

# Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

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# Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter

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Winter 2003

This issue begins *EAP*'s 14<sup>th</sup> year. We thank the 56 readers who have renewed and include a reminder for those who have not yet replied.

The essays in this issue focus on animals, particularly the question of how we human beings might better come to understand and respect their lives, experiences, and worlds.

"We need," writes naturalist Charles Bergman in his opening essay, "an ethos more favorable to animals, more open to the creature as a living presence." Critical of the reductive interpretations of animals both in the natural sciences and the humanities, he points out that, in startling contrast, the general public calls out for an understanding of animals that accepts and explores the *full lived reality* of their experiences and lifeworlds.

Next, writer Micah Issitt considers his field and zoo experiences of two Costa Rican birds—black vultures and tawny-capped euphonias. The zoo birds, he suggests, are not themselves in the sense that they have been removed from the contexts of their original worlds: they are "in the process of becoming a photograph, or a drawing of the animal it once was." How, asks Issitt, might we renew for the animal "the response of the world"?

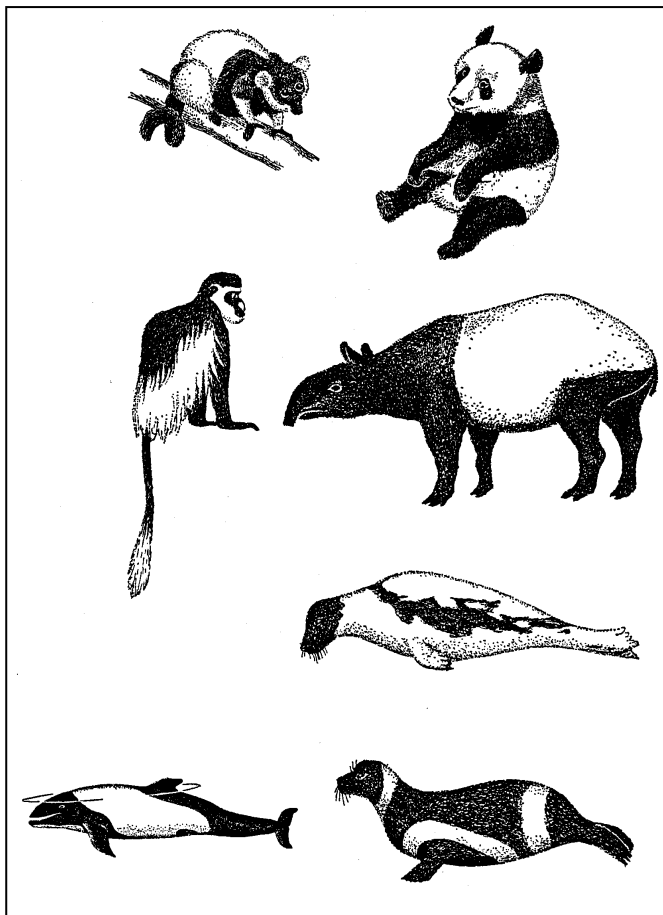
In his essay on North American grizzly bears, wildlife researcher Leon Chartrand argues that, too often today, we appreciate these amazing creatures only for their economic value in promoting wilderness tourism. He asks if we can somehow move beyond the grizzly's instrumental and intrinsic value to discover the bear's deeper significance—"a unique manifestation of the numinous presence that pervades all life."

From the start, we *EAP* editors have promoted the value of Goethean science as one pathway toward a phenomenology of nature. Since the 1970s, there has been important Goethean research on animals, and editor David Seamon highlights this work in a brief review that lays out some important starting points for readers who might wish to pursue the topic further.

We end with an insightful story by writer Laura Greenspan. Her account of fox and peacock crystallizes an increasingly difficult question: How, today, can we human beings again find a way to share the Earth with our fellow non-human creatures?

*Below, from W. Schad's seminal Goethean study of animals. The drawing depicts mammals in which large areas of black and white alternate. From top down, left, ruffed lemur of Madagascar and guereza of East Africa (1/17x); right, panda from China, Malayan tapir, Arctic harp seal, Arctic ribbon seal; left, Cape Horn Commerson dolphin (1/25x).*

*One Goethean question is whether this similarity in marking among such an unusual range of mammals points to other shared qualities, which for Schad center partly on metabolic characteristics. For example, the panda, though classified as a carnivore, is strictly herbacious as are the ruffed lemur and guereza, both primates (Schad, 1977, p.194).*



## DONORS, 2003

We would like to thank readers who have contributed more than the base subscription for 2003. Again this year readers have been most generous, and we are grateful.

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## ITEMS OF INTEREST

In keeping with this issue's focus on animals, we want to highlight again the remarkable work of **Interspecies Communication**, which "mixes art with activism in the cause of re-invigorating the human species' emotional, spiritual, and cultural ties with nature." Under the dynamic leadership of Jim Nollman, this group has made major efforts to communicate musically with whales and dolphins and to find creative ways to help these extraordinary creatures survive. Very important work for attempting to find ways to understand and make contact with nonhuman lifeworlds. IC, 301 Hidden Meadow Lane, Friday Harbor, WA 98250 [www.interspecies.com](http://www.interspecies.com).

*Ethics and the Environment*, published twice a year by Indiana University Press, is "an interdisciplinary forum for theoretical and practical articles, discussions, reviews, and book reviews in the broad area encompassed by environmental ethics." IUP, 601 North Morton Street, Bloomington, IN 47404; [www.iupress.indiana.edu](http://www.iupress.indiana.edu).

The **Earth Literacy Web** seeks to "support, link up, and assist in the self-education of the growing community of people seeking to create a benign hu-

man presence on planet Earth." 111 Fairmount Ave., Oakland, CA 94611; [www.spiritualecology.org](http://www.spiritualecology.org).

The 14<sup>th</sup> annual **Environmental Writing Institute** will be held 27 May—1 June 2003, at the Teller Wildlife Refuge in Montana's Bitterroot valley. Activities include workshops and personal writing consultations with environmental writer John Elder. [www.umt.edu/ewi](http://www.umt.edu/ewi); 406-243-2904.

The **International Symposium on Acoustic Ecology** will be held 19-23 March 2003, in Melbourne, Australia. Invited speakers include soundscape notables R. Murray Schafer and Hildegard Westerkamp. Interested parties are invited to present research, artwork, or projects in their field of expertise. R. Alsop, Victorian College of the Arts, Production Centre, 234 St. Kilda Rd., Melbourne 3004, Victoria, Australia; [www.afe.org.au](http://www.afe.org.au).

