

Ethics of culling doubled-crested cormorants

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Vanessa Lawes 997347367 PHL273 March 21, Ethics of Culling Double-Crested Cormorants (DCCO) Introduction Double-crested cormorants (DCCO) have flourished in Middle Island, in Lake Erie, but at the cost of destruction of some plant and animal life on the island. Parks Canada has started culling of DCCO in an effort to protect the rare forms of plant and animal life that is under threat from DCCO. Moral and ethical values have an important role to play in the mutual co-existence with all living beings in the environment.

Springer's Assessment of Moral and Ethical Values in the Culling of DCCO

The culling of DCCO raises issues for ethical considerations. The culling of DCCO is ethically justified from the standpoint that DCCO demonstrate little concern for mutual co-existence of the co-inhabitants of Middle Island. While the culling of DCCO can be justified as a necessity for the protection of rare plant life, it runs against the grain of the ethic of equal consideration. All living beings experience pain and humans do not have any moral right to cause pain to any other form of life.

The action of culling DCCO is tantamount to "speciesist" action on the part of us humans. Through this action only what humans believe are of importance is taken into consideration. The interest of DCCO within the species other than the human species is not considered important, and so ignored. The preserving of rare plant life places a utilitarian halo on the culling of DCCO, but in actuality it negates the ethic of equal consideration, and places a question mark on the moral rightness of the action.

Ethical considerations act as a guide for action and behavioral attitudes that one should adopt for harmonious cohabitation in an environment. Thus, from the viewpoint of existence injustice some animals do not demonstrate a capacity for ethical functioning and reciprocation for harmonious

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cohabitation in an environment. This makes it difficult to apply the ethic of equality to all living beings (Singer, 49).

However, while applying ethics to all living beings and justifying the use of ethics, it is only applicable to those living beings that are capable of reciprocating ethics in the form of human beings, and excluding those incapable of it, meaning all other forms of life. Furthermore, in the application of ethics personal interests and interests of a particular group or species are to be disregarded. There is the deficit among humans that value is given only to living beings capable of the display of ethical reciprocity. There are no moral grounds for basing value on the ethics of reciprocity (Springer, 20).

. While DCCO are not justified in the danger they pose to the plant life on the island, they cannot be entirely faulted for having no interest on the plant life, and only concerned about their interests (Singer, 20). Expanding on this argument in the words of Springer, p. 20, " The essence of the principle of equal consideration of interests is that we give equal weight in our moral deliberations to the like interests of all those that are affected by our actions".

Singer argues further in favor of ethical consideration of DCCO, in terms of their interests within the ecosystem of the island not being bound by the abilities of the plant life on the island to overcome the distress experienced. The interest of a living being is determined only if it can experience suffering. All humans have the capacity to suffer, but so too do many of the animals, including DCCO. Hence there is no relevance to the moral stand through the virtue that only humans are capable of feeling suffering and hence morally considerable, for there is no case built up that only human
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beings are morally considerable. Going further, it is true that the plant life was dying in the island. Still, even after the culling of many DCCO, irrefutable scientific proof that DCCO were responsible for the degradation of the ecosystem and the death of the endangered plant is yet to be found.

Human beings are self-conscious and rational and the culling of DCCO can be justified on these abilities of human beings in terms of an ecosystem. The moral impetus behind the action of human beings in carrying out the culling of DCCO on the island is based on the preservation of the endangered plant life that was faced with the threat of extinction. In counter argument, these characteristics are lacking in the DCCO, and so moral considerations are absent in their actions. The lack of this element of moral consideration also means that the DCCO were not deliberately causing the death of the endangered plant life, as they were not conscious of their actions that were responsible for the death of the plant life.

There is a gulf between human beings and other forms of life like animals. An element in this gulf between human beings and animals is the inability of animals to reason, and so they lack conception and self-consciousness. They do not see themselves as separate entities in the ecosystem. These inadequacies in comparison to human beings are the reason why DCCO persist with inflicting the damage to the plant life on the island. They are lacking in self-consciousness, and hence bereft of any moral feeling and in their reasoning with regard to the pain they continue to inflict on the plant life in the ecosystem.

