

# Declaration of Academic Integrity

CC0001 Inquiry and Communication in an Interdisciplinary World

Assignment title: **Op-Ed**

Student's (official) name: **Hendy**

Tutorial group number: **T145**

Tutorial day/time: **Friday, 12:30 PM -2:30 PM**

Tutor's name: **Dr. Keri Matwick**

Word Count: **1342**

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## Declaration

I have read and understood the guidelines on academic dishonesty as found at <http://www.plagiarism.org/> and the penalties for academic dishonesty (see 'general instructions'), and declare that this assignment is my own work and does not involve plagiarism or collusion according to the University's honour code and pledge. The sources of other people's work have been appropriately referenced. I have also not submitted any part of this assignment for another course.

I give consent for my assignment to be used for teaching or research purposes.

Student's signature:

Date:

9th April 2022



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## **Taking a Walk in Nature.**

One of the must-go places for the nature lover in Singapore is Tree Top Walk, located within the tropical rainforest of Central Catchment Nature Reserve at MacRitchie. The place is well known for its 250m-long freestanding suspension bridge that provides the bird's-eye scenery and trail path. The trail path lets the visitors experience a pleasant scene full of unique plants and animals, especially monkeys. During the trail walk, I saw signboards everywhere that serve to warn the visitor to be aware of monkeys and keep their food and belongings away from eyesight.

A couple of minutes into the trail, I can see monkeys casually sitting on rocks or hanging on nearby trees close to the visitors, some showing their teeth which often seem like a friendly smile, But they are more of a sign of protecting their territory. Some group of brazen monkeys got a little too close to the crowd, and one of the crowds quickly screamed to scare off the monkeys; shocked by the sudden voices, the monkeys panicked and retreated, but they bumped into the trash can and created some mess, some visitors were visibly upset of the trouble the monkeys have caused.

On the suspension bridge, monkeys sat on the bridge's handrail about 25 meters from the forest floor, I was constantly worried that they might slip and fall from the bridge, and then I saw a kid run toward a monkey only to be stopped by his parent and the parent quickly chased away the monkey probably out of the concern that the monkey might come into contact with the kid and do some harm to the kid even though the monkey did not do anything.

After the trail walk, I reflected on my experience. I understand the perspective of some visitors for getting upset at monkeys as they had caused trouble to the surroundings; however, those monkeys were behaving based on their survival instinct, and their actions were triggered mainly by visitors' animosity reaction toward them. Animal and humans are creatures habiting earth and as humanity progressed and enter the modern era, we began to live in separate groups for several reasons, mainly the difference in characteristics, lifestyles, and communication barriers. Some animals, however, still often can be found in some regions of the city but not in a positive light. The media often portrays these animals to be dangerous and having bad behaviors such as stealing food. These could have played part in the growth rate of people's hostile attitude toward wildlife. As the distance between humans and wildlife grows, I wonder how we can create an environment where humans and wildlife can coexist?

To understand how to create an environment where humans and wildlife can coexist, I start to analyze from a wildlife perspective. Animal cognition helps us understand how to better improve human and wildlife interaction. The E-book titled "The Role of Animal Cognition in Human-Wildlife Interaction" studies how animal cognition raises the conflict between humans and wildlife and how it can be resolved. Goumas (2020) mentions that "understanding how wild animals perceive humans may help minimize wildlife disturbance and allow the implementation of more effective conservation strategies" (Goumas et al., 2020). Goumas (2020) also mentions that "for many species, appropriate responses toward humans are likely to be critical to survival and reproductive success, and while humans often present a significant threat to animals, the presence or behavior of people may also be associated with benefits, such as food rewards" (Goumas et al., 2020), Goumas then emphasis that animals observe and decide whether the behaviors toward them are rewarding or threatening, "individual differences in cognitive and behavioral phenotypes and past experiences with humans may affect animals' ability to exploit human-dominated environments and respond appropriately to human cues" (Goumas et al., 2020).