## CITATIONS RECEIVED

Edward S. Casey, 2001. "Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean in the Place-World?" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 91 (4): 683-93 plus responses.

This philosopher examines "the nature of the human subject who is oriented and situated in place." His essay is the centerpiece for a series of responses by geographers Terence Young ("Place Matters"), J. Nicholas Entrikin ("Hiding Places"), and Barbara Hooper ("Desiring Presence, Romancing the Real"); and philosopher Theodore R. Schatzki ("Subject, Body, Place"). Casey then provides a response ("On Habitus and Place: Responding to my Critics"), which includes a counter to unsympathetic poststructural criticism of the place concept.

Mark, Francis, 2002. How Cities Use Parks for Community Engagement. Briefing paper, American Planning Assoc., Chicago; [www.planning.org/cpf](http://www.planning.org/cpf)

This paper argues that "by understanding the community benefits of parks, decision makers can develop constituencies that can sustain their urban park systems over time."

Mark Francis & Ray Lorenzo, 2002. Seven Realms of Children's Participation, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 22: 157-169.

This article presents a historical and critical review of children's participation in city planning and design, and identifies

seven approaches: advocacy, romantic, needs, learning, rights, institutionalization, and proactive.

Max Jacobson, Murray Silverstein, & Barbara Winslow, 2002. *Patterns of Home: The Ten Essentials of Enduring Design*. Taunton, CT: Taunton.

An effort to identify the built qualities of several contemporary houses that evoke a powerful sense of at-homeness and place: "A home that is well-related to its site, that makes its outdoors into wonderful rooms, will no doubt also be good at capturing light, will create lively spaces in the "seam" between indoors and out, and so on."

Michael Kazanjian, 2002. *Learning Values Lifelong*. NY: Value Inquiry Books.

This philosopher argues that "lifelong learning teaches values and wholeness and rejects inert ideas and fragmentation. Education plays a vital role in reorganizing and revitalizing the abundant facts from the information explosion. Specialization works at cross-purposes with liberal arts education, which discloses a holistic vision of each person's being."

Stephanie A. Watson & Jane K. Kucko, 2001. Thorncrown and the Mildred B. Cooper Chapels: Sacred Structures Designed by Faye Jones, *Journal of Interior Design*, 27 (2): 14-25.

These interior designers examine these two Arkansas chapels' powerful sense of holiness through number symbolism, natural rhythms, patterns, materials, and the relationship of architecture and the cosmos: "Both chapels represent a quiet celebration of the American belief in the sacredness and ultimate worth of each individual."

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Phycologist and medical herbalist **Ryan Drum** sends word of a new book, *Planting for the Future: Saving Our Medicinal Future* (edited by R. Gladstar and P. Hirsch) to which he has contributed two chapters—one on Oregon grape, the other on seaweeds. For more information, go to [www.partnereartheducationcenter.com](http://www.partnereartheducationcenter.com).

**Heather Thoma** and **Paul Salanki** live in upstate New York. Heather is interested in collaborative landscape study involving Goethean science and integrating artistic and scientific practices: "I am excitedly learning more about what dancers, actors, movement practitioners can share about perception

in natural as well as built environment!" Paul is interested in the interface between peoples' understanding of nature, ecology and life and the design and building of structures incorporating context-sensitive factors, application of local knowledge, and implementing local/community-based/user group involvement in conceptualization, design, and construction." 343 Rt. 21C, Ghent, NY 12075.

Chicagoan decorative-tile craftsman **Ted Lowitz** sends word of his new bronze tiles, which are cast in solid bronze techniques that originated 5,000 years ago. Two types are offered: traditional bronze, the type most often used for casting fine sculpture; and white bronze, which contains nickel and has a lighter, cooler tone. Loritz's aim is to "design tiles that are timeless and lasting—tiles that will be as appealing in 100 years as they are today." [www.beautiful.tile.com](http://www.beautiful.tile.com).

## OBITUARY

**Mike Brill**, architect and professor of design at the State University of New York at Buffalo, died unexpectedly Friday, 26 July 2002, in Buffalo General Hospital. He was president of BOSTI—Buffalo Organization for Social and Technological Innovation Associates, an architectural firm that does research-based analysis and design innovation to better serve people's needs.

Brill was a major figure in environment-behavior research and played an instrumental role in the continuing success of EDRA—the Environmental Design Research Association. He was a powerful advocate of place research and emphasized in his writings the presence of Jung-like "environmental archetypes" that he believed played a central role in human well being.

From the start, Brill was a staunch supporter of *EAP* and regularly offered encouragement when we felt our message wasn't being heard. We published his "Architecture of Peril: Design for a Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, Carlsbad, New Mexico" in the fall 1993 issue of *EAP*.

The Department of Architecture at Buffalo has established the Michael Brill Fund to keep his legacy and scholarly pursuits alive. [www.ap.buffalo.edu/architecture/people/brill\\_index.htm](http://www.ap.buffalo.edu/architecture/people/brill_index.htm).

## **Academic Animals: Making Nonhuman Creatures Matter in Universities**

Charles Bergman

*Charles Bergman is a professor at Pacific Lutheran University and writes about natural history and environmental literature. His books include Wild Echoes: Encounters with the Most Endangered Animals in North America (McGraw Hill, 1990), and Orion's Legacy: A Cultural History of Man as Hunter (Dutton, 1996). This essay originally appeared in the winter 2002 issue of Isle, and we thank the editors and Bergman for permission to include the essay here. © 2002 Charles Bergman.*

For two weeks on March 2000, in the vast jungle along Mexico's southern border with Belize, I joined a team of biologists and hounds in chasing and capturing a wild jaguar. I was in Mexico as a Fulbright Scholar. It took us nearly two weeks of hard work and unflagging persistence to locate, track, and finally tree this jaguar in the Biosphere Reserve of Calakmul.

Beyond the exhilaration of seeing a wild jaguar, a particular gesture made by all of us toward the jaguar grabbed my imagination. It happened while the biologists worked with the tranquilized cat, after it had been lowered to the ground. With the animal asleep, these professionals swung into efficient action, weighing it, measuring it, taking samples of blood and fur and parasites. Then they fitted the jaguar with a radio collar, which was the main purpose in capturing the animal.

