

# Ethical questions in animal research

 a commentary from human and social sciences



UNIVERSITY  
OF OULU

Pauliina Rautio  
Professor of Biodiversity Education  
Faculty of Education and Psychology  
University of Oulu

Carer for injured wild birds  
North Ostrobothnia ornithological society (PPLY)



**ANIMATE**

Should researchers in human and social sciences get a free pass?



### **Ethical concerns beyond "the needle"**

- Animals in therapeutic or pedagogical contexts
- Animal labour, e.g., in tourism
- Human-animal relations in diverse contexts
- Insects as free game

### **Compare with ethics of research with children**

- Informed and ongoing consent
- Right to withdraw, recognition of dissent
- Respecting dignity and diverse capacities
- Right to benefit from research

### **Delayed impact on animal lives**

- Overall objectives for and outcomes of research bear consequences to animal lives *even if the research practice would not directly engage animal individuals*


# What are ethical concerns beyond the target animals?


## Collateral damage

- Sidecatch
- Food animals
- Breeding and culling (supply trade)
- *What else remains secondary or invisible?*

## Research context and public engagement

- What is reinforced or normalised?
- How are public opinions reviewed and considered?

 Three lizards (protected species) in a malaise trap bottle

 Green-veined white (lanttuperhonen) raised by sixth grade students and frozen



What about insects, animal samples and body parts?

**Is the idea of intrinsic worth less relevant to**

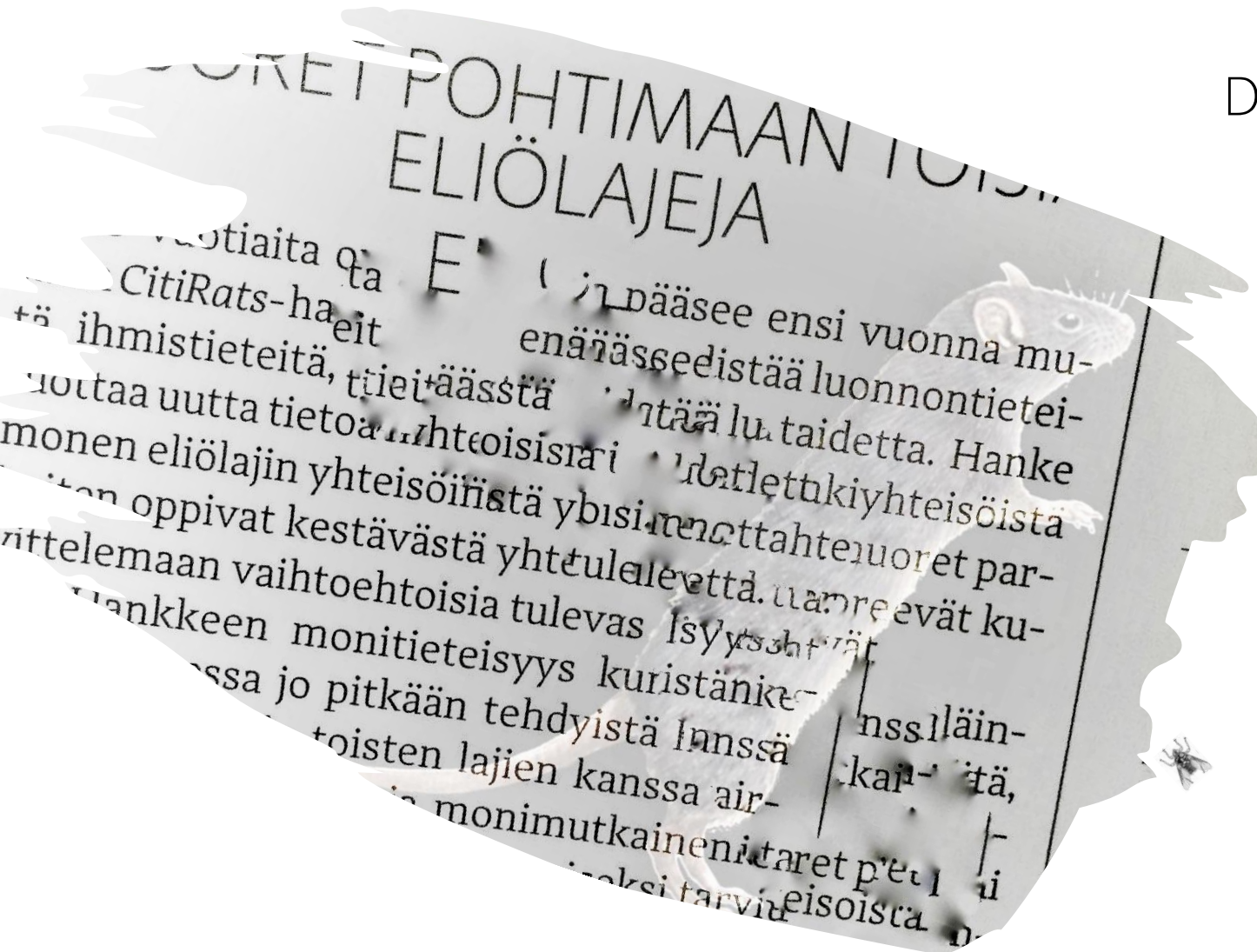
- small and numerous individuals
- easily accessed, kept and common species
- species with shorter life spans (than humans)
- those used as food anyway
- those already killed
- *Who are the most vulnerable?*

**Does outsourcing the killing or capturing relieve a researcher from ethical responsibility?**

**Are old samples more ethical to use than new ones?**

**Should animal bodies used in research be treated with dignity and respect? How?**





Does education justify harm or distress?  
(What do we mean by 'education'?)

For an increasing number of students in higher education, the use of animals (living or killed) in the name of their education is not justified.

**What does this tell to us as educators?  
How should we respond?**

What are we socializing the future generations to?

**Who could we collaborate with to increase the diversity of ethical sensitivity?**

# Where do ethical questions in animal research locate?



White-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), 2023

Lost the tip of its wing to a wind turbine blade.  
Was cared for by me as part of PPLY volunteer work.  
Euthanised at the city of Oulu veterinary clinic.  
Wind energy companies begun to discuss about compensation.  
Parasites from the body were collected for ecological research.  
The body was 3D photographed by an artist.  
And then stored in the freezer of the Zoological museum  
at the University of Oulu - for later taxidermy.  
Bones will be used for research.  
Taxidermied body will be displayed for educational purposes.

 Thank you!