

ABSTRACTS

TRACES OF EXTINCTION

**SPECIES LOSS, SOLASTALGIA,
AND SEMIOTICS OF RECOVERY**

University of Tartu Oecologicum,
Juhan Liivi 2, 50409 Tartu
Rooms 126 & 127

JUNE 5-7 2024

The conference is funded by the Estonian Research Council's grant PRG1504 "Meanings of endangered species in culture: ecology, semiotic modelling and reception" and is part of the Creative Nature Festival programme organized by the University of Tartu Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden.



Tartu 2024 European Capital of Culture



Funded by the European Union

NORDISK KULTURFOND

The conference is organised by the Department of Semiotics, University of Tartu in cooperation with Cost Action “CA20134 - Traces as Research Agenda for Climate Change, Technology Studies, and Social Justice (TRACTS)” and Nordic-Baltic Transdisciplinary Research-Creation Network.

The conference is funded by the Estonian Research Council’s grant PRG1504 “Meanings of endangered species in culture: ecology, semiotic modelling and reception.” The conference is part of the Creative Nature Festival programme organized by University of Tartu Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden and partners. The festival belongs to the European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024 programme and is supported by SA Tartu 2024.

Organising team:

Janine Aloe
Sara Bédard-Goulet
Andrew Mark Creighton
Ulla Juske
Riin Magnus
Timo Maran
Nelly Mäekivi
Silver Rattasepp

Table of Contents

David B. Rothenberg	3
Linda Knight	3
Eylül Tuğçe Alnıaçık-Özyer	6
Janine Aloe	7
Tarsh Bates	8
Susan Hauri-Downing	8
Sara Bédard-Goulet	9
Frédéric Vinot	9
Annette L. Bickford	10
Justine Blau	11
Fanny Weinquin	11
Ash Brockwell	12
Dace Bula	13
Matthew Chrulew	14
Emma E. Cole	15
Andrew Mark Creighton	16
Pauline Suzanne Delahaye	17
Paul Deshusses	18
Andrea Natan Feltrin	19
Anisha Gamblin	20
Tanya Gautam	21
Kathryn Marie Hudson	22
Kate Judith	23
Toby Juliff	24
Susanne Kass	25
Marta Kucza	26
Kalevi Kull	27
Simo Laakkonen	28
Séverine Letalleur Sommer	30
Chiara Li Mandri	31
Nina Luostarinen	32
Stanislaw MacLeod	34
Timo Maran	35
Alena Mathis	36
Nelly Mäekivi	39
Oscar Miyamoto	40
Rahul Murdeshwar	42

Joshua de Paiva.....	44
Pamela C. Perrimon.....	45
Oleksii Popovych	46
Ott Puumeister	47
Anand Raja	48
Silver Rattasepp.....	49
Jane Remm	50
Jonathan David Roberts.....	51
Garth Sabo.....	52
Hannah Stark	53
Elin Sütiste	54
Siiri Tarrikas.....	56
Darya Tsymbalyuk.....	57
Alex Ventimilla.....	58
Déborá Villarrubia	59
Susan Wardell.....	60

Keynote speakers

Sonic Species Memory: Extinction in a world beyond mechanical reproduction

David B. Rothenberg

New Jersey Institute of Technology, USA

Someday soon everything may be saved as media while nothing in the wild survives. Let's hope it doesn't get that bad, but there are plenty of images and sounds saved of creatures that no longer walk this Earth or fly in these skies. Musicians and artists can easily make music together with these 'extinct' sounds. What happens when we conjure to life the solastalgic music of beings that no longer exist? Can such reconstitution of the missing help us save the nature that remains? With listening and exploring, let's see if we can find out.

Mapping the multispecies cosmopolitics of extinction

Linda Knight

RMIT University, Australia

Contemporary discourses on extinction pinpoint factors such as biodiversity loss, ecological breakdown, end times, ecocide, as well as conservation, cloning and cryogenics. Given the rich detail of this research, what can art practice bring to the subject of extinction, and how might artistic explorations be both a practice of investigation and learning as well as a mode for commentary and dissemination?

Through my artistic practice of inefficient mapping, realised through drawing and critical stitching, I consider diverse perspectives on other-than-human extinction and how, collectively, those knowledges affect conceptions and ideas about endangered and vulnerable species. I explore how extinction might be considered via experimental concepts of cosmopolitical disruption, as a subversion of the continuities of energy and matter, and that the disruptions to continuous conditions are cosmopolitical actions of protest or, what James D. Ingram (2013) describes as "political action from below" (p. 258). Thinking about extinctions as cosmopolitical subversions provokes examination of more-than-human civics and citizenship, and how, in a multispecies cosmopolitics, there are different civic agencies at work.

Mapping Extinction is a collection of works that references bodies of data to counter-map species loss across global contexts: the impacts of the Australian bushfires in 2019-2020 on native biodiversity loss, and the ongoing impacts of land clearing and development in the United Kingdom, on native wildlife. The big news stories of extinction, such as the ones covering the catastrophic Australian bushfires often focus on the loss of easily recognisable animals such as kangaroos and koalas. In Mapping Extinction my experimental approach does not attempt to represent Big Data statistics on extinction, rather, I counter-map the vulnerability of species

lesser-known by the public to accentuate the plight of 'minor figures' of British and Australian native wildlife, including insects, reptiles, molluscs and small mammals. My examinations of multispecies civics maps the cultural politics and mainstream preferences for particular stories of extinctions, and how the continuity subversions of minor figures are a cosmopolitics at play.

Abstracts

The Life and Death of Invasive Species

Eylül Tuğçe Alnıaçık-Özyer

eylulalniciak@gmail.com

Turkish-German University, Türkiye

One of the prominent emphases in the discourse of ecological crisis, which is a symptom of the era of multiple crises, is that the balance of nature has been disrupted, that the harmonious relationship between species has been destroyed, and that this disruption is leading to extinction. In this process, in which the perpetrator of a disappearing balance is pursued, some biocultural conceptualizations come into service. One such conceptualization, which will be employed in this study, is that of *invasive species*. The conceptualization of invasive species runs the risk of being rather vague, as it refers to subjective assessment rather than a biological taxonomic classification. However, the prevailing definition focuses on the economic or environmental harm caused by a species to the ecosystem into which it is introduced. (These species are often, though not exclusively, characterized as non-native or alien).¹ This harm is then followed by a call for intervention, often resulting in removal or isolation.

In this respect, this study² examines the outrage and intervention processes triggered by the stray cat population in Germany in a relatively early period (between 1908 and 1912) within the framework of invasive species. The large number of stray cats was portrayed as a threat to many species, especially birds and hunting animals, and therefore there were calls for the culling and killing of stray cats. In the archives consulted, both the calls for action and legislation made by the two rival groups (bird protection organizations/*Vogelschutzvereine* and German Federation for the Protection of Cats/*Deutscher Bund für Katzenschutz*) to high-level governmental state organs and their attempts to create public pressure are prominent. What is lacking in the series of events that culminate in the removal of cats from the streets, coded as invasive species, are functional cycles in the Uexküllian sense. This historical example will be used to critically re-examine the discourse of invasive species, arguing that it is a cut-out of the entangled *umwelten* of all living beings. Finally, it is proposed that invasive species categorization, which have been occasionally identified as one of the primary representative culprits of the Sixth Great Extinction, should be reconsidered within a comprehensive biosemiotic framework.

Bionote. Dr. Eylül Tuğçe Alnıaçık-Özyer works as an assistant professor in the department of sociology at the Turkish-German University. Her main research interests include ecology, human-animal relations, biosemiotic and ethics, and from June to September 2023 she was a visiting scholar in the *Biotechnologies, Nature and Society Research Group* at Goethe University Frankfurt/Main under the supervision of Prof. Thomas Lemke. She translated Uexküll's *Streifzüge durch die Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen* into Turkish.

¹ <https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/what-are-invasive-species>

² This study is based on archival research that I carried out as a DAAD-funded visiting scholar at the Goethe University Frankfurt, from June to September 2023. The archive documents referred here are from the *Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz*.

Unravelling Media Narratives of Extinction through Critical Discourse Analysis

Janine Aloe

janine.aloe@ut.ee

University of Tartu, Estonia

“The animal care team is heartbroken over this tremendous loss.” This emotionally charged statement from a newspaper article regarding the death of an endangered vulture serves as a poignant entry point for the quantitative and qualitative analysis of my media corpus, consisting of US-American newspaper articles spanning the past two years. Employing a methodological lens that integrates critical discourse analysis and ecolinguistics, this study navigates the representation of the (impending) loss of individual animals or whole species in media narratives. Inspired by Ursula Heise’s (2016) insights into the prevalent elegiac and tragic modes surrounding extinction, I investigate the ways in which media articles articulate and navigate feelings of loss and solastalgia.

Central to the inquiry are questions about how extinction is portrayed in the articles and how emotions of mourning and a general sense of decline are expressed and navigated from the human perspective. Acknowledging the lack of engaging alternatives highlighted by Heise, my analysis extends beyond “doom and gloom” scenarios and also includes media articles that incorporate not only humorous and compassionate elements but also narratives imbued with optimism.

Drawing on findings from ecolinguistics, my presentation aims to identify linguistic features and genres that contribute to representations emphasizing the (expected) loss of biodiversity. By scrutinizing the cultural means available for reducing and preventing species extinction, the research contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between media representation, cultural perspectives, and the imperative for collective action.

Recognizing the importance of effective communication concerning the loss of species (Buijs et al. 2008), this study sheds light on the representations of biodiversity. By cultivating practices of care and response-ability for nonhuman species, the research aims to foster a deeper understanding of the human perception of extinction and, in turn, enhance the efficacy of communication surrounding this critical issue.

References

Buijs, Arjen E.; Fischer, Anke; Rink, Dieter; Young, Juliette C. 2008. Looking Beyond Superficial Knowledge Gaps: Understanding Public Representations of Biodiversity. *The International Journal of Biodiversity Science and Management*, 4:2, 65-80.

Heise, Ursula K. 2016. *Imagining Extinction. The Cultural Meanings of Endangered Species*. The University of Chicago Press.

Bionote. Janine Aloe is a first-year PhD student at the Institute of Foreign Languages and Cultures of the University of Tartu. The topic of her PhD thesis is “Critical Discourse Analysis of Endangerment and Extinction in Anglophone Media,” contributing to Timo Maran’s project titled “Meanings of Endangered Species in Culture: Ecology, Semiotic Modelling and Reception.”

Olfaction, Solastalgia and Art-Making: Tracing the Promise of Smellscapes in Disappearing and Emerging Ecologies

Tarsh Bates

natarsha.bates@umu.se

Umeå University, Sweden

Susan Hauri-Downing

susan.hauri@protonmail.com

Independent artist, Australia

Olfaction is a vital and neglected sensory aspect of place-making. Smellscapes are recognised as an important part of human wellbeing and health and are vital aspects of culture and memory, including grief rituals. However, the role of olfaction in human and more-than-human experiences of environmental change and loss is not well understood. This paper explores the relationship between olfactory landscapes and solastalgia and how artistic practices can trace the complex affective experiences of ecological grief and loss and make space for justice and optimism. We think through the significance of olfactory landscapes to the rapidly changing, multi-species experiences of place. We explore solastalgia (distress caused by environmental change) through a more-than-human olfactory lens, asking how smellscapes contribute to place-making by humans and non-humans and trace how olfaction contributes to human and non-human distress at the changes or loss of place. We discuss how olfactory art-making and creative practice can be used to understand and guide us through distress and grief and explore the emergence of novel olfactory ecologies and how olfactory creative practice can help us welcome or imagine just and regenerative worlds.

Bionotes. Susan Hauri is an independent artist and eco-social worker whose practice focuses on biocultural diversity, ecological grief and interspecies relationships. She has 20 years of experience working with people from diverse backgrounds and her trauma sensitive practice is dedicated to strengthening and improving well-being and the natural systems in which we live.

