

# Wildlife and the visitor-experience in Dutch national parks



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*The animal life of the (national) parks is among their best recreational assets...  
to the natural charm of the landscape they add the witchery of movement.*

(Joseph Grinnell and Tracy I. Storer, 1916)

## **Preface and acknowledgement**

As a little girl I often went to nature park Sallandse Heuvelrug, together with my parents. I admired the views and the beauty of varied landscapes dominated by heaths and sometimes trees. I even saw a deer once at this place, which is a very special memory. Living near this beautiful nature area made the Sallandse Heuvelrug become part of my life. I sled rode in winter on the hills, drove quickly to the park when there was a heath fire in warm summers, went to the visitor centre with my friends for birthday parties and my wedding took place at this beautiful location.

During my studies I became interested in the relationship between human beings and their environment, especially natural environments in a park context appealed to me. During my Master study Leisure, Tourism and Environment I learned more about human dimensions of wildlife. For my thesis I decided to combine my love for nature parks, their visitors and wildlife to use this opportunity to deepen my knowledge on these topics. The very special thing about this is that I got the opportunity to collect the data on my beloved Sallandse Heuvelrug.

I would like to thank all people who helped me to make this research possible. A special thanks to Hanneke Elbertsen of Staatsbosbeheer and other employees of the visitor centre. Their warm welcome and nice talks made the time spent on data collection the most memorable time of my thesis. I would like to thank Jaap Sijtsma for all the pleasant lunches together, opportunity to complain and the useful feedback on my work. I would like to thank the family Pearce for their feedback on my written English. I would like to thank my dear husband Bas for his patience and love, even when I was unreasonable and grumpy. And last but not least, special thanks to my supervisor Maarten Jacobs for giving me useful advice and feedback but above all for helping me to focus and structure my thoughts.

I spent seven months of intensive thinking, reading, writing and learning about wildlife and the visitor-experience in the context of Dutch national parks. My thesis has finished but I hope that my research might serve as a starting point for further research to discover the value of wildlife for Dutch people.

Hermineke de Leeuw – Welleweerd  
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## Summary

Because of major subsidy cuts by the Dutch government, management of nature areas aims to generate more income out of the visitor by developing the nature experience. Wildlife is a valuable asset of national parks in the Netherlands but the visibility of these animals for the average visitor is low. This research aims to explore how visitors of Dutch national parks experience wildlife.

The personal realm of the visitor is explored on the basis of three main concepts, namely wildlife value orientation, emotional dispositions towards wildlife and the image visitors have of wildlife on site. With these three mental dispositions two of five phases of the visitor-experience are explored, namely the anticipation phase and on-site phase. Semi-structured interviews are conducted at national park Sallandse Heuvelrug in December 2011 among 37 participants.

Data-analysis showed that expectations of visitors towards encounters with wildlife are low among some participants, others expect to encounter small wild animals. Most participants really hoped for encounters with wildlife but there are some participants who have certain animals which they do not like to encounter. Birds are the most encountered wildlife on-site but emotional reactions on these animals are in general absent. The overall evaluation of participants about the role of wildlife during their walk is positive. The predominant wildlife value orientation among participants, mutualism, and the vague image of participants about wildlife on site might explain the results. There is an indication that being at a place where wildlife roams and the possibility to encounter wildlife might cause emotions in participants. The results are summarized by the definition of two different visitor types. Both types like to encounter wildlife during their walk in nature, however there is a difference between these two. The first visitor type does not directly think about possible encounters with wildlife and does not feel very attracted to wildlife during their activity in the park. The second visitor type knows that an encounter with wildlife is unlikely however they feel themselves very attracted to wildlife.

It might be interesting to further explore the visitor-experience and emotions which might be felt by visitors because of the possibility to encounter wildlife on-site. Because of the low number of encounters with wildlife it might be interesting for park management to make wildlife more visible for visitors in order to develop the nature experience.

## Samenvatting

Door grote bezuinigingen van de Nederlandse overheid hebben sommige natuur beherende organisaties zich ten doel gesteld meer inkomen te genereren uit bezoekers door het ontwikkelen van de natuurbeleving. Wilde dieren zijn een waardevolle onderdeel van nationale parken in Nederland maar de zichtbaarheid van deze dieren is laag voor de doorsnee bezoeker. Dit onderzoek verkent hoe bezoekers van Nederlandse nationale parken wilde dieren beleven.

De bezoekers aan nationale parken zijn onderzocht op basis van drie hoofd concepten, namelijk hun waarde oriëntatie met betrekking tot wilde dieren, emotionele disposities tegenover wilde dieren en het beeld dat bezoekers hebben van wilde dieren in het nationale park. Met deze drie mentale disposities zijn twee van de vijf fases van de bezoekersbeleving verkend, namelijk de anticipatie fase en de fase wanneer de bezoeker op de plaats is waar de activiteit plaats vindt. Semigestructureerde interviews zijn afgenomen onder 37 participanten in nationaal park Sallandse Heuvelrug in december 2011.

Analyse van de data liet zien dat verwachtingen van bezoekers ten opzichte van het tegenkomen van wilde dieren laag zijn, anderen verwachten kleine dieren tegen te komen. De meeste participanten hopen wel erg op ontmoetingen met wilde dieren, al zijn er enkele participanten die bepaalde dieren niet hopen tegen te komen. Vogels zijn de meest tegengekomen dieren in het park maar emotionele reacties op deze dieren waren in het algemeen niet aanwezig. De evaluatie van de rol die wilde dieren speelden tijdens hun wandeling in het park was in het algemeen positief. Mutualisme als de meest gevonden waarde oriëntatie onder de participanten en het vaak vage beeld van wilde dieren kunnen deze resultaten helpen te verklaren. Er is een indicatie dat het zijn op een plek waar de mogelijkheid is om wilde dieren tegen te komen emoties veroorzaakt in bezoekers. De resultaten zijn samengevat door twee type bezoekers te definiëren. Beide types vinden het leuk een wild dier tegen te komen tijdens hun wandeling in de natuur, toch is een verschil tussen deze twee. De eerste type bezoekers denkt niet direct aan de mogelijkheid wilde dieren tegen te komen en voelt zich niet heel erg aangetrokken tot wilde dieren tijdens het doen van een activiteit in de natuur. De tweede type bezoeker weet dat het tegenkomen van wilde dieren onwaarschijnlijk is maar voelt zich erg aangetrokken tot wilde dieren.

Het zou interessant kunnen zijn om in de toekomst de rol van wilde dieren in de bezoekers beleving verder te verkennen en ook de emoties die bezoekers zouden kunnen voelen omdat er wel een mogelijkheid is wilde dieren tegen te komen. Omdat bezoekers op dit moment zo weinig dieren tegenkomen in de parken zou het interessant kunnen zijn voor park managers om wilde dieren meer zichtbaar te maken voor bezoekers om zo de natuurbeleving te ontwikkelen.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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National parks (NPs) are highly attractive places for recreational purposes (Eagles and McCool, 2002). After the Second World War increasing wealth in many western countries made outdoor recreation an important activity in leisure time. Shortened workdays and workweeks enabled the workers to spend more time and money on activities like hiking, camping, cycling and picnicking (Roberts, 2006). People preferred to spend their leisure time in areas where they could relax from their everyday lives such as parks, forests and agricultural areas (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989). This resulted in a new consumer demand, namely a demand for enjoyable places and facilities for recreation. By providing recreational outdoor opportunities, NPs are part of the leisure business. Before 1970, leisure had been seen by researchers as time after work or engagement in particular activities where recreational opportunities had to be provided. From the 1970s onwards researchers started to conceptualize leisure as a state of mind where experiences must be facilitated for visitors (Lee *et al*, 1994). The NP visitor manager of today does not only manage the recreational facilities of his or her NP but has become a manager of people's minds as well. Most managers of NPs are trained in resource management and this makes that managing the intangible attribute of visitors' minds is something that is frequently underestimated (Eagles and McCool, 2002). Although the leisure experience is an elusive area of research it provides important information for visitor management because the visitor-experience influences visitor satisfaction and this influences the choice of visitors to come back to that specific area or to avoid it for the future (Mercer, 1971).

### **The role of wildlife in national parks**

Wildlife is a valuable asset of national parks, for instance as part of the biodiversity of the park. Wildlife and biodiversity management is resource management rooted in biological disciplines. In order to manage a national park where people roam for recreational purposes, sociology, anthropology, psychology and cultural geography come into play (Manfredo, 2008). Animals do have a *social value* because people all around the world are attracted and interested in nature, particularly animals (Newsome *et al* 2005). Much research is done in wildlife tourism and it is found that companionship, emotional attachment and different attributes of animals influence the affiliation human have with animals. Especially charismatic mega-fauna are highly attractive for people (Leader-Williams and Dublin, 2000).



Tourism based on human-wildlife interaction is increasing in popularity around the world (Reynolds and Braithwaite, 2001), especially in countries with a wide range of species or where big numbers of charismatic mega-fauna can be found, for example African countries. Here, large numbers of tourists go on safari. Wildlife has therefore an *economic value* because visitors are prepared to pay money for such an adventure to encounter animals (Thresher 1981). Rolston (1987) studied the *aesthetic value* of wildlife. He states that economic and social value come out of aesthetic value. Mercer (1971) mentions the aesthetic need of the urban dweller as part of Maslow's hierarchy (Maslow, 1943) which can be satisfied in the natural environment. Rolston describes the aesthetics of wildlife as essential for society:

*'As much as fine art, theatre, or literature, they are poetry in motion. Our society and economy are surely rich enough that we can afford to keep them; they are not so rich that we can afford to lose them.'* H. Rolston (1987: pp. 196)

The value of wildlife can be explained in many different ways. Clearly wildlife has value for people as they are attracted towards animals. Wildlife in NPs is often large in variety and number and this makes NPs especially interesting for a visitor to experience animals.

### **National parks in the Netherlands**

In the Netherlands, an estimated 20 million people visit the Dutch NPs annually (SNP, 2007). Until now, the Dutch ministry concerned with nature selected twenty unique nature areas and protected these by classifying them as national parks (SNP, 2007), see figure 1 for an overview of the Dutch NPs. The NPs in the Netherlands are concerned with: (a) Protection and development of nature and landscape; (b) Facilitation of nature-oriented recreation; (c) Education and information and (d) Research (SNP, 2007). This broad range of goals needs good planning and management to make them all possible and work in the relatively small protected areas. Landowners, nature management organizations and other people and organizations concerned with NPs in the Netherlands take care of management, maintenance and design (SNP, 2007). NPs in the Netherlands are defined as:

*'...a contiguous area of at least 1000 ha, consisting of natural areas, water and/or forests, with an exceptional natural and scenic condition and a particular plant and animal life.'* (SNP, 2007: pp. 3)

Animals are important inhabitants of Dutch NPs. Among them, bird species, butterflies, reptiles and amphibians, wild boar, red deer, badgers, beavers, otters and seals can be found in Dutch NPs (SNP, 2007). Compared with countries in the Americas or Africa most animals in Dutch NPs are relatively small. Thereby, the mega-fauna that lives in these NPs is often shy and therefore not easy to encounter for the average visitor.

As far as I know, there is no scientific literature about the role of wildlife in visitor-experience in Dutch national parks. There is also not much specifically written in literature about the role of wildlife in the visitor-experience of nature visitors in the Netherlands. The only thing known at this moment is that most visitors of Dutch nature like to see wildlife (Goossen and de Boer, 2008). Goossen and de Boer (2008) did research on the role of spheres of experience for groups with different motives who are interested in recreation in Dutch nature. Goossen *et al* (2009) showed that when asked to give a reason why they thought a certain aspect would suit their objective, four of those five groups mentioned “Watching animals in ‘the wild’ in areas of Staatsbosbeheer and Natuurmonumenten”. Although animals were part of the Goossen *et al* (2009) research, the specific role of wildlife in the visitor-experience remained vague because wildlife was mostly mentioned in a sum-up of different elements of nature.



Figure 1 Overview of the twenty national parks in the Netherlands (SNP, 2011)

### **More emphasis on the visitor-experience in Dutch national parks**

Every now and then, there are new challenges for NPs that management has to deal with, for example changes in nature law or changing consumer demand. Anticipation on these changes is necessary to make all the goals of the national parks work for the future. At this moment, Dutch organizations concerned with national parks face a new challenge. The current economic crisis in the Netherlands led in 2010 to the announcement by the Dutch government that there will be a big subsidy cut for nature conservation. Nature management organizations have to find other ways to generate income in order to accomplish their goals. Staatsbosbeheer is one of the nature management organizations of the NPs and manages most of the national park areas in the Netherlands (SNP, 2007). This organization sees opportunities to overcome the problem mentioned above by investing in development and improvement of the intensity and marketing of the *nature experience* for the visitors of their areas, their aim is to generate more income out of the recreational visitor (Vader, 2011). This development means that management of the visitor-experience in Dutch national parks will become more important than ever before for the survival of these nature parks.

Staatsbosbeheer has different ways of communicating with recreationists, for example through their website, their magazine and visitor centers. It is striking how many images and stories about wildlife can be found in their communication. This became particularly evident in a quick exploration of two magazines of Staatsbosbeheer (Staatsbosbeheer, September 2011; Staatsbosbeheer, December 2011). Their revamped magazine (Staatsbosbeheer, December 2011) aims to put more emphasis on the objective of Staatsbosbeheer to develop the nature experience of the visitor. A comparison between these two magazines showed that wildlife became even more important in building the visitor-experience in the renewed magazine. On almost every double page of that new magazine at least one picture can be found of an animal. More often, several pictures of animals are placed on one page. Thereby, many articles are about experiencing wildlife in nature. Also in visitor centres of Staatsbosbeheer much attention is paid to wildlife. Stuffed animals, animal sounds, pictures and other information related to wildlife surround the visitor to these centres. However, the contrast is striking between the high profile of wildlife as is displayed in visitor centres and in magazines of Staatsbosbeheer and the reality of a recreational walk in nature where encounters with wildlife are often scarce. These observations raise questions about the actual role of wildlife in the visitor-experience of visitors to Dutch national parks.

### **Research objectives**

To be able to develop visitor's experience it is important to gain more knowledge about and insight into features of the visitor-experience. Especially because deepening and marketing of the visitor-experience becomes more important for visitor management of Dutch national parks to anticipate the effect of the current subsidy cuts (Vader, 2011). The aim of this research is to explore the role of wildlife in the visitor-experience in Dutch national parks. This research is scientifically relevant because it aims to make the first explorative steps to gain scientific knowledge on the role of wildlife in the visitor-experience in Dutch national parks. Thereby, this research is scientifically relevant because it might give more insight into the role of wildlife in the visitor-experience at places where wildlife is not very charismatic and scarcely seen by the average visitor.

# Chapter 2

## Theoretical framework and literature review

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*To be able to explore the role of wildlife in the visitor-experience this chapter focuses on two relevant topics for this study, namely the visitor-experience and human dimensions of wildlife. In order to develop a conceptual framework for this research, this chapter explores, introduces, explains and compares relevant work of different researchers who studied visitor-experience and human dimensions of wildlife. Several useful concepts, theories and empirical findings will be brought together in a conceptual framework which this research will elaborate on. This chapter ends with the research questions which guides this research.*

### 2.1 The visitor-experience

The visitor-experience is complex and there are some researchers who attempt to unravel this phenomenon. The concept of visitor-experience is studied in tourism as well as in leisure and recreational studies. MacCannell (1976) and Cohen (1979) are social scientists who studied tourism and described the tourism experience as important, exceptional and distinct in their function. Cohen (1979) mentioned the tourist activity as a religious-like experience. Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987) see the tourist experience as a primary outcome of leisure and tourism behaviour, these are immediate experiences and re-experiences through recall from memory. In leisure and tourism studies, psychological approaches come more and more into play. Larsen (2007) suggests a psychological approach to study the tourist experience, there an experience is based on general psychological processes. Larsen (2007) defined the tourist experience as a past personal travel-related event strong enough to have entered long-term memory.