One of the most beautiful animals in the world, the jaguar is the third largest of all the cats, behind only the tiger and the lion. Endangered throughout its range in Latin America, the jaguar remains the least studied cat. Using radio collars, biologists can study—and work to save—this elusive animal, using the signals from the transmitter to gather data on range, habitat needs, and behavior.

As we worked, each of us stopped what we were doing, in our own time and way, to reach out and touch the sleeping jaguar. It was a simple and reverent gesture of contact, feeling the animal's powerfully muscled body, stroking his magnificent rosette-spotted fur. The jaguar was a powerful, living presence.

For over twenty years, I have written about wildlife professionally in books and national magazines. I have been privileged to study some of the

world's most wonderful wild creatures. Yet touching this jaguar was the experience of a lifetime.

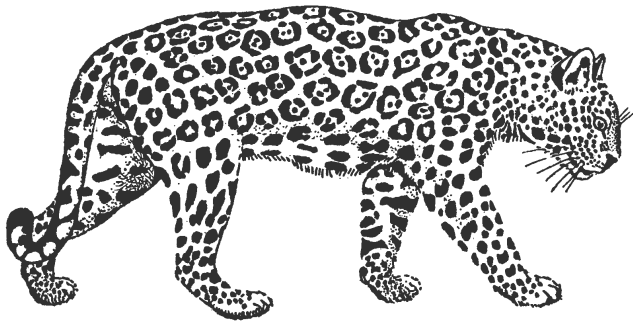
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Since returning to the United States, I often find myself evoking this deeply satisfying moment, when the value of like was contained in a touch. And I find myself wondering what happens to this sense of the presence of animals, this moment of contact with other creatures, inside the academy. The touching of the jaguar in the Mexican jungle dramatizes for me the absence of the animal as an animal in our universities. Despite important pockets of interest, I am struck by the general lack of concern for animals in universities. It seems to me that nonhuman animals have not fared well in American higher education.

When I refer to academic animals, I am not referring directly to animal experimentation in universities, though this is a related issue. Rather, I refer to the ways academics are likely to conceptualize nonhuman animals—the animals we construct—the animal as it appears in our various discourses. There are various versions of the academic animal, but these abstract versions of the animal are I believe major barriers in our abilities to understand animals more fully and realize more clearly our obligations to the other creatures with whom we share this wonderful life.

It should be clear that the animal movement has penetrated much more deeply into the popular imagination than it has into the academic mind. I say this as a person who writes extensively on wild animals for national magazines. Indeed, I've written an article about my encounter with the jaguar in the October 2000 issue of *Smithsonian*.

The wonders of animal life are on 24-hour display on cable TV's Animal Planet, as well as the numerous programs on the Discovery Channel and the "Nature" documentaries. Perhaps more telling, since they relate directly to the public's fascination with questions about animal minds, is the number of cover stories run in the 1990s by such magazines as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report* on the advances in our understanding of animals' use of language and their mental abilities.



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As a society we face important questions about how we can make sense out of animals as autonomous living creatures, as well as our ethical relations with them. There are major intellectual challenges, but that does not make the task any less important. Yet inside the academy the resistance to taking animals seriously is pervasive and not always subtle. To study nonhuman animals in ways that try to accord them value and dignity is still likely to strike most academics as quaintly marginal—an easily dismissed sentimentality.

Shortly after returning from Mexico, for example, I participated in a conference on animals and representation. Attended mostly by professors in the humanities and in cultural studies, the conference drove home to me the difference between my experience of touching the jaguar in the jungle and the way animals are processed in the academy.

Perhaps it should come as no surprise, but I was still disturbed by the ways in which most of the speakers were willing, almost glibly, to dismiss the animal as animal. Some of the people attending the conference cared about creatures, but for the most part the conference abandoned the animals—talking about what animal representations mean to us, and

almost nothing about how our representations affect the animals or the ethical issues involved in representation.

The creatures themselves vanished under a somewhat strange amalgam of attitudes ranging from post-structural skepticism to more traditional concerns with human superiority, anthropomorphism, and anti-sentimentality. The actual animal seemed almost an embarrassment, a disturbance to the symbolic field. Highly *literate* people went almost systematically about *obliterating* the actual animal.

As part of the conference, for example, Jan Goodall was a featured speaker. She spoke not just to the conference participants, but at an open event that produced a huge local crowd, drawn by her commitment to and knowledge of chimpanzees and animals. Anyone who has seen her speak knows that it's something of a cultural phenomenon.

Afterwards, however, many at the conference dismissed her 40 years of work as sentimental and not scientifically rigorous. Something about her emotional and moral commitment to animals was, I believe, uncomfortable for many. Yet she spoke directly to a huge hunger in the general population for knowledge and a deeper understanding about animals. This is directly akin, I believe, to the desire we all felt in the Mexican jungle to touch the jaguar.

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In academic discourses we continue to have trouble speaking about animals in ways that are not dismissive or reductive. For many scientists, the danger is to treat them as Cartesian automatons, not autonomous creatures. Their behaviors are explained by instincts, stimulus-response mechanisms, or genetic programming. For humanists, the tendency is to treat animals as little more than allegories of human fear and desire. Or the animal is given up as radically unknowable beneath human representation. Animals in the humanities? It seems almost an oxymoron.

Alienating animals from their own lives is a danger in wildlife biology as well, where researchers often must separate their personal from their professional responses to the creatures they study so intimately. The jaguar we fitted with the radio collar will disappear in the biological studies produced

from the research. With the data from several colored jaguars, a statistical composite of the jaguar in the area—the jaguar as species—will be constructed. Important information, to be sure. Yet as one researcher told me, studying another tropical species, the composite portrait describes the creature as type, “a platonic animal,” to use her words. Because it portrays a statistically typical animal, it really is a picture of no actual animal.

It's not that these views are wrong, despite a lot of mutual suspiciousness. It's that they each treat animals as though they have no lives of their own. They are treated as if they live somehow outside their own lives, moved by forces over which they have no control, forces that are somehow not them. Denied mind and subjectivity and agency, they are living robots. Their lives are wholly contingent. In what ways can we begin to represent animals that responsibly place them inside their own lives?

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Our obligation to the other creatures on this planet is one of the great ethical questions of our times. Yet the prejudice against animals—“speciesism,” as it's been called—slows our progress in sorting out these ethical issues. Compare the progress made recently with other major ethical and social issues. In his now-famous book, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (New York Review Books, 1990), Peter Singer gave a new academic respectability to animal issues and stimulated a renewed vigor in social-action campaigns on behalf of animals. He also explicitly linked animals with other social liberation movements.