Goumas further explains that "wild animals that frequently encounter humans are likely to adjust their behavior in response to human disturbance. Animals may avoid areas where human disturbance is high, but if humans are not dangerous, they may remain in the area and habituate to human presence" (Goumas et al., 2020). Most of the human and animal first interaction end in negative effect that raises the stress level of the animal due to the fear instinct that exists in animals, this fear instinct in humans are also affected by spatial variation in risk (Goumas et al., 2020). Although some species habituate to human presence, others appear to become sensitized to it, with higher human disturbance causing an increase in stress responses (Goumas et al., 2020). These stress levels could potentially lead to negative effects such as lower reproductive success.

However, Goumas also mentions that "animals' responses to humans are based on previous encounters with other humans, and the experience requires some level of generalization of what was learned during these prior experiences to influence response toward humans, and animals can only habituate to humans if they identify humans as being members of the same category" (Goumas et al., 2020).

The E-book gives insight and understanding that in creating an environment for animals and humans to coexist, it will be normal for conflict to arise between them as they interact; however, as wildlife learns from their experience, having frequent positive interactions with humans can reduce the stress of wildlife, and human activity plays an important role to create the opportunity to deliver the positive interactions.

Now, to better understand what concerns humans have to be around wildlife, we need to first understand how humans think of the wildlife animal. A journal article published in 2019 stated that "the public's attitude and tolerance towards wildlife has a large influence on the management of problem-causing animals in cities" (Ngo et al, 2019, p. 2). effective wildlife management is dependent on minimizing negative impacts on wildlife while meeting people's expectations (Ngo et al, 2019, p. 2).

Ngo et al (2019) also claims that "as urban areas worldwide expand, people's exposure to wildlife and nature is expected to decrease, and generations increasingly live without constant contact with nature" (Ngo et al., 2019, p. 3). With the less contact with wildlife and negative behavior by some wildlife animals causing bad impression to the city, it is no surprise that hostile attitude toward wildlife continue to grow. Ngo et al (2019) conducted a questionnaire survey to study the attitude and tolerance of Singapore residents toward the wildlife in Singapore. "Our results show that exposure to nature among Singapore residents was low, while attitude towards common problem-causing wildlife was largely neutral or negative" (Ngo et al, 2019, p. 10).

Ngo et al (2019) also added, "we believe that early exposure to nature increases affinity to wildlife and cultivates tolerance towards problem-causing animals among urban residents" (Ngo et al, 2019, p. 2). he supports his claim with statements, "Childhood nature experience has also been shown to have a positive relationship to environmental attitudes and behaviors" (Ngo et al, 2019, p. 3), and The human instinct of caring for animals is also usually cultivated from young (Myers et al. 2004).

Humans and wildlife live and behave differently. Distance between them grows with time; however, even in modern cities, interactions with the wildlife are still happening but not in a positive light. Wildlife found in the modern city is viewed as problems causing animals, resulting in a growing hostile attitude toward them. To create an environment where humans and wildlife can coexist, it is essential to remove the hostile impression human have toward wildlife because it could lead to negative activities toward wildlife during their interaction which causes wildlife's stress to increase and worsen their relationship.

Since humans possess better cognitive reasoning, humans should be more open and accepting toward wildlife and put effort into establishing effective wildlife management programs that educate and encourage the public starting from a young age to exhibit positive interactions with wildlife as a culture; this will eventually lead to the wildlife to view humans as rewarding individuals rather than threatening creatures. These actions are a forward step toward humans and animals coexisting.

## **Reference list**

### **(Source 1)**

- Goumas, M., Lee, V. E., Boogert, N. J., Kelley, L. A., & Thornton, A. (2020). The Role of Animal Cognition in Human-Wildlife Interactions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11.  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.589978>

### **(Source 2)**

- Ngo, K. M., Hosaka, T., & Numata, S. (2019). The influence of childhood nature experience on attitudes and tolerance towards problem-causing animals in Singapore. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 41, 150–157. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2019.04.003>

### **(Article related to Source 2)**

- Hio, L., 2018. Children here spend more time online than global average: Poll. The Straits Times. •  
Myers Jr \*, O.E., Saunders, C.D., Garrett, E., 2004. What do children think animals need?  
Developmental trends. *Environmental Education Research* 10, 545–562.