The travel experience is influenced by many things and events. Important concepts of the tourist experience which are also useful in the study of the recreational experience, seen from a psychological point of view, are *expectations*, *perception* and *memories* (Larsen, 2007). Larsen (2007) noted that these three concepts are all part of the (travel) experience, although in different phases: expectations in the planning process; perception during the actual undertaking of the trip; and memories in the recollection phase. Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010) came up with a model where they brought together different phases of the visitor-experience and the multi-influential and multi-outcome nature of the tourist

experience. The model of Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010), see figure 2, gives an overview of concepts which are most associated in literature on visitor-experience. This recent theoretical model is a good starting point for this research because it uses and brings together most used concepts in literature on visitor-experience in tourism and recreation. The concepts of the model will be considered here.

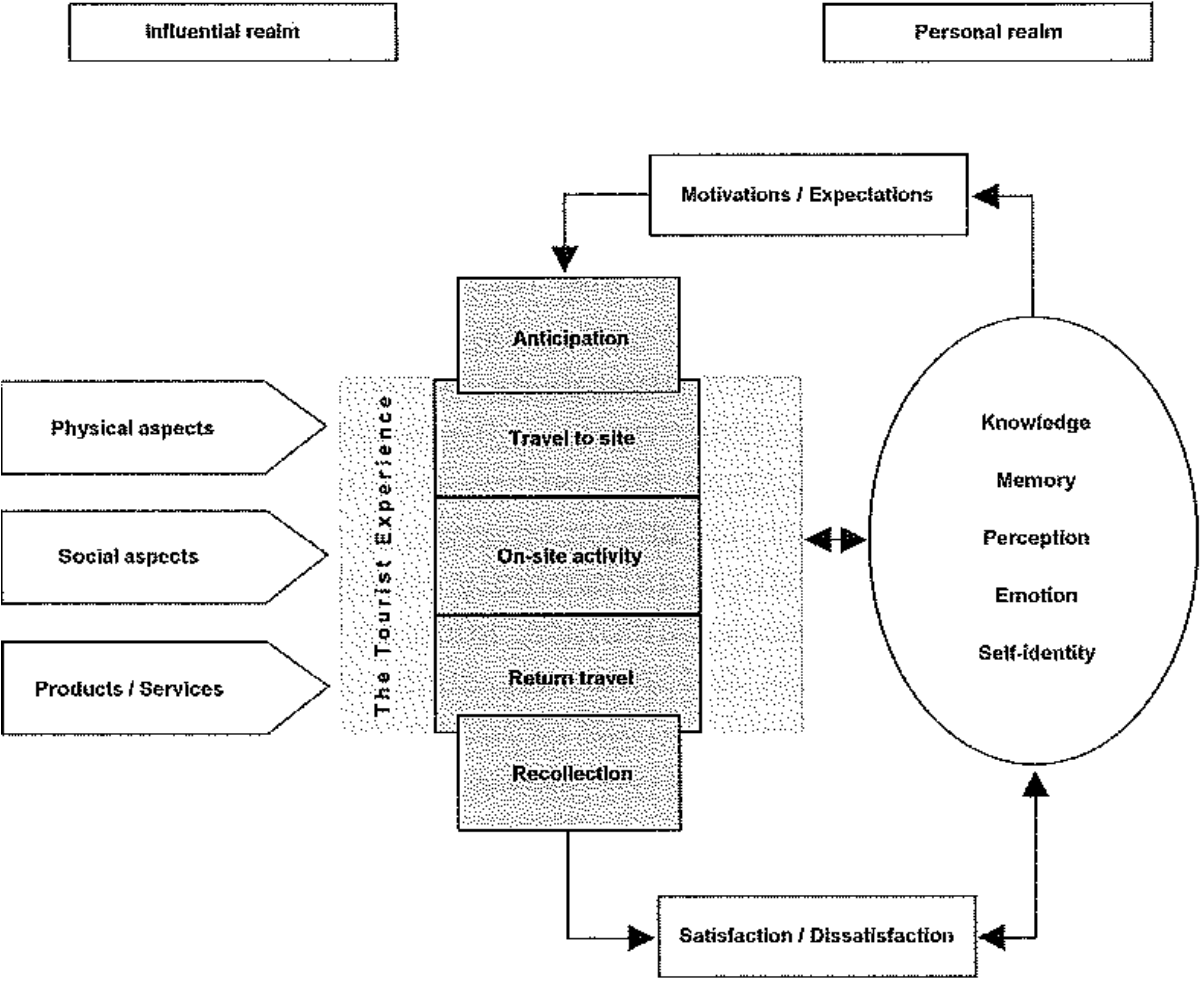


Figure 2 Conceptual model of influences and outcomes of the tourist-experience (Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael, 2010)

**2.1.1 Multi-phase recreational outdoor experience**

Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010) approach the tourist experience as an experience consisting of multiple phases. This multi-phase approach is introduced by Clawson and Knetsch in 1966. Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010) see the tourist experience as all that happens during a tourist event, from travel to the site until the return travel. Clawson and Knetsch (1966) however proposed to see the tourist experience that runs from the anticipation stage until the recollection stage. Clawson and Knetsch (1966) object that the

actual outdoor activity on site is the total recreation experience, this idea was observed by them by most recreation researchers before that time. The multi-phase approach of Clawson and Knetsch (1966) is underpinned by Fridgen (1984), he explained tourism as a phenomenon where people move from one environment, through a range of environments to a destination site and back home. Clawson and Knetsch' (1966) model include five phases which together form the whole recreation experience: *Anticipation, Travel to the site, On-site experience, Travel back home, Recollection*. Although on-site experience is probably the basic reason for the whole outdoor recreation experience, the four other phases are built around this phase.

#### a. Anticipation

The anticipation phase is about making plans for and setting expectations about the actual moment that the recreation activity will be done. This phase is about weighing arguments and coming up to a decision. If the decision is positive, the outdoor experience goes farther (Clawson and Knetsch, 1966).

#### b. Travel to the actual site

The recreational experience exists of two travel phases. Clawson and Knetsch (1966) describe the first phase as traveling to the site and the satisfaction and dissatisfaction individuals encounter during this phase. The experience people encounter might be dependent on many factors like: road ease, traffic jams, travel length, travel costs, etc.

#### c. On-site experience

This phase is about doing the actual recreational activity or activities and the satisfaction derived from them. There is diversity in people's response to the environment which form together the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the recreational activity taken (Clawson and Knetsch, 1966).

#### d. Travel back home

This phase is about travelling back from the site and the satisfaction and dissatisfaction individuals encounter during this phase (Clawson and Knetsch, 1966).

#### e. Recollection

The recollection phase is the construction of a memory or memories of the total experience. This memory might be shared with other persons. Recollection of one experience is often the starting point for making plans for the next recreational outdoor activity (Clawson and Knetsch, 1966).

Eagles and McCool (2002) built further on the theory of Clawson and Knetsch (1966) and applied it to the practice of visitor management of national parks. They came up with a new

name for the package of the five phases, they call it the 'travel experience continuum' (TEC). This name indicates the feature that the travel experience is continually in process and does not stop after the recollection phase but that this phase can be seen as a starting point of the next experience. Eagles and McCool (2002) point that not every phase can be fully controlled by park management and therefore it might be a major challenge for visitor managers to control the whole TEC.

### **2.1.2 Influences and outcomes of the tourist experience**

Quinlan Cutler and Carmichaels (2010) model distinguishes between elements that can impact on the experience from outside the individual (influential realm) and elements which can impact on the experience within an individual (personal realm). In figure 2, the influential elements from outside the individual are categorised as *physical aspects*, *social aspects* and *products/services*. The *physical environment* can facilitate activities and provide social interactions. The physical aspects of a destination are all aspects related to the physical setting, spatial characteristics and geographical features. *Social aspects* are various social influences during a tourist experience, like social settings, (personal) relationships, interactions with personnel and other tourists and host-guest relationships. Ryan (2002) states that the overall evaluation of a trip is influenced by tangible *products and services* like souvenirs, transportation, accommodation, available facilities, etc. Pearce (2005) states that if the quality of products and services meet the expectations, the tourist is satisfied. The different concepts related to the *personal realm* will be elaborated on here.

#### *Motivation*

There are many motives for tourists to go to a destination. Examples are: escape from the everyday environment, relaxation, adventure, prestige, health, interpersonal interactions, exploration of the self (Burton, 1995; Crompton, 1979; Fodness, 1994). Tourist motivations are often discussed by Crompton's push and pull factors (1979). Push factors are the motivations why people have a desire to leave home. Pull factors come from the destination and are the motivations why people like to go to that destination, for example provided activities and imagery of the landscape. Goossen and de Boer (2007) came up with a motive group division for nature oriented recreationists in the Netherlands based on orientation on nature, motives and desired experience. They distinguished five most important motives for Dutch people to recreate in nature: (a) socializing (gezelligheid); (b) having a break (er tussen uit); (c) having an interest for areas (interesse voor gebieden); (d) immersing in plant and wildlife (volledig opgaan in planten en dierenwereld) and (e) challenge (uitdaging). Cohen (1979) stated already that although motivations are the reasons behind why people travel, they do not fully explain the tourist experience. Some critical comments should be put with this research of Goossen and de Boer (2007). The activity people undertake in nature is not taken into account, although this activity might influence the visitor-experience. For example, people who are in the motive group 'challenge' can take a mountain bike to



challenge themselves but might take a long-distance hike as well. Seeing or hearing (experiencing) wildlife during mountain biking is probably less likely than during a hike. A second critic is that it is hard to measure exact motives. Visitors of nature have often multiple reasons to undertake an activity in nature. Somebody can undertake a hike in a forest with a friend (socializing) to relax and to remain in good physical shape. The main motives remain unclear and vague, this makes the division of visitors in motive groups a questionable approach. Nevertheless, Staatsbosbeheer has adopted this motive group approach for their nature areas (including NPs) but the complexity of the visitor-experience cannot be unravelled by dividing visitors in motive groups alone.

### *Expectation*

This concept can be defined as *the individual's ability to anticipate, to form beliefs about and to predict future events and states* (Maddux, 1999). Several phenomena influence expectations, such as motivation, attitudes, value systems, personality traits, self-esteem and states of affect (Larsen, 2007). Wirtz *et al* (2003) found out that the level of expected negative and positive affect are significantly higher than the on-line negative and positive affect reported by the same individual. The decision making process is often very subjective and influenced by many factors. Mercer (1971) mentioned the importance of the image represented by a site or region. This image is formed by the signals or symbols which build together the mental map people have (or: the image people have) of a specific area. It is hard to analyse precisely how information has shaped expectations of visitors. Deasy and Griess (1966) described the complexity of the impact of advertising on visitation to two tourist sites in Pennsylvania:

*'Unfortunately, it is presently impossible to marshal the necessary facts concerning the spatial dissemination of the hundreds of thousands of brochures and postage-meter stamp ads distributed each year; and it is equally impracticable to measure the impact of equivalent numbers of auto-bumper tags, and of roadside billboards, on passing motorists, of restaurant table place mats on diners, and a variety of other devices used to diffuse knowledge about the two tourist sites.'*

Deasy and Griess (1966, pp. 303)

The work of marketing and communication staff is affecting the actions of potential visitors. Visitors' decisions often proceed on the basis of subjective reality presented by marketing and communication. Within the last decade, the internet has become the number one information source and Buhalis and Spada (2000) pointed to the importance of the internet as a destination management system. Like many other recreation providers, NPs in the Netherlands use the internet to inform people about the different parks (SNP, 2011). This means that the internet might be another shaper of visitors' image of Dutch NPs.

### *Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction*

Satisfaction is often seen in tourism studies as the congruence between expectation and experience. If the experience meets the expectation the tourist is satisfied. Dissatisfaction is often discussed as the gap between expectation and experience (Ryan, 1995). However, satisfaction can not only be seen as a simple sum. The more this concept is studied the more the complexity of it becomes clear. Fournier and Mick (1999) describe this as follows:

*'A context-dependent process consisting of a multi-model, multi-modal blend of motivations, cognitions, emotions and meanings, embedded in sociocultural settings, that transforms during progressive and regressive consumer-product interactions.'*

(Fournier and Mick, 1999: pp. 16)

Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010) point to the need to take into account the tourists' evaluation and comparison of emotion based expectations and expectations towards products/services.

### *Perception*

This concept is explained by psychologists as *a mental process where sensory input is selectively attended to, organized and interpreted*. Perception is subjective because everybody experiences his/her world different but it might be possible to group people according to their common characteristics and to draw distinctions among them (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). Larsen (2007) explains how tourists construct their perception on the basis of earlier experiences, competences and maybe particular expectations. Peak and end effect are important phenomena in a trip experience (Frederickson, 2000). The peak is the most affective moment of an experience, the end is the affect experienced at the end of the event. It is possible to uncover this peak and end effect when we focus on individuals who say things like 'this is quite an experience' or 'it was quite an experience'. Terms such as happiness, surprise, sadness, fear or anger come into mind when people think of these experiences. This experience will be memorable because it will be stored in mind with the strong sense of an emotion (Manfredo, 2008). Rolston (1987) mentioned that the human-wildlife encounters in nature which we did not expect (hoped for or not) are often highlights and we take for granted the certainties. He also mentioned that if we do not find wildlife on our trip, the thrill remains in knowing that there is wildlife present and hiding. If we have seen wildlife in a certain place, this place remains haunted with that event. This example shows that memory and perception are highly entwined.

### *Knowledge*

Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010) describe knowledge as *'a cognitive aspect of the tourist experience which involves learning and education'* (pp. 16). They sum up possible skills and learning outcomes associated with tourist experiences with a categorization in

cognitive development; affective development; psychometer development; personal development. Most of the research on knowledge in tourism is on the educational value of field trips (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003). Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010) evaluated the literature which deals with this concept and found out that there is still a lack of insight on the relationship between knowledge and the tourist experience.

### *Memory*

Memory processes are important to human functioning because they are components of all thinking (Parrott and Spackman, 2000). Philippot and Schaefer (2001) showed that memory for an emotional event is better than for a neutral emotional event, so emotions help us to remember certain events. Bower (1981) showed that people tend to recall memories that are positive if they are in a positive state. Memories that are distinctive, for example vacations, are more likely to be remembered than 'normal' events (Larsen, 2007) like doing your weekly shopping in the supermarket. 'Flash bulb' memories are extremely vivid and long lasting memories (Myers, 2003) but are not always accurate (Larsen, 2007). Parrott and Spackman (2000) showed that some individuals are better at controlling the recall of memories than others. Wirtz *et al* (2003) showed that the remembered experience from a tourist event is the best predictor of the desire to repeat that experience. This shows that memories are important in the study of travel experience where they influence expectations.

### *Emotion*

Visitor-experience goes along with emotions. Larsen (2007) defined the tourist experience as a past personal travel-related event strong enough to have entered long-term memory. Emotions affect memory and Manfredi (2008) noted three ways how emotions can affect memory: (1) as a quality of what is remembered; (2) as a condition of the mental state of an individual when encoding information; and (3) as the condition of the individual recalling information. Arnould and Price (1993) researched extraordinary experiences and found out that such an experience goes along with intense emotions.

### *Self-identity*

Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010: pp. 21) describe self-identity as follows: '*self-identity involves questions related to the kind of person an individual perceives themselves to be.*' Going through a tourist experience can shape the way tourists see themselves (White and White, 2004) and this can result in changes in self-identity and self-perception (Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael, 2010).

### **2.1.3 Conclusion**

The model developed by Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010) contains an overview of those aspects which are most associated with the tourist experience in literature. It is not

their intention to be all encompassing but the model serves as a starting point for further research on visitor-experience. The list with concepts used in the model is not exhaustive and not all concepts will be used for this research. Different phases of the visitor-experience influence each other and result in a travel experience continuum, this is a basis for this research. In the case of this research on visitor-experience of wildlife in NPs the concept of *emotion* is helpful because experience goes along with emotions. It is important to notice that there is a difference between emotions people experience during a tourist event (state of mind) and the emotional dispositions (trait of mind). Further on in this chapter the concept of emotion will be discussed more extensively and deeper as a human dimension of wildlife. *The image visitors have of a NP-site* is an interesting and useful concept which probably influences expectations and on-site experiences.

