. With knowledge about particular species, her relationship to wildlife became a close one. Esther found the concept of ecotourism a very contradictory one and large-scale: '*Can travelling truly be 'eco'?*' However, she understood ecotourism better now that she had been working and studying in the tourism field. To her ecotourism meant sustainable tourism that included the protection of nature in a way that enables a continuum for nature's wellbeing in the future as well. She included the consideration of local people's wellbeing in the concept of ecotourism and talked about small, simple deeds in making a difference, e.g. recycling and water use. Esther saw ecotourist firstly as someone who considers the means of transport from home to the destination. Above all, she pressed the importance of tourist behaviour at the destination – choosing those services that were eco-friendly, but also ethical, supporting the local service providers. She did not regard herself as an ecotourist but more of an ethical tourist. She was aware of corruption and poor working conditions in the tourism industry in developing countries. Her sustainable thinking was directed more towards people rather than wildlife.

**Priscilla** emphasised her relationship to nature being a close one. She enjoyed and respected nature and would even like to live in a nature environment. Although she liked animals, they did not fit in her lifestyle as pets at the moment, for the time and dedication they need. While discussing ecotourism, she first mentioned airplanes as a means of travel that should be avoided. Particularly business travellers should focus on more eco-friendly means of travel than flying, since they fly very often. She also talked about avoiding littering and saving natural resources. Priscilla regarded ecotourist as someone who *'respects the local lifestyle at the destination and makes an effort to adapt to it'*. As an example, *'travelling to a developing country and not consuming like the typical westerner'*.

**Amanda's** relationship to nature and animals was close. She had been raised in a nature environment where their family had pets and a horse farm. Her motivation to engage in nature-based tourism came from her affinity to nature and, consequently, from the need to get into a nature environment. Living in the city made her want to escape the hustle and bustle as well as other people. She suggested that her longing for nature perhaps comes from her background, growing up in a countryside environment. She enjoyed going to a nature environment where human handprint is not evident everywhere. She also mentioned the calming effect nature has on her. Ecotourism to Amanda meant environmentally friendly travelling: choosing an eco-friendly hotel as well as eco-friendly means of transport, and not basing choices on money first. Ecotourist she saw as someone who thinks and behaves in an eco-friendly manner, including at the destination of travel. Ecotourist recycles and uses the services of tourism operators that take nature into account.

## **5.2 Wildlife tourism experiences**

The interviewees were asked about their visits to wildlife attractions, focusing mainly on wildlife in a natural or semi-natural environment such as natural parks or sanctuaries. A summary of these attractions was already inquired of them in the process of selecting interviewees. Only those that had personal experience of wildlife tourism featuring endangered wildlife were considered applicable for the purposes of this study.

**Madeleine** had visited a zoo in Singapore and two different elephant sanctuaries in Chiang Mai, Thailand. All visits took place in autumn 2015. Hug Elephant Sanctuary's activity of bathing with elephants occurred in an open environment, with the elephants free of any type of shackles. The tourists were given cucumbers to feed the elephants in order to gain their trust. She also mentioned local guides in the elephant bath activity. The other

elephant visit in Chiang Mai comprised of walking with the (free) elephants into a river bank and there watching them have a bath. There Madeleine had had a memorable experience of feeling a kick of a baby elephant while caressing the side of a pregnant one, soon to give birth. In the Singapore zoo monkeys did not have a pen of their own but instead were walking free among the zoo visitors. The orangutans had a pen and tourists were given the opportunity to have a photo with a baby orangutan. Madeleine recalled the zoo being a responsible one in some way, but could not remember the exact justification for this.

Madeleine did not recall noticing any animal maltreatment in the above wildlife attractions. All animals seemed happy and well, which was evidently a crucial contributor to her own enjoyment at these attractions. The reason she made these particular wildlife visits was that she wanted to support sustainable, animal-friendly tourism. She referred to doing something for a good cause. She had '*seen much bad*' in this area of tourism and did not want to see an elephant do tricks. Madeleine enjoyed the fact that the elephant was free to simply stand alone, away from the others, if it so wished, not being forced to come and greet the tourists. She preferred these open, interactive environments over zoos. She preferred to see animals in good condition but also to get in close contact with them. She talked particularly about the elephant in a respectful manner.