These other movements are now well established in universities with vigorous multi-disciplinary programs in gender studies, ethnic studies, and so forth. Not so animals. As far as I know, there is no “animal studies program” in any American university. In fact, the phrase “animals studies” does not even exist except as I am here using informally.

Even making the comparison between animals and historically oppressed people is much more likely to offend the people involved than ennoble the cause of animals. This even though many feminists like Carol J. Adams in *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (Duke

Univ. Press, 1999), have argued animals and women have both been constructed as “others,” resulting in similar forms of oppression and exploitation for both. Aristotle in his *Politics* likened the human superiority over animals to the rule of the soul over the body, men over women, and even masters over slaves.

Yet while we would not now condone language that makes women, say, symbols of the “passions” or makes Native Americans symbols of, say, “primitiveness,” it is still common to find academics using startling clichés and stereotypes in speaking about animals. Like Shakespeare's Caliban, animals are still too widely described as grossly mindless, stubbornly inferior, “this thing of darkness.”

Such attitudes are increasingly anachronistic. I do not mean to suggest that animal studies are commensurate with studies of women's issues or issues in other human groups. Understanding animals presents its own unique challenges: animals leave no text, at least directly and do not speak for themselves. Additionally, there is the tangled issue of anthropomorphism. Nevertheless, compelling research on animals in recent decades has dramatically changed our image of animal consciousness and our understanding of our relationships with animals.

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We are experiencing an exciting new wave of interest in animals. Animals are moving out of biology and zoology departments and into fields once way out of bounds for them. The conference I referred to earlier, for example, was one of four major international and multi-disciplinary conferences to be held on animal's issues in the last two years. Also encouraging, the Conference of the Modern Language Association has in the last two years sponsored three panels on animals which might be describe as “pro-animal,” that is, which move beyond studies of animal imagery in, say, Shakespeare or *Moby-Dick*.

Such conferences are made possible by a wealth of new research on animals in a wide range of fields. For some time, the conversation about human-animal relations has been largely dominated by terms derived from philosophical ethics. Other fields are now adding to the conversation in ways

that many expand our possibilities for understanding this important dimension of human life.

Consider for example just a few of the titles to have appeared in the last few years, selected to give a sense of disciplinary and theoretical range: Keith Thomas' *Man and the Natural World* (Random House, 1983); E.O. Wilson's *Biophilia* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1984); Harriet Ritvo's *The Animal Estate* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987); Andrew Linzey's *Animal Theology* (Univ. of Illinois Press, 1994); Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan's *Animals and Women* (Duke Univ. Press, 1995); J. M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1999); Eileen Crist's *Images of Animals* (Temple Univ. Press, 1999); Steven M. Wise's *Rattling the Cage* (Perseus Books, 2000); and Steve Baker's *The Postmodern Animal* (Reaktion Books, 2000).

One hopes that this interest in animals is more than a passing academic fashion. My own belief is that this new interest is fueled in large part by the broader social concerns for the fates of animals, whether wild animals increasingly facing extinction and endangerment, or captive animals increasingly facing all manner of abuses. Another important sign that this interest reflects a deep shift is that our understanding of animals and their mental abilities has been changing in recent years. Wildlife and conservation biology has given us a much greater appreciation for the wonders of animals and their complex behaviors. Also, the new field of cognitive ethology, which studies animal mentality as a kind of behavior, is changing our view of the animal mind. While it is a field with many challenges and controversies, we seem to be in the process of an almost revolutionary advance in our understanding of animal intelligence.

A good overview to this field can be found in Colin Allen and Marc Bekoff's *Species of Mind: The Philosophy and Biology of Cognitive Ethology* (MIT Press, 1997). Donald Griffin especially stimulated the emergence of the field in such books as *Animal Minds* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992), argu-

ing that the way to understand animal intelligence was to look not at the stereotypical behaviors of species. Rather, the flexibility, variability, and purposive-ness of the individual animal offer insight into animal intelligence. He and other early researchers stressed evolutionary continuity in the emergence of human intelligence. Increasingly, researchers are focusing on understanding animal minds and thought as distinct from human thought.

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The boundaries between animals and human beings are changing. The frontier is porous and the implications for our relationships with animals are great. There is much in the academy we can do on behalf of animals. I hope this new interest in animals studies reflects a concern for the lives of real animals. We need a change in our attitudes toward animals, so that they are not so easily dismissed and forgotten, even as we speak and write about them. Animals are no only texts that we produce. We need an ethos more favorable to animals, more open to the creature as a living presence.

That means more multi-disciplinary study to help us overcome the limitations of perspective in our individual disciplines. It also means more conferences, more panels, more publications, and more courses in universities. I would urge anyone interested in animal issues to read widely (and wildly?) about animals, ranging beyond the confines of particular disciplines. It's harder to treat a whale as only a linguistic artifact, a symbol, when you learn about discoveries in its mental abilities, for example. It's harder to treat an animal as a genetic program after savoring the presence of animals in W. S. Merwin's poems.

Most important, I would urge us to pay greater heed to the animals themselves. After the grueling challenges of chasing the jaguar in the rainforest of Mexico—and touching it—one comes away with an increased respect for the animal's intelligence and value. We need to care as much for the worlds of being as we do for the worlds of meaning.



## The Caged Bird's Song

Micah L. Issitt

*As we reported in the last EAP, Issitt is a philosophy and biology major at the University of Missouri in St. Louis. He is interested in phenomenological approaches to nature and environmental issues, particularly Goethean science. [Micah.issitt@mobot.org](mailto:micah.issitt@mobot.org). © 2003 Micah L. Issitt.*

When I was a child, I loved to go to the zoo. It was my only chance to see the strange, exotic animals that I read about in books and watched on TV.

The animals in the zoo seemed so majestic. I remember the hooded vultures staring at me with pitch-black obelisk eyes that reflected my image back to me as the bird hooded its wings over its head. I also remember the pair of tawny-capped euphonias, singing sweetly from the perches of their little corner cage in the birdhouse.

As I got older I came in contact with the idea that caging animals might be ethically or morally wrong, but by the time I heard these objections I had already become a biology student, and the American scientific community had shaped my way of thinking.