Tarsh Bates is interested in the human as a queer ecology, the aesthetics of care and smell as interspecies communication. They have a PhD in Biological Art (2019) and are currently a postdoctoral research fellow in Design and Molecular Biology, Umeå University, Sweden. They are enamoured with *Candida albicans*.

Hauri-Downing and Bates have collaborated on creative research and projects since 2012.

Experiencing Extinction: Psychic Processes in Relationships with Dying Species

Sara Bédard-Goulet

sara.bedard-goulet@ut.ee

Utrecht University, Netherlands / University of Tartu, Estonia

Frédéric Vinot

frederic.vinot@univ-cotedazur.fr

University of Côte d'Azur, France

This paper examines the short story “Couplet” from Quebec author Antoine Desjardins’ collection *Indices des feux* to identify how human perception of species extinction is depicted in contemporary French-language fiction and understand what psychic processes are at work in witnessing this loss. Desjardins’ narrative refers to the actual North Atlantic right whale, currently considered as functionally extinct with less than 350 living individuals and recalls the deadly summer 2017 during which 14 whales were found dead. The story focuses on the narrator’s reaction to seeing a whale spray during a holiday in Cape Cod, which he attributes in the aftermath to a specific individual, Couplet, that becomes *his* whale. When learning about Couplet’s death, the narrator is greatly affected and tracks all the information he can find online about the right whale deaths. This narrative juxtaposes with that of the narrator’s girlfriend’s pregnancy, which triggers existential questioning about having a child in a declining world. Building on psychoanalytical theories about imaginary, loss, object relation, mourning and nostalgia, our analysis focuses on the type of relation that the narrator develops toward an individual and a charismatic species that he has never met. It unearths the subjective underpinnings of extinction through their representation in a literary work, which provides additional aesthetic context to grasp the specifics of the human experience of dying animals.

Bionotes. Sara Bédard-Goulet is Assistant Professor of French and General Literature at Utrecht University and a Guest Research Fellow in Semiotics at the University of Tartu, where she is involved in the project “Meanings of endangered species in culture: ecology, semiotic modelling and reception”.

Frédéric Vinot is Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Côte d’Azur and a member of the research center Anthropology & Clinical, Cognitive and Social Psychologies.

Orca Yacht Ramming: Rethinking Biodiversity Extinction from Historical Perspectives of “Participating Consciousness”

Annette L. Bickford

bickford@york.ca

York University, Canada

An endangered species, killer whales are “orcanizing”. Initiated in 2020 by matriarch White Gladis “in a critical moment of agony”, there have been over 500 cases of disabling and sometimes sinking yachts. This began in high-trafficked areas off the Iberian coast, but incidents have recently been reported off the Shetland Islands in Scotland. Commercial fishing practices, along with underwater noise from industry and military activity jeopardize orcas’ food security, yet marine neuroscientists and animal behavior experts regularly attribute the behavior to “fun” and “play”. I am interested in exploring historical worldviews that inform the assumptions we make about such behavior we do not understand.

Cartesian dualism permeates Western culture, forming a fault-line which runs through its entire conceptual system, redefining humans, once direct participants, “as only minimally and accidentally connected to the earth, and masking the reality of catastrophic biodiversity extinction. For most of human history people exercised a “participating consciousness”—engaging with the natural world in ensconced, symbiotic, often animistic ways, regarding the whole of nature as alive and powerful. Politics and epistemology reinforced each other to bring shifts in consciousness, and our current perception, which instrumentalizes nature as sets of inert commodity resources, and culturally obscures nonhuman animals through hyper-separation, is indicative of a metamorphosis that became influential in Europe by the early modern period. The Scientific Revolution propelled technological innovation. Technology in turn instrumentalized scientific ideas, enabling surplus production, monetized by the rise of industrial capitalism. By the twentieth century instrumental rationality contributed to the rejection of holistic views of nature; biocentric mutuality became unthinkable.

How might orcas’ empathic collective cultural organization inform our ways of looking at ourselves and Nature that have proven disastrous? What are the epistemic constraints of our ability to imagine nonhuman perspectives, and what thwarts our collective willingness to do so? My hope is that with new understandings of our own historically constructed, alienated worldviews, we can better develop cultural strategies to raise awareness of biodiversity and extinction.

Bionote. Historical anthropologist, Associate Professor, Interdisciplinary Social Science, cross-appointed with Graduate Programs in Humanities, and Social & Political Thought. Author of *Southern Mercy* (University of Toronto Press, 2016). I contextualize extinction research within early modern European discourses, which redefined humans, once direct participants, “as only minimally and accidentally connected to the earth.” I ask how we might change ways of looking at ourselves and Nature that have proven disastrous.

Veil of Nature – De-extincting the *Sicyos villosus*, a Way to Uncover the Conservation Complex

Justine Blau

justineblau@hotmail.com, info@blaujustine.com

Luxembourg

Fanny Weinquin

fanny.weinquin@gmail.com

Estonia

Several years ago, I was struck by a number of news headlines published in the mainstream media, forecasting a sixth mass extinction. Trying to grasp the ungraspable, I decided to examine Charles Darwin's digitized herbaria collection to see how many of the plants he gathered had already gone extinct. Surprisingly, there was only one: the *Sicyos villosus* on the so-called Red List.

Endemic to the Galápagos Islands, this forlorn member of the *Cucurbitaceae* family was collected by Charles Darwin during his journey on the Beagle (1831–36), but is now extinct. It is still known to science thanks only to a single specimen preserved in the Sainsbury Laboratory of the Cambridge University Herbarium, where Darwin's complete botanical collection is preserved. After reading that a group of contemporary scientists were hoping to de-extinct *Sicyos villosus* using biotechnologies that could recover its DNA from Darwin's specimen, I began to investigate what it means to bring a species back to life. I started to undertake a journey to understand the desire for de-extinction, figuring out what science was trying to save. This has driven me to further delve into some current conservation strategies in place to protect our natural environment.

This led to encounters with researchers and scientists in herbaria and seed banks, as well as a journey to the Galápagos, as a conservation place. This art project comprises photographic documentation of science places and includes collaborations with a magician. The project will be released in a publication in 2024 by K. Verlag Berlin and will also be shown at the Botanical Garden of Tartu, developed in situ with curator Fanny Weinquin, as part of Tartu 2024 between June and July 2024. An artwork, part of this project, will also be presented as part of the exhibition Missing / Puudutakse, curated by Sara Bédard-Goulet at the Tartu Kunstimaja during Tartu 2024.

Bionotes. JUSTINE BLAU is a visual artist, with many of her works dealing with the complex and peculiar relationship humankind maintains with what we qualify as “nature.” She is currently on a residency at the Fonderie Darling in Montréal. Blau studied at Wimbledon College of Art, University of the Arts London. www.blaujustine.com

FANNY WEINQUIN studied art history at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and joined the Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique de Belgique. She is involved as an independent curator with projects such as Prix d'art Robert Schuman in Metz (FR) or the *murmures* exhibition at the Neimënster cultural center in Luxembourg (LU) as part of the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

Cultivating Emotional Connection with Species and Habitats: Insights from an Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Module

Ash Brockwell

ash.brockwell@lis.ac.uk

London Interdisciplinary School, UK

In a paper presented at the 1968 General Assembly of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Baba Dioum (then Director-General of Water and Forestry in Senegal) was quoted as saying, “In the end we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught.” This statement has been widely cited to highlight the importance of education for conservation, but it tends to be implicitly summarised as “we will conserve...only what we are taught [about].” Dioum’s assertion that education must foster *love* for other species, as the vital link between understanding and action, is usually overlooked.

This presentation will report on the experience of designing and delivering an interdisciplinary undergraduate module, “Encountering Ecosystems through Mixed Methods Research and Practice”, in a British higher education context. This module, taught as an elective for final year undergraduates on the BSc (Hons) Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods degree programme at the London Interdisciplinary School, has been created with the explicit aim of helping students to cultivate an emotional connection with a local habitat and the species that live there. It brings together traditional ecology and ethnoecology fieldwork with “kincentric” cooperative inquiry, as pioneered by Peter Reason – a set of practices that encourage engagement with other species, and even rivers and the land itself, as sentient subjects. These diverse encounters are expressed through artistic practice in a medium of the student’s choice, in the form of an exhibition submission and an accompanying catalogue entry, for the final assessment.

In addition to describing the module and key takeaways from it, I will reflect more broadly on the role of interdisciplinary place-based learning in cultivating emotional connection, with reference to the “mindshifts” required to bring Indigenous perspectives into European higher education.

Bionote. Dr. Ashley Jay (Ash) Brockwell is an educator, consultant, poet, and visual artist. He holds an MBiochem (Hons) degree in Biochemistry from Oxford University, an MSc in Environmental Anthropology, and a PhD in Education for Sustainability. Ash is an Associate Professor and the Problem-Based Learning Lead at London Interdisciplinary School.

Solastalgic Suburbs: Narratives from Altered Environments

Dace Bula

dace.bula@lulfmi.lv

University of Latvia, Latvia

The paper problematizes the state of oral narrative in the ecocritical debate. Oral culture, as a reflection of people-place relationships, even though researched in a number of disciplines, is somewhat underrepresented in ecocriticism. Invitations to turn to orality and spoken word are occasionally voiced. However, indigenous cosmologies and traditional verbal genres transmitting presumably authentic, unmediated patterns of human-nonhuman coexistence have attracted more attention from ecocritics than the everyday talk of contemporary urban inhabitants. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in the Riga port neighborhoods, the paper demonstrates that the personal narratives of city dwellers reveal everyday ontologies and, thus, provide a valuable resource for the study of experientiality involved in human-environment interactions. Focusing on the concept of dwelling, the paper sides with post-phenomenological inquiry keen to absorb narrated evidence of how people experience transformations that affect their habitats and immediate landscapes. In the context of recent conceptual advances trying to re-establish a link between human rationality, corporeality, and emotionality, it addresses the alleged queerness of environmental affects and the search for new vocabulary designating emotional states that emerge in the era of environmental crisis. One of the invented terms, Glenn Albrecht's concept of solastalgia (the homesickness one has at home), is applied to interpret the emotional load of narratives of people inhabiting suburbs that shelter both housing and industry, and experiencing unwanted change that often results in overt or tacit expulsion.

Bionote. I am a leading researcher at the Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art. My recent research activities include studying environmental experience stories and solastalgia of industrial suburbs, which have resulted in an edited volume, *Living Next to the Port* (2022). My present focus lies on literary naturecultures in the zoo-narratives by Regina Ezera.

Extinction and Ecological Existentialism

Matthew Chrulew

mchrulew@gmail.com

Curtin University, Australia

In addition to critique of the social processes and narratives behind the ongoing destruction of nonhuman species and their habitats, environmental humanists have an essential role to play in making extinction genuinely legible: to invent concepts adequate to its gravity, to tell stories appropriate to its scales, to share practices responsive to its burden, that is, to cultivate an environmental culture (Plumwood 2002) capable of responding to this devastating loss of meaning and being.

Building on work in the phenomenological, existential and speculative philosophy of the life and environmental sciences and its wider interpretation in biosemiotics, animal studies and the environmental humanities, this paper will seek to delineate an “ecological existentialism” fit to confront the culture of extinction. For anthropologist and ecophilosopher Deborah Bird Rose, our historical and performative implication in the lives and deaths of human and nonhuman others, in a world of uncertainty and connectivity, calls us into an embodied relational ethics of attentive proximity and careful responsibility: “How are we situated in the face of this great unmaking? Dialogically, what is our place, our history, our genre of being? And what of our actions?” (Rose 2013, 8). That is, how ought we best orient ourselves in relation to the disappearance of nonhuman worlds, in the many senses of this catastrophic event—the loss of species of phenomenal appearance, creative involvement, meaningful significance, experiential openness, and relational community (Smith 2013)—including, of course, the “withering of shared life” between humans and animals in hybrid communities (Lestel 2013)? Beyond melancholic nostalgia and ecomodernist fantasies of technological resurrection, how else might we learn to relate to those species who have become ancestral, summoning them to nurture our own becoming-ecological and thereby to aid in giving place, duration and meaning to those others who remain?