## 2.2 Human dimensions of wildlife

*Understanding the behaviour and reactions of the public on wildlife is important for managers of national parks in order to serve the public properly and to be able to manage the visitor-experience (Manfredo, 2008). To understand why people exhibit certain behaviour it is helpful to study the concept of emotion because emotions are often an important basis for behaviour. Improvement in understanding human behaviour will also be obtained by understanding the different attributes of the concept of the cognitive hierarchy (Manfredo, 2008). Although emotions and cognitions are theoretically separate systems, they interact constantly (Manfredo, 2008).*

### 2.2.1 Emotions

Animals can cause emotions in people (Jacobs, 2009a). The study of human emotional relationships with animals and the underlying mechanisms can help to understand people's reaction to animals (Manfredo, 2008). To be able to understand emotions it is important to distinguish between *emotional dispositions* and *emotional states*. *Traits* are relatively stable compared to *states*. Jacobs *et al* (2012) explains these two concepts. Emotional dispositions are *traits* of the human mind which help to appraise a stimulus, in this case a lion. An emotional disposition to fear lions, is usually stable. Being scared by a lion is a state of mind which is temporary, can switch on and off and vary in intensity depending on the situations.

An emotional response is a response characterized by expressive reactions, physiological reactions, behavioural tendencies or coping, specific emotion-related thoughts, and emotional experiences (Jacobs *et al*, *in press*). There are *genetic* and *learned* explanations for human wildlife relationships and how people react to animals is influenced by *evolution*, *culture* and *individual biographies* (Jacobs, 2006). Jacobs (2009) identified six possible

psychological mechanisms that can cause emotional reactions to animals and constitute the liking or disliking of animals. Three mechanisms proposed by Jacobs (2009) are innate, this means that these mechanisms are genetic and constitute emotions in every human being in the world. These are the three mechanisms that are innate:

### *1. Sensitivity for biological movement*

Although probably not a feature of the emotional system but of the visual perception system, human beings have an innate sensitivity for movement of animals. This sensitivity is caused by evolution and demonstrated by Simion *et al* (2008) in an experiment where newborn babies showed a preference for movement of animals above non biological movement. This sensitivity for biological movement focuses the attention of people on animals and this increases the likelihood of emotional responses to animals (Jacobs, 2009). Rolston (1987) described the preference for biological movement almost poetically:

*'The wild life is organic form in locomotion, on the loose, without designs on the human beholder, indifferent to if not desiring to avoid persons. The animal does not care to come near, sit still, stay long, or please. It performs best at dawn or dusk or in the dark. Yet just that wild autonomy moves us aesthetically'..... 'Wild life move themselves, and they move us'..... 'I rejoice in the stimulus of spontaneous life.'*

(H. Rolston, 1987: pp. 187 and 188)

### *2. Predispositions and quick learning programs to respond emotionally to some animals*

In the course of biological evolution a survival mechanism developed in humans to respond emotionally to animals which were relevant for the survival of our ancestors. Our ancestors used this mechanism to fear animals that were a threat (for example big predators, snakes and spiders) and to respond emotionally positive to animals that were beneficial (for example animals that could be eaten like rabbit and cow). This mechanism is probably innate but it is surely something that can be taught very quickly to young children (Seligmann, 1971).

### *3. Tendency to react emotionally to emotional expressions of animals*

Russel (2003) showed that we are able to recognize emotional states of some animals. This ability is probably partially rooted in the similarities in basic emotional expressions of humans and animals. We have an innate tendency to take on the emotion of animals, that is why animals can make us feel good. Rolston (1987) described the bond between animals and humans:

*'The mountains and rivers are objects, even the pines and oaks live without sentience; but the squirrels and the antelope are subjects'..... 'One form of life seeks to understand another, and this transvaluing brings aesthetic richness and creativity'.*

(H. Rolston, 1987: pp. 190)

People's compassion and bonds with animals (for example with pets) are probably partly rooted in this mechanism (Jacobs, 2009).

Three mechanisms proposed by Jacobs (2009) can cause emotional reactions to animals because these mechanisms are shaped by culture or individual biographies. This means that because of these mechanisms persons might react differently on the same animal.

#### *4. Dispositions that result from conditioning*

Conditioning can modify the brain regions where innate dispositions are stored. Emotional reactions can occur on previously neutral stimuli through emotional experiences. For example, somebody who had a frightening experience with a dog as a child might fear dogs for the rest of his life, even if he does not remember the frightening experience. The learned disposition is stored in the unconsciously operating brain regions (Jacobs, 2009).

#### *5. Knowledge that influences interpretation*

Acquired knowledge about animals can influence the way we interpret a bodily emotional reaction to an animal. This knowledge can enhance, reinforce or transform feelings we construct out of bodily emotional reactions (Jacobs, 2009). For example, encountering a lion in the wild causes us to freeze and our heart beat to increase. The knowledge that you know you are safe because the lion cannot come into the safari jeep that you are in causes you to interpret the situation differently and the encounter turns into a positive experience.

#### *6. Knowledge can turn on an emotional reaction*

Acquired knowledge about an animal can result in an emotional reaction, even if that animal is not detected by the emotional system as emotionally relevant. The knowledge that a bird is rarely seen will evoke an emotional reaction as soon as a bird watcher spots that rare bird. Rolston (1987) mentioned the symbolic value of wildlife in cultures. The eagle, for example, has become a symbol of characteristic American values like freedom, power, grace and alertness. That is why the image of the eagle has become a symbol for America and why that symbol can cause emotions. Another example of this mechanism is the phenomena that some people, if they see deer in the forest, say that they spot 'Bambi'. The Disney movie created the notion that a deer is no longer just an animal but that it became emotionally laden with a story.

### **2.2.2 Cognitive hierarchy**

Why people tend to react in a certain way to animals can not only be explained by the concept of emotions. Cognitions can influence emotional dispositions (Jacobs *et al*, *in press*). Cognitions are mental dispositions used by people in remembering, understanding, thinking

and perceiving (Jacobs *et al*, *in press*). The human mind consists of many different cognitions like *values*, *value orientations*, *beliefs*, *attitudes* and *norms* which exist at different levels of abstraction. These cognitions are hierarchical (Jacobs *et al*, *in press*) from abstract cognitions (for example values) to less abstract cognitions (norms). The less abstract cognitions are the easiest to change and the more abstract levels are harder to change (Vaske, 2008). The cognitive approach suggests that value orientations influence attitudes and norms and that these two affect behaviour (Vaske, 2008). Human thought and behaviour towards wildlife can be studied with this hierarchy of cognitions (Jacobs *et al*, *in press*). To get a better idea of how different cognitions differ from each other and influence each other, five concepts of the cognitive hierarchy will be discussed here.

### *Values*

Values are mental constructs that are very general and not specific for situations or objects (Jacobs *et al*, *in press*). Rokeach (1973) defined values as desirable end states of existence and modes of conduct (for example freedom, respect or honesty). Schwartz (1992) suggested that values serve as goals that apply across time and contexts. Values are often early shaped in life by family or other persons in life (Manfredo *et al*, 2004) and tend to be widely shared by all members of a culture (Fischer *et al*, 1999). This last feature of values makes this concept not very useful to study in this research on human animal relations within one culture.

### *Value orientation*

Value orientations are patterns of direction and intensity among basic beliefs. Beliefs are what we think is true (this does not necessarily have to be facts). Both value orientation and basic beliefs together help to explain how positions toward specific issues evolve from broad values because they are about meaning assigned to values (Vaske, 2008). In research on human wildlife relations the concept value orientation is frequently used named Wildlife Value Orientation (WVO). WVO represents patterns of “basic beliefs that give personal meaning of right and wrong and an ideal life to one’s more basic values in relation to wildlife” (Teel *et al*, 2007). WVO guides people’s behaviour, attitudes and experiences with respect to wildlife (Fulton *et al* 1996; Teel *et al*, 2007). Because WVO guide experiences makes this a useful concept for this study.

There are two predominant wildlife value orientations among people, namely *domination* and *mutualism* (Jacobs *et al*, *in press*). People with domination WVO believe that animals should be used and managed for human benefits. These people are more likely to prioritize human wellbeing over wildlife. Those people with a mutualism WVO see animals as part of an extended family and believe that humans and animals should co-exist in harmony (Jacobs *et al*, *in press*). Emotional responses to wildlife and WVO are closely related (Manfredo, 2008) and therefore it is useful to study them both in this study. For example, two persons

who share the value 'freedom' may react emotionally different to wildlife hunting because they have a different WVO (mutualism or domination). That explains why their emotional response to a killed deer will probably be different from each other (Jacobs *et al*, *in press*).

Most of the research on WVO is done and developed in the United States of America. However, Jacobs (2007) did an exploratory research on WVO among inhabitants of the Netherlands to find out whether the different WVO found in the USA is applicable to the Dutch population as well. Although the sample size was not representative for the Dutch population, the outcome of the study indicated that mutualism is the most dominant WVO among inhabitants of the Netherlands with an indication for two types of mutualism, firstly, mutualism based on interaction between humans and wildlife. This includes mutual respect, avoiding harm to animals and recognition. Secondly, mutualism founded on the idea that animals have the same rights as humans but there is not necessarily any interaction between human and animals. The first kind of mutualism compares best with 'caring', the second with 'environmentalism' (Jacobs, 2007). Vaske *et al* (2011) did research on WVO and demographics in the Netherlands. The outcome of that study showed that those individuals with a domination WVO were statistically older than mutualism oriented individuals. Females and people who live in an urban area tended to be more mutualistic. This study did not find differences among Dutch people with different education levels.

### *Attitudes*

Attitudes are mental dispositions to respond to an object or event, these responses are often expressed in terms of pro/con or pleasant/unpleasant (Ajzen, 2005). A person's attitude is generally constituted by different beliefs and evaluations linked to beliefs. Attitudes influence behaviour more directly than value orientations (Vaske, 2008), where value orientations transcend specific situations in a domain of thought, attitudes are more focused and context-dependent (Jacobs *et al*, *in press*).

### *Norms*

Where attitudes measure positive or negative evaluations, norms address acceptability evaluations. There are mainly two kinds of norms studied, namely descriptive norms (what most people are doing) and injunctive norms (what people should do in a given situation) (Cialdini *et al*, 1991). Social norms are standards shared by members of a social group and they influence personal norms (Vaske, 2008).

Vaske (2008) explains a fundamental issue in understanding norms, namely the strength of a norm. The ability of a norm to predict behaviour is influenced by how strongly that norm is held. This is why, to make the concept of norms useful to predict behaviour, the strength of the held norm must be measured.



Norms and emotions interrelate with each other in two ways. Firstly, there are norms about displaying emotional reactions. For example, a father tries to suppress fear when he and his family suddenly face a wolf in the wild, although his basic reaction would be to show fear. Secondly, emotion is aroused when norms are violated. This causes people to have highly emotional reactions to animal abuse, for example. This moral empathy motivates human-wildlife relations.

### **2.2.3 Conclusion**

For this research the concept of emotion will be used because visitor-experiences with wildlife are powered by emotions. There are many psychological mechanisms activated when visitors see or hear wildlife because animals can be triggers that cause emotions in humans. That is why the concept of emotion is important when we study human-wildlife interactions. Cognitions can influence emotions, that is why this research will take both concepts into account. With the concepts of the cognitive hierarchy the process of human thoughts to action can be studied. Not all concepts of the cognitive hierarchy will be used for this research because they are not all useful for the aim of this study. The concept wildlife value orientation will be used for this research because this concept is helpful to explore a specific domain of thought in people. Thereby, the WVO concept is a workable concept because there is already some knowledge about WVO among people in the Netherlands.

## **2.3 Conceptual framework**

This research explores the role of wildlife in the visitor-experience in Dutch NPs. A conceptual framework is developed based on the model of Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010) and the literature discussed above. Concepts related to two phases of the visitor-experience will be explored. Thereby, the research will explore the possible influence of some mental dispositions (*traits*) on these two phases of the visitor-experience. The concepts are brought together in a conceptual framework as will be used for this research, see figure 3.

Experiences are influenced by multi elements and it is impossible for this research to unravel all the elements which influence the experience of wildlife by visitors of Dutch NPs. The model of Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010) distinguishes between the *influential realm* and the *personal realm*. Although they both influence the experience, for time reasons this research focuses on the personal realm. Three mental dispositions are chosen to approach two phases of the visitor-experience.

### 2.3.1 Mental dispositions

Mental dispositions are sometimes explained as ‘habits of mind’. Mezirow defines habits of mind as “*broad, abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting influenced by assumptions that constitute a set of codes. These codes may be cultural, social, educational, economic, political, or psychological. Habits of mind become articulated in a specific point of view—the constellation of belief, value judgment, attitude, and feeling that shapes a particular interpretation*” Mezirow (1997: 5-6).

Like all mental concepts emotional dispositions are always there, are relatively stable and have a certain level of abstraction (Jacobs *et al*, 2012). *Emotional dispositions* will be studied in this research because it influence mental phenomena, such as perception (Jacobs *et al*, *in press*). Cognitions are mental dispositions used in perceiving and are, along with emotions, components of human behaviour. The cognitive concept of *wildlife value orientation (WVO)* is one of the cognitions which influences people’s behaviour and this research will focus on the WVO concept because it is a helpful concept to explore people’s thoughts about wildlife (Teel *et al*, 2007). The concept of *Image (people have of wildlife on site)* will be used because perception is related to this concept (Reisinger and Turner, 2003). Mercer (1971) mentioned the importance of the image represented by the site or region and the subjectivity on which visitors make choices and build their own image of the site. An image is subjective and influenced by many factors but worth researching because it might shape expectations and perceptions on site.

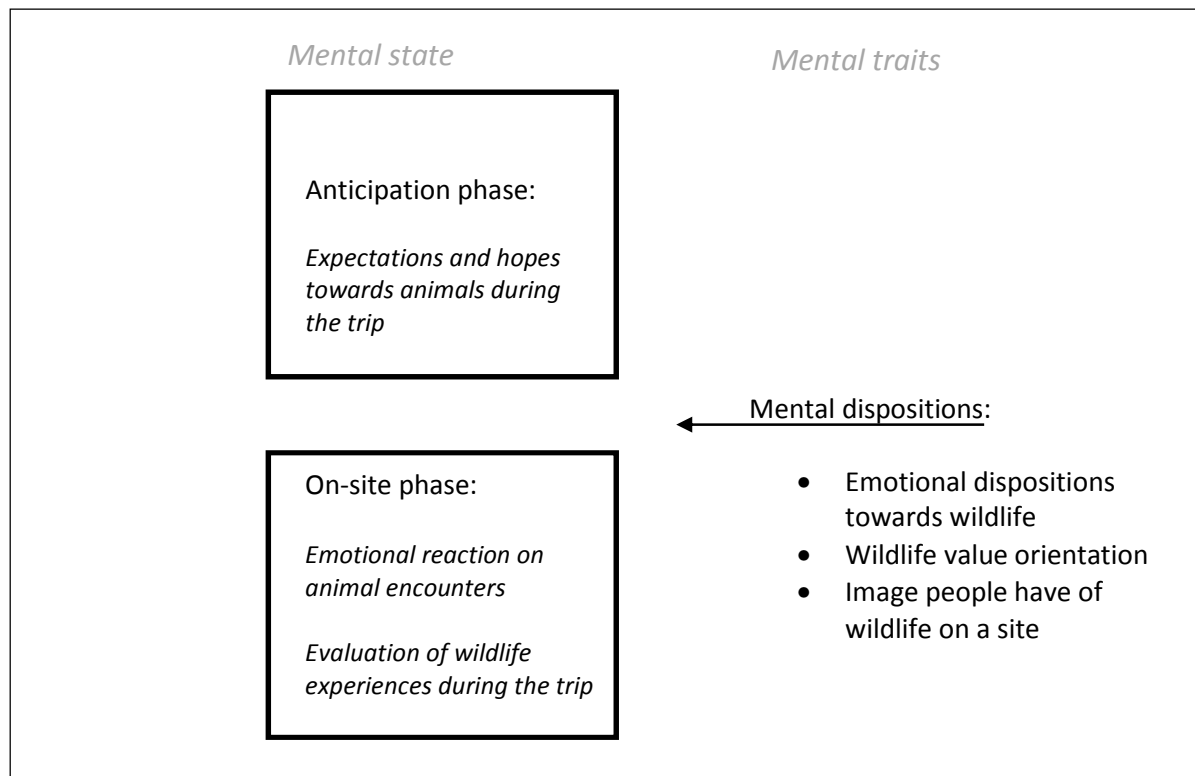


Figure 3 Conceptual framework of the two phases of the visitor-experience and the possible influence of some mental dispositions on these phases

### 2.3.2 Phases of the visitor-experience

The idea of travel phases with the feature to influence the perception of other phases comes forward in Eagles and McCool's (2002) 'travel experience continuum' (TEC) and in Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael's (2010) 'Conceptual model of influences and outcomes of the tourist experience'. This research builds on this multi-phase experience theory. For time and practical reasons, this research is about two travel phases, namely *Anticipation* and *On-Site activity*. These two phases are the focus for this research because they are feasible for data collection in NPs.

