

*Chapter 11*

# FROM ERADICATION CAMPAIGNS TO 'CARE PROTECTION': FINNISH ENDANGERED ANIMALS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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## Introduction

Finns often pride themselves in living close to nature and thus cherishing their living environment. There is definitely some truth in the first half of this claim, while the scale of endangered habitats proves that the latter claim is necessarily not true.[1] The country was a latecomer in urbanisation when compared to early industrialised Western Europe. Until the latter part of the twentieth century, a large proportion of the populace continued to live in the countryside, while drawing their livelihood directly from the land and Finland's abundant watercourses. Since the urbanisation process intensified after the Second World War, newly urbanised people have remarkably kept their ties to the land. Today, according to Statistics Finland, there are more the 500,000 summer cottages in a country of circa 5.5 million inhabitants,[2] most of which are situated deep in the countryside, preferably on the shores of a lake or the sea. Among European countries, only Norway compares to Finland in this sense.[3]

1. For endangered habitats, see ympäristö.fi, joint webpages of the Finnish environmental administration, Uhanalaistuminen jatkuu lähes kaikissa elinympäristöissä: https://www.ymparisto.fi/fi-FI/Kartat_ja_tilastot/Ymparistontilan_indikaattorit/Luonnon_monimuotoisuus/Uhanalaistuminen_jatkuu_lahes_kaikissa_e(61090) (accessed 21 Sept. 2021)

2. Statistics Finland, Freetime Residences 2020: https://www.stat.fi/til/rakke/2020/rakke_2020_2021-05-27_kat_001_en.html (accessed 21 Sept. 2021)

3. For Norwegian summer cottage culture and its junctures with environmental questions, see Gansmo et al. (eds) 2011.

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It is, therefore, no wonder that the Finnish identity-building has been very much tied to ideas about the environment. On one hand, there is a reminiscence of a pioneer mentality, in which the environment is something to be conquered and the others who inhabit the land – that is, animals – are seen as either resources or risks. On the other hand, the environment has increasingly been seen as the source of country's success and virtues, and certain animal species embody the best qualities that the Finns see in themselves. This ambivalence towards wild animals has particularly characterised the history of twentieth century Finland, when the old and new mentalities have co-existed, often causing conflicts about the use of the environment.

This chapter focuses on the human relation to wild animals in Finland from the early twentieth century to the present day. Clearly, even in a small country with relatively low biodiversity, it would be a mission impossible in such a short space to comprehensively examine the history of wild animals spanning over one hundred years. Therefore, it is necessary to restrict the scope of the analysis. I will concentrate on dominant trends in the context of Finnish animal history and important turning points that represent evolutions of new ways relating to wild animals. By turning points, I do not mean to identify revolutionary events in the history of Finnish human-animal relations. As Frank Uekötter has reminded us, environmental historians are not doing justice to their objects of inquiry in seeking such events that separate 'before' and 'after' into totally different realities. He maintains that turning points are useful in periodising developments in environmental history but, instead of sharp ruptures, they are rather gradual shifts, where condensations of events sometimes accelerate the change.[4] Therefore, for those who lived through them, these developments could have gone almost unnoticed, but retrospectively they can be seen as changing the world. In this vein, I argue that there have been distinct, yet overlapping developments, in the twentieth century history of human relations to wild animals in Finland.

The chapter begins with the examination of developments from the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, which were characterised by the dichotomy between useful and harmful animals. This will be followed by the emergence of the second turning point and the growing concern over certain endangered species. The late twentieth century, when the third turning point took place, saw an unprecedented effort and new techniques to save endangered species. However, apart from conservationists (and lofty declarations), this awakened concern for species protection was still restricted to a

4. Uekötter 2010.

rather small number of species, while a vast majority of endangered species were left behind and seen as having value only as part of ecosystems, if at all. Each of these turning points will be highlighted by focusing on certain animal species that are representative of their groups. The large picture of the Finnish human-animal relations is mainly synthesised from the research literature. When discussing individual animals as examples of change and continuities, I have complemented the narrative with empirical analysis of influential contemporary commentaries about animals.