**Esther** had visited Masai Mara, East and West Tsavo and Lake Nakuru, all national parks. The visits took place in Kenya between autumn 2013 and spring 2014. She got acquainted with Masai Mara and East Tsavo in terms of her work since those destinations were sold by the Finnish tourism operator she worked for in Kenya. She wanted to see a rhino and flamingos so went to Lake Nakuru and Naivasha. She did not recall noticing any signs of animal maltreatment. The guides in the jeep safaris were all locals, with high knowledge of how to approach and treat wildlife. When asked if the guides gave the tourists clear instructions on how to behave near wildlife, Esther said there was a rather '*hakuna matata*' atmosphere, implying a lack of orders. She had even heard of an incident where a cheetah jumped into the tourists' car. She recalled receiving feedback from customers that it was rather scary that they were allowed to go so close to the wild animals. She said we in the western countries are much more afraid of the savannah wildlife, whereas the locals are very comfortable around them. Esther distinguished Masai Mara from the bigger national parks in the way wildlife reacted to people. Since Masai Mara was small in size and big in numbers of animals, they acted more calmly in the presence of humans – whereas in other destinations the animals could get more easily irritated by tourists since they had more living space and thus were not so accustomed to humans. This she had discussed with the local guides and they had agreed. Esther told the best feeling

in these safaris was when she was allowed to get out of the car in Lake Nakuru – this was highly controlled or prohibited altogether in most destinations.

Esther continued with noting that although wildlife exist in Finland as well, we never see them. She recalled the feeling of discovery: '*They actually exist!*' and the feeling of being close to nature, when seeing wildlife. She also placed importance on the photos she had taken, even after the experience browsing the photos and still wondering in amazement, '*Have I really been there?*' The calming effect of nature was also a crucial part of her wildlife tourism experience.

**Priscilla** had gone to an elephant trekking safari in Ao Nang, Thailand, in 2012. She had also seen wild monkeys in Gibraltar in 2010. She had not had a personal motivation for going on an elephant safari, instead the initiation came from her travel companion. The wild monkeys in Gibraltar she simply came across with, rather than searching for them particularly. At the elephant trekking safari the driver sat behind the elephant's ears while the tourists sat in a carrying chair. Occasionally, some tourists were allowed to take the role of the driver, sitting at the elephant's back of neck. Priscilla did not believe the elephants were very well treated. It depended on the driver who controlled the elephant. Priscilla's driver was indifferent and occasionally hit the elephant with a stick whereas the other drivers simply patted their elephants. The elephant did not seem to want to be there, it was hot and it did not seem happy at all to Priscilla. While not on a trek, the elephants were chained so that they could not move from the scorching sunlight. This made Priscilla think that they absolutely were not well treated elephants. As a summary of her visit, seeing the elephants made her feel sorry for them. While she had not visited many wildlife attractions previously, this experience did not provoke any positive feelings either. She did mention later during the interview that at the time of the elephant safari she was not very aware of the many elephants' maltreatment in tourism industry. She mentioned internet videos in raising her awareness.

**Amanda** had visited wild orangutans in Sumatra, Indonesia, in 2016. To her it was a must to see endangered orangutans in a jungle environment as they only exist in the wild in Sumatra and Borneo. The orangutans had been partially raised in a specific rehabilitation centre for orangutans, and consequently, some individuals were very friendly towards humans. The local guides lured them closer with food but gave the tourists strict orders not to touch them. This gave Amanda the impression that the guides respected the animals. They also knew every orangutan by their name and one orangutan in particular was known for his aggressive and unpredictable nature – this individual was advised to be avoided. She thought the locals treated the orangutans well and observed them regularly.