Scientists claim that zoos are a necessary part of the conservation effort for several reasons. First, zoos serve to educate the public and thereby engender interest in the preservation and conservation of animals. Second, zoos allow scientists to perform delicate experiments, including studying how certain animals breed. Many scientists hope that learning how endangered species reproduce will allow them to help these species increase their numbers in the wild.

Some zoo officials also argue that the similarity of exhibit animals' behavior to the behavior of free-living animals indicates that these animals are content with their living situation. Scientists argue that animals wouldn't breed in captivity unless they were relatively "happy" with their room and board.

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For most of my life, I have been content to believe the contentions of the scientific community. After all, how could I possibly know how an animal feels about its situation in life, or if it feels at all?

This situation changed for me when I started learning about Goethe's organic phenomenology. As

I understand it, phenomenology represents the other side of the observational coin.

Modern science, sometimes called "positivist science" teaches us to distrust our senses, instincts, and intuition. Positivist philosophy believes that our senses are only capable of glimpsing the shadows of reality, because reality is hidden in the microscopic physical particles that make up all matter in the universe. Scientific "truth" is found by using our intellects to create quantifiable abstractions of the phenomena we observe. These abstractions are tested and retested in an attempt to avoid the illusory quality of our natural perception.

When scientists apply this philosophy to animal behavior the result is a set of abstractions that deal with unconscious motivations and evolutionary strategies. Scientists ignore or resist paying attention to behavior that cannot be quantified or abstracted from the scientist's direct observations.

By sharp contrast, phenomenology is the method of investigation that inserts the observer directly into the flow of his or her perceptions. In phenomenology, everything that we are capable of perceiving is language. Each detail that appears to our senses has meaning inherent in its form. Phenomenology seeks to become more attendant to these varied forms and to intuit communicative meaning from our perceptions.

Phenomenology does not dismiss or ignore any part of our perceptual experience, and so it allows us to recognize things that are invisible to the standard positivist style of investigation.

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So far, I have not encountered any phenomenologists who study animal behavior directly. Nevertheless, the phenomenological method has encouraged me to attempt 'observing' without letting my preconceptions control my experience. As far as observing animal behavior goes, I imagine this means

resisting the urge to classify behaviors in the usual positivistic sense—that is, as a set of evolutionary, or economic, cost and benefit strategies.

Before I begin my animal observations I try to clear my mind of any preconceptions I may be harboring. I begin with a short meditation, concentrating on the surrounding stimuli without thinking about them, just focusing on the flavor of the wind and the smell of the surrounding air. After this I engage my subject animals.

As animals come into my field of experience, whether through their sound, smell, or sight, I attempt to apply the same principles to this contact, allowing the experience to flow through me and fill me without dissecting it through my intellect.

Just after I started reading about phenomenology, I took a summer trip to Costa Rica. In fact, I was carrying a copy of Merleau-Ponty's *Sense and Perception* (Northwestern Univ. Press, 1964) as I trudged through the forests surrounding Monte Verde. One day coming around a corner on a mountain road, my friend and I came upon a group of about 40 black vultures surrounding the carcass of a dog. We stopped for an hour or so to observe the flock as they squawked and hopped about the carcass, hooding their wings above their heads.

As I observed, I attempted to allow the experience to soak into my mind, or in some ways to wash over me in a kind of wave. I did not try to hide from the vultures as another scientist might have done. I wanted them to notice my presence, so that I was a part of their experience, just as they were a part of mine.

A couple of days later while walking in the forest, I came upon a small bird flitting around the canopy and whistling a shrill symphony of notes. As soon as I saw the bird, I recognized it as a tawny-capped euphonia. Again I paused in the forest, among the giant buttressed trees, to listen to the euphonia's song and to follow it as it darted from branch to branch. Each time the tiny bird alighted on a branch it would whistle a few short notes before taking off again.

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During my Costa Rican encounters, it was difficult to avoid thinking about the possible evolutionary mechanisms that my education had instilled in me.

It took a substantial effort to clear these tendencies from my mind and to allow the experiences to exist for their own sake. All through my trip, I was attempting to resurrect my perceptions in my mind, and to imagine every detail that I could remember. This "experiment" proved quite challenging due to the extreme brevity of the encounters, and it wasn't until I arrived home that my observations began to crystallize in my imagination.

About a month after I returned home, I took a trip to the zoo. While walking through the bird house I came to the cage that housed the zoo's pair of tawny-capped euphonias. When I applied my phenomenological method to the zoo's euphonies, I was shocked at the immediate differences that stood out in my mind, even though I was not consciously attempting to compare. Further down the road I encountered the vultures. I feel I received a fundamentally different communication from the captive vultures than what I had with the flock in Costa Rica.

Following my zoo visit, I spent time allowing my experience to exist in my imagination. As I laid in bed preparing for sleep, I would try to picture the animals at the zoo and the structure of the zoo's cages. I would then imagine the vultures and the euphonies, switching back and forth between the ones at the zoo and the ones in Costa Rica. As the imagery lived inside me, I began to notice differences in the flavors of the experiences.

Trusting in my observations and in the communication that these organisms imparted to me, I have come to understand that the organisms I observed in the zoo are not the same type of organisms that I observed in Costa Rica. That peculiar historical entity that we call "species" does not equally apply to these two instances of life.

I believe that my bifurcated experience illustrates the nature of captivity and the effect of captive life on animal existence. I was suddenly able to see how the zoo functions as a further separation of our lives from the larger lifeworld that surrounds us.

Zoo supporters would have us believe that zoos bring the public in contact with animal life and help to engender understanding for the plight of declining animal populations. I am not inclined to accept this convenient explanation.

Through my study of phenomenology, I have come to understand how Western thought has

followed a tradition of separation. At least since early Greek philosophy, there has been a tendency to set the human animal apart from the surrounding lifeworld. Socrates, one of the most respected thinkers in the entirety of the western tradition, was quoted as saying, "I am a lover of learning, and trees and open country won't teach me anything, whereas men in the town will." This is a striking example of early Western society turning away from the influence of nature and increasingly believing that everything of value is found within human culture.

So what is a zoo, with its winding pathways, imitation trees, and carefully partitioned "habitats?" After my experiment, I am filled with the feeling that a zoo's main function is to increase this feeling of special domain for humanity. First, we separate ourselves from nature in the way that we think, and then in the way that we live, and now finally we bring "nature" back into our lives by translating it into our vision. In the zoo's carefully controlled environments, we see the illusion of nature's variety, geometrically divided into the Western, human, vision of the world.

