

>> SYNTHESIZE MOUNTAINS OF KNOWLEDGE <<

Submitted Abstract

ID IMC22-FSAbstr- 786

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Organisations	1: Université Savoie Mont Blanc, France 2: EDYTEM 3: LECA
Country	France
Region	Western Europe
Title	"They Don'T Seem That Disturbed" : Recreationists Perspective On Wildlife Disturbance.
Keywords	Mountain Sports, Participants Profils, Environmental Attitudes, Wildlife, Disturbance
Type	List Of Focus Session
Focus Session ID	84

Abstract

The research we present here is based on a twofold observation about recreational activities in the mountains. On the one hand, there is a growing interest in nature sports, which brings more and more people into the natural environment each year. On the other hand, despite the proven negative consequences on the environment and particularly on wildlife (Larson et al. 2016), recreationists are not always aware of the consequences that their presence in nature may entail (Gruas et al. 2020). The aim of this study is therefore to examine the relationship between winter (ski touring and snowshoeing) and summer (hiking and trail running) recreationists and mountain wildlife. The analysis is based on four mountain ranges of the northern French Alps and on data collected by questionnaires and interviews.

Four research axes are developed. The first deals with the social origin of the participants. The second axis aims to analyze the different ways in which each sport is practised, as well as their possible affinities with the participants' social groups. Although each sport has different styles of practice, these are not as obviously linked to the social origins of the athletes as one might have thought. These first two axes also highlight strong inequalities of access to mountain sports and their most committed modalities of practice for women. The third axis deals with the eco-responsible attitudes and behaviors of individuals outside of their sporting activities, in everyday life. The participants interviewed in this survey are indeed more concerned about the environment than the rest of the French population. However, there are marked differences within the sample, particularly according to gender and social background. The fourth axis is dedicated to the question of the relationship with wildlife. While gender and field of study partly influence the emotional bond with wildlife and knowledge of species, they do not explain the perception of disturbance and respect for tranquility areas, which are more closely linked to environmental values.

This structuralist analysis of mountain sports aims to propose an approach to the sociology of sports in the natural environment from the triple point of view of the practice of the sport, the relationship with the environment in which it is practised and the perception of disturbance of wildlife.