## Conflict over resources

The subspecies of reindeer that inhabits Finland and northwestern Russia is appropriately named the Finnish forest reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus fennicus*). This species has had a special place in the history of human settlement in the area that we nowadays know as Finland. When present-day Finland was populated by human settlers after the Last Glacial Period some 12,000 years ago, they are said to have been following reindeer. For thousands of years, reindeer (and moose) were the most important prey for humans and, along with abundant fish, enabled humans to survive in harsh northern climes where agriculture could provide only partial and insecure subsistence.[5] The heavy hunting pressure had consequences. In highly populated southwestern Finland, reindeer and moose were probably already rare during the Middle Ages. During the following centuries these populations continued to shrink and, by the early twentieth century, the wild reindeer was hunted to extinction in Finland.[6]

One cannot escape a strong symbolism in the destruction of the Finnish forest reindeer population; the species that enabled the human population to survive and colonise the land area became the victim of overhunting. The reindeer was not the only species to face this destiny. Several species that were valued by humans, either for food or, in the case of fur animals such as Eurasian beaver, Eurasian otter and stoat, for commercial value in European markets, were all decimated by excessive hunting. The beaver population was wiped out entirely by the late nineteenth century, while the rest scraped by in the sparsely populated areas of Eastern and Northern Finland.[7]

5. Huurre 1998, pp. 153–82.

6. Metsähallitus, Metsäpeura: https://www.suomenpeura.fi/fi/metsapeura/levinneisyys.html; Tourunen 2008, pp. 114–15.

7. Rantaniemi 1901, pp. 36, 50.

It has been argued that the human craving to dichotomise animals into two opposite categories dates back to the prehistoric times and is probably written in human biology. At one end of the spectrum, there are those animals that are seen as important resources. The other end consists of enemies, noxious animals that threaten human life and livelihoods.[8] (Between these extremes, there are, of course, a vast number of species that were met with indifference, either because they were from the human point of view useless or because they were invisible). Sometimes, though, these categories overlapped. Seals, for example, fell neatly into both categories, as they were hunted for their meat and train oil by coastal communities but, as predators, they were (and are, by some) also hated for preying on fish.[9]

When the central government tightened its grip on the country's natural resources in the late nineteenth century, no room was left for animals that were useless or, even worse, harmful. By going after the same prey as humans, or just by being intimidating or otherwise objectionable, these animals were direct threats to civilisation. They were nature's mistakes, that must be corrected by getting rid of them. There was little new in persecuting offending animals. The government and municipalities had paid bounties for wolves and bears since the Middle Ages and obliged locals to participate in organised hunts whenever needed. Gradually the bounty system was extended to all predatory animals, as well as to species that were considered somehow objectionable, and persecution was normalised as a systematic and incessant campaign, propagated and financed by the administration. By the late nineteenth century, eradication of unwanted animal species had become one of the cornerstones of building a modern and prosperous state. The list of animals to be eradicated consists of dozens of species, from large predators and every kind of predatory bird even to tiny seed-eating birds, such as sparrow.[10] It did not matter if the species was already rare and thus of little harm to human economies.

Soon many of them were indeed rare. In the late nineteenth century, wolves still roamed in hundreds all over Finland. Since cervids, their important prey, were all but gone, wolves often gravitated near human dwellings with tragic consequences. Even in present-day Finland, it is often recalled how wolves, in fact probably only one individual wolf, killed more than twenty children in southwestern Finland in 1880–1882.[11] After a few decades of obses-