Bionote. Matthew Chrulew is Senior Research Fellow at Curtin University. He co-edited the volumes *Extinction Studies: Stories of Time, Death, and Generations* (Columbia, 2017) and *Kin: Thinking with Deborah Bird Rose* (Duke, 2022), was founding associate editor of *Environmental Humanities* journal, and edits the book series *Animalities* at Edinburgh University Press.

The Lost-and-Found Case of Silphium: Towards a Qualitative Understanding of Extinction

Emma E. Cole

Utrecht University, Netherlands

e.e.cole@uu.nl, emmaelizabeth.cole@gmail.com

How can the case study of an ancient plant, lost and found, change the way we conceptualize extinction? Millennia ago, a wild plant called Silphium had significant medical, economic, and symbolic value to ancient Greek and Roman societies. According to Pliny the Elder and other ancient sources, the plant was either resistant to cultivation or lost potency when cultivated. Said to have appeared suddenly after a “black rain” near Cyrene, Silphium was harvested and traded for centuries before disappearing nearly 2000 years ago, since cited as possibly the first historical account of extinction. However, in recent years a group of botanists in Turkey claim that the plant has been “rediscovered” and identify the ancient Silphium with a rare plant called *Ferula drudeana*, a member of a diverse, shrubby genus related to fennel which grows in rocky, weedy farm outskirts.

With this paper, I contribute to qualitative evaluations of biodiversity and extinction. The questions raised by this case study strike at the heart of our understanding of the natural world. First, identity: what would it mean to be “truly the same plant”? Already troublesome in cases beyond vertebrate animals, boundaries of individuals and of species based on quantitative measures are breaking down ever more under current scholarship. Ecology, symbiosis, and solastalgia all suggest – demand – deeply relational understandings of living things. Second, embeddedness: what are the implications for conservation? Silphium’s resistance to translation into cultivated contexts, common to many plants used in traditional medicines, implies that extinction cannot be isolated from environmental impoverishment. Extending from ancient to present times, this example supports a wider argument that disappearance and reappearance, extinction and existence, can be better viewed as reflections of shifting and complex ecological and social conditions. This would mean that biodiversity “loss” cannot be itemized: qualities of historied contexts are at stake.

Bionote. I currently study History and Philosophy of Science at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. I have a background in biology and an interest in experiential and relational knowledges about the living world, especially very local wildlife. The present paper is part of my master’s thesis (in progress, expected summer 2024).

Ghettos on the Islands of the Living Dead: Inexorable Intimacies and the Exclusion of Death and Nonhuman Umwelt from Rational Consumption.

Andrew Mark Creighton

andrew.mark.creighton@ut.ee

University of Tartu, Estonia

Ray Bradbury's short story, *The Scythe*, depicts a farmer turned Grim Reaper refusing the fated death of his family. The family consequently become anomic, eventually falling into a state between life and death. In this presentation, I will use *The Scythe* as a metaphor for Baudrillard's 'dead ghetto', and Ritzer's 'islands of the living dead', which I will expand to incorporate nonhuman umwelt. My intentions here are to first explain how rational and enchanting consumerism makes use of and draws upon desires for intimacies and intersubjectivities to further rational consumption. This, in part, entails the "ghettoization" of death and nonhuman animals and the segmentation of "life" and humans into consumer islands. In other words, consumer rationality allows the focus of meaning towards enchanting intersubjectivity, over-emphasizing it and turning attention away from fuller relations, creating anomic consumers regarding nonhuman animals and death and, accordingly, their own lives. Just as the farmer's inherence of the Grim Reaper misplaces his love for his family, keeping him from relenting to their fate, consequently alienating all of them from their own life and death. To exemplify the above theory, I will examine the attempt at creating a wolf economy in the Northern Canadian town of Thompson, Manitoba.

Bionote. Andrew Mark Creighton is a 4th year PhD candidate at the University of Tartu. His research interests are in consumption, zoosemiotics, and social theory. He is also an editor with the online journal Hortus Semioticus.

Roles of the Cities: Deserts, Oasis, Purgatory, Temple

Pauline Suzanne Delahaye

pauline.suzanne.delahaye@ut.ee

French Society of Zoosemiotics, France

In this presentation, I will explore four different roles that can be played by the cities as living environments for species that are endangered, vulnerable or susceptible to become so: Desert, Oasis, Purgatory and Temple.

The city as a Desert is a role played by the urban environment when its poor planning or management leads it to become a climate amplifier and an over-artificialized place deprived of biodiversity and especially animal life. The city as an Oasis is the opposite. A role played by cities when they became providers (for food, for nesting places, for shelters, etc.) for species that have trouble surviving outside of the city due to other regions being occupied by other human activities (such as agriculture). This can also occur due to climate change and biodiversity consequently drops (disappearance of the primary prey of food source, pollution of soil or water, etc.). The city in a Purgatory role means it is more or less in a temporary role. This occurs especially when a city is in an expansion phase; destroying surrounding territories to expand, creating roads or energy infrastructure, leading to the destruction or fragmentation of the milieu and forced migration or displacement of a species (potentially leading to other territory conflicts because of these movements). On the contrary, the city as a Temple is a role a city can embrace by organizing its structure and its urban plan in order to be a shelter, not only for humans, but also for other animals. It is possibly a place where species can grow and thrive in order to become strong enough to reconquer their previous territories. In this presentation, I will present examples of these different roles, how they can coexist, evolve and shift, and how this comprehension can be used to build an environment more suitable for humans and for the species endangered by human action.

Bionote. A former post-doctoral researcher in the Department of Semiotics at the University of Tartu, Estonia. Pauline-Suzanne Delahaye is a zoosemiotician, specializing in complex animal emotions and human-animal cohabitation, in particular in urban environments. She has a PhD degree in language science from Sorbonne University, France. Dr. Delahaye is also an involved popularizer and a volunteer science educator for various associations, initiatives, and projects.

Eclipsed Species? Critical Histories of De-Extinction Attempts: from the Archives to the Future

Paul Deshusses

paul.deshusses@graduateinstitute.ch

Geneva Graduate Institute, Switzerland

This historical research aims to provide a contextualized list of de-extinction attempts and compare the advertisement of those attempts with their respective and situated critics. The evolution of terms associated with de-extinction, such as “rewilding”, “resurrection biology”, “back-breeding”, “de-introgression”, “genomic restoration”, “assisted gene flow”, and “atavistic gene engineering”, all carried peculiar connotations and ethical consideration that are worth examining.

This paper will seek to shed light on emblematic de-extinction attempts, from the Heck brothers’ cattle in 1930s Germany to the mammoth in DMZ Korea project, as well as lesser-studied cases of de-extinction, for instance, scientific expeditions aiming at finding species thought to be previously extinct. These explorations were inconclusive when it came to the Chinese river dolphins, contrary to the recent De Winton golden mole that has been found in South Africa after not being seen for 90 years. By pointing to the various motivations underpinning de-extinction attempts, this paper aims to show how political, societal, economic, and technological factors have contributed to shaping de-extinction attempts. This research will be based on primary and secondary sources; the Heck brothers’ archival material will, for instance, be explored for this research.

Additionally, this paper will compare those efforts with the ethical discourses that surrounded each of those attempts. For instance, the issue of the lack of the possibility of being nurtured by one of its kind for the (allegedly) resurrected animals, or the disappearance of the original animal’s environments, thus making the new individual impossible to be released in the current “wild”. By comparing the advertisement of de-extinction attempts to their critics, this research will contribute to a deeper comprehension of the multifaceted motivations, challenges, and outcomes associated with the ongoing venture to “bring back” extinct species.

Bionote. Paul Deshusses is a TA and PhD candidate in International History & Politics at the Geneva Graduate Institute. He holds a Master Erasmus Mundus in Bioethics from the University of Leuven, Radboud University, and the University of Padova, a Master in Political Science from the University of Geneva and a Master in International History from the Geneva Graduate Institute. His PhD research is interested in the history of animal communication in the 1960s.

Navigating Mass Extinction: Unveiling Neglected Taxa through Mossy Entanglements

Andrea Natan Feltrin

NatanFeltrin@my.unt.edu

University of North Texas, USA

In an epoch of unparalleled mass extinction, the narrative of biodiversity loss often overlooks a multitude of non-vascular species. My study, grounded in the philosophies of Ricardo Rozzi, aims to dismantle the taxonomic chauvinism that threatens these species by relegating them to the margins of conservation efforts and environmental dialogues.

The concept of ‘mossy entanglements’ emerges as an interpretive framework, re-evaluating human interaction with cryptogamic flora and asserting the significance of these organisms in a broader ethical, aesthetic, and ecological conversation. This framework reveals the intricate biological narratives of these species and challenges the prevalent ecosystemic instrumentalism, examining their aesthetic, semiotic, and biocultural importance.

Situated within the Cape Horn Biosphere Reserve, a pioneering site for non-vascular diversity, and reflected in artistic expressions such as the Mossaro Modern Wall Art and the serene beauty of Saihō-ji’s moss gardens, my presentation highlights the intrinsic worth of these often-ignored organisms. This exploration is also rooted in the cultural psyche, where mosses elicit a nuanced response akin to solastalgia, reflecting the emotional distress caused by the deteriorating visibility of these species in our shared natural and cultural landscapes. Moreover, I explore how horticulture and digital platforms like Etsy act as grassroots conduits for advancing a conservation ethic and heightening ecological consciousness regarding moss species. This methodological approach marries rigorous biological examination with aesthetic appreciation and semiotic analysis, biocultural insights, and a survey of artistic and conservation initiatives, carving a multifaceted pathway to engagement with these frequently overlooked taxa.

This inquiry seeks to recalibrate the conversation on extinction to encompass the broad, underappreciated spectrum of life. By fostering a more inclusive ecological ethic, we press for a conservation paradigm that protects and venerates the complex web of existence that fortifies our planet’s radiant diversity.

Bionote. I’m a Philosophy graduate from the University of Milan with a postgraduate specialization in Environmental Management from the University of Stirling. I have contributed to European rewilding projects and am currently pursuing a PhD in environmental ethics, focusing on rewilding, and the coexistence of multiple species.

“A Vanishing Species”: Near-Extinction Rhetorics, Nonhuman and Cultivating Creaturely Love in Witi Ihimaera’s *The Whale Rider* (1987)

Anisha Gamblin

en18a2g@leeds.ac.uk

University of Leeds, UK

“Extinction” has recently emerged as a keyword not only in the environmental humanities but also, more broadly, in public debates about climate injustice, environmental policy and social change (O’Key 2023). As a concept that has gripped the public imagination, the Sixth Mass Extinction has been increasingly interrogated by scholars of Extinction Studies. Why, for instance, do certain representations of mass extinction gain momentum in the broader, public consciousness, and how should we posit alternate, more complex representations of it? In this paper, I will explore Witi Ihimaera’s *The Whale Rider* (1987) which, although does not depict a mass extinction event, through inhabiting the perspective of whales, explores how extractive capitalism has destroyed oceanic ecologies and driven cetacean species to *near*-extinction.