The anticipation phase is the phase where visitors make plans for the trip and when they set expectations about the actual moment that the recreation activity will be done (Clawson and Knetsch, 1966). The research on the anticipation phase of the visitor-experience focuses on the *expectations* visitors have about wildlife experiences. An expectation is a strong belief of a visitor about something that will happen with respect to wildlife during his/her visit to the park. There are also experiences with wildlife where visitors might *hope* for (or not), for example to see rare wildlife species or to see no 'scary' animals. Hoped for experiences are not the same as expected experiences because the visitor might argue as follows: 'Because I know that it is unlikely to see that rare bird I do not expect to see it, but I still hope to encounter it'. Therefore, for this research, a hope is a desire for a certain thing to happen with respect to wildlife during the trip.

The on-site phase is about the activity/activities done on site when expectations of the visitor come together with actual experiences with wildlife. How visitors interpret situations with wildlife has to do with how they make sense of what they experience, called perception (Myers, 2003). '*Perception is the interaction of the information in the current stimulus situation and various types of processes and mental structures in the individual that makes processing of such information possible*' (Larsen, 2007:12). The research on the on-site phase is about how visitors react to encounter with wildlife during their trip, for example, when a visitor hears a bird singing or sees deer or sees deer tracks. This encounter can cause emotions and activate mental processes. That is why this part of the research is about the state of people's minds. This research explores these wildlife experiences and the emotions associated with that experience. Thereby, the research will explore the visitor's *evaluation of experiences with wildlife during the trip*.

### **2.3.3 Conclusion**

Fully aware of not being complete, this research explores the personal realm of the visitor-experience of wildlife in Dutch national parks. Three concepts relating to traits of the visitor will be used for this exploration, namely *WVO*, *emotional dispositions* and *image people have about wildlife on the site*. Herewith and thereby, the mental state of visitors towards wildlife will be explored in two phases of the visitor-experience, namely in the anticipation phase and the on-site activity phase.

## **2.4 Research questions**

The following research question guides this research:

***'How do visitors of Dutch national parks experience wildlife?'***

The following sub questions direct this research:

- What do visitors expect and hope for with respect to wildlife during their trip?
- How do visitors experience wildlife during their on-site trip?
- How do people evaluate the role of wildlife during their trip?
- How can emotional dispositions, wildlife value orientation and the image visitors have of wildlife on site help to get a better understanding of wildlife in the visitor-experience?

# Chapter 3

## Methods

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*There is not much known in scientific literature about the role of wildlife in the visitor-experience of visitors to Dutch NPs, this research serves as an initial exploration of this topic. Therefore, this will be exploratory research. This chapter elaborates on the methodology. The method will be explained, some concepts will be operationalized, the limitations and sample will be discussed and the research area will be introduced.*

### **3.1 Research design**

To explore the visitor-experience with respect to wildlife in NPs, a qualitative research method is used. Qualitative research methods give a maximum of explorative power because it has a flexible approach (Boeije, 2010). The data is collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews in order to explore what is happening in the mind of visitors as well as to explore the reasons why it happens (Boeije, 2010). The aim of the interviews is to gather data for this research by making visitors think and talk about their ideas about wildlife, their expectations and hopes towards wildlife during the trip and about what happened during the trip with respect to wildlife and their evaluation. The interviews are carried out face to face on site of a NP in the Netherlands. This gave the interviewer the possibility to gather the data in a relatively short term and to anticipate and react to answers and (non-verbal) reactions of participants to the questions (Jennings, 2001).

The interviews are carried out with a predefined list of questions. However, the interviewer had the liberty to formulate the questions and the sequence. The questions are open ended because this gave freedom to the interviewees to give the kind of answer the participant likes to give, including their ideas and stories. This approach with room for comprehensive answers helped the researcher to get a better understanding of multiple realities (Jennings, 2001) and to look beyond the predefined concepts. This made it possible to transcend the concepts and to explore the research subject more freely. Different concepts per sub questions are used to develop the interview questions, see appendix I for the interview plan with interview questions. See for an overview and explanation of the concepts the paragraph 'operationalization'.

Because of the explorative character, the interviewees were free to interpret the term 'wildlife'. The aim of this freedom was to get an idea of what kind of wildlife is part of the visitor-experience. This means that birds, terrestrial herbivores and terrestrial carnivores (Knight, 2009) are all part of this research, depending on interpretation of the interviewees. This research focuses on all senses that can help to experience animals. This means that this research is not only about animals that are physically seen by visitors but also about animal sounds heard or animals that are felt or smelled. Animal traces are also part of the experience because it suggests the presence of wildlife.

The interview consists of two parts. The first part is questions to explore the anticipation phase. These questions are asked to the interviewee before they started their on-site activity. The second part is questions to explore the on-site activity and mental dispositions towards wildlife. The interviewees are asked to answer these questions after the on-site activity.

#### *Data collection*

Visitors are asked to participate in the research when they had just entered the park through one of the main entrances and parked their car or bike. The first part of the interview took 5-15 minutes and was conducted on the parking place or in the nearby visitor centre, depending on the preferences of the participant. The second part of the interview took place in the visitor centre at a quiet place where the interviewee had the opportunity to speak freely. This part of the interview took 15-40 minutes. The interviewees were asked to talk freely about their expectations, hopes, on-site experiences, evaluation and thoughts with respect to wildlife. The interview plan as used during the interview can be found in appendix I. There were 6 actual interview days, after that time the interviewer decided to stop because a sufficient level of saturation was reached by then.

The interviews are recorded on audio recorder. Next to the recordings, the interviewer made written memos and notes about frequently occurring answers, reasoning of people which the researcher had not thought about before or unexpected findings or concepts arising (Jennings, 2001). Observational memos are made to capture observations made during the interview which could not be recorded on tape. Methodological memos are made to record the experiences of the researcher during the interviews and used to adjust the interview technique or questions for following interviews (Boeije, 2010).

#### *Data analysis*

Boeije (2010) describes qualitative data analysis as two activities, namely segmenting the data into parts and reassembling the parts into a coherent whole. The interviews were transcribed into a Word file and all memos as written down during the data collection were stored in that same data file. The data analysis started with the making of an analysis system

to make it possible to reduce the complexity of raw data into brief summaries on an abstract level. First, the data was segmented in quotes relevant per research question and the researcher took time to read the data carefully and think about it. During this reading and thinking process, memos were made to help the researcher to make sense of the data and to attempt to make sense of the reasoning of the participants (Boeije, 2010). Predefined concepts were used to code wildlife value orientations and emotional dispositions. With the definitions of the different wildlife value orientations and belief dimensions as suggested by Dayer *et al.* (2007) and the emotions defined by Izard (1977) and Ekman (1984) a first code book was made to make coding of data that reflects emotional dispositions, emotions and wildlife value orientations possible. An overview of these concepts and definitions can be found in appendix II. Emerging sets of categories that represented the concepts were added to this codebook. This first codebook consisted of sets of categories that represent the various emotional dispositions, wildlife value orientations, images about wildlife on site, expectations, hopes and hope not's, emotional reactions and evaluations. This first codebook was repeatedly checked by coding data and tested to see if the concepts covered all data. Some extra concepts were added in order to make sure that the whole variety in concepts reflected by the participants was covered in the codebook. The making of the codebook was finished at the moment that the researcher concluded that the total set of concepts satisfactorily covered the thoughts, ideas and stories reflected by the interviewees. In the second phase of the data-analysis the predefined codes that reflected the concepts were placed on relevant statement within the transcript. Coding of statements that reflected wildlife value orientations appeared to be hard for the researcher because the differences between wildlife value orientations are sometimes small. Assistance was provided by a second analyser. The coding of the first and second analyser was compared and they discussed the minor differences to be able to put the right codes on the statements. The data-analysis is finalized by relating main concepts to each other in order to find possible explanations for the outcomes, the results of the anticipation phase and the on-site phase were put into the light of the outcomes of the mental dispositions.

### 3.2 Operationalization

The concepts as used for this research are defined in table 1. The interview question(s) based on the defined concepts are part of the table as well.

Concept	<b>Expectations</b>
Definition	<i>A strong belief or strong beliefs of a visitor about something that will happen with respect to wildlife during his/her visit to the park.</i>
Interview questions	'Do you <i>expect</i> to encounter wildlife during your hike? If yes, which animals? How will you feel if that happens?'

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<b>Concept</b>	<b>Hopes</b>
Definition	<i>Desire of a visitor for a certain thing or things to happen with respect to wildlife during the trip.</i>
Interview questions	<p>‘Do you <i>hope</i> to encounter wildlife during your hike? If yes, which animals? How will you feel if that happens?’</p> <p>‘Is there wildlife which you do not hope to encounter during your hike? If yes, which animals?’</p>

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Emotional reaction</b>
Definition	<i>Emotions experienced and expressed by the visitor in case of a sensory encounter with wildlife.</i>
Interview question	<p>‘Did you encounter wildlife during your hike? (see/hear/animal traces) If yes, what did you experience?’</p>

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Definition	<i>Evaluation by the visitor of the role of wildlife in the visitor-experience</i>
Interview questions	<p>‘I would like you to evaluate your hike, particularly the role of wildlife during your hike.’</p> <p>‘You expected/hoped..., during your hike it appeared to be ..... What do you think about that?’</p> <p>‘How important is it for you to encounter animals during this hike?’</p>

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Emotions</b>
Definition	<i>A possible response to wildlife characterized by expressive reactions, physiological reactions, behavioural tendencies or coping, specific emotion-related thoughts, and emotional experiences (Jacobs et al, in press).</i>



Interview questions	<p>‘When you think of wildlife, what feelings do you get?’</p> <p>‘Are there animals that give you positive feelings? Why?’</p> <p>‘Are there animals that give you negative feelings? Why?’</p>
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Concept	<b>Wildlife Value Orientation</b>
Definition	<i>Patterns of “basic beliefs that give personal meaning of right and wrong and an ideal life to one’s more basic values in relation to wildlife” (Teel et al, 2007).</i>
Interview questions	<p>‘What does wildlife mean to you?’</p> <p>‘How do you think about wildlife?’</p> <p>‘What do you think about the relation between wildlife and human beings?’</p> <p>‘What value does wildlife have to you?’</p>

Concept	<b>Image</b>
Definition	<i>Signals or symbols which build together the mental map people have (or: the image people have) about wildlife of a specific area (Mercer, 1971).</i>
Interview questions	<p>‘What can you tell me about the animals that live in this park?’</p> <p>‘What do you think is the best way to experience wildlife during a visit to this park?’</p> <p>‘Do you have certain expectations with respect to wildlife because this place is 1 of the 20 national parks in the Netherlands?’</p>

Table 1 Overview of concept definitions and related interview questions

### 3.3 Research area

Not all NP's in the Netherlands could be researched because of time limitations. SNP (2007) distinguishes between two different kinds of NPs in the Netherlands, namely land parks (N=15) and coast parks (N=5). Dutch National land parks have been the choice of focus for the research because it is the most common type of NP in the Netherlands. The Dutch coast parks are therefore not part of this research.

The data is collected at national park Sallandse Heuvelrug. This NP is situated in the east of the Netherlands in the province of Overijssel, see figure 4 and 5 for the exact location. The interview location was at one of the main entrances of the park, at the Nijverdal site. At this place there is a large parking place, restaurant and visitor centre of Staatsbosbeheer. This is the starting place for many hiking trails. The website of this NP (Nationaal Park De Sallandse Heuvelrug, 2011a) describes this park as typical because of its hills, heaths and forests. The website of national park Sallandse Heuvelrug (2011b) gives a short overview of the fauna that can be found in the park. Mammals in this park are deer (the largest mammal in this park), foxes, badgers, stone martens, polecats, weasels, stoats and bats. Reptiles and amphibians which live in the park are frogs, toads, lizards and snakes but are often hidden. More than 75 bird species breed in this NP, for example stonechat, raven, nightjar, coal tit, crested tit, crossbill, honey buzzard, hawk, nuthatch, woodpecker and hawfinch. This NP is famous because of the black grouse although this species is threatened with extinction at this place. The national park Sallandse Heuvelrug uses the black grouse in their logo.



Figure 4 National park Sallandse Heuvelrug, indicated on a map of the Netherlands.

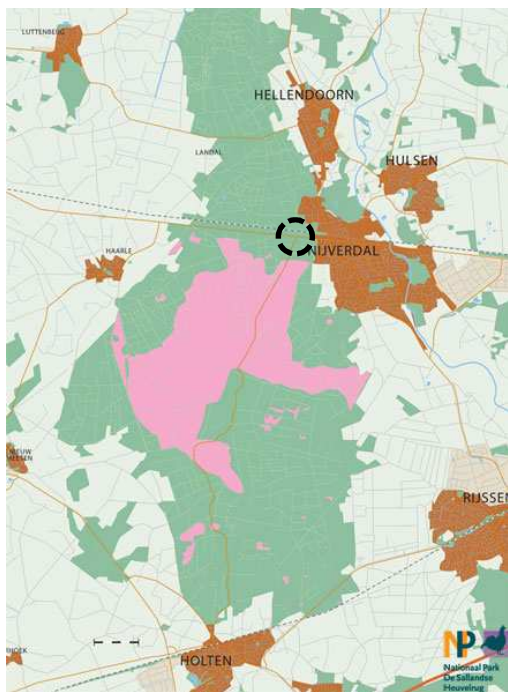


Figure 5 National park Sallandse Heuvelrug, indicated as the big green and pink area on the map, is situated between different villages in the province of Overijssel. The interviews are held at the visitor centre as indicated on the map.

### **3.4 Sample**

Due to time constraints it was impossible to collect a sample which is representative of all visitors to Dutch National land parks but because of the exploratory nature of this research this does not matter. The sample that was obtained for this research will not allow generalizations but enhance insight into the phenomenon of visitor-experience with respect to wildlife in NPs.

The data collection was done in winter. The weather conditions might influence the ability to experience wildlife. Every season has its own characteristics which brings opportunities and limitations for research on experience of wildlife. The limitation for wildlife experiences in winter is that many animals are in hibernation and therefore not visible. The opportunities for visible wildlife experiences are possibly higher because there are no leaves on most shrubs and trees. If there is snow in the park, animal tracks are more visible. The average number of NP visitors in winter is often lower than in spring or summer. This might influence the wildlife experience because there are fewer visitors around who might disturb the wildlife.

To explore a variety of perceptions towards wildlife in NPs, subjects are selected with a variety of characteristics in mind. This means, a wide variety in demographics and also variety in first-time and repeat visitors. This research focused only on visitors who come to the NP for a walk or hike because they are easiest to access for data collection in a parking place from where different hiking trails/routes start. The sample was collected during six interview days in December 2011. In total, 37 visitors participated in the first part of the interview. Of these 37 participants, 31 contributed to the second part of the interview as well. There are 17 male and 20 female participants. There are 15 first-time visitors and 22 repeat visitors.

