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"Ethics in Wildlife Management: What Price?"

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This paper argues that there may be instances where assessing wildlife for monetary valuation might be quite reasonable and useful for public policy, even when there are strong arguments against valuation of wildlife and nature. A case of deer population management is considered where continued growth of the deer population will lead to more property damage and habitat loss. However, deer population control raises ethical questions on the rights of animals to exist and on the rights of humans to arbitrarily interfere. The contingent valuation methodology (CVM) is used to value preferences for deer management for the purpose of guiding public policy. The valuation estimates show that ethical concerns about killing deer affect the level of willingness to pay in a quite a logical manner. However, for individuals with rights-based preferences, CVM is not appropriate. The survey results also show that individuals with rights-based preferences are a small minority in this particular example.

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