Drawing on Julietta Singh’s concept of “dehumanism”, a recuperative practice that seeks to renounce our violent, masterful subjectivities, this paper will explore the imaginative possibilities of centralising nonhuman species in narrative. Shifting between human and nonhuman characters, the novel often perceives the world through the eyes of a whale. Beyond challenging our anthropocentric assumptions about having a human protagonist, this narrative mode both ascribes animacy to the nonhuman and allows its readers to inhabit the less publicised effects of nuclear testing and radiation on cetaceans. The novel thus becomes an ethical project that invites its readers to witness the embodied physical impacts of nuclear explosion and the genetic effects of undersea radiation that propel charismatic megafauna to near-extinction. In doing so, *The Whale Rider* raises questions about which types of reading practices might posit and envision alternate oceanic futures outside of extractive capitalism and species extinction.

Bionote. Anisha Gamblin is a postgraduate researcher at the University of Leeds. She is based in the School of English, but her research straddles both literature and philosophy. Her PhD project, which explores Indigenous extinction narratives of the Pacific, is part of the Leverhulme-funded Extinction Studies Doctoral Training Programme at Leeds.

Tracing Multispecies Ancestry in Contemporary Lyric

Tanya Gautam

tanya.gautam@uni-koeln.de

University of Cologne, Germany

“The character of the mountain is contained within its song. When this male red crossbill offers his springtime melodies, the combined experience of thousands of ancestors flows to the air.”

— David George Haskell, *Sounds Wild and Broken* (2023)

By looking at examples in contemporary lyric ecopoetry and nonfiction writing, this paper aims to define and explore the concept of multispecies ancestry and ways of engaging with shared ancestral histories with more than human others. “The heart of ethics is the call from the other”, says Rose in *Extinction Studies* (Rose 2017). Whether aural or visual, the other’s call arrives and interrupts one’s self-absorption and awakens one to their responsibility as a living/ethical subject. In this light, my paper draws on the scholarship of Environmental Humanities scholars like Kate Rigby, Craig Santos Perez, Thom van Dooren, among others, and investigates the different calls from “the other” that are attended/responded to in contemporary lyric ecopoetry and nonfiction writing. How does this call and response, if any, illuminate our shared histories and “precariousness and express our responsiveness to the vulnerability and suffering of others” (ibid.). How does the lyric’s subjective approach to other’s suffering help in understanding extinction at the nexus of shared ancestry, contemporary experience, and future ethics?

Bionote. Tanya Gautam holds a BA in English Literature, Philosophy and Psychology from Pune University, India, and an MA in English Studies from the University of Heidelberg, Germany. As a doctoral researcher at MESH, Cologne, her interests lie in investigating the role contemporary ecopoetics, lyric poetry in particular, can play in creating eco-political impact and shaping eco-critical literacy across formal and informal systems of cultural education.

She is the co-founder of [Moonlit Brooks](#) — a spoken word poetry project which also curates multidisciplinary cultural events in Germany. She currently also works as a research associate at the European University for Well-Being, Cologne and has previously worked as a kindergarten educator, journalist and editor. She continues to pursue and share her passion for poetry through spoken word performances and creative writing workshops.

Saving Words, Saving Species: Lexicology as Ecological Engagement in Postcolonial Naturecultures

Kathryn Marie Hudson

HUDSONKM@ECKERD.EDU

Eckerd College, USA

University at Buffalo, USA

This paper explores the ways in which lexicography and lexicographic practice function as a means of ecological engagement and engagement for indigenous communities in postcolonial Latin America. Lexicographic materials have a “character of social memory” (Rodríguez Barcia 2018: 189) that is central to sociocultural identity and reflects “the attitudes of a society, as expressed in the word, toward the dominant problems of the ever-changing here and now” (Kahane and Kahane 1992: 20). One of these problems is extinction, which can be reflected in and – in some cases – mitigated by lexicographic materials. By recording words, their meaning(s), and their sociosemiotic significances, lexicographic productions provide a repository for traditional ecological knowledge that can facilitate knowledge of extinctions and generate both symbolic and practical actions intended to prevent further biodiversity loss. This is accomplished not only through the documentation of indigenous words and ecological insights but also through the fact that the survival and maintenance of these words records and reflects cultural identity in a way that provides an avenue towards cultural reclamation. This is particularly true for words that name species, which can additionally be used to reassert or reestablish connections to traditional homelands and environments (and, by extension, motivate or maintain interest in protecting and maintaining these spaces). There are fundamentally intertextual practices that make language, language use, ecology, and identity (re)assertion interreferential in postcolonial landscapes.

References

Kahane, H.; Kahane, R. 1992. The dictionary as ideology. Sixteen Case Studies. In: L. Zgusta (ed.), *History, Languages, and Lexicographers*, 19-76. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer.

Rodríguez Barcia, S. 2018. De la etnolexicografía a la lexicografía crítica. *Revista de Investigación Lingüística* 21, 186–206.

Bionote. Dr. Kathryn Hudson is an Assistant Professor of Animal Studies at Eckerd College and a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University at Buffalo. Her research focuses on the human-animal interface, identity construction/negotiation, processes of visual and non-verbal communication, ceramic analysis, and cultural and linguistic documentation.

Reframing Decision-Making Criteria Around More-Than-Human Vulnerabilities

Kate Judith

kate.judith@unisq.edu.au

University of Southern Queensland, Australia

Increasing information detailing and describing the scale, depth, and speed of the current sixth great extinction event fails to impact upon planning and policy decisions where these continue to be framed within narrowly anthropocentric and human-exceptionalist terms. Such terms lack the capacity to account for complex ecological interdependencies or diverse and multispecies ways of knowing and experiencing. One of the things needed if this is to change is a change in the evaluative criteria that count within decision making frameworks. Biodiversity, ecological resilience, and ecocultural diversity must replace economic power and security as the principal evaluative criteria.

This presentation interrogates the roles of human integrity and security as drivers of the sixth extinction. When a desire for security is combined with the capacity to destroy or exclude perceived threats to that security, violence is predictable. For a privileged human today, the capacity for the violent exclusion of whatever may seem like a threat to current or future security extends to the possibility of destroying everything. Knowing that the excluded may be endangered, ecologically keystone, climate change inducing, etc. fails to signify in the accounting framework when the criteria privilege one's own current or future security. Economic measures are largely calculated based upon this kind of privileged valuing of human integrity and security. The largest parts of our economies are targeted towards things that keep our integrity (health, food production), things that keep us secure (military, insurance), things that keep us separate (houses, property), and things that reproduce these things (transport, infrastructure, education). None of the largest economic drivers relate to ecological values. My analysis will draw upon the work by Michel Serres and Deborah Bird Rose, among others, and considers modes of decision making that invite multispecies vulnerability and attentiveness.

Bionote. Kate Judith is an Environmental Humanities scholar interested in non-anthropocentric practices of meaning making, relating, and deciding. She is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Southern Queensland and has a PhD in Environmental Humanities from the University of New South Wales, Australia.

Cephalopodic Orgies, Energy Landscapes, and Shared Witnessing of Extinction

Toby Juliff

toby.juliff@utas.edu.au

University of Tasmania, Australia

For one week in June 2019, a group of 14 artists set out to Point Lowly (Barngarla Country), South Australia, to meet and observe the gathering of *Sepia apama* (Giant Cuttlefish). Set in the shallow waters of the Upper Spencer Gulf, as many as 10,000 cuttlefish congregate annually to breed amongst the temperate waters in plain sight, visible from both shore and water. Listed as 'Near Threatened' in the IUCN Red List of endangered species, the annual cuttlefish migration has brought many divers, ecologists, ethologists, and now artists, to witness, record, observe, and reflect on the deep history of global migratory oceanic patterns of cuttlefish and other cephalopods. In the biblical terms of a local dive centre, you can, "literally [...] walk into the sea off the beach and the cephalopod version of Sodom and Gomorrah is all around you" (2022).

Not far from Point Lowly is the town of Whyalla, home of a large Santos oil and gas refinery, a legacy BHP steelworks, and for more than 100 years, a large seaport. Constituting what Dolly Jørgenson will name "an energy landscape", Whyalla's industrial infrastructure has offered up its own unique aesthetic. Jørgenson reminds us that energy landscapes are spaces of experience, they are neither alien nor "out there". (Jørgenson, 2020)

This paper explores the seismic, sonic, visual, and watery entanglements of the immediately endangered cephalopod, the increasingly endangered *Homo sapien*, and the ongoing endangering extractive colonialism. Exploring the theories of hydrofeminism (Neimanis 2016), watery wave theories (Whitehouse 2013; Helmreich 2023), energy landscapes (Jørgenson 2020), and extractivist activisms (Chaterjee 2023), this paper proposes a semiology of co-authored inscriptions: more-than-human and human shared witnessing of their shared extinction amongst the sonic booms and seismic shifts of an energy landscape and cuttlefish orgy.

Bionote. Toby Juliff is Lecturer in Art at the School of Creative Arts and Media, University of Tasmania. Toby has published essays and chapters on subjects as diverse as exhibition histories of British art in the 1960s, confessional video art, and most recently, Latinx feminist sculpture.

Rebelling Against Extinction – Embodying the Threat of Becoming Extinct

Susanne Kass

susanne.kass@fsv.cuni.cz

Charles University, Czech Republic

Since 2018, the London-based activist group Extinction Rebellion (XR) have engaged in non-violent direct-action demonstrations to address the ongoing climate crisis and the sixth mass extinction event. While many environmental and climate activist groups are concerned with biodiversity loss and climate change, XR are unique in putting the threat of extinction at the very forefront of their programme. Using a broad variety of communication mediums, ranging from live and online lectures to banners, posters and street performance, the group attempts to develop a language by which to express the emotions, fears and desires that are aroused in a concerned and rebellious body politic in the face of the extinction of civilisation, nonhuman species and our own human species. This case study looks at how art and activism may become a vehicle for understanding the risk and reality of extinction in an embodied way. Climate and environmental science have provided new perspectives on our ecological relationship to the Earth and comes with a moral imperative for humanity to act on this knowledge. XR's actions show how the new condition of living with extinction are not only understood and felt but can also be actively performed. Public “die-ins” or the slow processions of the striking Red Rebel Brigade act as new rituals for feelings of collective grief and mourning. These symbolic gestures and characters provide resistance against the psychological impulse to deny the facts behind the impending risk of extinction and highlight that this risk also applies to humans. Their creative practice provides an accessible language located between science and art and provides an ethical, political, and aesthetic lens through which to bring the complex and abstract indicators of extinction into the centre of public space and focus in an intelligible form.

Bionote. Susanne Kass is a PhD researcher in Media and Communication Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. She studied conceptual practices at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague and works with performance, pedagogy, language and communication.

Cultivating Curiosity about Endangered Species through Embodied Experimental Film Practices and Neurodivergent Poetics

Marta Kucza

marta.kucza@ut.ee

University of Tartu, Estonia

Learning to notice *modes of being alive* (Morizot 2020) beyond the symbolic realm requires the invention of procedures of enquiry that mobilise imagination and deploy singular perceptual sensitivities. What art practices attend to the complexity and uniqueness of animal *modes of being alive*, without referring to their cultural symbols? How can one cultivate curiosity about unreachable or non-charismatic species?

With this paper I would like to propose that art practices based on embodiment and non-symbolic meaning-making allow us to notice and care for certain forms of animal knowing.

While looking for collaborative and situated practices that would allow me to explore animal *umwelten* (Uexküll 2010), I set up an experimental film and sound workshop with participants from Maarja village in Estonia, a supported living facility for adults labelled with various categories of neurodivergence. Our shared artistic practices include Foley art, i.e. recording sound effects for existing video using everyday objects and our bodies, as well as other techniques of embodiment drawing from fiction and estrangement, allowing us to re-materialise found footage and perform impossible encounters.

I will present excerpts of our audiovisual work on the black stork (*Ciconia nigra*) and the freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*), tracing links between the findings that our artistic process revealed, Charles Sanders Peirce's iconic and indexical sign processes (Peirce 1965), animal knowing (Kull 2014), tacit knowing (Polanyi 1969), arachnidan (Deligny 2008), and autistic rhetorics (Yergeau 2019).