# Chapter 4

## Results

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*Results will be systematically described in this chapter per research question. First, the results related to questions about participant's mental dispositions will be mentioned, where after the results on questions related to the anticipation and on-site phase will be described. Where possible, outcomes about mental dispositions will be used to interpret the outcomes of the results of the two travel phases. Quotes of participants will be used to illustrate outcomes and interpretations. The results will not be described by percentages because the sample is not representative for visitors of Dutch national parks and the data set is relatively small. However, absolute numbers will be used for data description to clarify proportions. Take notice, these numbers have to be seen in perspective of a relatively small data set.*

### **4.1 Mental dispositions**

#### **4.1.1 Emotional dispositions**

The question about what feelings participants got when they thought about wildlife was answered by a large part of participants (17) with positive feelings. Some participants (4) told about positive feelings but they felt negative emotional feelings as well, like fear. Some participants (5) got immediately negative emotional feelings when they thought about wildlife. Most of these participants talked about feelings when they thought about wildlife in general and only 1 participant immediately thought about a specific situation. Some participants (4) could not mention which emotions they felt towards wildlife.

The different emotions as reflected by participants in the interviews are summed up and clarified with quotes in table 2. Positive emotions specifically mentioned were interest/fascination (19), happiness (7), surprise (7), enjoyment (6), and joy (4). In addition to emotions as proposed by Izard (1977) and Ekman (1984), see appendix II for an overview, two other emotions were found among participants. Feelings of mollification came up by quite a large group of participants (14) and three participants mentioned feelings of relaxation when they think about wildlife. Specifically mentioned negative emotions were

fear (42) and disgust (7). It might be that fear and disgust are emotions that come together. For example, if somebody fears snakes this might mean that disgust grows towards this animal species.

Happiness	<p><i>“That is fun! Gosh, a rabbit! That makes me happy. Other animals as well, everything that is beast.”</i></p> <p><i>“That makes me happy, I like that very much.”</i></p> <p><i>“That makes me happy: ‘Hey, there is a hedgehog or a squirrel!’. It makes you happy when you see one of those.”</i></p>
Surprise	<p><i>“For example, that is absolutely not the case in the Netherlands, but when you hike in Canada and all of a sudden there is a hedgehog or there flies all of a sudden a hummingbird in front of your face, that is fantastic!”</i></p> <p><i>“Well, I like it very much seeing deer. I react with much surprise, stop and hope that he or she will stop as well.”</i></p>
Enjoyment	<p><i>“Or when you sit in front of your tent and there walks a fox less than thirty meters away.... Well that is fantastic, I enjoy that.”</i></p>
Interest/ fascination	<p><i>“Beauty, elegance. Wild animals, they have something, it does not matter if they are large or small.”</i></p> <p><i>“When I see a tomtit in a tree doing things, that is fantastic. I find that very interesting and fascinating how they are busy with things.”</i></p> <p><i>“I am interested in animals in general. They fascinate me.”</i></p>
Joy	<p><i>“Well, seeing deer in a pasture gives me joy.”</i></p> <p><i>“Yes, that gives me pleasure. That is again in common with Africa, they are beautiful animals, how they walk there.”</i></p>

Mollification	<p><i>“And if you see small animals or mother-animals with children or babies and that kind of thing, that is just cute and nice to see.”</i></p> <p><i>“A koala bear looks adorable. They are just doing what they are doing. Nice stupidity.”</i></p> <p><i>“Well, I find deer cute and hares as well because you do not encounter them often. I find all animals cute.”</i></p>
Relaxation	<p><i>“Well, that is again a relaxed feeling. If I think about that, it has to do with escaping from the hectic life that we humans are in. It brings you rest when you think about animals.”</i></p> <p><i>“Peace I think. Well, if you see animals and you sit there in a quiet place, then I think ‘that gives peace’”</i></p>
Fear	<p><i>“I do not prefer wild boar. You never know exactly how they might react to human beings. He might think twice that I am here only for a walk, but the third time he might think ‘that guy comes too close to where I have marked out my territory’. You never know. That scares me.”</i></p> <p><i>“I am afraid of wild boar. Further, I hope that I will not encounter dangerous animals like foxes. I do not like to encounter those and certainly not a wolf, because they are coming to the Netherlands.”</i></p> <p><i>“They are not used to human beings. So, they might attack or something. A kind of anxiety.”</i></p>
Disgust	<p><i>“Well, if I think of hyenas, that is... Yes they are scavengers of nature. I find them dirty and ugly. I do not have feelings of mollification with them. I find them ugly, how they root in a dead body. That is the image I have in mind.”</i></p> <p><i>“Crocodiles and snakes, I find them A.) terribly ugly and B.) they belong to nature but it are monsters. I find them absolutely scary and ugly. Rhinos as well, those kinds of animals.”</i></p>

Table 2 Emotions and feelings of participants with clarifying quotations

It seems to be hard for participants to name specific emotions, 54 times words are used that indicate an emotion but does not specifically name the emotion. These words, like fine/pleasant/special/magnificent/wonderful/nice/beautiful/fantastic all denote positive feelings which can come together with positive emotions. The words *fine* and *pleasant* probably refer directly to positive emotions. The words special/magnificent/wonderful/nice/beautiful/fantastic do not refer directly to emotions but could be interpreted as a way of putting feelings of fascination, astonishment and surprise into words. In retrospect, the interviewer should have asked the participants to clarify which emotions they exactly felt.

A difference can be found in the way participants answer the question ‘*what feelings do you get when you think of wild animals?*’. A large group participants (15) respond with feelings they get when they think of wild animals in general.

*“Wild animals always arouses feelings of fear”*

*“Well, that is again a relaxed feeling. If I think about that, it has to do with escaping from the hectic scenes in which we humans live. It brings you rest when you think about animals.”*

Another group of participants (10) respond with feelings they get when they think about situations if they see wild animals.

*“I find that pleasant. Of course, if I see deer or a rabbit or a squirrel or birds, that gives a good feeling. A pleasant feeling.”*

Some participants (5) respond with feelings which they got in a specific situation.

*“If I think back to the safari, feelings of fear as well, I find them very impressive.”*

Experiences with wildlife during holidays were remarkably often used to clarify feelings participants got from wildlife. Apart from reactions on specific questions about feelings towards wildlife, participants reflect emotions in their answers on other questions spread throughout the interview as well. In total, ten participants told stories of encounters with wildlife during their holidays, some participants (7) told about wildlife encounters in Europe (including four in the Netherlands).

*“In the past I experienced something in Sauerland (Germany) and I did not feel comfortable with it. I had to move faster on forest roads than cars move. That wild boar pawed the ground, like he said ‘now you have to go immediately’. I did that, but he continued chasing me.”*



*“Two years ago I saw for the first time in my life a wild boar on the Veluwe (Netherlands). You don’t expect that because it was in the middle of the day. They are the amusing things you can encounter.”*

Some participants told about wildlife encounters in northern America (4) and in Africa (4).

*“Well...if you are in America, we went there to visit national parks. Well, take one park, it was so beautiful, that I still dream of it so to speak. Have you ever been to America? You should go to Bryce national park.....” “The whole place, both animals and nature is beautiful.*

*“Then I think back to Africa, not so much to the Netherlands. That was so exciting to see. It is like coming into their environment, you are an intruder and we do not belong there anymore. You may take a look into their lives.”*

These stories are about strong positive emotions as well as strong negative emotions felt during these holidays. A reason for this might be that memories of past travel experiences goes along with strong emotions. Thereby, the image of wildlife in general might be changed through past travel experiences with wildlife and this might change emotional dispositions towards animals as well.

There is a multitude of animal species mentioned to the question ‘are there wild animals which give you positive feelings?’. Most mentioned are deer (8), bird (8), squirrel (4) and rabbit (4). These are all animals that are in general harmless for people and have a certain cuddliness and liveliness. There is a multitude of animal species mentioned to the question ‘are there wild animals that give you negative feelings?’. Most mentioned are snake (9), wild boar (4) and fox (3). These are animals that are able to harm people. In cases when participants tell about negative feelings some made a comment that not the animal itself would scare them but being in a situation that the animal can harm the person.

*“Negative feelings can be there because they can harm you. But besides that there are positive feelings. If you see a crocodile you are fascinated by the animal but at the same time you think ‘be careful’. In general it is positive but certain situations with animals can be dangerous.”*

Some interpretations can be made from the perspective that humans can react emotionally on animals through innate and learned psychological mechanisms (Jacobs, 2009). Positive emotions that come together with animals that move very vividly (bird, squirrel, deer, rabbit) might come forward from an innate sensitivity for movements of animals. It is not

said that this mechanism does not work in case of less vivid moving animals but it might be that people are more aroused in case of fast moving and jumpy animals. The negative emotions felt when people think about snakes has probably to do with a quick learning program to respond emotionally to some animals. There are snakes that can kill people so it was and is important for survival to respond to this animal. This same mechanism can help to explain why people react on rabbit and deer with positive emotions because these animals could be eaten and were therefore relevant for survival as well. Conditioning can be a reason why visitors react with feelings of fear to wild boar or snakes. A frightening experience with certain animal species or negative stories told in the media or folktales can cause emotions. There are often negative reports in Dutch media about wild boar, especially in the context of de Veluwe and the fox has a special place in folktales and fables as cunning and unpredictable and might therefore evoke negative emotions in people. Emotional reactions can also be turned on by knowledge and the deer is a good example here. The Disney movie 'Bambi' has probably brought on positive emotions, there were even participants who talked about 'Bambi' instead of deer.

### *Conclusion*

Participants told about the feelings they get when they think about wildlife. This provoked predominantly positive emotional feelings whereby feelings of interest, fascination and mollification are most often mentioned. Most participants mentioned animals which provoke positive emotions among which are deer, birds, squirrels and rabbits. There are also negative feelings reflected among participants, predominantly feelings of fear, which are mentioned but are mainly felt when participants think about a certain situation when a wild animal can harm a human-being. Most mentioned animals which provoke negative emotions are snakes, wild boar and foxes. Many participants made use of specific situations and past experiences with wildlife during holidays to tell, illustrate and explain positive as well as negative emotions they feel when they think about wildlife.

#### **4.1.2 Wildlife value orientations**

In order of most to least frequently mentioned, the following wildlife orientations are found: mutualism, environmentalism, attraction/interest, concern for safety and materialism. See table 3 for clarifying quotes of most mentioned orientations.

Mutualism	<i>"I think that they have the same value as human beings. Both have a right to live."</i>
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<p>Caring (waarvan 21x)</p>	<p><i>"They just belong to nature. Wild animals belong to nature, they are part of the whole eco system."</i></p> <p><i>"I find a relationship with animals important. I find it important that young people grow up with animals and learn how they should treat animals. We belong together so we should live together."</i></p> <p><i>"We should treat them well. Do not tease or abuse them or whatever. Just be kind to them."</i></p> <p><i>"Well, I see that they roam freely but if there are extreme winters in the Netherlands, we should help them."</i></p> <p><i>"I love animals very much because I find them cute, most of them. I want them to have a shelter, I find animals very important."</i></p>
<p>Environmentalism</p>	<p><i>"Wild animals... can die out."</i></p> <p><i>"Every time, also today, when we walk in nature we find it very annoying that people leave their trash behind. I always say 'please take it with you and leave the animals as they are'."</i></p> <p><i>"The fact that there is less wildlife due to different causes, I regret. That is a pity."</i></p> <p><i>"I find it important that there are enough wild animals in the Netherlands. It is very important that there is enough attention given to nature conservation."</i></p>
<p>Attraction/ Interest</p>	<p><i>"We are very interested in flora and fauna. We always look out for it during hikes."</i></p> <p><i>"It is the way they look at you, that you know that there is something sparkling inside them, something beastly. I like that. It is a kind of power."</i></p>

	<p><i>"I'd like to come as close as possible. Yes, in their natural habitat because that is what I prefer most, to watch animals in their natural habitat."</i></p>
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Table 3 Statements referring to wildlife value orientations

### *Mutualism*

The mutualistic value orientation is most (44) found among participants' statements. In general, these statements reflect thoughts about wildlife as part of an ecosystem of which human beings are part as well.

*"Nature without animals? Actually, human beings shouldn't belong there as well. They belong to each other."*

There are some (9) statements which refer to a positive relationship between humans and wildlife. A relationship in which they live together, interact together and enjoy together a shared environment.

*"From experience, I know that it makes it possible to place yourself better. You project yourself on others. If you project yourself on animals I got the feeling that you come closer to yourself than when you project yourself on material goods."*

*"If you give animals freedom it is possible to live together in the same environment. I think that that should be possible. Basically, we belong together. Provided that you walk in their environment and not drive between them."*

There are statements that refer to the concept *caring* as a belief dimension within mutualism. Remarkable is that some (3) of these statements are about shooting animals as a way of caring for wildlife. This indicates that caring is not always seen as 'live and let live'.

*"I saw a fox once. The animal is very beautiful. But they eat the black grouse, so I think that we should clean up them once."..."We need to give nature a helping hand."*

This might come forward from the Dutch nature situation where many animal species live together on relatively small areas. There are hunting permits to shoot certain animal species on places where nature will be dominated by one specie, for example to shoot wild boar at places outside *de Veluwe* and national park *de Meinweg*. This measure gives better survival chances for other, more vulnerable species.

Living together in the same environment, with mutual respect for each other, is the most preferable way for mutualistic oriented visitors in relation to the nature in which they recreate. Interaction with wildlife is possible in this value orientation. Provided that people respect the rights of animals because people with this WVO find that wildlife have rights like humans.

### *Environmentalism*

A large part (41) of the statements is indicated as environmentalistic value orientations. The statements reflect a general concern that humans impact the environment in a negative way through their actions. This can extend to the willingness to preserve wildlife. Some statements reflect preferences of participants on how to preserve wildlife. A large part of these statements (14) are about preserving wildlife through a 'hands off' attitude, wildlife is able to take care of themselves if humans remain at a distance.

*"I think that animals do not need humans. But because we intervened in the past in nature they need us now in order to restore their habitat. For example, an eco-duct. We destroyed something and now we have to repair it. But I think that animals do not need humans. There are no animal species which are dependent on us. Except a tapeworm (laugh)."*

*"Well, you should keep an animal in its habitat. I should not come in the habitat of a deer, we should not disturb them because then I'm trespassing."*

There are some (5) statements that relate to active nature protection as the most preferable way to preserve nature.

*"I think that measures have to be taken to preserve animals in their natural habitat. We support WNF (World Wildlife Fund). I do not eat meat. Those kind of those things."*

It is interesting that a large part of the environmentalism statements are about remaining at a distance from wildlife. This can be seen as behavior resulting from the value orientation. In this line of thought encountering wildlife is something that you should not look for and an appropriate distance between animal and human being must be observed.

### *Attraction/Interest*

The wildlife value orientation *attraction/interest* was 22 times found among 11 participants. These participants share an interest in and a desire to know more about wildlife but above all to see wildlife. Ten of these participants related their experiences of watching wildlife on

previous holidays. These holidays might change the way visitors see wildlife when they are back in the Netherlands.

*“We walked here in the park and at a given time I thought: ‘Oh, this looks like Africa. Where are the elephants, where are the tigers?’. It is something very special on the other side of the world, if that should be here in the Netherlands it would not be special anymore because you would get used to it. So there are mixed feelings. Okay, if there were more deer or wild boar here, that would be fun.”*

To see wildlife as an attraction may influence the place wildlife has during a walk in nature. An encounter with wildlife for people with this WVO will probably enhance the visitor-experience. Although visitors know that wildlife is less visible in the Netherlands, there might still be a strong willingness to encounter wildlife.

#### *Concern for safety*

Concern for safety was seven times mentioned with an explanation that feelings of fear were felt when the participant thought of wild animals. This concern relates to interacting with wildlife because of possible harm.