The environment being wild, a jungle, it could not be guaranteed that they would see any orangutans, but they were lucky to see many.

In 2016 Amanda visited Elephant Jungle Sanctuary in Chiang Mai, Thailand. It was a sort of elephant village. The three elephants lived free but they had humans as caretakers providing food and water. She thought there were too many tourists at the same time interacting with the elephants. They also had a mud bath with the elephants and afterwards washed them. The animals did seem happy to Amanda, however, as she had discussed with other tourists on site, the whole truth was not necessarily visible to them. After all, it is not normal for a wild animal to be so human-friendly – to the point of being touched and patted by multiple people at a time – she mused. During the visit she had the doubt in the back of her mind, about whether the animals had been trained in a fully animal-friendly manner.

In autumn 2015 Amanda went on a dolphin sightseeing tour in Bali. She had never seen dolphins so she wanted to see them in the wild as well as the orangutans. She preferred to see them in nature rather than in an aquarium. However, Amanda did not like the fact that there were too many boats on the same tour. When the swarm of dolphins finally arrived, all the boats started chasing the animals: *'If someone had seen a dolphin, the others had to see it as well'*. With this the guides wanted to make sure the tourists would see some dolphins, but it just scared them away. Amanda thought it was very inconsiderate of the guides to ride the boat straight at the direction of the dolphins. She would have appreciated just watching them from a distance, knowing it could not be possible to get in close contact with a wild dolphin. It all made her feel that she was not really engaging in a wild-life activity.

### **5.3 Attitudes towards wildlife conservation**

**Madeleine** did not provide a specific definition when asked about her perception of animal protection. She answered that it is about protecting animal rights and about being responsible towards animals. At this moment it was discovered that the term 'animal protection' in the question shall be replaced with 'endangered species conservation'. The author came to acknowledge the vagueness of animal protection as a concept, referring to animals in general – including farm animals and test animals in science, for example. The question had to be rearranged to focus on endangered species conservation, which commonly refers to exotic wildlife (which is often affected by tourism to these exotic destina-

tions). This realisation came with the need for an entirely new question in order to investigate the perceptions of wildlife conservation: can the interviewees name any current endangered species or organisations that work to protect them?

The question '*How was wildlife conservation demonstrated or evident in the (related) destinations?*' actually triggered Madeleine to talk about the contrary – about destinations conducting in irresponsible, animal-abusing behaviour. She criticised zoos that involve elephants doing tricks and the amount of the controversial elephant riding particularly in Phuket. She, as many others, had a negative image of the infamous Tiger Temple, drugging their tigers. She did not believe it was possible in any ethical way to make a wild animal such as the tiger accustomed to humans or domesticated. She called all of it dirty business and noted that tourists are not generally aware of it or not interested in it. Madeleine had noticed that wildlife tourism in northern Thailand was clearly more responsible, whereas in southern Thailand more irresponsible tourism operators dominated the market. She was then asked again whether she noticed any visible conservation efforts in these destinations she regarded responsible. Here she mentioned generally places that worked on the animals' terms but also admitted to not focusing on conservation that much herself. She thought, however, that the promoting of wildlife conservation in tourism settings is poor, that the marketing towards tourists is not visible.

Among the last questions was one regarding the interviewees' opinion of volunteering holidays related to endangered species conservation. Madeleine thought it was basically a good idea but too expensive. She did not comprehend why tourists have to pay such amounts in order to be of help. She was amazed at the price of several hundreds of euros for a week of volunteering in a Thai elephant sanctuary. Madeleine did seem to put value on this type of volunteering and appreciate the people who did it, but did not express a personal interest to go on this type of holiday.

The last question inquired about the interviewees' possible change of views towards conservation after having a personal experience with endangered wildlife. Madeleine told she was not aware of the clear difference between North and South Thailand in regarding responsible wildlife tourism, until her recent experiences in 2015. She highlighted the experience in raising her awareness. She said it would be nice to help but that she does not know how to. Instead of making a monetary donation, she hoped it would be possible to help by bringing food or medical supplies to the animals. This way she could be sure her help goes to the right target. With a monetary donation she could not trust that.

