

HUNTING PRACTICES AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCE: A BRIEF OVERVIEW WITH AN ETHNOZOOLOGICAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT - Wild animal hunting is still a recurring practice around the world, being motivated by multiple factors and being directly related to cultural and environmental aspects. Due to the wide range of possible approaches to the subject of hunting, ethnozoology seeks to understand it under an interdisciplinary approach, considering related historical, ethical, social, economic, cultural and environmental aspects. This justifies its importance as a conservation tool. Thus, this article is part of a heuristic investigation and seeks to synthesize the main considerations about hunting and its dynamism.

Keywords: Hunting practices, Interdisciplinarity, Wildlife Conservation.

Práticas de caça e influência ambiental: uma síntese geral de uma perspectiva etnozoológica

RESUMO - A caça de animais silvestres ainda é uma prática recorrente em todo o mundo, sendo motivada por múltiplos fatores e estando diretamente relacionada aos aspectos culturais e ambientais. Devido à ampla gama de abordagens possíveis para o tema da caça, a etnozoologia procura entendê-lo sob uma abordagem interdisciplinar, considerando aspectos históricos, éticos, sociais, econômicos, culturais e ambientais relacionados. Isso justifica sua importância como ferramenta de conservação. Assim, este artigo faz parte de uma investigação heurística e busca sintetizar as principais considerações sobre a caça e seu dinamismo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: PRÁTICAS CINEGÉTICAS, INTERDISCIPLINARIDADE, CONSERVAÇÃO FAUNÍSTICA.

Las prácticas de caza y la influencia ambiental: una síntesis general desde una perspectiva etnozoológica

RESUMEN - La caza de animales silvestres sigue siendo una práctica recurrente en todo el mundo, motivada por múltiples factores y directamente relacionada con aspectos culturales y ambientales. Debido a la amplia gama de enfoques posibles sobre el tema de la caza, la etnozoología busca entenderlo bajo un enfoque interdisciplinario, considerando los aspectos históricos, éticos, sociales, económicos, culturales y ambientales especies relacionados. Esto justifica su importancia como herramienta de conservación. Por lo tanto, este artículo es parte de una investigación heurística y busca sintetizar las principales consideraciones sobre la caza y su dinamismo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: PRÁCTICAS CINEGÉTICAS, INTERDISCIPLINARIEDAD, CONSERVACIÓN FAUNÍSTICA.

INTRODUCTION

The historical interaction established between humans and animals represents one of the most continuous ways of interaction between humanity and the natural resources (Alves et al. 2009a). This multiplicity of connections that human cultures preserve with animals is frequently approached by an ethnozoological approach, which investigates the cultural knowledge, interpretation and the use of fauna in human societies (Marques 2002).

Despite of being an illegal practice in Brazil (Federal Law N° 5.197/ 1967), hunting still pressures several animal species (Alves et al. 2009a, Fernandes-Ferreira 2014) and, along with habitat degradation, it can increase faunal vulnerability (Barbosa and Aguiar 2015).

In spite of this scenario, the ethnozoological studies that focus on hunting practices, their sociocultural and ecological importance, and the environmental services provided by wildlife (García-Flores et al. 2017, Fernandes-Ferreira and Alves 2017, Alves et al. 2007). However, the preponderance of these practices may contribute to trigger serious environmental conflicts related to socioeconomic and cultural-historical aspects (Barbosa and Aguiar 2012).

Before the thematic breadth intrinsic to hunting, it is necessary to discuss it under a comprehensive perspective and that also takes into consideration the varied aspects that parallels with its causes, motivations, effects and implications (Alves and Albuquerque 2017). Therefore, this article derives from a heuristic investigation of national and international academic texts, and aims to summarize into theoretical review, the main considerations regarding hunting practices, in a multidisciplinary approach and from the standpoint of Ethnozoology.

THE MULTIPLE RELATIONS BETWEEN HUMANS AND ANIMALS

The historical interaction formed between human beings and animals is largely recognized as relevant in different regions of the world, within the broadest cultural, economic and social contexts (Marques 1995). These interactions can represent not only traditional forms of knowledge and rational usufruct of faunal resources but also mechanisms of animal overexploitation and environmental pressure on their natural populations (Marques 2001).