In our conceptual view of nature, we divide each animal from the larger world, classifying them as "things." In so doing, we are attempting to make an object out of a process. Within its environment, each animal represents a node of a dynamic fabric that is continuous with its surroundings. The separation is created by the idea that the animal can, in theory, be separated, as if it were pulled from the backdrop and set against a blank white page.

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It is true that my understanding is borne from a very limited number of observations. Perhaps it is true that I could not qualify the varied ways in which the behavior of a captive animal differs from its counterparts living in the wild, but I do not believe that it is necessary to have a large set of repeated observations to understand the simple and obvious difference between captivity and freedom.

Each movement and gesture of the captive animal communicates these differences in stark visceral language. The euphonia sings the same notes behind the bars of its cage as it does in the trees of

Costa Rica, but here in the zoo, the song's sweet melodious notes are not echoed by the forest, but instead by the confining closeness of concrete walls and the divisive sharpness of a cage. While the notes are the same, the song is not because it is taken from its context. Set against this new backdrop, the song has as little meaning as an Arabic letter removed from its cozy home inside a word.

The same is true of the vultures. Here in the zoo they hood their wings above their heads, and jump around with superficially similar motions. Again the gesture falls upon a different audience and so loses much of its meaning. And when the vulture spreads its wings within its confinement and reflects the image of the bars off of its pithy black eyes, its song of movement and expression is inserted into a contrived sentence, and so much of its meaningful nature is lost.

The animals in the zoo are not in the same state of "being" as their counterparts in the wild. Even though they are still living, dynamic organisms, they are trapped in a state of transformation. A captive animal is in the process of becoming a photograph, or a drawing of the animal it once was. Although it appears to us as three-dimensional, it has lost the dimension of connectedness, and of context.

I feel that we are psychically impoverished by viewing animals this way. We are inserting ourselves further into our intellectual understanding and away from the world where understanding itself is borne. The zoo is constructed with angular cages, and two-dimensional pictures of trees, like a mirror reflection of the abstract "nature" that we envision. The carefully maintained sex-ratios and breeding groups of zoo populations are a further abstraction of dynamism, an attempt to make stasis out of process.

When the euphonia sings within its cage, its song is the ghost of the lifeworld it is still trying to contact. As the poet Maya Angelou says, "The caged bird sings of freedom." These poetic words have new meaning for me, because I believe I have heard the yearnings myself. I have learned to listen to the voice of the bird, and to hear the meaning in the silence between the notes. The tiny creature is waiting for the response of the world.

## Recovering Bear Sacredness: Insights into Phenomenal Presence of a More-than-Human World For Future Grizzly Bear Recovery Initiatives

Leon Chartrand

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Montana's Glacier National Park is ideal for spotting wildlife from the safety and comforts of a vehicle. It is so popular that signs are posted to warn visitors of the hazards of "wildlife traffic jams." No matter. Given the millions of visitors here each summer, sudden halts and long delays are to be expected.

Today is no exception. In a parking lot on Going-to-the-Sun Road, several hundred camera-toting tourists are leaning over the guardrail, pointing fingers and talking amongst themselves. Their "object" of fascination: a 300-lb grizzly and her two cubs foraging in a meadow fifty yards from the road.

The photo shoot begins.

Clicking cameras and human scent are usually enough to chase off even the most dominant grizzly in Glacier, but surprisingly these bears do not run. This is unique considering the intense protectiveness of a mother with cubs. Perhaps for now ripened huckleberries are worth risking close proximity.

The smaller cub, still new to the lessons of bearhood, senses a threat, probably from her mother's cue. She scurries and summersaults under the shade of the maternal belly taking shelter in a brief attempt to nurse. The dominate cub, oblivious to the crowd gathering nearby, bites and tugs on the yellow tag clipped to his mom's ear. But with a quick snap to his behind, mother bear instructs him that now is not playtime. The rambunctious one obediently returns to the business of fattening himself.

The family spends nearly half-an-hour consuming the choicest berries until the onlookers become too much of a disturbance to tolerate. With the crowd growing larger by the minute and cars lining up for a mile in both directions, mother decides it is time to leave. She unhurriedly strolls towards the ridgeline with wrestling cubs in tow until they are eventually out of sight from camera's eye. The audience, jubilant

about the show, return to their vehicles with expended roles of film and a story to tell others.

Nothing more happens. Bears leave, humans return to their cars and traffic resumes.

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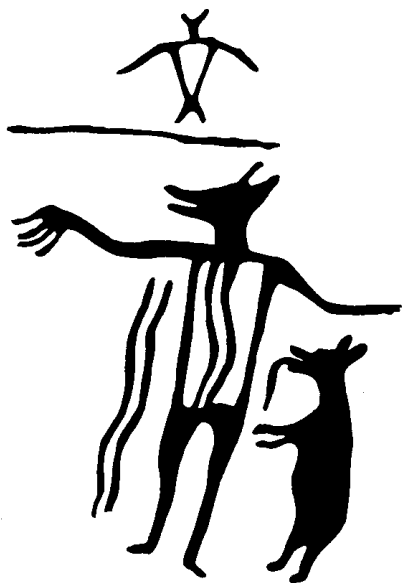
This type of bear encounter is a relatively new phenomenon. For thousands of years, grizzlies and humans have lived within the same habitat, but not without each fearing and respecting the other. Both found a distinct survival advantage in giving the other plenty of space. For some native peoples, forests inhabited by the brown bear had a presence that invited humility, reverence and wisdom. In fact, the grizzly was potentially the most sacred encounter experienced on a vision quest.

Today, whether in the backcountry or along the roadside, seeing bears is becoming less a transformative experience and more a spectacular vacation highlight. Just now we appreciate what makes them sensational rather than ordinary. But through our fascination with their charisma, their endangerment and physical qualities—the cub's fuzzy innocence, the mother's raised shoulder muscles and long sharp claws, and the almost human-like personalities they portray—we are not open to a much more ordinary yet profound reality that lies within them.

This withinness, characterized by a deep sense of presence and profound otherness of being, is an important part of their full identity that we too often ignore or, once encountered, cannot find words to articulate. Withinness continues to be shut out by our self-centeredness and exploitive tendencies to treat the world mechanistically and out of concern that it would cloud our "objective" view of a subjective world.