*“I do not have to encounter wild animals, I am glad if they are kept behind bars.”*

*“I think that we should not disturb them and I think that people should not watch animals. It is fun to see an animal but you should not scare them because you never know what will happen then.”*

Unpredictable behaviour of wildlife was mentioned twice as a reason why people are concerned for their safety. This wildlife value orientation might influence visitor’s feelings of safety during their walk in nature.

#### *Materialism*

Among three participants materialistic statements were indicated. The statements reflect that wildlife exists for human use but above all that human welfare is prioritized over that of wildlife.

*“A hare at Christmas is okay. We should not maintain everything in nature.”*

*“They are building ecoducts here. That might cost a million Euros! The Netherlands is in financial distress and it is ridiculous to give priority to those things, such as a little animal crossing the street without getting killed. No, I do not agree with that kind of thing. It is nonsense, a waste of money.”*

*“In Limburg there was a little hamster. Millions of euros are spent to save that little animal. I think: ‘We should not exaggerate’. That’s going too far.”*

The participants who made materialistic statements, did make mutualistic and environmentalist statements as well. A WVO is a contextualized mental construct concept (Jacobs, 2007). This explains that different WVO are reflected by the same participant. Two participants made materialistic statements in the context of distribution of funds. A reason for this might be that the interview was held at a time that subsidy cuts were highly discussed in the media and politics and decisions had to be made by the government about how to divide their money. This context might have influenced the outcome of the interview.

### *Conclusion*

In general, *mutualistic* wildlife value orientations are found among participants. As Jacobs (2007) proposes, two types of mutualism can be distinguished for the Netherlands. The first combines with *caring* and the second with *environmentalism*. The first type is based on interactions between humans and wildlife. For this WVO, the visitor-experience with wildlife is founded on interaction. The second type is founded on the idea that animals and wildlife have the same rights. For this WVO, the visitor-experience is not necessarily founded on interaction with wildlife. There is a special place for the WVO *attraction/interest* because previous holiday experiences with wildlife watching probably influences the way visitors think about wildlife. There are some participants who are concerned for their safety because of possible harm from wildlife, this might influence their feelings while they walk in nature. The results of the interviews were possibly influenced by discussions by politicians and the media at the time when the interview was held.

### **4.1.3 Image of wildlife on site**

In order to explore the image which visitors have in mind about wildlife on site, three questions were asked to the participants. The first question is about what participants know about wildlife on this site. The second question explores if participants have a specific image in mind of wildlife because this place is defined as a *national park*. The third question is about what participants think about the best way to experience wildlife in the national park.

### *Knowledge*

Almost half of the total set of participants (15) said they did not know what kind of animals would live in the NP. However, most of them (11) did a guess.

*“I do not know but I think that there are deer and of course foxes and martens, I do not know. And a lot of birds. ”*

There are people who come to the place with an image in mind about wildlife that does not exist on this site. Some participants (6) talked about wild boar and red deer. Interpretation of the results give the impression that a large group of participants do not have a clear image of which animals to expect at this place.

Most of the participants who named species in the national park talked about relatively large mammals like deer and foxes as well as smaller animals like squirrels and birds.

*“Well, sometimes you can see squirrels here. Hares. Deer seem to be here, I have never seen them. That is it.... and birds.”*

The black grouse is remarkably often mentioned (12) by participants.

*“Yes, the black grouse. The black grouse is very famous.”*

*“The black grouse is notorious. The only time I saw a black grouse was five kilometres outside this national park, in a meadow. Probably to the frustration of the forest managers. They do everything to keep that creature alive.”*

The NP makes a lot of effort to make people aware of the presence of the rare black grouse. This bird serves as a logo for the NP. This seems to work because many participants mentioned this bird.

Some participants who were returning visitors (8) mentioned that in this NP wildlife encounters are very unusual because wildlife is rarely seen.

*“To be honest, you should not come here to experience wildlife. There are some birds which are nice but that is it. Once in a while you see deer but not often.”*

#### *Image of Wildlife in the national park*

It seems that there are few or no expectations towards wildlife in national parks among participants. Most of the participants (20) did not mention special expectancies towards wildlife because the place has the national park status. It is unclear if these visitors knew that the place is a national park. Some participants (7) mentioned that they did not know that the place is a national park. Some participants (5) mentioned expectancies, these expectancies are diverse of character:

*“That these will be well looked after.”*



*"I expect, because this is a protected area, that there is more chance to meet animals."*

*"Well, on the one hand I think that they take care that there will not be too many animals here and on the other hand that when they are threatened with extinction they keep an eye on them."*

*"I think that the animals here are really wild."*

The outcomes raise questions about the publicity of this place as a national park and the knowledge among visitors about wildlife in national parks. It seems that the status 'national park' does little to affect the image which most visitors have in mind about wildlife in this place.

#### *How to encounter wildlife*

In general, seeing wildlife or wildlife tracks is mentioned as the best way to experience wildlife. According to participants the eye (seeing) is the most helpful sense to experience wildlife. Most participants talked about the nature itself as a place to experience wildlife. There were some participants (4) who see a visitor centre as the best place to experience wildlife in the NP.

*"Well, it might be the best to go to the visitor centre. You will never get it better than there"*

It seems that visitors have an image in mind that they are more likely to see wildlife if you meet certain conditions. The use of tools or external help to encounter wildlife is mentioned by some (8) as a good way to be able to experience wildlife.

*"There are, I don't know if they are here, kind of houses where you have a view over a certain area. Wild observation places with kind of windows where you can look through."*

*"Well, in summer we take a kind of box with us for our grandchildren. My grandson puts little animals in that box and can see them magnified. We bought that at the visitor centre. He likes that very much."*

*"I think, it is best to go on such an excursion together with the forest manager. He knows the spots where animals are and the right times."*

Many participants (12) see experiencing wildlife as something that has to do with behaviour/attitude in nature. You should be quiet and keep calm. Thereby, some (6) mention the time of day as important, dawn or dusk being mentioned as the best times to encounter wildlife in nature.

### *Conclusion*

The status of national park does not seem to influence the image people have of wildlife on the site much. Visitors seem to have an image in mind that seeing wildlife is the best way to experience wildlife. For most visitors, but not all, nature is the best place to experience wildlife and they should take certain precautions and behave in a certain way to actually see wildlife.

## **4.2 Visitor-experience phases**

### **4.2.1 Expectations and hopes**

Most participants (18) did not expect to encounter wildlife. Some of them (4) explained that this expectation was based on previous experiences during trips to this national park. Others (3) gave reasons lying beyond their control, like weather conditions, time of day or the crowd. Seven participants who did not expect to encounter wildlife said they expect to encounter birds.

*“No, not really. There will be a bird. But in this weather and this time of the day...”.*

Another part of the participants (12) did expect encounters with wildlife. Most of these participants (11) expected small animals like rabbits/insects/squirrels. A large part of this same group (9) expected to encounter birds. Some participants (5) mentioned that there may be an encounter with deer. Some participants (4) skipped over the expectation question and immediately said they *hoped* for encounter(s) with wildlife. Interpretation of the results give the impression that participants are kind of hesitating to expect large wildlife, some talk about seeing deer in the distance. There seems to be a narrow dividing line between expecting and hoping for encounters with wildlife. This might have to do on the one hand with the predominant value orientation that wildlife has the right to be free and to avoid visitors, and on the other hand the attraction towards wildlife and the strongly felt positive emotions that guide these encounters.

Birds are the most mentioned animals expected by the participants. It is remarkable that birds are mentioned as well by participants who said they did not expect to have wildlife

encounters, because birds are animals that live in the wild and are therefore wildlife too. This might have to do with how participants see birds as species. The results indicate that there are discourse differences about birds as part of wildlife.

The predominant mutualistic oriented wildlife value orientation found among participants might explain the results. Wildlife that has the same rights as humans, according to the participants, has the right to be shy and to avoid contact with visitors. Most participants know that large as well as small animals live at this place but most participants did not expect to encounter large wildlife, only small animals (including birds). There seems to be a hesitation to expect encounters with large mammals. It is possible that the image of absence of encounters with large mammals is shaped by previous visits to nature at the NP or in other Dutch nature.

#### *Hope to encounter*

Most participants (30) hoped for encounters with animals. Most frequently mentioned animals were deer (16) and foxes (9). After these, large birds (like owls and birds of prey), squirrels and wild boar were mentioned as animals people hoped to experience during their walk. The animal species which people hoped for are mostly relatively large animals. Most people reacted very enthusiastically on this question with answers like: “Yes, of course!”. Participants often used emotional descriptions and description about a high arousal to give answers on these hope-related questions.

*“Of course! That is something you always hope for. You always hope for something nice unexpected. A couple of weeks ago in Brabant (the Netherlands), we saw a badger for the first time in our lives. That is just fantastic and your first reaction is: ‘Oh!’, yes fantastic.”*

*“Yes, that gives me a kick. I always like to see deer, certainly larger wild animals I like. I heard that the black grouse is a rarity to see, not that I came for an encounter with black grouse. You know that if you see them it is very special so you hope for it.”*

It is hard for people to define exactly why they hope for an encounter with wildlife. However, fascination for the forest and seeing animals and the excitement of the possibility to encounter animals seem to be main reasons why so many people yearn for experiences with animals.

*“I hope to see deer, they are very impressive. From experience I know that you do not encounter much here, you do not dare to hope. In April and May they are here with*

*binoculars to watch for the black grouse. You know that they are here but you do not see them.”*

*“It sounds a little high-blown if I should say that encountering deer would make my day. But that is how it feels. To be one with nature. That feels good, you are not alone here, you are part of the environment. Although we wear clothes and are cultured, we are part of the whole system.”*

*“Animals in the wilderness are different from those situated in a zoo or with your pet. This is how they live, it is beautiful to see something of that. Here they walk around freely, which is different from the city.”*

An innate attraction towards animals might be a good explanation of the emotional reactions and yearning for encounters with wildlife. This attraction towards wildlife may have to do with a wildlife value orientation which is based on interaction and attraction towards wildlife, like for example *attraction/interest* and the belief dimension *caring*. Positive emotions towards wildlife guide these WVO.

Next to positive emotions (for example, joy) there are also some people (4) who immediately reacted to the question with stories about negative emotions like fear. Some species mentioned by these people, like foxes and wild boar, are also the species which others hoped to see and reflect positive emotions with. Negative emotional reactions are reflected towards animals that might harm people, like wild boar, foxes and wolves.

*“ Well, not really. Because, if a wild boar breaks out and he does not like me, I might have to run faster than I am just to.”*

The image participants have in mind about wildlife that lives in the NP makes some people hope to see wild boar, a species which does not exist at NP de Sallandse Heuvelrug.

#### *Hope not to encounter*

Many (26) participants did not mention animals which they did not hope to see during their walk. Not every visitor gave a clear reason for that but some (6) mentioned that there are no animals people should fear in this NP or in the Netherlands. There were many visitors who reacted to the question with cynical laughter and answers.

*“ No. I do not have the feeling that you have to fear animals which you can encounter here.”*

*“ Not here. Bears (laughing).”*

*“No, in Africa you may encounter animals you do not like.”*

Some (11) participants mentioned that there are animals which they do not hope to see. Wild boar (6), foxes (6) and snakes (5) were animals they hoped not to encounter. In general, people hope not to encounter these animals because they feel emotions of fear with these animals. Unpredictability of the animals was also given as an argument (4). The image people have of animals in this NP might be a reason for that, some participants fear wild boar, a species which does not live at this place.

Some participants (6) mentioned the wolf in case this interview question was asked although they knew that wolves do not live in the NP.

*“Here in the Netherlands? Yes, they are planning to introduce wolves here. I do not know if they are in the Netherlands already but that is something I am scared of. Everybody fears wolves.”*

There is a similarity between the animal species in which participants give negative feelings in general (mental dispositions) and the animals participants mentioned which they do not like to encounter on-site.

### *Conclusion*

Small animals are most expected on-site and birds are the most mentioned animals in this case. There is hesitation in expecting encounters with large mammals. There seems to be a narrow dividing line between expecting and hoping for encounters with wildlife. Most participants hope to encounter wildlife, especially relatively large animals. Although most visitors do not have animals they do not like to encounter, there are participants who fear to come into a situation with animals that might harm them. There seems to be an excitement among visitors because they know that there is a possibility to encounter wildlife when they are in nature.

### **4.2.2 Encounters with wildlife**

Two thirds of the visitors (20) who participated in the second part of the interview encountered animals during their walk in the national park. Some (10) said they did not encounter animals. Yet, most participants who said that he/she did not encounter animals did mention that they encountered a bird or birds:

*“No, just birds”*

A large part (17) of the group of participants who said they encountered animals during their walk saw/heard bird or birds. These are the most encountered animals. It seems that most interviewees do not see them as animals: *"No animals, only birds"*. The reactions on these encountered wildlife were in general without emotions. At least, these participants did not reflect these emotions in the interviews. This is remarkable because birds are one of the most mentioned species among participants to provoke positive feelings (as reaction on the question 'Are there animals that give you positive feelings?'. For many people birds are not mentioned as special in this environment *"They just belong here"*, this might be a reason that there is not a lot of emotional reaction to this wildlife because if animals do not emotionally trigger people, there will probably be no emotional reaction.

The following animals were encountered by participants as well: sheep (2), dogs (3), rabbit (1), horse (1), spiders (2), squirrel (1), insect (1). Notice that not all of the mentioned animals can be classified as wildlife. Two participants mentioned sculptured squirrels out of wood that can be found nearby the parking place in the play forest. Most participants did not have emotional reactions to these animals, at least they did not speak about it during the interview with much emotional related words. Some participants (3) saw animal tracks.

Some participants expressed emotions through their stories about their encounter with wildlife. Two participants saw spiders and talked about this with words related to the emotion fear. Two participants talked about the excitement of seeing deer tracks.

*"Immediately you start to look around. That triggers: 'to which side points the hoof? Do I see something? No I do not see something'. That is a kind of excitement."*

One participant talked about encountering rabbits in an emotionally laden way.

*" We heard birds and we saw rabbits. They came out of the shrubs in front of us, they heard us I guess, and ran across the dirt track. Two little rabbits walked before us. I liked that: ' Hey! That is remarkable!'. We were talking together and all of a sudden two rabbits came running out of the forest. We stopped talking and were focused on the rabbits: ' Hey, where are they going to?'. We stood still, were kind of shocked, watched the rabbits and walked on." ... " I think that when we come home this evening we will say: 'Gosh, we encountered a rabbit in the forest'. I think that I will remember this. Not that it is very special such a rabbit but you talk about it differently from usual."*

The amount of encountered wildlife was, as expected, low. As there was not much encounter with wildlife, it cannot be expected to measure much emotional reaction. The reactions on the encountered animals were almost all without passion. The kind of

encountered animals might have to do with this. Birds seem not to cause much emotion by visitors because they are in general seen as common for a walk in nature. The image people have of wildlife in a NP might be more large mammal and charismatic wildlife oriented and this might explain why a large group of participants did not mention birds as an animal. There was not much charismatic wildlife encountered. Deer can be seen as charismatic wildlife and it may be that deer tracks therefore caused some emotions by two interviewees. It must be pointed out here that only after the wildlife-encounters questions were asked about that moment, that it was some time after the encounters actually happened. Thereby, emotional reactions are more than just vocal stories and bodily reactions at the moment of encountering were not measured here.

Although not directly asked, some participants (3) talked in a positive emotional way about the excitement of a walk in nature for them because there are animals around.

*“There are certainly eyes looking at us, although we do not know that”.*

Other participants did not talk about this possible excitement, it does not mean that they did not feel these emotions. The excitement of being in a place where wildlife roams and the possibility to encounter wildlife might evoke emotions in visitors. It remains questionable if these feelings are intense if there is a low probability of an actual encounter with animals.

### *Conclusion*

Although most participants encountered birds during their walk in the national park there was not much emotional response on this wildlife. Encounters with other animals were scarce, three participants expressed emotions because they encountered an animal (one rabbit, two spiders). There are indications that not the encounters themselves but the excitement that there are animals around in the place where they walk and the possibility to encounter wildlife might evoke emotions in visitors.

