



Urban Fox Survey

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Introduction

The main aim of this project was to investigate the attitudes of residents in an urban area towards urban wildlife, in particular foxes, to see whether there was correlation between population density and a negative attitude towards urban foxes.

The opinions of residents were expected to vary from being very positive to very negative and possible influential factors, such as the media and personal experience, were considered to try and establish which had the largest effect in changing opinions.

Method

Door to Door surveys were conducted in a 4 km² area of Fenham, Newcastle Upon Tyne, an area that had had a low number of reported fox sightings during the Channel 4 programme, Foxes Live.

- Originally, every 10th homeowner was asked to answer questions for an in depth, survey concerning their opinions on urban foxes.
 - This was modified so everyone that answered the door was asked if they would complete this survey as this was the only way to try and ensure a reasonable response rate.

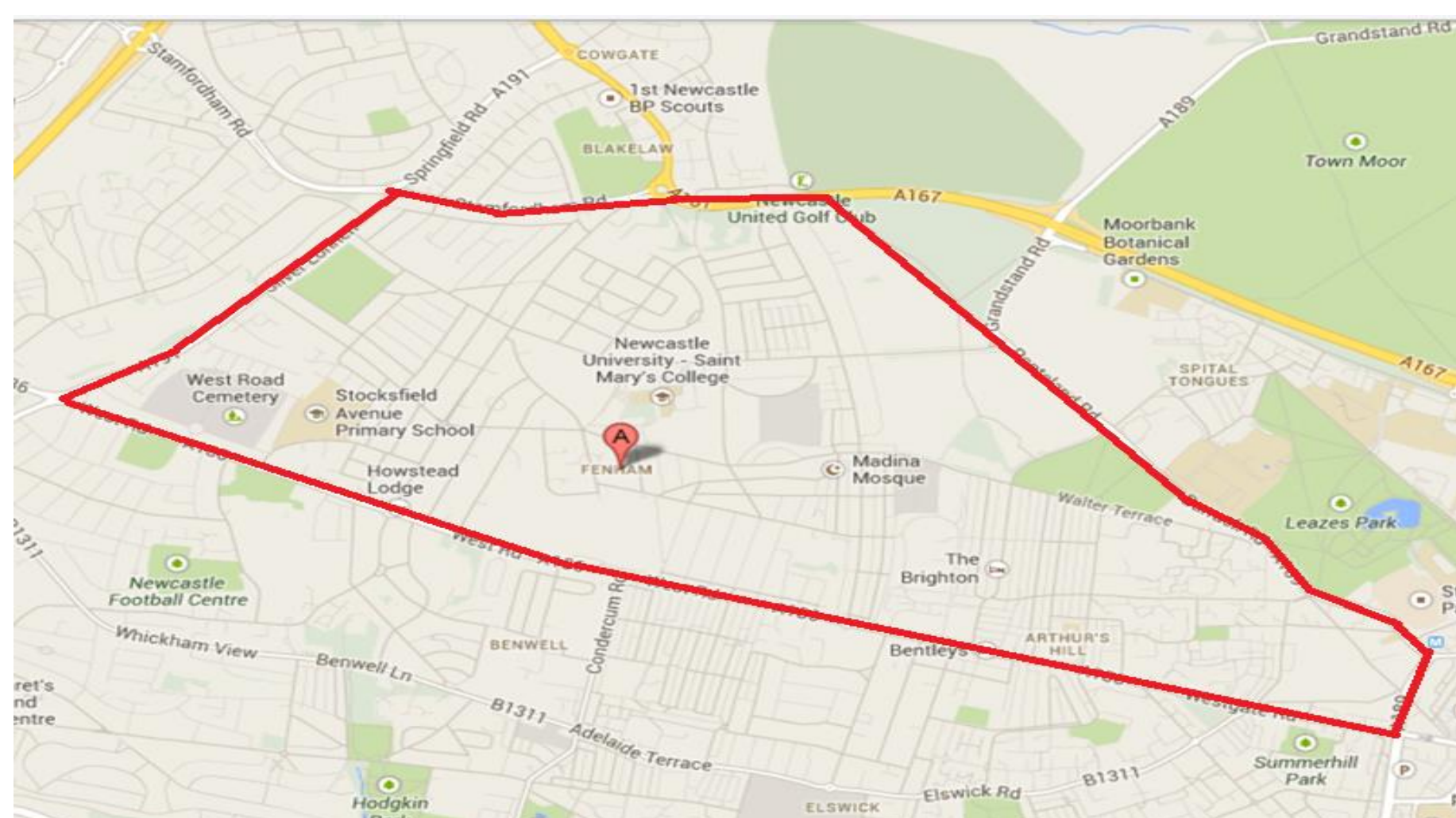


Fig 1 - A map showing where the surveys were conducted. Fenham is the area contained within the red boundaries.