Lastly, I would like to argue that extinction implies not only the disappearance of a species, but also an associated loss of its distinctive modes of knowing. Engaging with them in a fictional yet embodied manner could be an alternative to solastalgia and a form of palliation for the species driven extinct, proposed by Julia D. Gibson, allowing us to "go beyond affect, symbolism and abstraction" (Gibson 2023).

Bionote. Marta Kucza is a PhD student at the Department of Semiotics, University of Tartu. She graduated from African Studies at the University of Warsaw and Sound/Image/Culture in Brussels, an interdisciplinary laboratory merging experimental film and anthropology. She directed two documentary films and she has been working as a film curator, namely for the Riga Pasaules Film Festival. Her current research interests are ecosemiotics, neurodivergence, embodied cinema and art-based fieldwork methodologies.

Endarkenment: Reducing the Cultural Impact for the Sake of Ecosystemic Sustainability

Kalevi Kull

kalevi.kull@ut.ee

University of Tartu, Estonia

The catastrophic change that took place within the twentieth century is the tenfold increase in energy consumption per capita in the Western world – from approximately 0.6 to 6 kW per capita. Since the origin of human culture up to the end of the 19th century the increase had been only threefold, from approximately 0.2 kW to 0.6 kW per capita. The increase in individual energy consumption opened the way to human population growth and colonisation of natural communities, resulting in the wave of extinction not only species, but what is even more devastating – the natural communities together with their rich and complex semiotic networks.

Thus we understand that the 20th century was a huge mistake. Repairing it will take many centuries, but there is no time to wait. Reducing the energy consumption would mean, metaphorically, endarkenment.

The solutions require a careful holistic approach coming from ecosemiotics. On the one hand, it provides the explanation for the intrinsic value of natural living communities, and on the other hand it helps (together with ecology, sociology, economics, and other sciences) in solving the problems which appear in the processes of the transformation of ecosystems towards sustainability and decolonisation.

Enlightenment was a period towards human happiness and freedom. But it also introduced the idea that nature must be improved, and its resources exploited to great extent – which ultimately contravenes with the idea of happiness and freedom.

Thus Endarkenment could be the name for the era that hopefully begins in the 21st century. Its sense is positive – reducing the human energy input into ecosystems could stop the massive extinction of species and communities, providing them happiness and freedom. As such, it parallels with the Enlightenment.

Bionote. Kalevi Kull is Professor of Biosemiotics at the Department of Semiotics, University of Tartu, Estonia. He has worked in field ecology, theoretical biology, and semiotics. His research focuses on semiotic phenomena of life, processes responsible for diversity, umwelt, subjective time and space, semiotic approaches in biology, theory of general semiotics, history of biosemiotics, and ecosemiotics. Since 2015, he is the president of the International Society for Biosemiotic Studies. He is a co-editor of the journal *Sign Systems Studies* and of three book series (*Biosemiotics; Semiotics, Communication and Cognition; Tartu Semiotics Library*) all specializing in semiotics.

Crafting the Art of Protection: Campaigning for Sea Eagles in the Northern Baltic Sea Region a Century Ago

Simo Laakkonen

simo.laakkonen@utu.fi

University of Turku, Finland

In Finland, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, it was noticed that especially large birds of prey were rapidly becoming rare. The war of extermination carried out by bounty hunters supported by public authorities and the advisory work and propaganda produced by various organizations had already led to the extinction of the bald eagle and the collapse of the sea and golden eagle populations. The superintendent of the Helsinki Zoo estimates that in the late 1910s there were perhaps only about 10 nesting pairs of sea eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) left in Finland, and the number of nesting pairs decreased even more so in the early 1920s. The Nature Conservation Act enacted in 1923 protected several species of predatory birds but not the sea eagle – so the extinction of the sea eagle seemed almost certain in Finland at that time. In Sweden, the situation was quite similar.

Research on the sea eagle has focused particularly on the 1960s and 1970s and the period after that, when environmental toxins began to threaten the existence of this largest bird of prey in the Baltic Sea region. However, the time period before this dramatic era is not very well known despite of its importance. The political history of the early stages of the struggle for the protection of the sea eagle has been studied to some extent. However, the importance of art in this struggle has hardly been the subject of historical research. This is not a surprise, since the role of art has remained marginal in environmental historical research. In this presentation, attention is paid to the political dimensions of early environmental art, which constitutes an essential part of the environmental history of media.

This proposal flips key assumptions of the history of the protection of the sea eagle. The presentation argues that art had a key role in the campaign for the protection of this majestic bird already a century ago, in the aftermath of the horrors of the First World War. With the help of selected examples, the presentation shows which forms and genres of art were used for the sake of protecting the sea eagle in Finland and Sweden in the late 1920s. Examining both of these two countries is a natural choice, because the sea eagle has traditionally existed on the coastal zone in both countries, whose populations have largely been united by the Swedish language. The presentation examines representations related to the sea eagle and its threat of extinction in painting, newspapers, magazines, literature, and in the world's first nature documentary film about the sea eagle.

Bionote. Simo Laakkonen is currently the director of the Degree Program in Digital Culture, Landscape and Cultural Heritage at the University of Turku, Finland. He has focused on 20th century history of environmental policy-making, media, science, and technology in the Baltic Sea Region. Recently he has explored the environmental history of WWII and the Cold War that fundamentally reshaped the environment and societies around the world. His main publications in this field include the following co-edited volumes: Simo Laakkonen, Richard Tucker, Timo Vuorisalo (eds.), *The Long Shadows: A Global Environmental History of the Second World War* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2017) and Simo Laakkonen, J. R. McNeill, Richard

Tucker, Timo Vuorisalo (eds.), *The Resilient City in World War II: Urban Environmental Histories* (New York, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). Currently he is interested in the environmental history of seasons in the north.

Images of Extinction, Warped Semiosis in Times of Environmental Crisis, or the Sad Tale of the Hermit Crab

Séverine Letalleur Sommer

sletalleur@parisnanterre.fr

Université Paris Nanterre, France

In times of anthropogenic environmental degradation, powerful images focusing on small-scale individual situations may be construed as more telling than scientific forecasts. Visual representations that reach all the senses, and play on affects as well as the intellect, increase the spectators' environmental awareness and empathy by reinforcing the *aesthetic* experience (etymologically, conveying meaning more *feelingly*). By offering a fresh perspective on our altered relationship to Nature, pictures of extinction can help us grasp the paradox of the "possible and the real" that characterises the Anthropocene, as we struggle to fathom the inconceivable. This may cause an uncanny feeling of loss along with a sense of helplessness and apprehension (hence the host of neologisms coined to typify those uncanny sentiments: solastalgia, eco-anxiety, eco-paralysis, which in turn may engender a desire to reconnect with a damaged natural environment – biophilia). Those senseless images encapsulate the ontological crisis which species on the verge of extinction are incurring.

The aim of this talk is to analyse images of warped semiosis, such as that of hermit-crabs nested in plastic waste. The endearing image of the small chirping scavenger crustacean embedded in its makeshift abode is a tangible metonymic illustration of the interlocking jigsaw process at stake in semiosis; it also exemplifies how the combination of "perception images" with "effect images" in hermit crabs' *umwelten* is eerily magnified through the distorted lens of environmental deterioration. With mass tourism and plastic pollution, there are fewer empty arthropod shells on beaches, and hermit crabs therefore sometimes opt for plastic screw caps instead, thus producing in human witnesses an abnormal and literally surrealistic yet a very powerful vision, akin to Lautréamont's "chance juxtaposition of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table." In terms of semiotics, those dystopian visions are revelatory: meaning is not global and stable, but local, variable, context-specific, species-specific, to a certain extent subject-specific, as volatile as life itself.

Bionote. Senior Lecturer at the University of Paris-Nanterre in English linguistics, semiotics and word & image analysis (representation theories); currently in the process of writing a monograph on semiosis in times of environmental degradation (keywords: enunciative linguistics, image analysis, embodied cognition, enactivism, phenomenology, stylistics, eco-semiotics, biosemiotics, eco-feminism).

Contemplating Our Extinction: The Relevance of Our Non-Essentiality

Chiara Li Mandri

chiara.limandri@unipa.it

University of Palermo, Italy

Starting from a posthumanist perspective on education (Gough 2004; Snaza & Weaver 2015; Wallin 2016), this essay aims to demonstrate how imagining the extinction of the human race can be an important theoretical and educational tool to challenge the anthropocentric myth. This research proposes a hypothetical lesson for children, inviting them to contemplate the extinction of the human race as a thought experiment through the “Dialogue between a Goblin and a Gnome”, a fable written by the famous Italian poet and philosopher Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837). Due to its strong symbolic content, this fairy tale enables the activation of imagination, fostering the development of a strong critical sense in children. It encourages reflection on fundamental concepts such as the idea of deep time, the non-essential nature of human beings, and the geological and ecological impact that humans have on Earth. The final aim behind this thought experiment is to promote, through children’s imagination, hypothetical ideas of different futures for humanity.

References

- Gough, Noel 2004. RhizomANTically Becoming-Cyborg: Performing posthuman pedagogies. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 36(3): 253-265.
- Leopardi, Giacomo 2017[1824, 1837]. *Moral Fables. Followed by Thoughts* (trans. Nichols, J.G.). London: Alma Classics.
- Snaza Nathan; Weaver, John A. 2015. *Posthumanism and Educational Research*. New York: Routledge.
- Wallin, Jason J. 2016. Pedagogy at the brink of the post-anthropocene. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1-13.

Bionote. Chiara Li Mandri graduated in Philosophy from the University of Palermo with a MA thesis on the ethical project in Baruch Spinoza and Giacomo Leopardi. Her current research investigates the relationship between poetry and environmental studies, and it proposes the former as a valuable medium for raising awareness of climate change.

Shifting Shape for Connection: Dealing Solastalgia with Participatory Play

Nina Luostarinen

nloustarinen@gmail.com

Humak University of Applied Sciences, Finland

In these participatory land art workshops, nature was used as a material for play to represent the motif of metamorphosis, while participants role-played as herrings to evoke empathy. The aim was to shift the perspective from our materials, which play an active role in co-constituting conditions that evoke empathy, to observing the outcomes from a bird's-eye view. The workshops sought to demonstrate the power of collaboration by presenting an allegory of the collaboration seen in herd species such as herrings or bees. Alone, we are nothing, but with determination and a clear goal, we can create visible changes in the environment and in emotions and attitudes, such as environmental empathy. Both earlier research and this case demonstrate how ecological paradigms can be stimulated through place-based art.

These artworks were participatory workshops focusing on the concept of metamorphosis. These playful arts-based activities aimed to reveal the playful qualities and narrative layers of a place by changing individuals' perspectives and encouraging collaborative action. Simultaneously, they were experimented with as a means to address eco-anxiety. The artworks aimed to nurture place-empathy and sensuous knowledge by creating a heterotopic multisensory experience. The process in these tactile workshops demonstrated an aesthetic encounter with the landscape. Additionally, the workshop made participants realize that only a few hours of work can generate a visible change large enough to be seen from a satellite when we work together and view it from another, even surprising, perspective.

The workshops aimed to provide an example of Pihkala's (2020) quest for embodied, collective, place-based methods, and participatory action research into eco-anxiety. They demonstrated that our actions may seem insignificant when taken alone, but together we are powerful. They also demonstrated that wicked problems can be addressed playfully.

References

Pihkala, Panu 2020. Eco-Anxiety and Environmental Education, *Sustainability* 12(23):10149. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su122310149>

Based on articles/visual essays by the author:

Luostarinen, Nina 2021. Collective metamorphoses: Shifting shape for connection. In: R. Vella & M. Sarantou (eds.), *Documents of socially engaged art* (pp. 180–192). InSEA Publications.