### **4.2.3 Evaluation of the role of wildlife**

#### *Importance of encounters*

Some (5) participants mentioned that they find it important to encounter wildlife during their walk. Some participants (7) mentioned that wildlife is part of the natural environment that they walk through during their walk, wildlife is an indispensable part of that nature and they like to experience that part of nature as well. Some participants (11) mentioned that encountering wildlife is not important because it was not their motive to experience wildlife. Most of them mentioned other motives for their walk, for example ‘physical exercise’, ‘having a good conversation’, ‘to have a breath of fresh air’, etc.

Some participants mentioned that they like landscape, scenery, trees and other things that can be found in a NP. These participants like to enjoy nature (7) but it is unclear what they exactly mean by 'nature' and if they see animals as part of that nature.

*"Uh.... well it is always fun. I enjoy the nature as well".*

Some interviewees (11) made comments like *"It is not most important but if I see animals it is okay, of course"*. It seems that encountering wildlife is not the most important thing for a walk in nature. The mutualistic wildlife value orientation might be a good explanation for this because if a person sees an animal as a creature with rights like human beings, then they have the right to take their rest and avoid recreationists in nature. Visitors who like to encounter wildlife mentioned that they are attracted to wildlife and hoped to encounter them to experience a connection.

### *Evaluation*

Many (21) interviewees mentioned their positive evaluation about the whole trip.

Putting the low wildlife encounters into perspective was a way for many interviewees (14) to answer the question. Ways to put things in perspective were: Time of the year, weather conditions, disturbance by car traffic, etc.

Some participants (8) mentioned that their expectations were met during the trip. Some people (5) said they didn't mind that they did not see animals. Some people (4) said that wildlife would add something to their overall experience of the trip but all these interviewees were positive about their trip. Some people (4) were disappointed about the fact they did not encounter wildlife but all these people were able to put their disappointment in perspective. Two of these people said that their disappointment was to do with the interview questions they got before their hike. They were made more conscious about the fact that there are animals around and they liked to come with a whole list of animals for the second part of the interview. Although not all interviewees mentioned that they were positive about their trip does not mean that the other interviewees were not positive. Hence, they did not mention it in their answers. It cannot be said that the interviewees were disappointed because of the relative absence of encounters with wildlife during their walk. The few who were disappointed were influenced by the first part of the interview, that coloured their perception. Although only two interviewees mentioned this, that does not mean that the other interviewees were not influenced by the first half of the interview.

Many participants put things into perspective to evaluate their trip. This might have to do with the image they have of wildlife in this NP, this influenced the expectations of participants. Many participants did not expect to encounter wildlife and this was also the



case during their walk. The results of the different wildlife value orientations can be used to arrive at possible explanations of the relatively good evaluations of the trip. The participants all reflect mutualistic oriented wildlife value orientations which indicates that the participants have the idea that animals have rights as humans. The right to move or to roam where ever wildlife likes to be gives them also the right not to show themselves to visitors to the NP.

### *Conclusion*

There is a division between visitors who find it important to encounter wildlife during their trip and visitors for whom encounters with wildlife is not very important. The overall evaluation of the role of wildlife in their trip was positive. Visitors put the absence of emotion activating wildlife during their trip into perspective to evaluate their trip, these were all things outside their control.

## **4.3 Coherence between phases**

Most participants did not expect to encounter wildlife with an exception for birds. This expectation is probably based on previous experiences during walks in nature. This shows that the visitor-experience is a continuum (Eagles and McCool, 2002) and that experiences can be a starting point for new experiences. The fact that most participants hope for but do not expect encounters is a good way to protect themselves from disappointment if it turns out that no animals are encountered. This might be the reason that the evaluation of the role of wildlife during the trip is overall positive because expectations are met.

The mental dispositions as investigated for this research can help to get a better understanding of the results of the two travel phases. Expectations probably come from the image visitors have in mind about wildlife on site. For example, the idea that there will be wild boar on site makes the visitors expect wild boar, although these animals do not live at this place. Thereby, previous experiences (or absence of experiences) with wildlife in nature probably shaped the image people have of wildlife on site.

The predominant *mutualistic* oriented wildlife value orientations and the pre-set expectations might help to explain why there is a good evaluation of the trip. These value orientations come together with the idea that wildlife has rights as well as human beings and they have the right to hide for visitors and to stay away if they prefer to. The often found wildlife value orientation *environmentalism* among participants indicates that these visitors like to keep a distance between human beings and wildlife is often seen as the best way to deal with wildlife in order not to harm them. Another found wildlife value orientation among participants, *mutualism* (with caring as basic believe system), means that there are many

participants who like to come closer to wildlife to experience the bond between humans and animals. The fact that so many participants hoped for wildlife encounters can also be explained by the attraction of human beings to animals and the innate and learned psychological mechanisms which can cause emotions in visitors. Wildlife value orientations often guide these kinds of emotions which visitors can express when (they think about) experiencing wildlife. The fact that not many emotions are expressed towards the encountered wildlife has probably to do with the kind of encountered wildlife, namely birds. Participants mentioned that these birds are not very special and it is possible that therefore the bird did not trigger emotions.

In order to get a better understanding of the visitors to Dutch national parks and to make it easier to come to practical applications, two types of visitors are distinguished to conclude the results. These two visitor types are not mutually exclusive because persons are not one type or the other but can be both in different situations. The type in which a visitor is categorised depends on different factors, the two most depending factors are the predominant wildlife value orientation and visitor's motives for the trip. The descriptions of visitor types will probably not be all comprehensive but is indicative.

#### Type 1 Wildlife from a distance visitor

*"I come to the national park to have a nice walk in a nice and natural environment. I do not directly think about possible encounters with wildlife during this walk and do not expect to encounter wildlife. Humans often impact wildlife and therefore it is better to keep a certain distance between you and animals. If I would like to encounter wildlife I think that this requires preparations or certain actions, for example a visit to the visitor centre or bringing your binoculars. When I think of wildlife, I get positive feelings but there might also be some feelings of fear: 'You never know what those big animals will do, there is always unpredictable behaviour'."*

#### Type 2 Wildlife nearby visitor

*"I come to the national park to have a nice walk in an environment where wildlife also lives. Although it is very unlikely to encounter wildlife it would be great to see an animal in its own habitat. The beauty of an animal attracts and the connection and bond between human beings and animals is interesting. It is worthwhile to go to a wild observation place or to go on excursion to see large animals like wild boar, deer or a fox. If I think of wildlife this causes warm feelings and positive emotions because of the beauty, power and liveliness of animals."*

Seventeen (17) participants of the interviews conducted for this research can be categorized as a 'wildlife from a distance visitor' and nineteen (19) participants can be categorized as a 'wildlife nearby visitor'. Wildlife as part of the visitor-experience is probably most important for the 'wildlife nearby visitors'. These people would be very enthusiastic about wildlife

encounters because this makes it possible to experience the relationship with animals. A higher probability to encounter wildlife would please these visitors. The 'wildlife from a distance visitor' does not consciously think about the possibility to encounter wildlife but this visitor would have an unexpected but nice experience if he/she did encounter an animal in the wild. This type of visitor would mainly appreciate encounters with wildlife species that give them positive feelings.

# Chapter 5

## Conclusion and discussion

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*Conclusions of the sub questions and the research question will be given in this chapter. First, a concise answer will be given per sub question. After that the main question will be answered. The results will be discussed and possible explanations and implications will be mentioned. There is a reflection on the theoretical framework and used research method. This chapter ends with proposals for future research on this topic and some practical applications, based on the results. The practical applications might be interesting for management of National Parks and other nature areas in the Netherlands as well as for managers of places with wildlife conditions like in the Netherlands.*

### 5.1 Conclusion

Many visitors do not expect to encounter wildlife, however many of them expect birds. Visitors who expect to encounter wildlife do expect relatively small animals. Although visitors are doubtful about expecting to see wildlife, most hope to encounter animals, especially relatively large fauna. Most visitors have no specific animals which they wish to avoid in nature, however there are some visitors who fear wild boar, snakes and foxes.

The most encountered wildlife species on-site are birds, these seem however not to be part of the visitor-experience for most visitors. Encounters with other wildlife species are scarce. There is an indication that visitors feel excitement because of a possibility to encounter wildlife while making a walk in an environment where wildlife roams.

The overall evaluation of visitors about the role of wildlife during their trip is positive. The fact that there were not many special wildlife encounters seems to be no problem for most visitors.

Emotional dispositions towards wildlife appear when visitors start to talk about their hopes and hope nots with respect to wildlife for their walk in nature. Positive as well as negative emotions guide these hopes. Many visitors talked about emotions they experienced during wildlife encounters on previous holidays. There are not many emotions activated through wildlife during the walk in the NP because encounters with wildlife that generates emotions in visitors are scarce. Birds seem to cause no emotional reaction for most visitors.

Wildlife value orientations among visitors are mostly mutualistic oriented. This value orientation might be the reason that visitors evaluate their trip in the NP as positive

although there were no wildlife encounters. This WVO is about rights of animals, the right to be shy and to hide from visitors is a possible explanation for this. There is an indication for two types of mutualism among visitors. The first type prefers to keep at a distance from wildlife in order to avoid harm towards wildlife. The second type prefers to be in the same environment as wildlife with a preference to experience them in order to feel connected with animals.

The image visitors have in mind of wildlife on site is often vague, with an exception to the awareness of the presence of black grouse. There are visitors who come to the park with an image in mind of wildlife that does not exist at the place. The label 'national park' seems to be unknown among many visitors and there seems to be no specific expectations towards wildlife because of the national park status of the place.

The answer on the question how visitors of Dutch national parks experience wildlife depends on how the concept *visitor-experience* is defined. There is little evidence to assume that wildlife made such an impression on visitors that there can be spoken about a past personal travel-related event strong enough to have entered long-term memory (Larsen, 2007). There is not much indication that there were wildlife-encounters that made a big impression on visitors. However, this cannot be confirmed with this research because this research focused on the anticipation phase and the on-site phase. As already thought beforehand, wildlife encounters that triggered visitor's emotionally were scarce. The question that arises here is, is there a visitor-experience with respect to wildlife in places where there are no emotionally triggering encounters with wildlife? Although not directly asked to participant, the excitement which can be felt when walking in a place where wildlife roams and the possibility of encountering wildlife may trigger affect the visitor and might contribute to the visitor-experience. Another issue is whether wildlife can be important for the visitor experience even when it is not seen: just the knowledge that wildlife is there, and that there is a chance to encounter it, may add value to the experience.

## **5.2 Discussion of the results**

### **5.2.1 Possible explanations for results**

Relatively large animals are mentioned by participants when they were asked for which animal species they hoped to encounter. This is in line with findings about peoples appeal to charismatic mega-fauna. Charismatic mega-fauna are attractive large vertebrates, such as whales or elephants (Leader-Williams and Dublin, 2000). In case of the Netherlands it might be that people are attracted to relatively large vertebrates for example deer, foxes and wild boar. Although these animal species might be less attractive in comparison with elephants or whales, relatively large body size and charisma (White *et al*, 1997; Ward *et al*, 1998) come

into play here. This means that the Netherlands probably has its own appeal to visitors for attractive charismatic mega-fauna.

In general participants of the research talked about *seeing* as the most preferable way to experience wildlife. The sound of singing birds is for example not mentioned by any of the participants. This might have to do with the time of the year in which this question was asked, birds are relatively quiet in winter. The importance of the eye is already expressed in the notion of the 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 2002). Ballantyne *et al* (2011) identified four levels of visitor response on wildlife experiences including a process involving what visitors saw and heard, the sensory impression. In recalling their wildlife experiences, participants of that research reported quite vivid memories focussed on their sensory impression, commonly they described visual images. Although all senses come into play in case of tourism and visitor-experiences (Gretzel and Fesenmaier, 2010), as in other wildlife settings the eye seems to be the most preferable sense among visitors to experience wildlife in the context of Dutch national parks.

The unfamiliarity of many participants with the status 'national park', that came out in this research, was also shown in the results of a baseline study by Beijer *et al* in 2010 about familiarity of the Dutch population with the concept of the Dutch national parks. The research of Beijer *et al* (2010) was about brand awareness and showed that it is likely that many visitors to Dutch national parks do not know about the status 'national park' of the site. This research reveals more about awareness of Dutch national parks that visitors probably do not know much about the content of the status 'national park' with respect to wildlife.

## 5.2.2 Implications

### *Fear of wildlife*

The contrast is remarkable between participants who said (often in a cynical way) that they did not have wildlife encounters which they did not want and the group who took this question very seriously and mentioned animals which they like to avoid during their walk. The animal species which some participants really hoped to encounter during their trip (like foxes and wild boar) seem not to be appreciated at all by other participants. These findings suggest that feelings of fear are not felt by all visitors and they are, as other emotions, subjective. The cognitive vulnerability model (CVM) gives insight into fear towards animals among humans (Armfield, 2006). This model suggests four perceptions which are important to the interpretation of animal species by humans: a) perceived degree of danger or harm the animal represents; b) properties of an animal to evoke disgust; c) perceived unpredictability of the animal's movement; and d) perceived uncontrollability (Johansson *et al*, 2012). These perceptions are apparently different among visitors. These four factors are

also at stake in the case of wolves. The introduction of the wolf to the Netherlands seemed to affect some of the participants. Although they knew that it was highly unlikely that there were wolves in the NP at that moment, the question provoked reactions relating to wolves. This indicates deeply rooted fear towards wolves in some people. Especially visitors' perception of the degree of danger or harm which this animal represents and its uncontrollability predict the experienced fear of wolves (Johansson and Karlsson, 2011). This might indicate that for some people possible future presence of wolves in national parks might increase anxiety during their walk.

### *Birds*

Encounters with *birds* were the most common wildlife encounters during the walks in nature by participants, but in general these encounters did not trigger participants emotionally. However, there seems to be discrepancy between the outcomes of questions relating to emotional dispositions towards animals and the reactions of visitors to birds on-site. Birds are one of the most mentioned species, in the case of the question relating to emotional dispositions, which provoke positive feelings in participants. The birds that were encountered by participants were relatively small and the bird species were not rare but common in the daily life environment of most participants and might therefore not be seen as something special. In winter birds are not very vivid and do not sing so much, the reaction to birds might therefore be different in spring. The outcome that so many participants did not seem to see birds as part of wildlife but as a part of nature that is 'just there' might indicate the common and minor status of these species. When there are no encounters with animals that trigger visitors emotionally, it is very unlikely that visitors will feel emotions because of wildlife and that this wildlife will be a part of visitor-experience. However, it remains unclear why birds seem to be part of the group of animals that provoke positive feelings and emotions in people.

### *Wildlife watching on holidays*

It seems to be that watching wildlife during holidays can change the participant's ideal in relation to wildlife and therefore provokes a shift in wildlife value orientation towards attraction/interest. It is possible as well that people with a dominant wildlife value orientation attraction/interest make an effort to watch wildlife during their holidays, for example to go on safaris or wildlife observation excursions. Those encounters with wildlife are very important for these people and are therefore likely to be part of their memories and form their visitor-experience. The big question here is: 'which came first, the chicken or the egg?'. However, patterns of basic beliefs are not easy to change and a holiday might not be enough to change someone's value orientation.

