

The Place of Animals in Ecological Economics

USSEE 2003

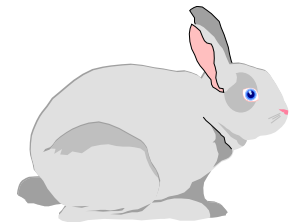
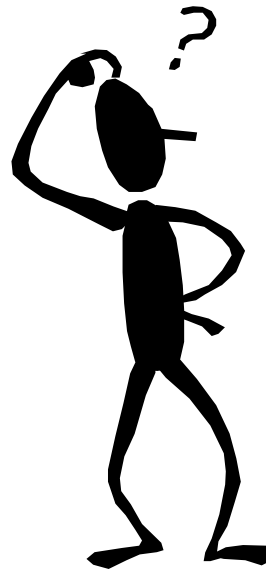
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- The Case for non-human animal consideration:
- Jeremy Bentham-Father of Utility Theory
"The question is not, can they reason? Nor, can they talk? But, can they suffer?"
 - Economics has moved far away from his original intentions.



Singer, Regan, and others:

- Lack of a relevant distinction and moving targets
- The marginal cases argument
- Utilitarian vs. Rights-based cases
 - Constrained Utilitarianism (Frank, 2001)
- It need not be all or nothing: the case for **SOME** consideration
 - **Quantified value**
 - The “zero default”



Individual vs. Ecological Ethics

- Ecological Economics typically takes ecological perspective
 - Generally valuable, but fails to incorporate non-humans as individuals
- Examples of conflict:
 - Conservation orgs calling for more animal testing
 - Outright killing of non-native species
 - Suffering discounted if ecosystem unharmed

Why Ecological Economics?

- Why Economics?
 - Economic questions
 - Trade-offs
 - Information economics/market failure
 - Use of limited resources
 - Financial incentives
- Why Ecological Economics
 - Interdisciplinary
 - Inclusive
 - Has dealt with related questions
 - Intergenerational equity, income inequity



How to give consideration

- Can indirect consideration (ie sympathy) replace direct?
 - If an animal suffers in the forest and a sympathetic economic agent doesn't hear it, does it really suffer?
 - Perverse implications: Intentional Misinformation
- Larger issue of the production process and Information Economics
- The real world: Institutionalized ignorance; unseen suffering
- Again--with no obvious way to internalize, the “zero default”



Solutions?

- Parallel to humans with zero (or very little) income--how do we internalize their wants and needs?



Where Ecological Economics has succeeded and fallen short: Successes

- Wild animal populations
 - This is where Ecological Economics has given adequate attention
 - Species Extinction
 - Biodiversity
 - Trade in illegal ivory
 - Consequences of development



Where Ecological Econ has not done as well:

- Animal Experimentation
 - Great example of no mechanism to internalize cost and the “zero default”
 - England does try to internalize
- Can the “foxes” do the accounting for the hen house?
- Is a tax a potential solution?



Food Products

- Best example of information costs and institutionalized ignorance
- Willingness to pay to reduce cruelty
 - Possible market failure (enforcement costs)



Companion Animals

- 5 mm euthanized annually--The one case where the goal is agreed upon.
- Still there are major economic issues
 - Product choice (adoption/pet store/pure bred)
 - Spay/Neuter-demand function (subsidies)
 - Rental market (current FIREPAW project)



Conclusions

- Need more economic study of issues
- Need more discussion of how to internalize death/suffering outside of market system
- FIREPAW is attempting to work out some of these issues.