Humans on the other hand through the high value of moral feelings that they can experience are aware and concerned of the changes that are being brought about on the island. This has been sought as the moral edge for <https://assignbuster.com/ethics-of-culling-doubled-crested-cormorants/>

culling DCCO. In this reasoning too there is the flaw that it is not even handed, or lacks the element of equal consideration. DCCO may be responsible for the degrading the ecosystem to the disadvantage if the plant life. By the same yardstick, DCCO are also beneficial to the ecosystem in terms of the snakes. Yet, human beings can only see what is beneficial for them and act in that direction. The plant life there is of larger economic considerations to human beings, which has resulted in the culling of DCCO against the principled of equal consideration and avoiding inflicting of suffering on other living beings Singer, 65).

Comparison of Springer's Assessment and Kant's Observations on Animal Welfare

Springer in his argument against the culling of DCCO raises the ethical principle of equal consideration of all living beings, and the culling of DCCO reflecting the "speciesist" tendencies in human beings (Springer, 49).

Comparing this with Kant's view of ethical principles in human relationship with its environment and animals, Kant does not go with the contention of equal consideration of all living beings. In his perception animals exist only as a means and not for themselves, since they lack self-consciousness.

Humans with self-consciousness have no direct duties towards animals, and whatever duties we owe animals are indirect, stemming from our duties to humanity (Kant, 428).

The second ethical principle in Springer's argument against the culling of DCCO is the issue of suffering of the birds in the culling action of human beings. Animals like human beings can feel suffering, and just as causing suffering to humans is against the ethics and morals of human beings, so is the case with animals. In other words human beings have no right to cause

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suffering to other animals, because they can feel the suffering caused to them. Kant also agrees that humans have no right to act with cruelty towards animals. However, Kant's argument against cruelty to animals is not based on the feeling of suffering by animals or any duty of human beings not to harm or kill them. It is based on the harming or killing of animals violating the possibility of human end setting. Therefore, destruction of nature and the elements is against our duty to other human beings (Kant, 429).

Another key argument of Springer against culling of DCCO is the distinction between human beings and other life forms. Human beings are self-conscious and rational, with the ability to reason. Animals lack conception and self consciousness, and therefore the ability to reason. As a consequence of these deficits in other life forms, they are unable to understand any damage they cause within an ecosystem. In other words they lack reasoning powers and the moral feelings towards any damage and pain they cause within an ecosystem. Human beings on the other hand with their powers of reasoning and moral feelings are capable of understanding any damage and pain caused to the other life forms. The capacity for higher powers of reasoning and moral feelings, place on human beings the responsibility of acting on the basis of ethical principles and desist from causing damage and harming other life forms in our ecosystem (Springer, 65). Kant agrees that there is the lack of reasoning among animals, but sees their lack of reasoning and moral feeling as making them inferior to human beings. Kant does not place any responsibility on human beings to act in a responsible manner and not cause damage and pain to other beings in our ecosystem, on the basis of are capacity for reasoning and moral feelings. Instead his position on human beings desisting from causing harm to animals

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is based on the need of human beings to desist from cruelty, as by acting in a cruel manner to animals human beings develop the tendency for cruelty, which can lead to irresponsible actions against other human beings (Kant, 429).

The Stronger View

Springer's viewpoint is stronger than Kant's. The view of Springer is broad based, giving equality to all life forms to exist on this planet. Kant's view has a narrow base of the superiority of human beings, and animals existing for the sake of human beings. Springer argues in favor of animals on the basis of their being a life form capable of feeling pain, and not being held responsible for their actions, as they cannot reason. Kant's view agrees with animals not being able to reason, but according to him only strengthens the argument of animals being lesser to humans. Kant's observation against cruelty to animals has nothing to do with any pain that animals may feel, but is justified on the grounds that acting with cruelty to animals would lead to acting with cruelty against human beings, which is a one sided argument in favor of human beings.

Conclusion

Observations of Springer on the culling of DCCO and Kant's observations on human attitude towards animals, provides an opportunity to evaluate two different viewpoints on what should be the attitude of human beings to animals in this ecosystem. Springer's observations come out the winner in the comparison.

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