The many possibilities of combining cultural and environmental factors can lead to the use of the same animal species in a vast array of ways and purposes in distinct societies. In the same scenario, various species can present similar utilities. Generally, these relationships take into consideration the usefulness of the animals, as well as the oral tradition about them, which is transmitted from one generation to another (Thomas 1983, Marques 2002).

At first, one of the most fundamental ways of exploiting the fauna is through hunting and fishing in order to attend human nutrition (Reitz and Wing 2008, Alves 2012, Neufeld and Richmond 2017, Alves and Albuquerque 2017). The types of animals used for this purpose involves the usage of small invertebrate animals and also large vertebrate animals, particularly mammals, birds and reptiles (Redford and Robinson 1987, Robinson and Redford 1991, Klemens and Thorbjarnarson 1995, Nasi et al. 2008), which represent the main source of animal protein in several rural and urban communities around the globe (Peres 2000, Fa et al. 2003, Schenck et al. 2006, Alves et al. 2009b).

Another ample group of relationships between humans and animals concerns aspects related to health. Alves (2012) highlights five important aspects that need to be considered in this context: the fauna acts as the cause and as disseminator of diseases to humans, and vice versa, the animals act as bioindicators or signals of the potential risk of certain diseases, fauna specimens are used in traditional medical treatments by societies worldwide, animals are exploited when bioprospecting for drugs, the fauna is largely utilized in medical investigation.

Since ancient times human beings relate the emergence of some diseases to the presence or influence of certain animals (Ávila-Pires 1989), which, in certain cases is true, since several animals can act as vectors or

natural reservoirs of diseases (Fong 2017) that directly influence public health, economy and the conservation of biodiversity all around the world (Cleaveland et al. 2001, Friend 2006). It is estimated that, from the emerging infectious diseases, around 75% have some sort of connection with animals, from that amount, 800 are known zoonotic pathogens (Taylor et al. 2001, Woolhouse and Gowtage-Sequeria 2005, Chomel et al. 2007).

Humans and animals share many diseases (Bell et al. 1988, Krauss 2003) and therefore some species from fauna can be excellent indicators of risk and vulnerability, warning prematurely to the need of interventions in the field of public health (Reif 2011), either by denouncing known pathogens being disseminated in a new location, as well as the direction of their propagation, or indicating fluctuations in their incidence or prevalence over time, besides making possible hypothesis tests specific to their biology and the efficiency of potential mechanisms related to their control (Mc Cluskey 2003). Despite of not being a solidified methodology in disease prevention, the observation of zoological evidences in public health analysis has gained space among disease prevention policies (Scotch et al. 2009, Alves 2012).

Besides being potential disease transmitters and useful bioindicators in public health, many animals are directly utilized for therapeutic purposes since ancient times, with historical records of this type of usage in traditional medical systems in different parts of the world (Stephenson 1832, Moquin-Tandon 1861, Mackinney 1946, Scarpa 1981, Nakanishi 1999, Unnikrishnan 2004, e.g. Alves and Rosa 2005, 2007a, b, 2012).

Asian societies stand out in the usage of fauna and its by-products for the treatment of diseases (Yinfeng et al. 1997, Unnikrishnan 1998), however, Africa and Latin America, in spite of not being much studied, it has been documented an ample usage of the animal biodiversity in zootherapeutic treatments (Alves and Alves 2011, Alves 2012, Barbosa et al. 2018). There are still accounts of this practice in some European countries (Quave et al. 2010, Voultsiadou 2010, Ceriaco 2012).

This widespread use of animals for therapeutic purposes has strengthened in recent years (e.g. Alves and Rosa 2007a, b, Robinson and Zhang 2011), shifting from being mainly a local practice to become one of the main reasons for the illegal wildlife trade (Cleva 2006, IFAW 2011), also representing a major additional pressure to the decline of several animal species populations (Call 2006, Alves et al. 2007). Thus, to consider and comprehend such uses is of the uttermost importance in the context of faunistic conservation (Alves 2012).