8. Vuorisalo and Oksanen 2020.

9. Ylimaunu 2000, pp. 109–27.

10. Ilvesviita 2005, pp. 144–53. Mykrä et al. 2005.

11. Teperi 1977. Lähdesmäki 2015, p. 187.

sive slaughtering of wolves, except for lone wandering specimens, wolves were forced to retreat into the sparsely inhabited eastern and northern parts of the land.[12] Ditto the other large predators – brown bear, wolverine and lynx. The numbers of animals killed were staggering. Hunting statistics reveal that, in the 1910s, the most hectic phase of the 'War Against Seals', as it was dubbed by fishery scientists, approximately 10,000 marine seals, grey seals and Baltic ringed seals, were killed annually in Finland alone. In the Northern Baltic Sea area, mainly in Finland, the Soviet Union and Sweden, humans killed more than 600,000 marine seals in total throughout the twentieth century, of which by far the biggest toll was taken in the first half of the century.[13] At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were possibly more than 300,000 seals in the Baltic Sea. By the 1970s, the number had sunk to less than 5,000.[14] These numbers are very comparable to the much better-known overkills of, for example, American Bison.

## Turning the tide

The war against seals continued well into the latter part of the twentieth century, as did the eradication campaigns against some other predators. Finland has over 1,000 kilometres of land border with Russia/Soviet Union, which mostly runs through the sparsely inhabited boreal forests without any natural barriers. The Soviet Union provided Finland throughout the twentieth century with an ample reservoir of animal intruders, some of which were greeted mostly with warmth, such as the Finnish forest reindeer, which started to slowly reappearing on the Finnish side of the border from the 1940s, while others were not. The wolf population in Finland was kept alive only by the constant flux of migrating individuals from the vast forests of Soviet Karelia. When spotted in Finland, they all got shot sooner or later.[15] There is nothing new under the sun, in this regard.

The long twentieth century, with regard to animal history, started with the urge to modernise the country. The crucial events were the hunting laws of 1868 and 1898, that codified and institutionalised government-led campaigns

12. Lähdesmäki 2020. Finland was not by any means the only country to eradicate its wolves, for similar campaigns were launched all over the industrialising world. For the campaign to eradicate wolves from the United States, for example, see Robinson 2005.

13. Gottberg 1921; Härkönen et al. 1998; Martti Soikkeli, N.d, Memorandum, Antti Halkka's Collections, WWF Finland Working Group on Marine Seals.

14. Härkönen et al. 1998.

15. Bisi 2010; Lähdesmäki 2020.

to eradicate all harmful species.[16] This advent of institutionalised killing of animals was the first turning point in the history of human relations to wildlife. The second turning point emerged during the period from the 1920s to the 1960s with a new interest in protecting some endangered species. During this period, some species were gradually freed from the stigma of being nature's greatest mistakes, while others were elevated from mere resources to having a right to be respected dwellers in Finnish nature.

In the early years of the century, some Finnish biologists, following the international discussion on the matter, had already suggested that predators were not villains that terrorised the harmony of nature and threatened at every moment to throw civilisation into chaos, as they were presented in popular imagination. These new ideas were put in practice with the country's first law on natural protection, enacted in 1923, which omitted many predatory birds from the list of exterminated species and instead gave them a protected status. The reason behind this volte-face was that these species were understood to be of minor or no threat to humans and their domestic animals. For example, all predatory birds had been listed as noxious animals just because some species preyed on important game birds. Moreover, many of them were so rare that the discourse of threat had lost its argumentative power.[17] But it would be oversimplifying to define this law as an exact and decisive turning point in animal history. Among the scientific community, on whose authority the law rested, the change had already been unfolding for some time. Even more importantly, the law did not do much to change attitudes among local people, and often hatred towards and killing of protected predators continued unabated for several decades.[18]

The early ideas of natural conservation in Finland, as elsewhere in Europe, found their justification in history and cultural heritage (along with scientific values).[19] It is no wonder, then, that the species that were first seen as worthy of protection were those with cultural and historical meaning for the Finns. Not only conservationists but even some hunters advocated the protection of the brown bear, a sacred species in Finno-Ugric religions, from the early twentieth century. This was in striking contrast with the treatment of wolf, another predator that had been ferociously hunted for centuries, which was