**Esther** mentioned WWF and rhino when asked if she knew any endangered species or related NGO's (non-governmental organisations). She wanted to see the rhino particularly for its highly threatened state. At this point she also told having visited an orphanage for elephants. One orphanage only welcomed visitors who had adopted an elephant, i.e. donated money for the orphanage. She visited another orphanage where she bought a jacket of approximately 50 euros, from which the profits were said to go directly to the conservation of these elephants. Elephant adoption was encouraged in the printed guide of the tourism company she worked for. The company itself had adopted three elephants. Apart from Kenya, Esther had not seen any other destination during her travels that went to such lengths in aiding both local people and endangered wildlife in distress.

Esther was then asked about her perception of endangered species conservation. She first said it is necessary, but not very visible. She told about her employee's offered tour to see an endemic primate species that only exists in the shores of Mombasa. The profits from the entrance tickets, she said, were used for the conservation of this rare endangered species. Esther was surprised at the level of progressiveness in ethical and ecological approaches particularly in Mombasa and Kenya that she still regarded as developing countries. In the context of endangered species conservation, she also mentioned her employee's boat tours to see dolphins. In those particular tours playing with dolphins was not allowed, different from e.g. some Mexican destinations. The dolphins swam free in the ocean. She told about a marine national park, where snorkelling and scuba diving fees were partially used in the conservation work of the area's marine life.

Esther had previously experienced it troubling to form her own opinion on volunteering holidays in general. She wanted to do volunteer work but was sceptic towards the intermediary in between the volunteer worker and the target in need of help. In developing countries, according to her, the volunteering agencies can be very greedy. Some major tour operators also acquire a hefty amount from the profits originally directed to the aid targets. The locals are left with nothing – this was truly enraging to Esther. She acknowledged the existence of organisations conducting in ethical manners, serving to the local's needs. However, she argued that the initiation for sustainable and ethical tourism activities often comes from the tourists' own need for experiencing exotic things, rather than from a perspective that supports local communities' wellbeing. At this point she told about her employee's offered tours in co-operation with WWF to a local village in Kenya. The tribe living in the village lived close to nature, collecting herbs to make potions. Tourists were encouraged to donate to the village a preferred amount of money. The tourists could then decide how much they actually donated. Esther told about her friends spending 3 months at this village as volunteer workers. She wondered whether their help on site – not having

specific skills such as a nurse or an engineer would have – was very helpful to the community compared to the more efficient financial donations.

Esther was more inclined towards helping indigenous communities than endangered wildlife. As she mentioned earlier, her sustainable thinking is directed more towards people than nature. She did agree with having a personal experience ignite a change in her attitudes towards helping communities in distress. Again she talked about corruption and that it is best to go to the destination and there make the decision on to which target to donate money. Esther was encouraged to suggest any ideas on how donating could be most effective, achieving its appropriate target. She first pressed the importance of information as she herself informed her customers about the right channels to use for donations. As she worked for a prestigious Finnish tourism operator, she thought Finnish tourists could trust in the guidance of another trustworthy Finn. She said the bigger an NGO was, the more corrupted it usually was. Again she sided the local NGOs rather than the international ones, such as WWF. Esther said it is also easier today to search for information from the internet, as more and more people have travelled around the world and shared their information online. She pressed the importance of doing small things and the importance of small units that could guide tourists on how to donate effectively. Also when tourists can see for their selves the concrete donation, they can trust their donation has had a significance. Esther's employee encouraged tourists to bring clothes and toys to an African orphanage during the visitation, which is a very concrete and visible, thus trustworthy way to make a donation. They also asked customers to leave their sunscreens at the end of their holidays for the local albino children. In the context of wildlife conservation, she said adopting was a nice way to help wildlife. Particularly because after having adopted one, they were allowed to pet the elephant. It was a peculiar experience, allowed for only those having adopted an elephant.