Despite its contribution to traditional medicine, fauna is also used as raw material in modern medical science and pharmacology (Sifuna 2012), its potential has been recognized through many studies over the past decades (Fusetani 2000, Chivian 2002, Dossey 2010, Alves and Rosa 2012, Alves and Albuquerque 2012). Since the number of animal species is many times superior to plants, it is assumed that the pharmacological and therapeutic potential of fauna it is still very much overlooked (Trowell 2003, Alves and Albuquerque 2012). Nevertheless, a considerable number of animal-derived ingredients have been tested by the modern pharmaceutical industry (Kunin and Lawton 1996, World Resources Institute 2000, Chivian 2002).

This trend towards the growth of bioprospecting for drugs of animal origin requires conservation strategies to avoid overexploitation, for many target organisms, of known potential, are already vulnerable (Alves 2012, Alves and Albuquerque 2012).

Besides being employed in traditional medicine and in drug manufacturing, animals are largely used in tests and experiments with implications for human health (Bishop and Nolen 2001, Chorilli et al. 2009). An estimated 35 million animals are used every year in research and medical experiments (Alves 2012). This usage, despite of being widespread, generates ethical debates about animal suffering and animal rights that need to be considered and discussed (Singer 1993, Bishop and Nolen 2001, Singer 2004, Tonella et al. 2016).

Another type of interaction between humans and fauna is through the use of pets. The employment of pet animals dates back to the oldest societies that would capture, keep and raise them (Collar et al. 2007, Carrete and Tella 2008), establishing this behavior upon their culture and local tradition (Carvalho 1951, Bueno 2009, Alves et al. 2012, Alves and Albuquerque 2017). Vertebrates are usually more domesticated especially mammals, birds and fish, however, the use of reptiles and amphibious has risen (Fitter 1986, Hoover 1998, Franke and Telecky 2001,

Jepson and Ladle 2005, Alves et al. 2011). This rising usage of wild animals as pets, however, has been stimulating the illegal wildlife trade, and it has a possible impact on natural populations, which requires to be considered in conservation strategies (Andrews 1990, Broad 2001, Alves et al. 2012).

Some studies clearly correlate the closeness between humans and animals with considerable gains to physical and mental health of patients stricken with different ailments and on people's wellbeing (Fitter 1986, Netting et al. 1987, Jorgenson 1997, Silveira 1998, Brodie and Biley 1999, Serpell 2006, Matuszek 2010). This fact deserves to be taken into consideration by public health policies and as therapeutic alternatives, being careful not be neglected, even when dealing with the use of wild fauna.

Another form of human interaction with fauna concerns the diverse artistic expressions, symbolic, mythological and religious established in every historical period (Yoder 1947, Klingender 1971, Spears et al. 1996, Shepard 1996, Beardsworth and Bryman 2001, Sax 2002, Turner and Freedman 2004, Kalof and Resl 2007, Collar et al. 2007, Senior 2009, Herrmann et al. 2010, Sexton 2011, Garcia 2012, Alves 2012). Alinei (2000), suggests that the first universally known religion, Totemism, included the cult of fauna, this practice is still relevant in religious rites around the world, the animals are considered gods and used as amulets and as sacrificial offerings (Adeola 1992, Léo Neto et al. 2009, Léo Neto and Alves 2010, Alves and Souto 2010, Léo Neto et al. 2011, 2012, Alves 2012), a fact that exerts influence on environmental perception and the use of natural resources to this day (Berkes 2001, Tomalin 2004, Shiu and Stokes 2008, Alves 2012).

Another historical classic way of using animal products is on ornamentation and production of objects with their by-products, such as bones, teeth, horns, feathers, furs, etc., employed as ornaments, clothing or weapons since the most remote societies (Neufeld 1973, Oldfield 2001, Pedersen 2004).

Birds, due to their feathers and plumage, are some of the most explored groups for ornamentation, by traditional populations as well as by modern societies in different contexts (Biebuyck and Van Den Abbeele 1984, Collar et al. 2007, Kothari 2007, Alves 2012). Mammals are also expressively exploited, mainly for their furs and for ivory that can be obtained from some species, the use of ivory dates back to 30.000 years (Kunz 1916, Conard 2003).

Nowadays, besides ivory, furs, feathers and fibers from many species of mammals, reptiles, birds and fish fuel the international trade for the manufacturing of clothing, boots and shoes, bags and other items (Oldfield 2001, Alves 2012, Duda et al. 2017).