Luostarinen, Nina 2022. Becoming bird. In: G. Pataky, M. Sato & J. Silverman (eds.), *Climate Literacy for Art Educators*, *IMAG* 13 (pp. 6–10). InSEA Publications. https://www.insea.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/IMAG_issue_13_final_doi.pdf

Luostarinen, Nina 2023. Building, believing, becoming: Participatory playful land art intervention for creating empathy and meliorism. *International Journal of Education Through Art* 19(1): 59–67. https://doi.org/10.1386/eta_00118_3

Bionote. Nina Luostarinen has a background in puppetry and animation. She works at Humak University of Applied Sciences (Finland) in the Department of Cultural Management with projects that combine art with different industries. She is also a doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Arts and Design, University of Lapland, Finland defending her dissertation in December 2023. Both her artistic work and research topic deal with adult playfulness, serendipity, and place attachment.

Mechanisms of Care: A Design Methodology for an Emerging Multispecies Paradigm

Stanislaw MacLeod

info@smacleod.com

Glasgow School of Art, Scotland

How will we design in a future characterised by care and alliances of human and more-than-human species? This is the central question posed in this paper – a suggestion for the use of creative tools and application of ethics of care to multispecies contexts. Using a derelict parcel of land as a test ground on the edge of Glasgow’s city centre, the research for this paper and following urban intervention focuses on the interdependence of the various species that occupy the site, once home to a shopping arcade but now a space of other spontaneous life. Based on a series of experimental field studies, observations and interviews, the author draws direct links between the built environment and research into strategies for different species’ adaptation and survival, using regeneration and resilience as a common ground for understanding themes of placemaking and belonging in both human and non-human worlds. By de-territorialising such spaces and acknowledging the entangled artefacts, both physical and socio-cultural produced by nostalgia and decomposition, new systems of care or caring are allowed to emerge. The final outcome of the research proposed by the paper is a series of four vernacular insect habitats built onsite, both to provoke discussion and encourage species conservation on a local level. Based on existing ecological management strategies, they also propose an experimental dimension which addresses the need for more holistic and multidisciplinary approaches towards collaborative survival.

Bionote. Stanisław (Staś) is an interdisciplinary designer and graduate of Glasgow School of Art interested in non-human design. Based on the intersection of ecology and anthropology, much of his work uses research-driven methodologies to translate experiences and complex systems into ideas, stories and objects which embody them.

Imagining Extinction: Umwelts, Hybrids, and Literary Metaphors in Jaan Kaplinski's *Leavers* (2009)

Timo Maran

timo.maran@ut.ee

University of Tartu, Estonia

An important mission of environmental humanities in times of global environmental crisis is to describe the potential of cultural texts to provoke ecological recovery. In this presentation, I will analyse the structures of artistic texts that have the potential to transform human attitudes towards the environment. The use of conceptual metaphors – and in particular text-wide extended metaphors – in literature can be one mechanism through which nature literature texts can change human values and behaviour. Extended metaphors manifest themselves in the literary text as a whole whereas the parts of the text carry different aspects of the metaphor, supporting or reinforcing the meaning.

I analyse the works of the Estonian writer, poet, and publicist Jaan Kaplinski. His book *Leavers* („Lahkujad“, 2009) contains three dystopian narratives from the point of view of human-animal genetic hybrids: the human dog, the human gibbon, and the human raven. Kaplinski's work can be read as a description of the disintegrating relationship between humans and the natural environment in the context of the ongoing mass extinction of species. Describing the world from a first-person point of view reveals the depth of the disconnections in one's Umwelt. A mutated body radically transforms the way we see the world. Kaplinski's artistic model is about destabilising the boundary between organism and environment, whereby the bodily deformation and the impoverishment of the environment become one and the same phenomenon.

It has been difficult for humans to relate to species extinction because the process is seen as distant and unknowable. Kaplinski uses the bodily deformations of mutants as an extended metaphor to make the environmental crisis tangible. The logical structure of the extended metaphor used by Kaplinski would be as follows: 1) We are mutants, 2) because we destroy the nature of which we are a part, 3) therefore, the destruction of nature is a self-distortion and self-mutilation. The metaphorical transfer of meaning occurs between the human body and the environmental sphere. *Leavers* is Kaplinski's critique of the modernist project, a tragic story of humanity's failure perceived from within.

References

Kaplinski, Jaan 2009. *Lahkujad* [*Leavers*]. Tallinn: Tänapäev.

Bionote. Timo Maran is an Estonian semiotician and poet. Maran holds a position of Professor of Ecosemiotics and Environmental Humanities at the Department of Semiotics, University of Tartu, Estonia. His research interests are theory and applications of ecosemiotics; ecocriticism and Estonian nature writing; and semiotics of biological mimicry. His publications include the monograph *Mimicry and Meaning: Structure and Semiotics of Biological Mimicry* (Springer, 2017) and *Ecosemiotics. The Study of Signs in Changing Ecologies* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

Sensing Extinction and Creating Awareness: Solastalgia as an Emotional ‘Contact Zone’ Between the Human and Non-human World.

Alena Mathis

rebekka-alena.mathis@uni-bamberg.de

University of Bamberg, Germany

The current polycrisis is a crisis of the relationship between what is still conventionally referred to as nature and society, and thus a crisis of the boundary itself constructed between the spheres of the human and non-human. This is shaking the ontological security of people worldwide and is manifesting itself in a growing number of “psychoterratic” syndromes (Albrecht 2020, 2005; Galway *et al.* 2019; Fischer, Sörries 2016; Albrecht *et al.* 2007). Caused by externally induced landscape change (e.g. resource extraction, Albrecht *et al.* 2007; environmental pollution, Testoni *et al.* 2019; temperature and landscape changes such as extended periods of heat and drought, Kumar, Kumar, Sarthi 2021; rising sea levels, Philipps, Murphy 2021; McNamara, Westoby 2011), solastalgia stands for the parallelization of environmental degradation with human health and can refer to both the present and the future as a sense of loss (Pearson *et al.* 2023; Albrecht 2020, 2019, 2006; Albrecht *et al.* 2007). As a painful emotional insight into the very real connection between the supposedly separable spheres of the human and non-human, solastalgia goes far beyond “mourning nature” (Cunsolo, Landman 2017). It is about realising what is “home” (Richardson 2019; Butler, Sarlöv-Herlin 2019; Loupa Ramos *et al.* 2019; Butler *et al.* 2018) and about identifying conflicting cultural values – aesthetic demands, identity-forming habits, ideologically charged notions of nature, private and economic interests in use –, actors and power relations associated with a “cherished landscape” (Galway *et al.* 2019: 11; Kennedy 2016; Albrecht 2010; Gill 2003). Negotiating what is “good” and “bad” has the potential to both strengthen and divide affected communities (Bartlett, Chinna 2018; Honneth 2014; Stobbelaar, Pedroli 2011; Devine-Wright 2009). In any case, however, the solastalgic experience represents a “contact zone” (Haraway 2008) that in an essential manner creates awareness – for the vital interdependencies of the human and non-human world, for the necessity of designing more-than-human “refugia” (Tsing 2015) as well as for mourning the losses itself as a potentially decisive step towards a sustainable future (Gillespie 2020; van Dooren, Rose 2013; Albrecht 2010).

References³

Albrecht, Glenn A. 2020. Negating Solastalgia. An Emotional Revolution from the Anthropocene to the Symbiocene. *American Imago*, 77, 9-30. doi: 10.1353/aim.2020.0001.

Albrecht, Glenn A. 2019. *Earth Emotions. New Words for a New World*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press.

Albrecht, Glenn A. 2010. Solastalgia and the Creation of New Ways of Living. In: S. Pilgrim and J. Pretty, *Nature and Culture. Rebuilding lost connections* (217-234). London, Washington: Earthscan.

Albrecht, Glenn A., Sartore, G.-M., Connor, L., Higginbotham, N., Freeman, S., Kelly, B., Stain, H., Tonna, A. and Pollard, G. 2007. Solastalgia. The distress caused by environmental change. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 15 (Suppl. 1), 95-98. doi: 10.1080/10398560701701288.

³ Author’s note: Non-English titles are translated to English by the author.

- Albrecht, Glenn A. 2006. Solastalgia. *Alternatives Journal*, 32 (4/5), 34-36.
- Albrecht, Glenn A. 2005. "Solastalgia": a new concept in health and identity. *PAN: Philosophy Activism Nature*, 3, 44-59.
- Bartlett, Alison and Chinna, N. 2018. Highways, activism and solastalgia: Poetic responses to Roe 8. *TEXT*, 22 (1).
- Butler, Andrew and Sarlöv-Herlin, I. 2019. Changing landscape identity – practice, plurality, and power. *Landscape Research*, 44 (3), 271-277. doi: 10.1080/01426397.2019.1589774.
- Butler, Andrew, Sarlöv-Herlin, I., Knez, I., Ångman, E., Ode Sang, Å. and Åkerskog, A. 2018. Landscape identity, before and after a forest fire. *Landscape Research*, 43 (6), 878-889. doi: 10.1080/01426397.2017.1344205.
- Cunsolo, Ashlee and Landman, Karen E. (eds.) 2017. *Mourning Nature. Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief*. Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Devine-Wright, Patrick 2009. Rethinking NIMBYism: The Role of Place Attachment and Place Identity in Explaining Placeprotective Action. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 19, 426– 441, doi: 10.1002/casp.1004.
- Fischer, N. and Sörries, R. 2016. Epilogue: The new view of dying, death and mourning. In: M. Buchner and A. Götz, *Transmortale. Dying, death and mourning in recent research* (249-252). Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag.
- Galway, Lindsay P., Beery, T., Jones-Casey, K. and Tasala, K. 2019. Mapping the Solastalgia Literature: A Scoping Review Study. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health*, 16, 2662: 1-24. doi: 10.3390/ijerph16152662.
- Gill, Bernhard 2003. *Nature in dispute. World views in technological and environmental conflicts*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien.
- Gillespie, Sally 2020. *Climate crisis and consciousness. Re-imagining our world and ourselves*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Haraway, Donna 2008. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis, London: Minneapolis University Press.
- Honneth, Axel 2014. *The struggle for recognition: on the moral grammar of social conflicts. With a new afterword*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Kennedy, Amanda 2016. A Case of Place: Solastalgia Comes Before the Court. *PAN: Philosophy, Activism, Nature*, 12, 23–34.
- Kumar, Pawan, Kumar, N. and Sarthi, P. P. 2021. Feeling solastalgia: A study of the effects of changing climate in rural India. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 24, 208-220, doi: 10.1111/ajsp.12473.
- Loupa Ramos, Isabel, Bernardo, F., Carvalho Ribeiro, S. and Van Eetvelde, V. 2016. Landscape identity: Implications for policy making. *Land Use Policy*, 53, 36-43. doi: 10.1016/j.landusepol.2015.01.030.
- McNamara, Karen E. and Westoby, R. 2011. Solastalgia and the Gendered Nature of Climate Change: An Example from Erub Island, Torres Strait. *EcoHealth*, 8, 233–236. doi: 10.1007/s10393-011- 0698-6.
- Pearson, Jasmine, Guy, Jackson and McNamara, Karen E. 2023. Climate-driven losses to knowledge systems and cultural heritage: A literature review exploring the impacts on Indigenous and local cultures. *The Anthropocene Review*, 10 (2), 343-366. doi: 10.1177/20530196211005482.
- Phillips, Christopher and Murphy, C. 2021. Solastalgia, place attachment and disruption: insights from a coastal community on the front line. *Regional Environmental Change*, 21 (46), 1-14. doi: 10.1007/s10113-021-01778-y.
- Richardson, Johanna 2019. *Place and Identity. The Performance of Home*. London: Routledge.
- Stobbelaar, Derk Jan and Pedroli, B. 2011. Perspectives on Landscape Identity: A Conceptual Challenge, *Landscape Research*, 36 (3), 321-339. doi: 10.1080/01426397.2011.564860.