In turn, grizzly bears like the family encountered along the roadside are treated as objects, as means to an end. Thus, in acting out of this pathology, we remain disconnected from the earth community. And the bear's voice, along with the incomprehensible wildness that it represents, remains silenced until it one day inevitably becomes a relic of wilderness past.

Forever silencing the grizzly is indeed on its way to realization. In less than 200 years, the grizzly bear has been extirpated from most of its former habitat. At one time, the grizzly was estimated at 100,000 with about half of that population inhabiting the contiguous states. Presently there are only six small isolated populations remaining in the northwest U.S. totaling at around 1,100 bears. And, with an expanding human population and the unsustainable economic development and resource extraction corresponding with that expansion, the effort to protect the grizzly is not getting any easier.



Accordingly, grizzly conservation has correctly extended beyond the realm of scientific research to include political, economic, legal, technological and ethical initiatives. Various specialists, lobbyists and activists are devoted to finding the most appropriate method for maintaining the current population size and facilitating their full recovery.

Yet, the issue at hand is much more profound than any specialized discipline or political movement is capable of addressing. For, even with all the progress, the grizzly still rarely dies of natural

causes and its viability is at the mercy of human influence. In fact, human-caused mortalities, loss of habitat, habitat fragmentation, and lack of public support continue to be the most serious threats to their survival.

Clearly, while we now have more scientific knowledge about grizzly bears than ever, and while these animals are legally protected and much of ecotourism's success depends upon their continued protection, it is not the only type of knowledge or progress we need. Something is missing.

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We have lost our ability to be open to the deep presence that pervades all life. We only momentarily, if at all, experience a deeper reality, the numinous presence that pervades a more-than-human world. By focusing on the grizzly bear's circumstance in a strictly profane manner, we have inevitably lost a deep sense of the sacred. Scientific insights and recent ethical paradigms, while important, have not led toward an intimate presence with a meaningful universe and, therefore, a meaningful relationship with other earth community members.

We continue to define the grizzly in terms of instrumental and intrinsic value. They are important to us instrumentally by way of the economic advantages they provide. They are important to us intrinsically by way of the sense of wildness that they bring to the national park that would not exist if they were absent. It, therefore, has become important to protect them because of the instrumental enjoyment and aesthetic aura that they bring to the wilderness experience.

But the difficulty with instrumental value is that the grizzly is valued as an object or instrument for our own benefit. This does not acknowledge the bear's importance to the earth community or the earth's life processes. It ignores the following ecological insight: the grizzly exists because, in some undefined way, it has had something of value to offer to the earth community.

Furthermore, the difficulty with the bear's inherent value is that it is understood by what value lies within them. It is quite possible that the inner depths of the grizzly are just as mysterious as its beyondness and just as unavoidable. And if we are authentically seeking to understand their wholeness

of being, the challenge then becomes how we choose to address their mystery.

We can certainly address this mystery as we have in the past, as an incompleteness of knowledge or puzzle to be figured out. We can extrapolate based on what is observed and quantified. We can continue tranquilizing them to understand them. But new subjectivities always emerge and indicate that a profane journey into knowing the grizzly is destined for quiet desperation, especially for the bear.

However, if we open ourselves to the otherness of the world, we invite an encounter with this mystery. We may then become aware of a pervading presence when confronted with incomprehensibility. In this act, we come to know the sacred as different from the secular and, consequently, become aware that the secular solution alone is insufficient. We may recognize that the bear has a presence that is not defined by its wondrous physical characteristics or the complexities of its habitat alone but by something more deeply profound as well. Through this encounter, it becomes something else, something more, yet continues to remain a bear.

This means that the sacred we encounter within the grizzly does not necessarily venerate the bear itself but allows it to be revered, not as a bear, but as a unique manifestation of the numinous presence that pervades all life. In other words, when one has such an encounter, the bear remains a bear in that it is not discernible from other bears or other living beings except that its physical reality becomes a celebration of a more profoundly deep reality capable of transforming our present consciousness.

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## ANIMALS AND GOETHEAN SCIENCE: A VERY BRIEF REVIEW

This newsletter has consistently emphasized that Goethe's way of science, understood as a phenomenology of nature, is one valuable means for fostering an openness toward the living presence of the natural world, including its animals.

The Goethe referred to here is, of course, the eminent German poet and playwright Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749—1832), who also produced a considerable body of scientific work that focused

Certainly, the grizzly bear family encountered along Going-to-the-Sun Road, if it is to survive, demands a response that is beyond secular thought, beyond rational knowledge, beyond sensationalism. Indeed, there are important aspects of their full identity not presently being considered. We ought to explore how new insights can potentially transform the human consciousness—the way we see ourselves in relationship to other beings and, consequently, the way in which we address our own influences upon the grizzly mother and her two cubs' uncertain future.

Once we encounter the grizzly in this manner, we awaken to a world of wonder, a world of pervading presence that is so much more than aesthetic beauty, more than recognizing inherent value, much deeper than personal growth. We experience a deep sense of withinness and profound beyondness. And we come to understand the grizzly as a unique celebratory moment in the Great Self, a unique articulation of existence, a communion of relationships between varying moments in a 15-billion-year cosmological story that extends far beyond our ability to objectively study or quantifiably explain.

In all their finite ordinariness, we come to know that within each bear—within the cautious mother, the shy and the rambunctious cubs—there exists the universe.

*Drawing on p. 12: Rock painting on granite from Medicine Rapids, Saskatchewan, depicting Thunderbird above and a bear shaman and his assistant below. "For early peoples across the planet, the bear was ancestor and god, totem and guardian, medicine-giver and lover" (from J. Halifax, Shaman, Crossroad, 1982, p. 17).*

on such aspects of the natural world as light, color, clouds, weather, geology, plants, and animals. In its time, Goethe's way of science was highly unusual because it moved away from a quantitative, analytic approach to the natural world and emphasized, instead, an intimate firsthand encounter between the student and thing studied. Direct experiential contact coupled with prolonged, attentive efforts to look and see became the basis for descriptive gener-

alization and synthetic understanding (useful introductions to Goethe's way of science are Bortoft 1996; Goethe 1988; and Seamon & Zajonc 1998).