### *The role of wildlife in the visitor experience*

Although most participants did not encounter wildlife on-site that affected emotionally, overall they were satisfied with the role of wildlife during their walk in nature. It could be said that there is no problem because satisfied customers are the objective of the park management. This is true but there is also the objective of Staatsbosbeheer to increase the nature experience and it seems that wildlife plays a minor role in the visitor-experience but has potential to play a bigger role in the nature experience because most visitors react emotionally to wildlife. Because of the relatively high absence of visible wildlife, there are not many emotional reactions to wildlife during a walk in national parks. The only thing that remains now is the indication in the result that there is a possible excitement felt by visitors because there is a possibility they will encounter wildlife. Innate sensitivity for biological movement as one of the psychological mechanisms proposed by Jacobs (2009) can partly explain these empirical findings. It might also be that a walk in a natural environment might increase the alertness of visitors because there is a possibility to encounter wildlife and to be prepared to react to such an encounter. Although this alertness will probably be unconscious, it is there and this might add something to the visitor-experience. Rolston (1987) mentioned that probability, improbability and likelihood of seeing wildlife makes the natural scene an adventurous place. This insight might put the role of wildlife in the visitor-experience in another light for further research. Participants seem to appreciate the spontaneity and excitement of encountering wildlife in nature, something that Rolston (1987) describes in the context of the United States:

*“A principal difference between scenery and wildlife is that the observer knows that the mountain or the cascades will be there, but what about the red tail hawk perched in the cottonwood, the fox running across the meadow, the grouse flushed at the creek? The latter involve probability, improbability, contingency, which add adventurous openness to the scene.... Time counts, not just space; time brings to the animals freedom in space, and aesthetic experience of that freedom must delight in the spontaneity.”* H. Rolston (1987: pp. 188)

An interesting theory to approach this phenomenon is developed by Kaplan and Kaplan (1989). Their *preference matrix* can help to explain the mystery that wildlife can add to a landscape. The preference matrix is about preferable landscapes for human beings. People prefer landscapes that are coherent, complex, legible and mysterious. Coherence and legibility as features of landscapes provide information that can help people to make sense of the environment. Legibility and mystery concern information that suggests the potential for exploration. This can be done through a variety of elements or because of cues that imply there may be more to be seen (Kaplan *et al*, 1998). The preference matrix is about landscapes and as far as I know there is nothing written by them about wildlife as part of a landscape. However, wildlife adds something to a scene like for example tracks of deer or



other wildlife or rub marks on trunks. These evidences in the landscape give some promise that one can find out more as one keeps going. This suggestion that there is more to see can be compelling (Kaplan *et al*, 1998) for visitors of nature areas. A question that arises here is to what extent visitors feel this excitement in a place where encounters with wildlife are scarce and unlikely.

### **5.3 Reflection on theoretical framework and methods**

The theoretical framework is based on the theory about the multi-phase character of the visitor-experience as developed by Clawson and Knetsch (1966). All five phases together form the whole visitor-experience. Consistent with theories about multi-phase visitor experience (Clawson and Knetsch, 1966; Eagles and McCool, 2002; Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael, 2010), participants' expectations towards wildlife during their walk seems to be based on previous trips in nature. It can therefore be said that it is a continuum whereby the on-site phase and recollection phase of previous trips help to form expectations for a next anticipation phase. The multi-phase visitor-experience theory appeared to be useful for this research in order to approach and deepen the elusive visitor-experience. This research focused on two phases of the total five proposed phases and the results of this research contribute therefore only partly to the knowledge on the role of wildlife in the whole visitor-experience.

Approaching the visitor-experience on the basis of mental dispositions is done to get an understanding of the visitor-experience and not to find relations between mental dispositions and the visitor-experience. There are multiple mental dispositions which might influence the visitor-experience but this research used only three of them to get an understanding of two phases of the visitor-experience. Although these three mental dispositions are not all-embracing they appeared to be a good start for this explorative research.

The findings might be influenced by the chosen methods in several ways. The data is gathered at one time of the year, namely in winter. To be more complete it would be better to gather data in other seasons as well because visibility and activity of wildlife is different over the year. The interviews were conducted in and around a visitor centre of Staatsbosbeheer. Although the most 'neutral' room in the visitor centre was chosen to conduct the interviews, the place still might have influenced the participants. Participants were free to interpret the questions and to give a long or short answer on questions. This meant that deeper motives and exact emotions did not become exactly clear in every case. It should also be noted that there seems to be difference in how participants described wildlife, it seems they have different interpretations of this word. There were participants who immediately thought about big mammals in Africa and mammals in zoos and other

participants saw animals that live free in nature (in Dutch nature as well) as wildlife. It is unclear what the distribution is of these views among participants. Discourse differences could be caused by the translation of 'wildlife' into the Dutch 'wilde dieren' (Wild animals).

Because the interview consists of two parts, a set of questions before and a set of questions after the walk, the first part might influence the on-site experiences. Some participants even mentioned this in the second part of the interview. Questions about expectations and hopes made them think about wildlife, some participants talked about the topic with somebody else during their walk. The questions caused participants to watch more carefully for wildlife.

The visitors were asked to recall their emotions after their on-site trip. Although participants did not reflect much emotion towards wildlife on-site, this does not automatically mean that there were no emotions at all because emotions are part of the conscious as well as the unconscious part of humans' minds. Emotional responses have been shown to be experienced along two dimensions: valence (varying from unpleasant to pleasant) and arousal (varying from deactivation to activation) (Küller, 1991; Mehrabian and Russel, 1974). Participants were asked to reflect on felt emotions after the actual encounter took place and some information might be lost because the arousal level and activation level possibly dropped in the meantime.

## **5.4 Further research and practical applications**

This research can serve as a start for further investigating of the role of wildlife for visitor-experience in Dutch national parks, some suggestions will be given here. To complete this research on the phases of the visitor-experience, explorative research on the role of wildlife in the recollection phase should be done. If there are memories relating to wildlife during walks in nature these should be investigated. Memories of walks in national parks or nature in the past are interesting in this case because memories seem to be very important for the presence or absence of a visitor-experience. Thereby, previous experiences shape new experiences. Although the impact of the travel phases on the visitor-experience is probably low it might be interesting to complete the research on wildlife and the multi-phase visitor-experience.

The data collection for this research was only done at one NP in the Netherlands. It is advisable to collect data in other NPs as well because the influential realm is different per NP. The results for NP de Sallandse Heuvelrug show already some interesting results on how visitors might experience wild boar in a negative way. In NP de Hoge Veluwe and NP de Meinweg wild boar are present. These are interesting places to conduct interviews about how visitors experience wildlife at these places. To get an overview of the role of wildlife in all kinds of Dutch national parks it is advisable to do a similar explorative research in coast

parks as well. The role of birds might be different in these parks because the birds in these parks are often larger and of more importance in the marketing of these parks.

It is advisable to collect data about different phases of the visitor-experience in other seasons as well. Visibility of wildlife is diverse over the year and this might shape expectations and hopes of visitors and therefore the whole visitor-experience. It might be interesting for NP de Sallandse Heuvelrug to collect data at the mating time of the black grouse. The black grouse is well-known among visitors to the park and the expectations towards this species might be higher at that time because then this animal is more visible and audible.

There are some subjects, relating to the topic, which are interesting for further exploration and to deepen by further research. For visitor managers in Dutch nature it might be interesting to get more understanding of wildlife and visitor-experience in their parks. Visitors seem to be positive about the role of wildlife during their walks in nature. Will actual encounters with wildlife make visitors more positive about their trip and enhance the visitor-experience? Or will increasing the tension in visitors to see wildlife in NPs enhance the visitor experience? It might be interesting for this topic to explore if and how the excitement visitors might feel in nature parks, caused by the presence of wildlife and the possibility to encounter wildlife, relates to the visitor-experience. The preference-matrix of Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) can be a useful theory to approach this question and an experimental set-up can be a good method to collect data. It might be interesting to measure visitors' emotions on site while they are walking in landscapes varying on a scale of many indications of animal presence (rub marks on trees, tracks, droppings, etc) to no indications of animal presence. Thereby, it might be interesting to influence the image about wildlife which visitors have in mind about the likelihood to encounter wildlife by giving them certain information before and during their walk in the nature. It is advisable to measure emotional feelings of visitors during the trip because emotions are transient and afterwards sometimes difficult to recall for visitors.

It is advisable for further research on this topic in the Netherlands to find out what exactly is understood by participants on 'wildlife' or 'wilde dieren' in Dutch. There seems to be a different understanding of this word among visitors. A discourse analysis might be a good method to find out how visitors interpret the Dutch 'wilde dieren'. If data has to be gathered about wild animals that live freely in Dutch nature, this should be made clear beforehand to the participant in order to collect data about wildlife.

Although this research mainly focused on the personal realm of the visitor-experience, the influential realm appeared to be important as well in the case of the visitor-experience. The influential realm means that visitors are able to encounter wildlife or not because encountering wildlife depends on the design of the environment, number of animals in a national park, properties of the landscape to see wildlife, etcetera. For further

research it is advisable to focus on both the influential realm and the personal realm in order to develop a better understanding of influences on the visitor-experience.

The fact that more and more people go to countries to view large mega-fauna and take home these experiences seems to influence mental dispositions of these visitors. It might be interesting to research the impact of wildlife-experiences during previous holidays on the visitor-experience in Dutch nature. Is there a shift towards the wildlife value orientation attraction/interest because more and more people go on safaris or other wildlife-watching experiences during holidays? Does the image about wildlife change through this kind of wildlife-watching activity?

Visitors to national park de Sallandse Heuvelrug are positive about their trip in the park. The fact that triggering encounters with wildlife are absent or scarce does not seem to make them less positive about the trip. Increasing the already positive evaluation is therefore a challenge. It will probably be difficult to enhance the nature experience with respect to wildlife if wildlife encounters remain absent or scarce. However, emotions that are connected with (unexpected) encounters with wildlife are very intense and worth attention because intense emotions that are connected with events help to form memories and encourage a return to the place.

It is worth improving and increasing the likelihood of encountering wildlife to enhance the visitor-experience in Dutch national parks. National parks in countries where wildlife-watching is a major source of income make use of different kinds of methods to make animals more visible to the public. There are several ways to increase the likelihood to experience wildlife in national parks. The two visitor types as proposed in this research might prefer different methods. Raising the likelihood to encounter wildlife can be done by buying and importing wildlife that is attractive to the public, especially wild parks for safaris use this method. This method seems the best with the visitor type who prefers to keep wildlife at a distance but which would be surprised if they encountered wildlife. Human intervention is minimal once the animals are in the park and the likelihood of encountering animals increases. Wildlife has the tendency to flee from humans and this makes wildlife encounters often difficult (Knight, 2009) but there are two other ways to make wildlife watchable. These two methods might fit well with the visitor type who prefer to come close to wildlife. It is possible to *habituate* certain animals to human presence whereby the animal will be systematically approached by a person until he is accepted by the animal (Knight, 2009). Some sorts of situations have been unintentionally created at the Veluwe where there are certain spots where masses of tourists go to feed and experience wild boar (Omroep Gelderland, 2011). Another way to encounter animals in nature is to *attract* wildlife to certain places in the park by feeding them or giving them other opportunities which they prefer, for example water holes (Knight, 2009). At these places visitors can watch and observe the animals from a concealed vantage point that prevents the animals from

detecting the presence of visitors. This last method might be the best solution to meet preferences of both visitor types.

Nature conservation in the Netherlands is in need of new ways to generate income and this requires a change in thinking and management approach among park managers. Increasing the likelihood to encounter wildlife is one of the possibilities to enhance the nature-experience among visitors. This research showed that there is potential to use wildlife for enhancing the visitor-experience. However, measures should be taken to make one of the most valuable assets of national parks more likely to provide encounters and better visibility to the public.

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## Appendices

### I Interview plan

#### Interview days

7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29 Decembre 2011 + 3, 4, 5, 7 January 2012, in/around Visitorcenter Staatsbosbeheer Nijverdal.

Contactperson: Hanneke Elbertsen  
*Visitorcenter Staatsbosbeheer De Sallandse Heuvelrug*  
Grotestraat 281 | 7441 GS Nijverdal, phone number 0548-612711

#### Preparations

Take with you:

- Interview questions
- Audio recorder (+ extra batteries)
- Pen and paper
- WVO list
- Email list

#### The interview

##### *Introduction of the interviewer and the interview objective*

My name is Hermineke de Leeuw, I study at Wageningen University. At this moment, I am working on my thesis. I explore how visitors of a national park experience wildlife. I would appreciate it if you would help me, I would like to interview you.

##### *Course of the interview*

The interview consists of two parts. For the first part of the interview I would like to ask you some questions before you start your hike. This part of the interview will take approximately 5 minutes. The second part of the interview takes place after your hike. This interview will take approximately 15-30 minutes.

##### *Finally*

There are no right or wrong answers. My aim with this interview is to hear about your ideas, feelings and opinions. Everything you say in this interview will be treated in confidence. I would ask you if you mind me recording this interview on a voice-recorder. This makes it possible for me to reconstruct your answers as accurately as possible after the interview.

## **Interview (I)**

### *General questions*

- Is this your first visit to this park?
- What can you tell me about this park?
- What can you tell me about the animals that live in this park?
- What do you think is the best way to experience wildlife during a visit to this park?

### *Questions on expectations of the trip*

- Do you expect to encounter wildlife during your hike? If yes, which animals? How will you feel if that happens?'
- Do you hope to encounter wildlife during your hike? If yes, which animals? How will you feel if that happens?'
- Is there some wildlife that you hope not to encounter during your hike? If yes, which animals? How will you feel if that happens?'
- How important is it for you to encounter animals during this hike?
- Do you have certain expectations with respect to wildlife because this place is one of the twenty National Parks in the Netherlands?

## **Interview (II)**

### *Questions about your visit to the park*

- Did you encounter wildlife during your hike? (see/hear/animal traces) If yes, please tell me about it. How did you feel when that happens?'
- Evaluate your hike, particularly the role of wildlife during your hike.
- You expected/hoped....., during your hike it appeared to be ..... What do you think about that?

### *Additional questions*

- What does wildlife mean to you?
- What do you think about wildlife?
- What do you think about the wildlife-human relationship?
- What value does wildlife have to you?
- When you think of wildlife, what feelings do you get?
- Are there animals that give you positive feelings? Why?
- Are there animals that give you negative feelings? Why?

### *Completion*

Finally. Is there anything you would like to add where you had no opportunity to do so in the interview? I would like to thank you very much for your help. If you are interested, please give me your email address and I will send you the research report.

After the interview

Make a summary

Write down demographics (age, sex, composition of the group the person is with)

Note details which are not recorded on audio recorder.

## II Predefined codes of emotions and wildlife value orientations

### Emotions as defined by Ekman (1984) and Izard (1977)

*Fear*  
*Anger*  
*Sadness*  
*Happiness*  
*Disgust*  
*Surprise*  
*Enjoyment*  
*Interest*  
*Joy*  
*Shame*  
*Contempt*  
*Distress*  
*Guilt*

### Wildlife Value Orientations (Dayer et al, 2007)

Wildlife value orientations and their definitions as proposed by Dayer et al (2007):

<u>Wildlife value orientation</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Materialism	Wildlife exists for human use, human welfare is prioritized over that of wildlife
<i>Hunting/Fishing<sub>1</sub></i>	<i>Positive focus on wildlife as the object of hunting and/or fishing rather than of viewing or other no consumptive activities</i>
Mutualism	Wildlife are viewed of capable of relationships of trust with humans, wildlife have rights like humans, wildlife are part of an extended family
Caring <sub>1</sub>	<i>Personal attachment to animals, animals make humans feel better and likewise humans want to help animals and prevent them from suffering</i>



Attraction/Interest	Interest in and a desire to know more about wildlife, feeling that wildlife enhances life experiences
Concern for Safety	Concern related to interacting with wildlife because of the possibility of harm or contracting disease
Environmentalism	General concern for protecting the environment which can extend to preserving wildlife, feeling that humans are impacting the environment in a negative way through their actions
Scientific	Belief that humans can solve any environmental problems by using science and technology
Respect	Basic value (as opposed to a value orientation that wildlife and their habitat should be respected and valued, respect may be expressed in many different ways: as a general respect for life, a more utilitarian respect which involves using wildlife in the proper way, a more mutualistic respect for interacting with wildlife and their habitat, etc.
Rational/Scientific	Rational or scientific explanations about the way the natural world works and the way animals behave (as opposed to spiritual or religious explanations)
Spiritual/Religious	Viewing wildlife and the environment as created and controlled by a higher power(s), explaining the working of the natural world through a spiritual or religious viewpoint (as opposed to a scientific or rational viewpoint)

*<sup>1</sup> These two concepts are conceptually belief dimensions of the above wildlife value orientation in addition to the WVO.*