Testoni, Ines, Mauchigna, L., Marinoni, G. L., Zamperini, A., Bucuta, M. and Dima, G. 2019. Solastalgia's mourning and the slowly evolving effect of asbestos pollution: A qualitative study in Italy. *Helyion*, 5 (e03024). doi: 10.1016/j.helyion.2019.e03024.

Tsing, Anna 2015. Feral biologies. *Inaugural conference: Anthropological visions of sustainable futures*. Organised by Brightman, M. and J. Lewis. London: Centre for the Anthropology of Sustainability (CAOS), University College London.

Van Dooren, T. and Rose, D. (10.11.2013). *Keeping Faith with Death: Mourning and De-Extinction*. (Online available at: <https://www.thomvandooren.org/2013/11/02/keeping-faith-with-death-mourning-and-de-extinction/>, accessed on 11/12/2023).

Bionote. I, Alena Mathis (European Ethnology PhD candidate, Sociology M.A., Social Work B.A.), work as a research assistant at the University of Bamberg, European Ethnology, focus on Intangible Cultural Heritage. My dissertation project – an empirical investigation based in the Alps – possibly forms one of the first German-speaking research contributions to solastalgia.

Communicating Extinction

Nelly Mäekivi

nelly.maekivi@ut.ee

University of Tartu, Estonia

Ongoing biodiversity crisis has reached every part of our shared planet. This also prompts discussions about reevaluating conservation policies, implementing sustainable practices, fostering public awareness and engaging in global collaborative efforts in limiting the decline. This presentation focuses on communicating the loss of biodiversity which still has the tendency to focus on large charismatic species, evoking affectionate sentiments. Though this strategy is valid to a certain degree, it brings about limitations and biases in understanding the broader challenges of biodiversity loss, such as the idea of “animal blindness” and the more comprehensive “plant blindness”. It is argued that these concepts also do not fully encompass the depth of the problem. By proposing the (metaphorical) notion of “life blindness,” attention is turned beyond the mere recognition and acceptance of other organisms. Life blindness signifies a broader deficiency – our inability to perceive the intricate connections that exist among these organisms and their relationships with each other, biotic and abiotic systems, and ourselves. Life blindness is blindness to interdependence and to the contingency of the world. Finally, this presentation tries to explore how to communicate extinction while considering the phenomenon of life blindness.

Bionote. Nelly Mäekivi is a researcher at the department of semiotics at University of Tartu, Estonia. Her interests lie in intra- and interspecies communication, ethology, anthropology, and human representations of other species. Her main research focus lies in analyzing hybrid environments and species conservation as multifaceted research objects by applying zoo-, eco-, and cultural semiotics.

How to Help Wild Animals to Remember Better in the Face of Anthropogenic Disruption?

Oscar Miyamoto

miyamotounam@gmail.com

University of Tartu, Estonia

Cultural habits, shared knowledge, and arbitrary codes. These zoosemiotic features are key for the survival of complex animal societies, which depend on forms of memory that are not genetically inherited but learned during a lifetime. For example, some matriarch elephants teach younger members of the herd a traditional route and methods to find water during drought times in Africa (Fishlock *et al.* 2016).

Under this cognitive view, it is crucial to prevent animal interpreters to fall “victims” of some forms of misremembering (both subjective and intersubjective) due to manmade environmental changes. This presentation will explore a preliminary typology of animal memory “errors”, analogous to the human typology proposed by Michaelian (2016: 1), based on “the accuracy of the memory representation, the reliability of the memory process, and the internality (with respect to the remembering subject) of that process”.

First, in the case of *veridical relearning*, I will address how some animals may relearn *true* dicisigns to navigate dangerous urban spaces (e.g. not to get hurt in a highway). Second, in the case of *falsidical relearning*, I will explain how animal interpreters may relearn *false* dicisigns and develop more suspicious or cautious attitudes in response (e.g. in deception strategies, when they confuse food sources with pollutants). And third, in *falsidical confabulation*, I will capitalize on already existing applied umwelt studies (e.g. Magnus, Mäekivi 2023) to describe mnemonic strategies for the relocation of endangered species, and for the development of better artificial but realistic habitats for captive populations.

Just like human memory, I will conclude, animal memory is fallible. This means that, instead of making “information processing errors”, animal interpreters are constantly testing the validity of their own memories, as in an inquiry or trial-error process between sensorial experiences and embodied affordances. This perspective demands discussing ecosystems beyond mere physical factors, and framing extinction as a mnemonic disruption of the ecosemiosphere (Maran 2021).

References

Fishlock, Victoria; Caldwell, Christine; Lee, Phyllis C. 2016. Elephant resource-use traditions. *Animal Cognition* 19(2): 429–433. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10071-015-0921-x>.

Magnus, Riin; Mäekivi, Nelly 2023. Ecosemiotic Analysis of Species Reintroduction: the Case of European Mink (*Mustela lutreola*) in Estonia. *Biosemiotics* 16(2): 239–258. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12304-023-09530-1>.

Maran, Timo 2021. The Ecosemiosphere is a Grounded Semiosphere. A Lotmanian Conceptualization of Cultural-Ecological Systems. *Biosemiotics* 14(2): 519–530. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12304-021-09428-w>.

Michaelian, Kourken 2016. Confabulating, Misremembering, Relearning: The Simulation Theory of Memory and Unsuccessful Remembering. *Frontiers in Psychology* 7. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01857>. (5 January, 2023).

Bionote. Oscar Miyamoto's main research interests are animal episodic memory and the visual pragmatics of scientific diagrams. Being a science journalist by training, he aims at using semiotics as an interdisciplinary theory to advance and communicate evidence-based research. His latest published work is featured in *Biosemiotics*, and his latest journalistic work is featured in *Symmetry*.

Caste Injustices and Vulture Extinction in India

Rahul Murdeshwar

rahulmurdeshwar1@gmail.com

University of Tartu, Estonia

The alarming disappearance of vultures in India and other parts of South Asia due primarily to inadvertent use of toxic chemicals in veterinary practices (see Prakash *et al.* 2019, also Pain *et al.* 2008) has brought attention to how their functional extinction impacts human social groups, practices, health and livelihoods. Vultures are deeply entangled in processes of co-becoming and lived experiences especially among poorer, cattle-dependent communities (van Dooren 2010). In India, human social labour in manual scavenging, sanitation, and the disposal of cattle carcasses has historically been stigmatised as undignified according to the logic of Hindu caste hegemony (see Lee 2021), and these taboos have ostracised and repressed the mostly poor and Dalit communities who have historically been the social groups involved in waste disposal in Indian society. Hegemonic caste discourse can be revealed through a semiotic approach to Dalit religious and social self-representational discourse (see Lee 2021). In Dalit literature, the role of the animal has remained polyvalent (see Mukhopadhyay 2021). Vultures, just like other scavengers, are portrayed as “friends of Dalits” in the literary aesthetics of humanist Dalit realism (Gupta 2016). However, as Sunder (2018) notes, even in Dalit literature which subverts the ideal of Hindu upper-caste purity with the profanization of the cattle carcass as “an abject surplus that stands in uncanny opposition to the Brahmanical figure” of the sacred cow, the logic of caste exclusion remains intact because other non-human scavengers like rats, vultures, crows and dogs are posed as adversarial competitors in interspecies struggle. Thus, the social positions and destinies of both human and non-human scavengers are determined by an exclusionary, differential and repressive logic of caste, and so solving environmental problems in India requires an addressal and annihilation of the logic of caste (see Prasad 2022). In India, the extinction of vultures should serve as a haunting reminder of the conditions that reproduce caste atrocities and multispecies injustices (Celermajer, Chao 2023) in the lived experiences of entangled more-than-human communities.

References

- Chao, Sophie; Celermajer, Danielle 2023. Introduction: Multispecies Justice. *Cultural Politics* 19(1): 1–17. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/17432197-10232431>
- Gupta, Alpana 2016. Dalit Aesthetics: Theory and Praxis. *International Journal of English Literature, Language and Skills* 5(2): 24–33.
- Mukhopadhyay, Aniruddha 2021. From Worse than Dogs to Heroic Tigers: Situating the Animal in Dalit Autobiographies. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 44(4): 756–771.
- Prakash, V.; Galligan, T.; Chakraborty, S.; Dave, R.; Kulkarni, M.; Prakash, N.; Shringarpure, R.; Ranade, S.; Green, R. 2019. Recent changes in populations of Critically Endangered Gyps vultures in India. *Bird Conservation International* 29(1): 55–70.
- Pain, D.; Bowden, C.; Cunningham, A.; Cuthbert, R.; Das, D.; Gilbert, M. *et al.* 2008. The race to prevent the extinction of South Asian vultures. *Bird Conservation International* 18(S1):S30–S48.
- Prasad, Indulata 2022. Towards Dalit Ecologies. *Environment and Society* 13(1): 98–120.

Lee, Joel G. 2021. *Deceptive majority: Dalits, Hinduism, and underground religion*. Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Sunder, Jason 2018. Religious Beef: Dalit Literature, Bare Life, and Cow Protection in India. *Interventions* 21(3): 337-353.

van Dooren, Thom 2010. Vultures and Their People in India: Equity and Entanglement in a Time of Extinctions. *Manoa* 22(2): 130-145.

Bionote. Rahul Murdeshwar is a student of semiotics at the University of Tartu, Estonia. With a background in anthropology and qualitative research, his forthcoming thesis will examine retro and nostalgia in youth and pop consumer culture.

For an Aesthetics of the Living in Times of Extinction: The Role of Art, or the Art of Getting to Know Other Living Beings

Joshua de Paiva

joshua.depaiva@gmail.com

Sorbonne University, France

While some contemporary artists such as Brandon Ballengée or Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg have focused several works on addressing extinction *per se*, exploring affective dynamics of loss and the creation of symbols or rituals for the collective mourning of extinct species; others, such as Tomás Saraceno or Marguerite Humeau, create the conditions for an encounter with other living beings who are (still) present around us – spiders or “weeds” – but mostly go unnoticed in our daily lives. These encounters with non-humans, who appear to be invited to live their own life in the exhibition spaces, have the potential to transform our modes of attention, and could be of significance as we face a major biodiversity crisis. I am proposing to take seriously the relational and experiential dimension of this crisis, which is *also* a crisis of sensibility and attention to the living (in quantity and quality), as the philosopher Baptiste Morizot has stressed. This is partly due to what conservation biologists, following the lepidopterist Robert M. Pyle, have called an “extinction of the experience” of nature, that is, a loss of direct contact with non-humans in ever more anthropized landscapes, which partly explains the lack of concern and action for their preservation. Exploring what might be at stake in sensible encounters with non-human beings in an artistic context, and how they might nurture our receptivity for future encounters outside of it, I aim to question the idea that art ought to be “an-aesthetic”, following the art historian Paul Ardenne’s term, should it play any role in times of ecological upheaval and species extinction. In doing so, I am inviting for a reconsideration of the potential roles of art, and of what could be called an “aesthetics of the living” in times of extinction, defined as an “art of getting to know” other living beings.

Bionote. Joshua de Paiva (born 1993, lives in Paris) holds a PhD in aesthetics and philosophy of arts from Sorbonne University (Paris), where he defended his doctoral thesis titled *For an aesthetics of the living. A philosophical inquiry into the encounters with living beings in contemporary art* in November 2023.

Extinction Refusal and the Empirical Death of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker

Pamela C. Perrimon

perrimon@usc.edu

University of Southern California, USA.

