

## **Abstract**

During the entire course of evolution of our species have animals played an important role in human society and culture. They receive considerably more attention over other stimuli and the interest in animals is accompanied by both positive and negative emotions.

This work deals with human attitudes towards three classes of vertebrates – amphibians (Amphibia), mammals (Mammalia), and birds (Aves) – and aims to reveal morphological and other perceptual characteristics of these animals (colour, pattern) that are responsible for their ratings of attractiveness, and of fear and disgust induced, and to investigate the relationship of negative emotions and human aesthetic preferences.

The testing, undertaken by 536 respondents, revealed the general body shape has the most significant impact on the rating of attractiveness and disgust induced by amphibians. Mammals and birds were significantly influenced by their real body size that was impossible to completely filter out by standardising of the photographs. Colours were of merely marginal influence, saturation contributed to the positive rating, whereas dark and dull colours were rated rather negatively. Particular colours were specific for individual groups.

The relations between the examined quantities were not uniform among all the investigated groups of vertebrates, e.g. beauty did not correlate with fear among mammals, while among birds they were in negative relation. It was repeatedly proven, however, that people were the most willing to protect attractive species, while the least protection was offered to disgusting ones. Beauty and disgust correlated negatively with each other in all cases, though with varying intensity. A connection was also discovered between the results of psychological questionnaires (DS-R and SNAQ), and animal ratings.

**Keywords:** attitudes towards animals, human preferences, beauty, disgust, fear, ethnozoology