**Priscilla** mentioned the fight against poaching within the context of endangered species conservation. She talked about first and foremost enabling wildlife to live in their natural habitats. The second best solution, she suggested, was parks and zoo-like environments that protect wildlife that cannot survive in their own habitats. Priscilla, as well, recognised WWF as a conservation organisation and panda, rhino and Saimaa ringed seal as endangered species.

Priscilla regarded volunteering holidays generally as something very positive but emphasised the dedication volunteer tourists need to take instead of just seeing it as a laid-back holiday. The length of a volunteering holiday should be sufficient enough in order to gen-

erate real benefit to the target of aid, rather than drawbacks. Although considering volunteering as an absolutely good idea, she did not see any sense in *'everyone engaging in it for just one week, just petting animals'*. The experience of elephant trekking clearly did not have an effect on her views towards wildlife conservation, since this particular wildlife attraction was not conservation-oriented. Instead the internet videos had had more of an effect on Priscilla. However, she did not see herself going on a volunteer holiday at the moment because she hoped to settle down in her life. *'At a younger age, when doing a lot of backpacking, I could have done it if I had known about it'*. Finally, she did not want to exclude the possibility of doing it someday.

**Amanda** saw wildlife conservation as taking care to not reduce animal populations. Preventing hunting, protecting the animals and aiding in breeding were all part of wildlife conservation according to her. She recognised WWF as a wildlife conservation organisation. Of endangered species she knew orangutans, and that some sub-species of rhinos that she did not remember the name of, were also endangered. She knew the list of endangered species is a long one, but could not name more species at the moment.

The question *'How was wildlife conservation demonstrated or evident in the (related) destinations?'* was also presented to Amanda. She mentioned the rehabilitation centre for orangutans in Sumatra, which provided much information on conservation for tourists. When asked about possible entrance fees used for conservation, she told about Elephant Jungle Sanctuary in Chiang Mai, that was selling jewellerys and other souvenirs to tourists. These profits were then said to be used for the upkeep of the elephants. She was sceptic of the fact that the entrance fee amounts at the orangutan destination were set by a higher authority, not by the organisation itself. This made her doubt if the money goes to the appropriate target rather than to the government, for example.

Amanda thought volunteering holidays related to wildlife conservation was a *'pleasant idea – if it has been organised well'*, she added. She also related fraud to the business of volunteering, expressing scepticism towards the industry similarly to the other interviewees. She doubted if many elephant sanctuaries were actually working for the protection of the animals. She highlighted the importance of making sure that the destination of volunteering is trustworthy.

To Amanda, donating money to the wildlife attraction visited did not seem like a reliable way of helping endangered animals. Similar to other respondents, she also doubted if a monetary donation would reach its original goal. Finally, she was encouraged to propose any ideas on how anyone could support conservation in a way that the support could be

trusted to reach its target. She also, as other respondents, talked about donating objects (or food), rather than money, as a more trustworthy means of support.

#### **5.4 Summary**

It would seem that wildlife welfare is a familiar topic among the respondents of this study, if not necessarily the main point of their wildlife tourism activities. Moreover, as is suggested in wildlife tourism literature, tourists seem to be most interested in specific charismatic megafauna such as the rhinoceros, the Asian elephant and the orangutan, out of all endangered wildlife. The alert state of endangerment of these species is often the very reason to go see them. What comes to elephant tourism in Thailand, this study truly speaks for its popularity, and consequently, for its dark side. Comforting was to find out that two out of three respondents having engaged in the activity, were at the time aware of the truth of Thai elephant tourism and had tried to find more responsible ways of interacting with these magnificent animals.

All respondents reported having a close relationship to nature. They saw it as a place of harmony and relaxation, an opposite force to the hectic city life. This was not, of course, a direct indicator of a close relationship to animals, as only two of the four respondents expressed a deeper affection for them. None of the respondents regarded themselves as an ecotourist but all had a somewhat similar picture of it: a tourist who leaves home the western, over-consumptive behaviour.