16. Ilvesviita 2005, pp. 148–49.

17. Ibid., pp. 230–33; Pohja-Mykrä 2014, pp. 34–35.

18. See Räsänen 2020, p. 29.

19. Pekurinen 1997.

unanimously despised by everyone, including conservationists, well into the latter part of the twentieth century.[20]

The dispute over the bear indicated how difficult it was to dislodge prevailing attitudes towards predators, no matter how rare they actually were. It was easier to accept or even embrace the protection of animals that posed danger to no-one, especially if symbolic and identity-related meanings coud be attached to them. The case in point in this regard was the whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*). Immortalised in the first known rock art sites and referred to in countless folk tales, starting with the Finnish national epic Kalevala where it guarded the river separating our world from the underworld, the Whooper swan has a special place among birds in Finnish culture. In Finno-Ugric mythology, the swan was related to humans and thus sacred. Despite this intimate relationship, the swans were hunted and eaten for subsistence (though not among Finno-Ugric tribes in Russian Karelia, where the mythological relationship endured longer) and their eggs were stolen and sold to collectors. By the mid-twentieth century, the swan population was decimated to a mere fifteen pairs. After relentless hunting pressure, swans had learned to fear humans. This was why all swans in Finland nested in the far north of Lapland behind the roadless stretches of fells and swamps, as far from humans as possible.[21] There is a tragic irony involved in this swan behaviour. While wintering in Denmark and northern Germany, they could be spotted right next to human occupation without showing any particular fear of humans. It turned out that they did not escape people *per se* but only Finnish people, in the land occupied by the very group of people that used to totemise the bird. Obviously they had learnt to fear humans during their nesting season in Finland. Because of this alleged wildness, Finns imagined that swans truly preferred the solitude and peace of remote wilderness. As with many other so-called wilderness animals, nowadays it is clear that they do not mind living next to people, and the population is strongest in the most inhabited – and most fertile – part of the country, as long as they do not have to fear death.

Despite official protection of the Whooper swan in 1934, illegal hunting and gathering of eggs continued. It did not help either that, during the Continuation War, Finnish soldiers sometimes shot swans for food in Russian Karelia, where the population was somewhat stronger. Then, in the 1950s, it came about that the demise of the swans, which in the 1930s and 1940s had concerned only a handful of conservationists, became a widely discussed

20. Lähdesmäki 2020, pp. 261–62; Kalliola 1958, p. 429.

21. Merikallio 1950.

topic, even among the general public, and swans were adopted as an animal darling for thousands of Finns. The astonishing rise of swan in Finland has in many instances been attributed to the work of Yrjö Kokko, who worked as a veterinarian in the Lappish parish of Muonio, when he set off to find and photograph the last of the swans. After years of tiresome searching, he and his companion, a local man, finally managed to find a pair by an unnamed wilderness lake (Kokko never told publicly the name or the place of the lake so that hunters or egg-thieves could not find the pair). After returning home he wrote a book, a true love story, about his encounters with the swan pair, 'Hanna' and 'Marski'.[22]

The book, *Laulujoutsen – Ultima Thulen lintu* (The Whooper Swan – the Bird of the Ultima Thule), came out at the moment, in 1950, when Finland was beginning to develop into a modern society and attitudes towards wild animals had been evolving for some time. Together with the sequel titled *Ne tulevat takaisin* (They Are Coming Back), published in 1954, the book became a bestseller, and the books' call for the protection of this bird so full of symbolism in Finnish culture stroke a chord with the public at large. In the following years, ordinary people were lining up en masse to see and admire, for example, a swan named 'Aino', a lone indvidual who tried to survive in Central Finland through the winter, and 'Hannu', which was released from the veterinary clinic into the river crossing the city of Joensuu in Eastern Finland. Only a few years earlier, it had not been uncommon for people to bait swans, when they happened to stop by, while migrating from or to nesting places in the North. Several veterinary clinic were established, by cities as well as by ordinary citizens, in different parts of Finland, where swans found during the winter could be taken care of.[23] The nation clearly had warmed to the Whooper swan and, by the turn of the 1960s, conservationists could rejoice in how the population had started to climb, though first only in Lapland and in the east near the Russian border.[24] The success of saving the whooper swan became one of the founding stories of the Finnish modern environmentalism. The history book of the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, which is the biggest and the oldest environmental advocacy group in Finland, is aptly named as the 'The legacy of the whooper swan'.[25] Nowadays whooper swans are so common