Moreover, as the first humans stand out intellectually, they would leave behind nomadism and started dominating and domesticating other species, which represents one of the great milestones in the development of civilization (Thomas 1956, Sulman 1982, Beck and Katcher 1996, Kisling 2001). The domestication of fauna allowed that the first human societies enrich their diets with regular sources of meat, milk and other derivatives (Alves and Souto 2010). Subsequently, some domesticated animals provided news sources of traction such as wagons and riding, or for the traction of plows and coaches (Alves 2012) multiplying human productive capacity and spatial mobility (Ribeiro 1998).

Nowadays, domesticated animals remain essential to human development, providing nutrition, income, transportation, locomotion, company and entertainment (Scanes 2003), however, several wild species are also captured for captive breeding to attend different purposes, which places this theme as relevant to conversation.

THE MULTIFUNCTIONALITY IN HUNTING

In distinct societies, several functions are closely and inevitably connected to hunting activities. Therefore, hunting does not only consists of chasing, slaughter or capturing wild animals, but, it is also an important part of environmental management, that can influence biodiversity conservation, as well as the success of other human activities, interfering economically and socioculturally in certain regions (Lund and Jensen 2017).

-40

In many rural areas, hunting essentially models the manners of human subsistence and the natural environment (Adams et al. 2009). Accordingly, Fischer et al. (2012), places hunting practices as a significant share in the totality of activities related to the management wild fauna. To these authors, the multifunctionality of hunting denotes the multiple benefits that hunting and its practices can result to society, serving as food, recreation, income, cultural identity and the desirable ecological results.

In some regions in the European continent, hunting practices are considered as a constituent part of environmental management. In Scotland and Sweden there is moose and deer management in order to maintain the populations of these animals aiming at sport and recreational hunting, along with commercial silviculture (Wennberg Digasper 2008). This type of management also results in variation in the abundance of animal species associated with, such as predators or preys (Blanco-Aguiar et al. 2008, Casas and Viñuela 2010).

In Spain, another example of the ecological functionality of hunting is the management of red-legged partridge populations – bird associated with agricultural areas (García et al. 2008). However, the commercial hunting of these birds demands an intensive management, which denotes the control of predators (legal and illegal ones), provoking tensions between hunting management and conservation of these predators (Villafuerte et al. 1998, Virgós and Travaini 2005).

In Croatia and Slovenia, hunting is the main tool to control the number of brown bears, which reached the "socially acceptable maximum" (Huber et al. 2008a). Similarly, Norway aims to keep the population of lynxes stable through controlled hunting, aiming to reduce conflicts associated with the loss of areas to livestock farming (Linnell et al. 2010). In all these places, hunting has, therefore, a clear role as population control in an ecological perspective.

In the African continent, examples of the ecological functionality of hunting can also be seen. In Ethiopia and Tanzania, hunting is currently employed to control populations that affect the means of human subsistence (Nelson 2007). Nevertheless, in these cases there is a strong economic influence, which highlights another functionality of hunting.

In the southwest of Ethiopia and in the west of Serengeti, in Tanzania, the hunting of smaller animals is conveniently utilized as food by the hunters, however, when the game animal is larger in size, usually its byproducts are commercialized and can generate a significant income (Loibooki et al. 2002, Fischer et al. 2012).

In Europe and in regions of Asia, not only the direct use of animal sub-products generates income, but connected activities, such tourism and recreation generate a significant economic return (Mattsson et al. 2008, Macmillan and Leitch 2008, Caro et al. 2009, Willebrand 2009, Lund and Jensen 2017), a fact that is also consolidated in some regions of Africa that already explore ecotourism (Thirgood et al. 2008).

There are still the social functions of hunting, which relate primarily to the development and conservation of share capital and status – or symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1977, Putnam 2000). As Lund and Jensen (2017) observe, the practice of hunting can be seen as a sign of male bravery and maturity by some human populations in Africa and Asia, while disregarded by others.

In European areas, in turn, hunting can be represented as a cultural perpetuation trait and as an important relation with social status in different classes (Macmillan and Leitch 2008). There are still situations where hunting practices have recently become regular recreational activities (Frković 2002, Huber et al. 2008b).

In general, hunting can possess significant social functions, since it helps to develop symbolic and sociocultural capital, particularly in when it comes to the occurrence and perpetuation of bonds inside social groups. These relations may, in some cases, be transferred to the economic capital (Bourdieu 1977).