The results of this study suggest a change in attitudes towards wildlife, where greener shades can be seen. The respondents preferred to see wild animals in the wild or at least in as natural as possible environment. Some expressed their dislike towards zoos. Particularly for the two interviewees with a closer relationship towards animals, it was important not to harm the animals with their tourist activities. One was evidently appalled by the way elephants are treated in some Thai elephant attractions, whereas the other criticised the way the guides drove the boats too close to the dolphins and scared them away. These two respondents seemed to have a more profound respect towards wildlife, and shared their doubts of touching a wild animal. Although they enjoyed a close contact with wildlife themselves, they thought it was not in a wild animal's nature to be touched by masses of humans. If touching was allowed, it made them doubt the responsibility of the wildlife attraction, in terms of training methods to make wild animals docile and tolerating of multiple tourists around them.

Only one of the respondents had made concrete actions to support wildlife conservation, in buying a jacket from which profits were allegedly used to the conservation of local elephants. It has to be noted that since all four respondents are students, monetary support for conservation was not an option in their travel budget. Particularly so because they related much corruption in the business of donations. Inspiring however is the fact that they did present alternative, more trustworthy ways to support endangered wildlife.

Figure 4 on the next page illustrates thematically the core findings of this study. The main combining feature of the respondents is how they regard nature as a calming retreat from everyday life. The respondents' relatively high awareness of ethical and ecological tourism dilemmas suggest a softening of the title ecotourist into a wider array of different shades of green tourists. The moralistic views of some respondents towards wildlife seem to make them search for more responsible wildlife tourism. However, concrete actions to support wildlife conservation are few because of much scepticism. More practical means of supporting wildlife conservation are suggested.

## Relationship to nature

- nature as a retreat to escape the hectic life and other people

none regarded themselves as ecotourists but expressed awareness, even concern in ethical and ecological dilemmas in tourism



the study of ecotourists should be combined with the more subtle study of shades of green tourists

## Wildlife tourism experiences

- state of endangerment as a motive to see wildlife
- wildlife welfare a familiar topic

moralistic view on wildlife / close relationship to animals (2 out of 4 respondents)



awareness of irresponsible wildlife tourism, importance of wildlife welfare



demand for more responsible wildlife tourism

## Wildlife conservation

- promotion of conservation towards tourists is poor, more visible selling of the idea needed

awareness of corruption and profit-seeking organisations



scepticism towards donations and volunteering holidays



more practical and transparent means for effectively incorporating tourists in wildlife conservation

Figure 4. Core findings of young female traveller attitudes towards responsible wildlife tourism, illustrated thematically

## 6 Discussion

The final chapter of this work links the core findings of the study to the theory presented. A new, unanticipated finding of the study is the poor quality of promotion of wildlife conservation towards tourists. Ideas for future research are suggested. A personal process evaluation ends the work.

### 6.1 Conclusions and development ideas

As McKercher 1993 (in Dolnicar 2015) wisely put it, tourists are seeking an escape from their everyday lives and do not want to be burdened with the concerns of the normal world. Despite the respondents' awareness on ethical and ecological issues in tourism – such as wildlife welfare, transportation emissions, local communities and western consumerism linked with mass tourism – they did not report of their own eco-friendly behaviour on holiday, thus did not regard themselves as ecotourists. Consequently, as Swarbrooke and Horner (2007) suggest, wiser would be to study the different shades of green tourists rather than just trying to distinguish the green tourists, or ecotourists, from the mass tourists. After all, western, young female travellers may have a much different 'green profile' from e.g. Latin American young male travellers, while it is acknowledged that they are both far from the typical ecotourist: the middle-aged, the well-educated, and the wealthy.