In regard to animals, three important researchers are Wolfgang Schad (1977) and Craig Holdrege (1998), and Marc Riegner (1998), whose efforts to render a Goethean phenomenology of animals through qualities of animal form, appearance, and behavior offer stunning insights into the experiences and worlds of creatures other than ourselves. In the holistic biology that these researchers are attempting to establish, each feature of an animal is seen as significant because the whole is reflected in each part. The aim is to recognize the inner organic order in an animal in such a way that its individual features can be explained by the basic organization of the animal itself (Bortoft 1996, pp. 89-99).

One of the most intriguing results of a Goethean approach is its returning us to questions we asked as children but for which we never received satisfactory answers: e.g., What exactly is a cat? What exactly is a dog? How are cats and dogs different and how are they alike? Why are leopards spotted but zebras striped? Why are giraffes' necks long? Why do cows have horns but deer antlers? Why do beavers, otters, seals, and hippopotami live in water? How can such different animals as shown

in the drawing on the front page have a similar black-and-white pattern?

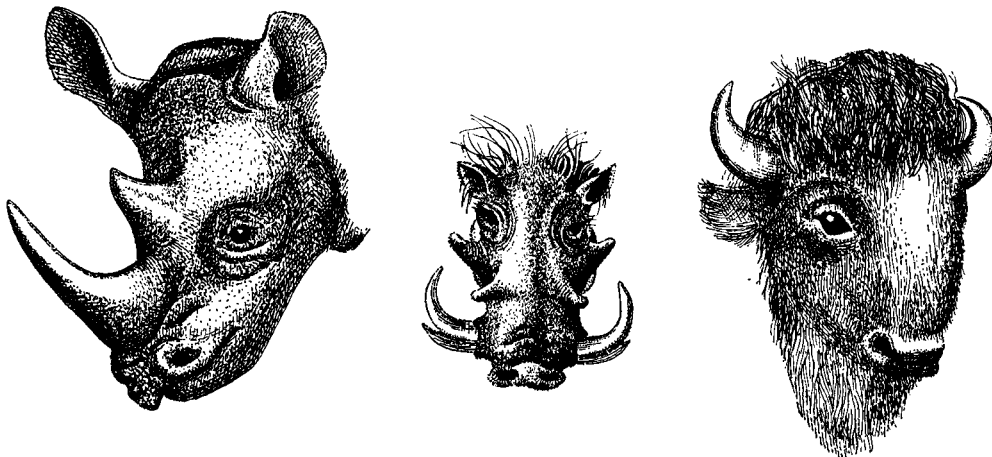
A Goethean approach is important because it provides an organized, accessible way for us as human beings to move closer to the worlds of other creatures. In this growing intimacy, we not only deepen our intellectual understanding of animals but also strengthen our empathy and emotional sense. We better realize the profound moral implications of Goethe's claim that each animal is "a small world, existing for its own sake, by its own means. Every creature has its reason to be" (Goethe 1988, p. 121).

—David Seamon

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*Below: The contrasting placement of horns for the rhinoceros, wart hog, and bison. Note the bison's horns are at the top of the head, whereas the wart hog's horns are close to the mouth. In his animal studies, Goethe came to realize that the appearances of horns and other head protuberances were always related to the absence of certain teeth from the animal's upper jaw. In his work, Schwenk examines this relationship in exhaustive detail (drawing from Schwenk, 1977, p. 119).*



## THE FOX AND THE PEACOCK: A FABLE FOR OUR TIME

Laura Greenspan

*Greenspan is a resident at the intentional New Jersey agricultural community Genesis Farm. We thank her and the editor of Genesis Farm Newsletter for allowing us to reprint this wonderful story, which first appeared in the spring 2002 issue. For more information on Genesis Farm, write to 41A Silver Lake Road, Blairstown, NJ 07825. © 2003 Laura Greenspan.*

We'll never forget the day we first saw the red fox at Genesis Farm last winter. His rusty red fur and bushy tail lit up the white snow. We were thrilled that this beautiful creature chose our land to make his home. His playful tactics were a constant joy to us as he leapt catlike in the air trying to distract his prey and as he rolled around in the sun. As winter continued in February, we became aware of a second fox, a mate for our little trickster.

Before the arrival of spring, five fox babies appeared. Like adorable puppies, they played in front of us with momma fox keeping a watchful eye over her litter. Papa was forever searching for food to feed his new family. Mice, shrews, voles, and rabbits slowly disappeared from the fields. But the little ones were growing fast and needed even more to sustain their appetites.

The foxes started coming up the stairs to the farmhouse, even in the middle of the day. They spotted Mia, the cat, Sweetpea, a guinea hen, and Thor, a beautiful peacock, each of whom also resides here. Cushla, our ever-watchful Sheltie, let us know when Fox was around and would chase him away from the farmhouse. Each night, Janet would make sure the animals were safely tucked away.

The day the foxes killed a wild turkey was the day we realized our own companion animals were in imminent danger. We became alarmed because we love them and realized how dependent on us they are for protection, food, and shelter.

We had a dilemma that many people experience. We are committed to preserving the rights of the wild creatures, and want to be able to co-exist with them on this land. In 1986, we set aside a sanctuary of about six acres behind our meditation garden and kiwi orchard. It is closed to humans and has

been left undisturbed for the exclusive habitat of the native community of life.

When humans start chiseling away at the habitats of wild animals, the animals come closer to our doorsteps. The loss of their natural landscapes not only means a loss of their homes, but also the loss of their food sources. So deer, bears, raccoons and foxes come closer to human habitats to find whatever food they can scavenge, whether it be bird food, garden plants, mice, garbage—or pets.

One sad morning, we found the remains of Thor outside the wetlands. We felt a profound grief at the loss of his luminescent being who gave everyone so much joy. And in that grief, we also felt anger and wanted the foxes to leave. We wanted to chase them away forever, so bereft did we feel by their choice of Thor for their sustenance. But they chose to den on a part of the land that we had dedicated to the wild, and we honored that.

The act of one animal killing and tearing apart another can seem so violent, especially if that animal has been a companion in your life. Indeed, we initially responded as though it were violent. But we also realized that the taking of one life to feed another is beyond human judgment. It is what it is—an act that has played out since the beginning of life on Earth. Thor became transformed in the life and energy of the foxes in this dance of life and death.

As long as human beings continue to encroach on the habitats of wild animals, this dance will continue, and we all have deep questions to ponder about our nearly total disregard for the rights of the original community to its natural habitat.

It is now February, and the foxes have returned. Come March, another litter will be born...

No easy answers.