22. Kokko 1950.

23. Eg. Ketola 1945; Erkamo 1955; 'Toimintaa joutsenen suojelemiseksi', *Suomen Luonto* 18 (1959): 88–89.

24. Eg. Haapanen and Helminen 1965; Haapanen and Helminen 1966.

25. Telkänranta (ed.) 2008.

that occasionally some commentators propose hunting them, not for meat but to restore the balance among different birds. These proposals have so far always been met with outrage and nearly universal condemnation.

## Labouring for animals

The period from the early twentieth century to the 1960s can be seen as an incubation period[26] for the new relationship between humans and wild animals in Finland. For centuries, the relationship was characterised by the sharp distinction of beneficial and harmful animals. As the twentieth century went on, this dichotomy began to wane and was gradually replaced by a much more complex relationship. This did not mean that there was no longer hatred and enmity towards certain animal species, such as large carnivores. An increasing number of people, however, started to appreciate even the most dangerous of animals, arguing that, despite the fear they engendered, they deserved a right to exist in the Finnish nature alongside humans. Indeed, in this emerging mentality, many admired these animals precisely because they represented the wildness and the danger that made nature the opposite of overly civilised everyday life in an urbanised environment.

The traditional relationship between humans and wild animals had arisen from the notion of progress. The success of the nation rested on the effective use of its natural resources, animals included, and those animals who impeded achieving progress were destined to go. The emerging appreciative relationship, in contrast, emphasised co-existence and extension of the ethical sphere to the animal kingdom.[27] This change in human-wild animal relations is perhaps best exemplified by the use and reception of labour: who worked for whom. For thousands of years, the value of animals depended on the labour they did for humans. The most respected animals were those who provided shelter for humans and accompanied them in hunting, such as dogs; who provided support in agriculture and transport with their muscles and manure, such as horses and oxen; or kept pests in check, such as cats. In short, they did work for humans, and at the end of their lives they often provided humans with food, clothes and other utensils. In this sense, there has been an almost complete about-face in human-animal relations. Today, conservationists, government officials and ordinary citizens spend countless hours working to ensure the wellbeing of

26. The term incubation period has been borrowed from the Austrian cultural historian Egon Friedell and his treatise on European cultural history, Friedell 1927–31.

27. For the development of animal ethics, see, for example, Nash 1989.

wild animals. Remarkably, these animals, for which humans work, are often the same animals that we tried just a short while ago to get rid of. Instead of being harmful, though according to some they still are, more often now these species are characterised as charismatic animals.

As said earlier, turning points in environmental history rarely take place as sudden explosions but more often evolve gradually from tiny trickles before emerging as mighty rivers. Retrospectively, it is easy to see these trickles or the seeds of a new relationship emerging even back when the traditional way dichotomising of animals was the order of the day. Bird boxes, for example, had been a popular method in Finland and elsewhere of helping songbirds from the late nineteenth century.[28] Hunters toiled hard bringing extra food for game animals and improving their habitats.[29] Obviously, neither practice was directed at protecting endangered species. Bird lovers wanted to help cheering songbirds, who also ate damaging insects, but who were increasingly lacking nesting trees.[30] Hunters were motivated mainly by being able to continue killing animals.

When it comes to institutionalised protection of endangered species in Finland, an important milestone was the founding of World Wildlife Fund Finland in 1971. In 1972 WWF Finland launched conservation projects to protect five key species: the Finnish forest reindeer, the Saimaa ringed seal, the grey wolf, the peregrine falcon and the white-tailed eagle, all of which were iconic species to conservationists. The project of protecting the white-tailed eagle in particular was groundbreaking for its intensity and for innovative new conservation techniques, that perfectly illustrate the new relationship to wild animals.

By the early 1970s, the once ubiquitous white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) was inevitably heading towards extinction in the Baltic Sea area. Due to decades of persecution and human disturbance, the Finnish population of eagles had shrunk to a mere few dozen breeding pairs, which lived in three separate enclaves. While the persecution gradually eased, toxic chemicals, such as DDT, PCBs and methyl mercury, seemed to seal the eagle's destiny. Due to these chemicals, eagles had become unable to produce healthy offspring. Conservationists reckoned that soon there would be only old eagle individu-

28. Vuorisalo et al. 1999, pp. 116–18; Lehikoinen et al. 2020, pp. 436–39.

29. See for example, Moilanen and Vikberg (eds) 1986, pp. 15–27, 37–38.

30. Lehikoinen et al. 2020, pp. 436–38.

als left. When they eventually died, white-tailed eagles would roam across the archipelagic sky only in memories.[31]

Together with their Swedish colleagues at the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, WWF Finland launched an extensive and multi-faceted project to save the eagles from extinction. They quickly realised that the traditional way of conserving species – that is, the preservation of their habitat from hunting and disturbances – would not be enough to save the eagles. Even if left in peace, eagles would still eat toxic fish and waterfowl. Therefore, conservationists had to invent novel conservation methods, including feeding the eagles with clean food (mainly pig carcasses), building them artificial nests in tranquil places and nurturing wounded eagle individuals.[32] Similarly to the protection of the whooper swan, the white-tailed eagle project has been a real success story. The species has been removed from the list of endangered species and spotting individuals has become commonplace.

The white-tailed eagle project was not the first time that humans had helped animals, for example, by feeding them. But this was, to my knowledge, the first time in Finland and perhaps even anywhere that humans had actively and intensively tried to assist the survival of endangered wild animal populations by taking intensive care of individual animals. Hence, I have elsewhere termed this wholly new method of conservation 'care protection'.[33] Remarkably, in this new conservation ethos, the labour of care was done for species, such as the white-tailed eagle, that only recently had been objects of hate and killing.

Subsequently, care protection has been introduced as a method for conserving several other animal species, in Finland and elsewhere, whenever traditional protection has proved insufficient. A good example in Finland is the Saimaa ringed seal (*Pusa hispida saimensis*), the subspecies that lives only in the Finnish lake of Saimaa, which, similarly to its marine cousins, depends on ice and snow for survival. In recent years, however, too often snow and ice have been scarce or even missing, which endangers the reproduction of the seals and the survival of the whole population. Therefore, in mild winters conservationists have, with great effort, heaped up snowdrifts for seals to build their lairs and also constructed artificial lairs for seals.[34] Ringed seals, namely the subspecies Baltic ringed seal (*Pusa hispida botnica*), are also troubled by the

31. Koivusaari et al. 1973.

32. Stjernberg 1995; Wallgren 2016, pp. 13–14.

33. Räsänen, 2020.

34. Jaakkola et al. 2018, pp. 140–41.

changing climate in the Baltic Sea.[35] Interestingly, however, no such efforts to care and labour on their behalf have been made to help marine seals. This demonstrates that concern for, let alone intensive care of, animals is very unevenly and haphazardly distributed. Even animals that are almost identical, such as lake seals and marine seals, are treated differently depending on the meanings humans attach to them. The Saimaa ringed seal lives solely in Finland, which makes it an important symbol of the Finnish nature, while the Baltic ringed seal is just one animal species among many.