The results of this study suggest a change in attitudes towards wildlife, from utilitarian to moralistic, as Newsome et al. (2005) presented it. The protectionistic view was not evident within the interviewees, whether it be because of their personal views on wildlife or because of student budget preventing monetary support for wildlife conservation. As such, the respondents had not chosen the attractions based on their level of work on endangered species conservation. However, they had chosen the attractions based on their non-consumptive nature, highlighting the importance of seeing a wild animal in a natural environment. The cruelty of some Thai elephant tourism forms was acknowledged by the respondents who had been in Thailand. Tourism Concern's (2014) worry about the elephants' welfare in the tourism industry in Thailand was shared by the respondents.

Although the study of attitudes is said to be best conducted through interviews, I cannot help myself wondering about the possibilities of a more on-site research method in this case. It would be fascinating to combine with interviews the observing of actual tourist behaviour on site. Interesting also would be to interview these same women in, say, 40 years of time, and see how their values will have changed – to darker or lighter green. I

believe more research and support campaigns should be conducted related to the promoting of wildlife conservation in a wildlife tourist attraction. As some respondents here agreed, the marketing and 'selling of the idea' of supporting conservation has been poor in most attractions that seemingly stand for responsible wildlife tourism. It would seem these wildlife tourism managers have not yet found how to a) effectively recognise the gradually 'greening' wildlife tourists, nor how to b) offer these tourists appropriate ways of participating in conservation work, in correlation to their own shades of green.

## **6.2 Process evaluation**

Although there are surely faults in my first ever qualitative research, I am glad I now have experience on it. Using a research method that was new to me was a risk I wanted to take in order to reach relevant results. I really enjoyed conducting research in a very practical manner, interacting with other people. The interview situations were much more fascinating to me than creating a questionnaire online and not meeting the subject of research. I now understand better the deeper level characteristic of the qualitative method. Moreover, the deeper analysis of the qualitative method compared to the quantitative one is now clearer to me. Although my written analysis was left insufficient with limited time, fascinating was to discover so much more profound information through a qualitative method, compared to the quantitative. I now know I prefer the qualitative one – now I just need more practise.

The process of writing a thesis has been quite a challenging one, since larger reports and long-term focus have never been my forte. However, I am glad I chose to do this alone. It gives me a feeling of self-reliance to know I was able to pull through a project I was originally horrified to do on my own. I am more a team worker and I appreciate the opportunities Haaga-Helia has given me on building my team working skills. Nevertheless, I desperately needed experience on an individual long-term school project. Now that I have, I am more convinced that my strength is in teamwork, but I also know not to limit myself so drastically and run away from challenges. A year ago I was absolutely convinced I could not do this alone. Now that kind of thinking seems ridiculous and a sure-fire way to never get far in life.

## References

- Bulbeck, C. 2005. Facing the wild: Ecotourism, Conservation and Animal Encounters. Earthscan. London.
- Dolnicar, S. 2015. Environmentally sustainable tourists? In Hall, C. M., Gössling, S. & Scott, D. (edit). The Routledge handbook of tourism and sustainability, p. 141–142. Routledge. New York.
- Fennell, D. 2013. Ecosystems and impact issues. In Holden, A. & Fennel, D. (edit). The Routledge handbook of tourism and the environment, p. 117. Routledge. New York.
- Fennell, D. 2013. Ecotourism. In Holden, A. & Fennel, D. (edit). The Routledge handbook of tourism and the environment, p. 326–327. Routledge. New York.
- Fennell, D. 2012. Tourism and animal ethics. Routledge. New York.
- IUCN Support. 2016. A campaign to support the IUCN Red List. URL: <http://support.iucn-redlist.org/about>. Accessed: 3 April 2016.
- Kananen, J. 2014. Laadullinen tutkimus opinnäytetyönä. Miten kirjoitan kvalitatiivisen opinnäytetyön vaihe vaiheelta. Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulun julkaisuja – sarja. Jyväskylä.
- Lummaa, K., Rönkä, M. & Vuorisalo, T., 2012. Monitieteisyyden ongelmat ja mahdollisuudet ympäristötutkimuksessa. Monitieteinen ympäristötutkimus, p. 263–266. Gaudeamus Helsinki University Press. Tallinn.
- Markwell, K. 2015. Animals and tourism: Understanding diverse relationships. Channel View Publications. Bristol.
- Mercer, D. 2013. Biodiversity and tourism. In Holden, A & Fennel, D. (edit). The Routledge handbook of tourism and the environment, p. 130. Routledge. New York.
- Newsome, D., Dowling, R. & Moore, S. 2005. Wildlife Tourism. Channel View Publications. Clevedon.