In North and Central America, the same multifuncionality of hunting has already been described, with emphasis on studies carried out in Mexico, Nicaragua and Trinidad. The majority of these works, nonetheless, are based in studies about traditional or indigenous populations (León and Montiel 2008, Santos-Fita et al. 2012). In Brazil, despite of hunting being illegal, some studies have also demonstrated these varied nuances of hunting

activities (Barbosa et al. 2011, Alves et al. 2012, Barbosa and Aguiar 2015). Recently, a thorough study tried to analyze the multiple aspects of hunting in different biomes in the country (Fernandes-Ferreira 2014).

It is worth mentioning that hunting practices are not exclusively related to benefits. Hunting and the corresponding management activities can also result in undesirable outcomes, such as defaunation, overexploitation and the extinction of fauna species. Therefore, besides contributing simultaneously to achieve various goals, these practices also have their cost (Abler 2004, Garrido 2009, Linnell et al. 2010, Lund and Jensen 2017).

In order to better understand whether the multifunctionality of hunting in environments where it occurs has a positive balance or results in serious environmental impacts, it is necessary to identify the most explored cultural target species (Cristancho and Vining 2004), considering their ecological services (Garibaldi and Turner 2004). Only in this way is it possible to understand the typical dynamism of relations between humans and local biodiversity (Sousa 2014).

HUNTING PRACTICES AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Despite the fact that hunting is an activity directly connected to fauna, its impacts cross over different environmental components, possibly being able to interfere directly with the general balance of ecosystems (Redford 1992). One example of this influence is documented by Wright (2003), stressing that depending on the animal species being hunted and the intensity of its exploitation, there may be alteration in the dynamics of the plant community that ecologically relates with these animals, whilst this same fact could influence species from fauna that are not being hunted, which would tend to occupy vacant niches, resulting in behavioral alteration.

Corroborating the aforementioned work, a complex ecological study carried out in Malaysia suggested that hunting practices affected a considerably larger area in the rainforest of *Lambir Hills National Park* when compared to deforestation and wood extraction combined (Harrison et al. 2013). This study concluded that the continuity of hunting in the region in the last fifteen years contributed to substantial changes in the spatial structure and in the dynamics of tree populations, culminating with a decline of local vegetation diversity over time.

Besides affecting the plant biodiversity, it is clear that hunting practices considerably affect fauna, having an impact on the size of populations, on age distribution, on sex ratio, on behavior and on the distribution of natural populations (Clausen et al. 2017). It is known that mammals and birds are historically the animal groups most affected by hunting, due to their medium size and population abundance, which yields more protein (Trinca and Ferrari 2006, Martínez 2006).

In an attempt to comprehend if hunting in the Udzungwa Mountains, in Tanzania, affected more intensely the populations of primates than the degradation of their habits, Rovero et al. (2012) monitored populations of five different primates for six years. The results showed that in forest areas with distinct measures of habitat protection there was no significant variation in the population of some primates, whereas the differences in hunting intensity strongly influenced these populations.

Another study performed in *Beskydy*, between Slovakia and the Czech Republic, showed that hunting acts as a reducer in the availability of food for carnivorous mammals, with particular emphasis on canines and felines (Kutal et al. 2016). This study analyzed the population dynamics of great carnivores between 2003 and 2012 and concluded that variations in hunting practices and their influence on the disponibility of preys in different scenarios resulted in a considerable behavioral disparity among the predator populations studied.

Seeking to comprehend how hunting acted upon a bird migration corridor between Norway and Denmark, Clausen et al. (2017) analyzed the impact of the killing of birds based on 25 years of population monitoring. The authors documented a considerable raise in the ratio of slaughtered individuals in hunting over the last years, which culminated in alterations to age structure of the populations, a fact that can carry a serious influence over the reproduction dynamics of these birds.

42

The hunting practices indeed entail environmental impacts that need to be considered in any environmental management plan, whatever the studied area and independent of the hunted species, once that the continuity of these activities interfere in the general balance of the natural ecosystems (Fernandes-Ferreira 2014, Talukdar and Gupta 2017).