Results

In total, there were 81 respondents for the survey.

- 8 people's opinions of Urban foxes have become more negative over time (9.87%)
- 68 people's opinions of Urban foxes have remained the same (83.95%)
- 5 people's opinions of Urban foxes have become more positive over time (6.18%)
- Most people were secure in their opinions but information from personal sources had the most influence – 61.2%
- The results showed that the opinion of experts would have the least influence on the opinions of the participants as only 14.1% of participants ranked this as being the most influential.
- Generalised Linear Model showed that:
 - Males had a lower opinion of foxes than females
 - Younger residents were more negative about urban foxes than older residents
 - Pet owners had a more negative opinion of foxes than non pet owners
 - There was a positive correlation between Population Density and negative opinions of Foxes.

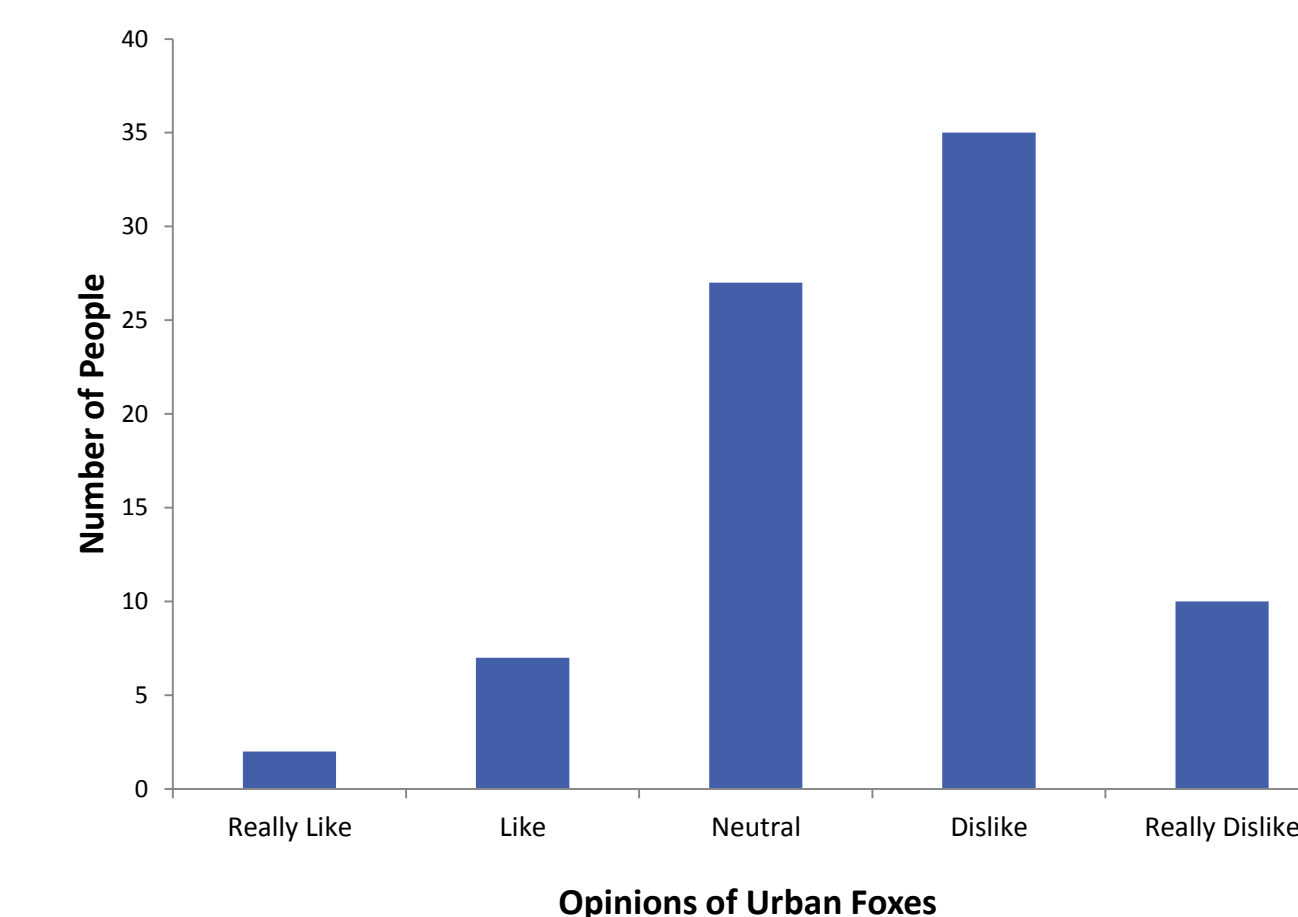


Fig 2 – Opinions of residents towards Urban Foxes

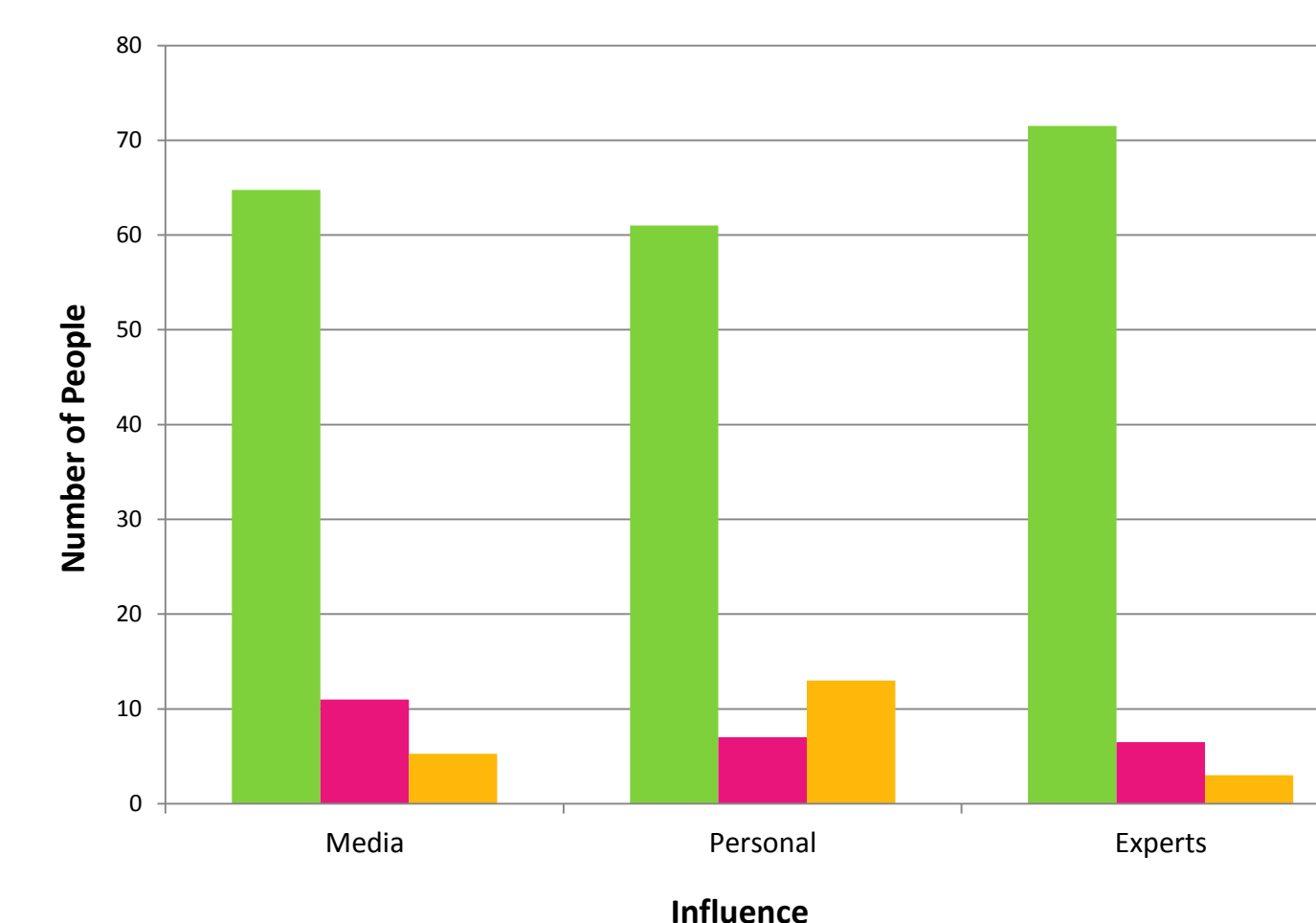


Fig 3 – Factors that were predicted to have the most influence over people's opinions of Urban foxes. There are three bars for each influential factor, with each bar representing how strongly participants felt they have been affected. The first bars (green) being the lowest influence and the third bars (orange) being the highest influence.

Discussion

- Some residents said that they regarded foxes as being dangerous and were scared of them after hearing about foxes entering homes and attacking children.
 - Statements such as this indicate that there should be further education on urban wildlife so people know that foxes, and other animals, are unlikely to cause them any harm. In reality only 1-2 incidences of attacks in the past few years on humans compared to over 6000 admissions to hospital every year for dog bites
- The media, which has been shown to have the most influence on opinions, should also be encouraged not to sensationalise when reporting on fox attacks as they are rare and, in many cases, preventable.