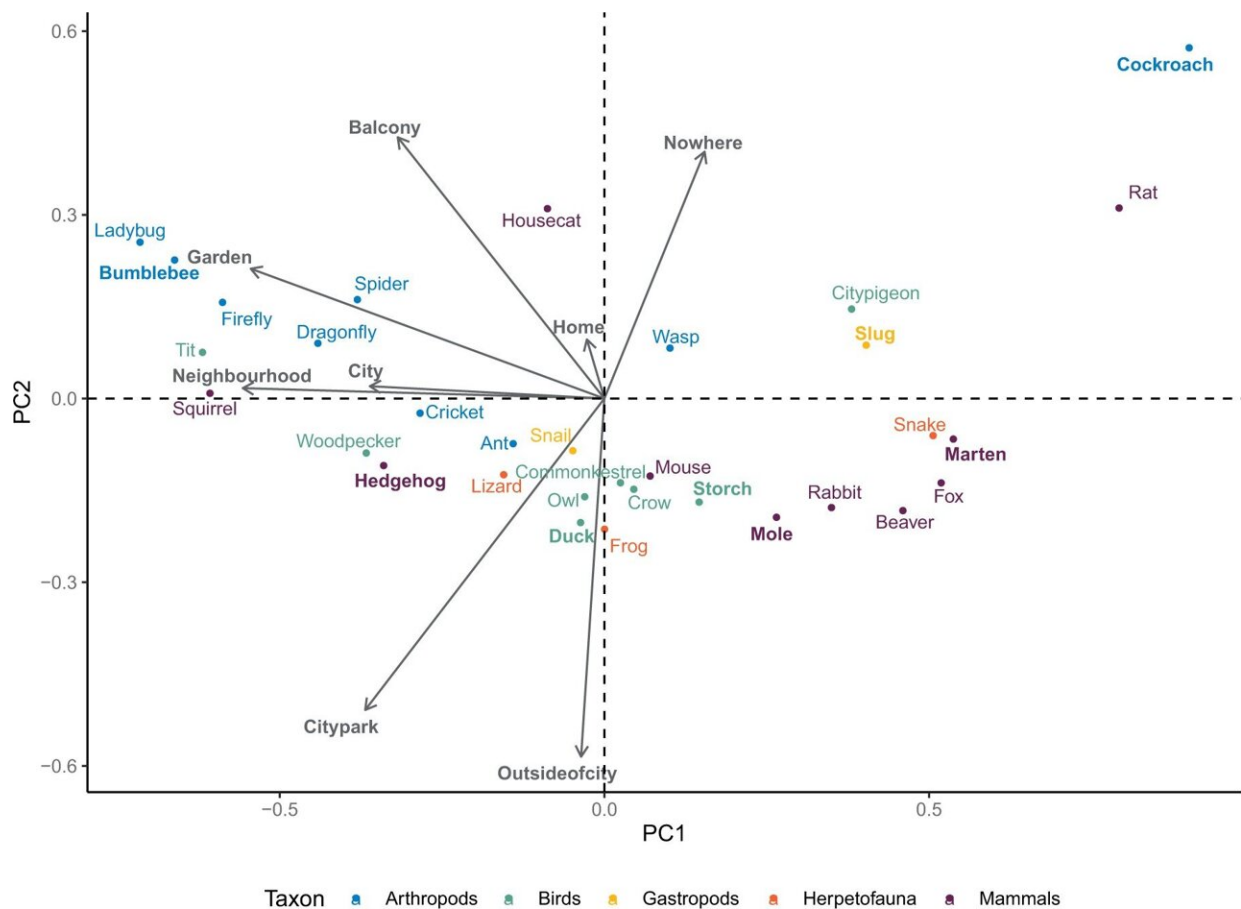


Researchers conduct survey on attitudes toward urban animals and where people want them to live

May 8 2024, by Magdalena Eisenmann



Principal component analysis (PCA) of the eight locations where the people of

Munich placed different animals in the questionnaire. Credit: *Journal of Urban Ecology* (2024). DOI: 10.1093/jue/juae006

How do city residents feel about animals in their immediate surroundings? A [recent study](#) published in the *Journal of Urban Ecology* by the Technical University of Munich (TUM), the University of Jena and the Vienna University of Technology shows how different the acceptance of various wild animals in urban areas is.

Important factors are the places where the animals are found and their level of popularity—squirrels and ladybugs come out on top here. The results have important implications for [urban planning](#) and nature conservation.

The relationship between city inhabitants and urban animals is complex, as the study shows. The researchers conducted a survey to find out how Munich residents rate 32 urban animal species and where in the city they would prefer to see them.

In general, respondents liked most of the animals—23 of the 32 [animal species](#) received positive approval ratings. The majority of birds and mammals were very popular. The respondents also rated arthropods, lizards and frogs positively. Exceptions were martens, rats, wasps, slugs and urban pigeons. Cockroaches were the least popular. Respondents had a neutral attitude toward ants, spiders and snakes.

Acceptance depends on the animal and its location

According to the survey, all animals have a place in the city—except for

the very few, very unpopular species. In the survey, city residents were able to choose from various locations in different proximity to their homes as to where the animals should be found. In most cases, participants placed the animals in urban areas such as their neighborhood, city parks, in the city in general and in the surrounding countryside.

In contrast, they rarely chose their immediate living environment, such as in the garden, on the balcony or in the apartment. Participants placed some animals, such as squirrels and ladybugs, in all or almost all locations. They placed many species in several locations, while three species were often not placed at all: Cockroaches, rats and slugs.

"It turns out that city residents' preferences for locations clearly correlate with their attitudes towards animals," explains researcher Dr. Fabio Sweet. The animals that were generally more popular were on average placed closer to home by the respondents.

Planning cities for people and animals

Prof. Wolfgang Weisser, head of the Chair of Terrestrial Ecology, emphasizes, "Increasing urbanization makes it necessary to actively care for animals in the city and to design urban development accordingly. If we know where people prefer or dislike certain animals, we can anticipate potential points of conflict. This allows us to identify places where species conservation in cities is accepted by people."

The results show, for example, that human–wildlife conflicts are unlikely in city parks because the animals are accepted by most people there. Animals are also tolerated in the wider residential environment. Conversely, [wildlife protection](#) in the immediate proximity of the living space, such as the balcony, could meet with resistance.

Measures to promote urban biodiversity are most successful when they are not only ecologically sensible but also socially acceptable. It is therefore necessary to combine knowledge about the way these animals live and people's acceptance of them. In this way, urban planning can simultaneously promote [animal welfare](#) in cities and avoid conflicts between humans and animals.

More information: Fabio S T Sweet et al, There is a place for every animal, but not in my back yard: a survey on attitudes towards urban animals and where people want them to live, *Journal of Urban Ecology* (2024). [DOI: 10.1093/jue/juae006](https://doi.org/10.1093/jue/juae006)

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