


BSc thesis M.H. Nguyen (applied biology)- *"Opinions on wildcrafting"*
Afstudeerwerkstuk: **"Visies op het wildplukken"**

Een verkennend onderzoek naar de ervaringen, visies en kennisbehoeften van wildplukkers en natuurbeheerders



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Datum: 17 Augustus 2015, Beek

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"Opinions on wildcrafting"

An inventory of experiences, opinions and knowledge gaps; target group both wild crafters and nature conserve institutions

Abstract

Although the traditional use of wild edible plants disappeared in the Dutch culture early 20th century, the practice of collecting and eating wild edible plants is resurgent among the Dutch people today. In public media [newspapers, magazines and radio] wildcrafting for food seems to be praised enthusiastically.

With its increase in popularity, the phenomenon also attracts people whom are against these collecting practices. According to some nature conservators from the KNNV and other specialists, many are overlooking the damage and exploitation impacts wildcrafting can cause upon the Dutch biodiversity and natural environment.

The present study sought to examine what advantages and disadvantages (or eventually risks) the wildcrafters and nature conservators see in the increase in popularity of wild crafting. Field research consisting of on line polls and semi-structured interviews were carried out to identify how both groups experience wildcrafting and what their visions and knowledge gaps are regarding the practice.

A first impression regarding the differences in opinion and viewpoint was obtained with the poll in which 74 respondents through social media and 11 interviewee participated. With pie charts, interesting differences in perspectives were discovered and put into perspective.

A total of seven wild crafters and five nature conservators were interviewed to document knowledge associated with the hype. The interviews revealed that small scale collecting practices is not seen as a threat by both groups in addition to crafting on a large-scale bases/ for commercial purposes. Both groups see this as a big threat. Although crafting practices can cause (severe) damage to the natural environment, the crafters argue that the benefits of collecting plants outweigh the threats. Wildcrafting contributes to more interest in nature. The conservators, on the other hand, have their doubts regarding this issue. The increase in activity may indeed contribute to more interest in nature, but will also increase the chances and make it more likely that more damage will be caused upon the natural environment and that species could disappear.

All in all, this study sought to identify the visions on wild crafting in the Netherlands. From both sides a lot of interest was shown for this study. To avoid a rising conflict between the crafters and conservators, it is recommended to form strategic alliances between the two groups and/or similar groups (such as the Herboristengilde and EHGA) that already have expertise and guidelines for wildcrafting. Further research is also needed. Therefore, it is also recommended to conduct a pilot study regarding the impacts of wild crafting on the species composition. The pilot study could provide rational arguments for the above-explained discussion.