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"The Values of Ecologists"

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The popular stereotype of ecologists appears somewhat at odds with the ideal of the objective, detached, morally disinterested researcher. Ecologists tend to subscribe to this ideal, as do most natural scientists. This puts the stereotype into question. To what extent and in what respects can ecologists be regarded as motivated by environmentalist values? What other values might contribute to their motivations? The answers to those questions have bearing on how policy makers perceive the input they receive from ecologists and it has long-term implications for the funding of ecological research. To obtain some answers I analysed over fifty randomly selected publications of ecologists for explicit and implicit value statements. The analysis revealed an abundance of value statements. However, no bias was evident towards a conservationist or ecocentric environmental ethic such as suggested by the stereotype. I will suggest some explanations and ramifications of these results that take into account the ecologist's professional situation.

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