HUNTING AND ITS ETHICAL AND CONFLICTING ASPECTS

Hunting is a practice that evokes an intense and immediate moral judgement, which many times is extremely significant when discussing wildlife management. A solidified theoretical framework discuss these moral arguments from a historical perspective (Mackenzie 1987, Steinhart 1989, Adams et al. 2009), normative (Curnutt 1996, List 2004, Kretz 2010) or philosophical (List 1997, Bergman 2005, Vitali 2010), emphasizing specific types of hunting, however, they are incipient studies that base their explorations on empiric data, which are contextualized and analyzed systematically (Fischer et al. 2013).

On the one hand, there are authors that validate hunting practices by presenting opinions and arguments from hunters as part of anthropological analysis, as done by Dahles (1993) in Holland and Marvin (2000) in England. On the other hand, there are researchers that raise consistent arguments opposed to hunting, stating that debates on the subject should not be simplified (Minnis 1996).

Although the moral arguments must be analyzed taking into consideration their historical configurations and the social aspects involved (Setten 2004), the appreciation of different scenarios does not make it impossible the investigation of similarities and patterns of morality through different contexts (Smith 2000). A seeming model of legitimation – or delegitimation – of the use of natural resources, including the animals hunted, tends to highlight four moral arguments: the identity of the user, the kind of practice, the objectivity of this practice and its site of application (Minnis 1996, e.g. Brown 2007a, b).

What it seems to be a trend is the fact that the opinions about the legitimacy of hunting vary between the different types of practice, where the perceptions of motivations and forms of hunting perform an important role in the establishment of these points of view (Heberlein and Willebrand 1998), making it possible to question the morality of the so-called "traditional hunting" and the evaluation of the relevance of these practices within the context of traditional ecological knowledge (Reo and Whyte 2012).

ETHNOZOOLOGY

Ethnozoology is a subdiscipline of Ethnobiology, which combines elements of social sciences and natural sciences. Thus, scientists and researchers that are dedicated to this field of study, encompass aspects related to zoology, ecology, anthropology, sociology and related areas, crossing the subjective methodology of social sciences and the more objective aspects of biological sciences, seeking to investigate and better understand the complexity of the relations humans develop with the natural environment (Alves and Souto 2015, Alves and Albuquerque 2017).

HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF ETHNOZOOLOGY

Animals and humans are connected in multiple ways, since the most remote cultures from the Old World (Ponting 1995). And these ways of interaction were very well represented by archaeological inscriptions and rock art, which includes hieroglyph and even official documents (Baker 1941, Dodd Jr 1993).

43

Despite of this well established relation, the beginnings of Ethnozoology, according to Alves and Souto (2015) bring us to the natural expansionism that started in the sixteenth century, with works from many researchers that were interested in the fauna of the New World and in the knowledge of the natives over the utilization of the fauna. This research field had got so strengthened that, in the nineteenth century, naturalists from the whole world relied upon the collaboration of traditional populations and native communities for the discovery and description of thousands animal species (Moreira 2002).

The lack of ample dissemination and recognition of this collaboration, however, contributed to misconceptions of indigenous people all over the world, excluding an ethnozoological point of view in favor of a classic zoological and detached from traditional knowledge standpoint (Alves and Souto 2015). It is necessary to consider, however, that currently many local populations continue to be essential to the completion of several ecological and zoological works, but, hardly they are mentioned or given the credit (Silvano and Valbo-Jorgensen 2008).

The references made to "Ethnozoology" date back to 1899, in an article about American indigenous people (Mason 1899). Its acknowledgment as a discipline dates back to 1914, when Henderson and Harrington (1914) defined Ethnozoology as the study of cultures and their relationships with the animals in the environment that surrounds them. The term would only primarily be remembered from the 1920s on (Santos-Fita and Costa-Neto 2007), and its definitions would become more refined, such as the one coined by Marques (2002), that considers Ethnozoology as the transdisciplinary study of thoughts and perceptions (beliefs and knowledge), feelings (emotional aspects), and behaviors (attitudes) that mediate the relations between human populations and species of fauna in the ecosystems that surround them.