Photo Ark. 2016. URL: <http://nationalgeographic.org/projects/photo-ark/>. Accessed: 16 May 2016.

Swarbrooke, J. & Horner, S. 2007. *Consumer behaviour in tourism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Elsevier. Oxford.

Telfer, D. J. & Sharpley, R. 2008. *Tourism and development in the developing world*. Routledge. New York.

Toivonen, H. 2012. Biodiversiteetin suojeluun tarvitaan monitieteistä tietoa. In Lummaa, K., Rönkä, M. & Vuorisalo, T. (edit). *Monitieteinen ympäristötutkimus*, p. 203–209. Gaudeamus Helsinki University Press. Tallinn.

Tourism Concern, 2014. Should I ride an elephant? URL: <https://www.tourismconcern.org.uk/should-i-ride-an-elephant-2/>. Accessed: 11 May 2016.

Viitanen, M. 11 October 2015. Personal travel blog. URL: <http://sabais.blogspot.fi/2015/10/jopas-on-aika-taas-vierahtanyt-aika.html>. Accessed: 11 May 2016.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Interview questions

Endangered animals in Wildlife Tourism 2016  
Study of young female traveller attitudes

#### Relationship to nature

1. In your own words, how would you describe your relationship to nature and animals?

---

---

---

2. What do the words ecotourist and ecotourism mean to you?

---

---

---

#### Experiences

3. In which destinations (that featured animals) have you visited? When?

---

---

---

4. How were the animals treated? Did they seem well to you? Did you notice any maltreatment?

---

---

---

5. What does wildlife tourism mean to you? Why did you want to go to these destinations?

---

---

---

**Conservation**

6. What do you think endangered animals' conservation means?

---

---

---

7. Was conservation work visible at the destination(s)? How?

---

---

---

8. How do you feel about volunteer holidays related to the conservation of endangered animals?

---

---

---

9. Did the personal experience make you think about participating in conservation, e.g. make a donation to the destination visited?

---

---

---

Gender:

Age:

Profession:

## Appendix 2. Interview questions in Finnish

Endangered animals in Wildlife Tourism 2016  
Tutkimus nuorten naismatkailijoiden asenteista

### Suhde luontoon

1. Miten kuvailisit omin sanoin suhdettasi luontoon ja eläimiin?

---

---

---

2. Mitä sanat ekomatkailu ja ekoturisti sinulle tarkoittavat?

---

---

---

### Kokemukset

3. Missä kohteissa olet matkoillasi vierailut, joissa on eläimiä? Milloin?

---

---

---

4. Kuinka eläimiä kohdeltiin? Vaikuttivatko ne hyvinvoivilta? Huomasitko kaltoin-kohtelua?

---

---

---

5. Mitä luontomatkailu sinulle tarkoittaa? Miksi halusit juuri näihin kohteisiin?

---

---

---

## Suojelutyö

6. Mitä eläinsuojelu mielestäsi tarkoittaa?

---

---

---

---

7. Näkyikö suojelutyö kohteissa, joissa kävit? Miten?

---

---

---

---

8. Mitä mieltä olet vapaaehtoismatkoista, joissa osallistutaan uhanalaisten eläinten suojeluun?

---

---

---

---

9. Saiko omakohtainen kokemus miettimään osallistumista suojelutyöhön, esim. lahjoittamaan vierailun yhteydessä?

---

---

---

---

Sukupuoli:

Ikä:

Ammatti: