

**A social science perspective towards wildlife conservation and management:  
What do Andean villagers think about vicuñas?**

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**Abstract:**

Understanding sociocultural changes that affect society's perspectives about wildlife is an important aspect of comprehensive, effective wildlife management. A leading example is the South American vicuna. In order to accomplish a variety of management goals, it is essential to understand the attitude of Andean villagers towards vicuñas. These goals include, encouragement to participate in wildlife related activities, reducing conflict among wildlife stakeholders, educating people about management practices, and to be able to predict emerging issues. The vicuña is a strategic resource for the Andean people for its luxurious fiber that has high value in the international market. With the recovery of some vicuña populations in the Jujuy province in Argentina, various Andean communities have requested help to develop management plans to promote the use and conservation of this species as an alternative source of income for local development. However, not all the communities have the conditions to implement a vicuña management plan, for example, more than 9 vicuñas/ km<sup>2</sup>, at least two years of scientific basic data on vicuña density and behavior, and a local community organization based on the participation and mutual cooperation between all the members of the community. We have studied the perception of Andean people towards wild vicuña in four communities that have different sociocultural organizations, land property, and density of vicuñas. Specific goals were to understand their attitudes, knowledge and interests towards wild vicuña, and to identify potential sites for future management.