## Conclusions – new dichotomies

The history of human relations to wild animals in Finland is possible to construe as a story of increasing tolerance of animal lives and extension of the species that are considered worthy of protection and care. This would, however, oversimplify the past. Eradication campaigns are long gone and bounties for dead animals are no longer paid, but this has not silenced the debate over, for example, whether two or three hundred wolves are too many, while illegal hunting has remained widespread.[36] Many of the formerly overhunted species are today protected, but the protection merely aims at achieving a so-called favourable conservation status for these species, which in effect is an euphemism for keeping their numbers at the minimum, defined by scientists, without risking extinction. Although dozens of protected areas have been established during the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, habitats continue to decline due to land-use practices – and increasingly because of climate change. For these reasons combined, currently one in nine species in Finland is endangered, as assessed by Finnish Ministry of the Environment and Finnish Environment Institute.[37]

Conservationists have every reason to celebrate the success of eagles and other previously endangered species that have bounced back in recent decades. The old dichotomies, where animal species were categorised into useful and harmful species have waned, though not entirely disappeared. Yet, old dichotomies have been replaced by new ones. There seems to be an almost unanimous consent that invasive species are the present-day villains, which are free for all to kill. But there are also more subtle dichotomies, that are related somewhat loosely to the charisma of animal species. The recovery of animal populations has overwhelmingly encompassed certain species, which in social construction

35. Markus Meier et al. 2004.

36. Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki 2014.

37. Hyvärinen et al. (eds) 2019, p. 25.

have been deemed as having more worth than others. Therefore, they also tend to attract most attention from conservationists, politicians and the wider public alike, while countless other species have been more or less ignored, regardless of their conservation status.

However, it is far from evident what makes species charismatic, as there seems not to be a single denominator. Large size and cuteness definitely help. Predators may be more often recognised as charismatic species than herbivores. Some of the reasons are culturally specific and are related to concepts of representation and identity, as the case of the whooper swan demonstrates. Then, there are charismatic species that fall into none of the above-mentioned categories. One such is the river pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*). A species that remains virtually all its life stuck at the river bottom is a highly unlikely candidate for the group of charismatic animals, but it has nonetheless been recently adopted as a darling species of conservationists.[38] The fact that it is the oldest living animal species in Finland, the pearl it sometimes carries and its dependence on salmon, arguably the most charismatic of all fish species in Finland, may partly explain its worth. This list of denominators is, of course, far from conclusive, and calls for further research examining cultural appreciations of animals. Rather than being systematic analysis, these examples merely intend to show how unbalanced and coincidental attitudes towards different species are.[39]

This chapter began with the widespread claim among the Finnish to be a particularly nature loving nation. The existence of these new dichotomies and the ongoing decline of animal populations makes these claims rather dubious. To give just one example, each of the Baltic states has a wolf population roughly the same size or only slightly smaller than that of Finland, despite being more than five times smaller in land area.[40]

We are living amidst the sixth mass extinction of our planet's history. If we are to keep the planet habitable for humans and other living beings alike, we need to care not only for species that are randomly chosen as culturally valuable but also those that are not charismatic or even visible. The history of human relations to wild animals in Finland has experienced three major turn-

38. See for example, WWF, 'Jokihelmisimpukka': https://wwf.fi/elainlajit/jokihelmisimpukka/ (accessed 4 Nov. 2022).

39. For more detailed discussion on charismatic species in conservation biology, see Albert et al. 2018.

40. International Wolf Center, Wolves of the World: https://wolf.org/wow/world/ (accessed 11 Nov. 2022).

ing points during the long twentieth century, which all conferred on a growing number of species the right to exist unmolested. Another turning point is required, one that will discard the remaining dichotomies and recognise without cultural prejudices and privileges the value of every animal species for the whole planet. Considering the discussion about biodiversity loss, which has intensified in recent years, we may well be witnessing such a new change in human-animal relations.

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