

Comments to Parks Research Forum

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Ecotourism has recently come to be regarded as the panacea that enables us to aggressively seek tourism dollars with no apparent damage to ecosystems, since wild populations are not being harvested.

There is accumulating evidence however, particularly in Africa and Asia, that increasing human tourist activity in natural ecosystems is negatively affecting the normal movement patterns of sensitive species, causing displacement to less suitable habitat and ultimately leading to reduced reproductive rates.

While the desire among area planners to set aside a specific percentage of Ontario's land mass as parks and protected areas is indeed a laudable goal, this excellent foresight is aimed primarily at future generations of humans and may therefore fall short of the intended goal by not making adequate provisions for other species, the loss of which could ultimately diminish the quality of life presently enjoyed by Ontarions.

While park planners, having recognized that increasing human population is placing inordinate demands on available wilderness facilities, have introduced limits on human activity in some interior park facilities such as Algonquin, these restrictions are aimed primarily at preserving the quality of human wilderness experience, but have not taken into account the possibility that such controls may still allow excessive human activity from the standpoint of indigenous species.

Unfortunately human population is growing faster than human knowledge, and benchmarks against which to equate excessive human activity in natural ecosystems have not yet been thoroughly developed, although there is an increasing body of knowledge to indicate that the threat is very real.

I cannot offer an easy solution to this problem, but respectfully urge you to enlarge your horizons beyond the mere needs of the human species and to include the needs of our "fellow travellers" in your deliberations.