
Charismatic species: who are they?

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Abstract

Charismatic is a term commonly used in conservation biology to describe species. However this term is unclear and needs to be properly defined in order to fully meet its potential in conservation biology.

As a first step to define it, we sought to assess i) who are the most charismatic species, ii) what characterizes these species and iii) whether these depend on the socioeconomic category of the respondents. Therefore, we proposed an online survey and asked respondents to cite the ten species they consider the most charismatic. In order to understand respondent's choices, we also asked them to associate their choice to one to six characteristics (rare, endangered, beautiful, cute, impressive and dangerous).

Hence, we set up a ranked list of the 20 most charismatic species and the characteristics that are most often associated to them. In addition, a multivariate analysis reveals that socioeconomic categories of respondents don't affect their choice, suggesting the absence of a standard profile of the most charismatic species.

These results are a first step to develop and define the concept of charismatic species, which could be really helpful in conservation biology, for both academic research and the design of conservation campaigns.

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