After the publication of the first studies explicitly focused on Ethnozoology, the progress of the researches in the area is associated with researches of folk taxonomy nature (Chamberlin 1908, e.g. Malkin 1956a, b, 1958, Sturtevant 1964, Berlin et al. 1973). Recently, however, the diversity of the aspects approached in the area is growing considerably, with researches that include zoological perception and classification (Posey 1982, Mourão et al. 2006), myths and beliefs involving the animals (Lewis 1991, Léo Neto et al. 2009, Barbosa and Aguiar 2012), sociobiological aspects of the use of fauna (Posey 1978, Dias et al. 2011, Barbosa and Aguiar 2015), traditional medicine, cosmetic, ritualistic and nutritional aspects including animals (Costa-Neto and Oliveira 2000, Lev 2003, Alves and Pereira Filho 2007, Barboza et al. 2007, Alves et al. 2011, Rosa et al. 2011), domestication and management of fauna and the conservation of biodiversity (Fleck and Harder 2000, Alves and Nishida 2002) and hunting and its impacts on animal populations (Balée 1985, Quijano Hernandez and Calme 2002, Souto 2007, e.g. Alves et al. 2009a, b, c, 2012, Barbosa et al. 2010, 2011, Bezerra et al. 2012, Souza and Alves 2014), tending towards growth and expansion of the researches done in Brazil.

THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY IMPORTANCE OF ETHNOZOOLOGY TO CONSERVATION

A number of studies currently demonstrate that human populations possess vast knowledge about the natural resources that are directly used, especially the one about the fauna (Mourão and Nordi 2002, 2006, Mourão et al. 2006, Souto et al. 2011, Alves and Rosa 2012, Alves et al. 2013). These types of knowledge have attracted attention from the scientific community around the world, once they can complement scientific information and provide significantly relevant data on the assessment of environmental impacts, the management of natural resources and sustainability (Posey 1984, Alves and Souto 2015).

Just as academic knowledge, the traditional zoological knowledge derives from systematic observation of nature, although it is interpreted in a unique cultural context, resulting in data on local natural phenomena, as well as knowledge about the relationships established with the resources originated from the ecosystems (Nishida et al. 2006). Nonetheless, this vast source of knowledge has being historically overlooked by the scientific community

(Alves and Nishida 2002) and just recently has being considered and recognized by scientists from different areas of knowledge (Tidemann and Gosler 2010, Alves and Souto 2015).

It is worth mentioning that individuals that possess a considerable zoological knowledge are the ones that seize the faunistic resources more directly – such as hunters, fisherman, and gatherers, thus, the success of their practices is directly linked to the quality and the reliability of their biological knowledge (Marques 1995, Begossi et al. 2008, Nordi et al. 2009, Capistrano and Lopes 2012). As a result, these individuals present a vast range of information susceptible to complement with great quality academic studies on Ethnozoology, population biology, ecological interactions, weather patterns, environmental assessment and management, conservation status and adaptive management of faunistic resources (Berkes 1999, Alves and Nishida 2002, Rosa et al. 2005).

This array of aspects for the applicability of ethnozoological knowledge, reinforces its role as an important tool that has contributed to environmental studies, along with the analysis of economic and social aspects inherent in the use and conservation of the biodiversity of fauna, enabling environmental management and species conservation planning, considering the socioeconomic circumstances of the individuals concerned (Alves and Nishida 2003, Rocha-Mendes et al. 2005, Alves and Souto 2015).

The ethnobiological studies – with emphasis being placed on the ethnozoological ones – are directly associated with resource management and conservation biology, have much to add to these disciplines, since all conservation strategies need to contemplate the sociocultural and economic aspects concerned (Begossi 2006, Lopes et al. 2010, Alves and Souto 2015).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is evident that the multiplicity of approaches relating to hunting was historically and globally constructed and disseminated by humanity, but, it also occurs in local contexts that legitimate or not, its continuity, minimizing or amplifying its impacts.

Despite of its cultural and nutritional importance, hunting is still poorly studied, figuring as one of the great threats to animal biodiversity, therefore, it is necessary more studies that seek to understand its dynamics and its role on the support of human societies, along with its influence regarding conservation.

Ethnozoology comes out as one of the most effective tools to the understanding of the relationships established between humans and animals, aiming for sustainability. This efficiency is due to the possibility of an interdisciplinary alliance between methodologies from different sciences, in an attempt to understand a complex thematic context that cannot be really comprehended through a disciplinary approach.

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