Last seen by Don Eckelberry in 1944, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker is a ghost species that dominates extinction narratives in the southern United States. Since Eckelberry's sighting countless encounters with the bird have been documented but remain unverified. Thus, in 2021, after almost 80 years without a sighting, the US Fish and Wildlife Service proposed the bird's removal from the Endangered Species Act, citing probable extinction. Fish and Wildlife sourced their assessment from the IUCN's Red List of Endangered Species. The bird's inclusion to the list in 1988 was part of a mass import of species, when the project began to expand to an encyclopedia of life. The woodpecker's presence in the Red List is one of contradictory assessments and shifting taxonomic categories, which undermined future assessments of the bird, weakening its case for continued life.

The Ivory-bill's ambivalent assessments and contradictory nature in the IUCN highlights the lack of empirical knowledge produced about the bird. The variables and conditions of life of the Ivory-bill are too debatable to make irrefutable claims. Thus, the history of the Ivory-bill is incompatible with the assessment methods of the database. Its social life is instead based on intimate and irreproducible interactions with human communities: the stuff of amateur and enthusiast interactions with the space and environment of the elusive bird. The Ivory-bill lives today as a composite of stories that bring in affective landscapes, protagonists, and settings, rather than the empirical population assessments.

This work traces the conflicting narratives of the Ivory-bill and how this bifurcation led to the amateur/expert fallout that has catapulted the bird into the public eye from 2021 to the present. Currently, the Ivory-bill remains listed in the ESA after a citizen campaign rallied against the USFWS proposal to delist.

Bionote. Pamela Perrimon is a doctoral candidate in Communication at USC Annenberg. Her research focuses on the ways extinction narratives crop up in public life and what social stakes undergird those narratives, which species are worthy of remembrance, and how they are mobilized in public space.

Recovery on Ruins: A Zoo Space Between Life and Death

Oleksii Popovych

alexpopovichofficial@gmail.com

University of Tartu, Estonia.

What can a multispecies space mean when most of it is wiped out by aerial bombing? What can a multispecies environment become when all that is left are indexes of destruction (Björkvall 2022) and memories of those left alive? In 2022, workers and volunteers had to evacuate around 6000 animals from Feldman Ecopark, a zoo in the Kharkiv region of Ukraine. While most animals were saved, the zoo space was destroyed almost completely. Later, the Ecopark administration decided to rebuild it.

This presentation will examine how Ecopark represented itself on social media between November 2022 and June 2023 – a period of demining, rubble clearing, and future planning on the ruins haunted by stubbornly present absences (Whale, Ginn 2017). I argue that this period illustrates how spaces can oscillate between being “controlled” and “wild” (Parlebas 2013) and between being architecture and non-architecture (McMurtrie 2017). I also focus on the ways in which representations of particular actions (repetition of traditions, elaboration of plans, or even a certain type of walking) can re-establish and project into the future the meaning of the space as organized, living and owned, even on the background of devastated buildings and in the absence of permanent inhabitants. Feldman Ecopark is an example of an effective semiotic recovery – of a story that insistently mobilized semiotic resources (words, bodies, affects, memories, objects) to overcome trauma and materialize an imagined future.

References

Björkvall, Anders; Archer, Arlene 2022. Semiotics of destruction: traces on the environment. *Visual Communication* 21(2): 218-236.

Whale, Helen; Ginn, Franklin 2017. In the Absence of Sparrows. In: A. Consulo Willox, & K. Landman (eds.), *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief* (pp. 92-116). McGill-Queens University Press.

Parlebas, Pierre 2013. Motor praxeology: A new scientific paradigm. *Playing fields: Power, practice, and passion in sport*, 127-144.

McMurtrie, Robert J. 2017. *The Semiotics of Movement in Space: A User's Perspective*. Routledge.

Bionote. Oleksii Popovych is a Master's student of semiotics at the University of Tartu. His main research interests are animal agency, human-animal relations, and zoosemiotics.

Ending the “World”

Ott Puumeister

ott.puumeister@ut.ee

University of Tartu, Estonia

So be it, let the world end. Here I am speaking about the concept “world” that signifies the whole, the container filled with living beings and their ways of acting and thinking. This world commonly has one master, the human, without whom it is almost impossible to imagine other types, styles, modes of existence. To clear up – or to decolonize – imagination, it is thus necessary to get rid of the “world”. Then all the “left-overs” that remain after the end might have the possibility for self-determination, for populating imagination. As Claire Colebrook has said, Gilles Deleuze’s and Félix Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* is one such attempt to think of styles of existence without the world. Life is here no longer thought of as being contained in the world but as the very process for constructing the Earth. Thus, processes such as de- and reterritorialization, lines of flight and articulation, segmentation, repetition, multiplication, etc., gain the upper hand. *A Thousand Plateaus* is, from this perspective, an attempt to think about what remains when the world ends. The short reply is that life itself remains in all its multiplicity – and when we wish to defend this diversity, it is necessary to end the “world” that tends to reduce it.

Bionote. Ott Puumeister (b. 1985) is a research fellow of semiotics in Tartu, Estonia. Wrote his doctoral thesis about biopolitics, currently reading and thinking about political theory that is not limited to non-inhumans.

Disruption & Extinction Rebellion's Strategy to Fight Mass Extinction

Anand Raja

Anandraja89@rediffmail.com

Prof. Rajendra Singh (Rajju Bhaiya) University, India

The problem of mass extinction exists at two levels: in the real world, where the mass extinction is taking place and in the world of mass media and social media, where information about the problem is communicated. While tangible efforts in the real world can stop extinction, language can spread information about the issue, campaign for solutions and convey doubt about what has been achieved. The problem not only exists at these two levels; it is also being solved at them.

The strategies to force governments to bring immediate action can go further. Mass extinction is being communicated, but innovation can make it even more visible. Such visibility can happen when the campaigners start disrupting the daily life and functioning of ordinary people, governments, corporations and the like to force them into realising the scale of the problem and take remedial action. The international civil society group Extinction Rebellion, which fights ecological extinction, is practising such stratagems, around whose strategies this paper will focus.

These strategies force people, governments and corporations to confront the problem, which is the 'Other' of their happy, comfortable, and middle-class lives. This 'Other' is the extinction of quite a few species, biodiversity and possibly humanity itself, which is one of the species on the planet. Looking at the impact of the strategies of Extinction Rebellion can provide essential lessons about how governments and corporations can fight extinction and how civil society and the people can turn the tide against extinction.

Bionote. Dr Anand Raja is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the Prof. Rajendra Singh (Rajju Bhaiya) University, Prayagraj, India. He has been practising Sociology and Semiotics for the last seven years, pulling together Social Theory and semiotics to investigate contemporary social politics in India.

Umwelt Endlings

Silver Rattasepp

silver.rattasepp@ut.ee

University of Tartu, Estonia

Somewhere in the Pacific Ocean there lives a whale called 52 Blue, the name referring to the fact that the calls of the whale are at 52 hertz, which is significantly higher in pitch than those of other whale species living in the same region. Thus incapable of being heard by other whales and therefore also never receiving a response, 52 Blue has been called the world's loneliest whale.

It has been remarked that as far as umwelts are concerned, extinction is not the disappearance of a species, but of a world. To quote Vinciane Despret, "When a being is no more, the world narrows all of a sudden, and a part of reality collapses. Each time an existence disappears, it is a piece of the universe of sensations that fades away."

In much of biology and ecology, the focus is on the species and the population, and thus extinction, too, is what happens to species and populations. In the human realm, however, the loss of every individual is a tragedy. In umwelt theory too, there has been some debate about the relations between the umwelt of a species and that of an individual, the umwelt as laid down by the capacities of a species, and the umweb (to borrow a newly coined term from Kalevi Kull) of the particular and the experiential. A somewhat speculative question may arise at this point: what is extinction, if it is anything, on an individual level?

An endling is the last living individual of an already extinct species. This presentation wants to ask: are there umwelt endlings, the umwelts of the last individual representatives of an already extinct world? Can we conclude anything from the umwelt of 52 Blue?

Bionote. Silver Rattasepp is a researcher at the Department of Semiotics, University of Tartu. His research interests encompass umwelt studies and animal studies more broadly, science and technology studies, and varieties of new materialism and posthumanism. Current research involves inquiring if and how the diverse forms of animal knowings and subjectivities can inform various philosophical issues.

Interspecies Social Sculpture: We are More than Us

Jane Remm

jane.remm@artun.ee

Tallinn University and the Estonian Academy of Arts, Estonia

The presentation introduces “interspecies social sculpture” as an approach to observe and imagine co-existence with other species and the extinction of species, specimens and habitats. The presentation is based on my artistic research case-study “Interspecies social sculpture”. The case study combines: 1) citizens’ nature protection by observing and increasing biodiversity in a garden and a forest in the South-Estonian countryside; 2) artistic observation of co-existence and co-creation with other species and 3) valuing the aesthetics of interweaving, decay and invisibility. Those three approaches are used to explore the potential of artistic strategies for observing and raising awareness about extinction.

The case-study “Interspecies social sculpture” is a platform for engagement, dialogue, and transformation between species, highlighting the interconnectedness and interdependence of all living beings. I initiate interventions in the garden to support biodiversity and interspecies co-creation, as well as social activities for humans, such as walks, talks and artistic activities. If social sculpture (a term advocated by Joseph Beuys) underlined the transformative potential of art in reshaping society and the environment, I experiment with expanding the boundaries of our society and incorporating non-human communities to our sense of “us”. The personal sense of interconnectedness with non-humans is crucial for creating contacts with them as well as noticing someone missing. We can only notice the extinction of those whom we have seen existing. Besides being an ecological and social question, extinction is also an aesthetic one – whom do we notice and find attractive, to what do we give meaning, what kind of beauty we value – does the extinction of species matter in our aesthetic realm? My practice-based approach seeks for ways to create personally meaningful relations with non-humans, to notice the unnoticeable and appreciate the aesthetics of irregularity, decay and invisibility, by phenomenological drawing, imagining and visual story-telling and symbolic methods of art.

Bionote. **Jane Remm** is an artist and art educator. She is a PhD student at the Estonian Academy of Arts, and lecturer in art didactics at Baltic Film, Media and Arts School, Tallinn University. Her creative practice focuses on the representation of experiences of nature, communication and co-creation with non-human neighbours.

Extinction as Progress: Hookworm Eradication as a Signifier of Progress in the Late-Colonial British Caribbean, 1914-1936

Jonathan David Roberts

bsjdr@leeds.ac.uk

University of Leeds, UK

Extinction is typically defined as a negative loss, and discussed within frameworks of mourning, elegy and memorialisation. But this framework is rarely applied to parasites, even parasites such as the soil-transmitted hookworm and the waterborne guinea worm, which are themselves animals. Case studies of “eradication” and “control” programmes directed against hookworm in the early 20th century Caribbean reveal subjective perceptions of extinction as a mark of social, civilizational and sanitary progress. In Jamaica, public health workers such as the Rockefeller Foundation’s Benjamin Washburn anticipated (but never realised) the extinction of hookworm. Hookworm’s extinction – its disappearance from the list of menaces to public health and economic productivity – was anticipated as a signifier of the hygienic and public health progress that Jamaica was making. Hookworm was expected to fade away with the advent of a liberal hygienic modernity. Extinction constituted not a loss, but a gain in health and social progress. This paralleled the anticipated (and again never realised) extinction of folk medicine, which Washburn and others felt would naturally die off as allegedly superior “modern” biomedicine advanced and became accessible across Jamaica. By contrast, in the Windward Isles Association (St Lucia, St Vincent and Grenada), failure to eradicate hookworm – failure to induce its extinction – was seen as a social failure of “natives” to behave in an adequately sanitary manner, and hence a failure of the colonial civilising mission. In St Vincent, high re-infection rates among those previously treated – that is, hookworm’s re-entry into previously dewormed bodies – was taken to signify the failure of the eradication campaign, which was shut down in response to post-treatment reinfection in 1918. In late colonial public health programmes we are confronted with a worldview where the local or global extinction of problematic species was not only desirable, but pursued as a mark of social progress.

Bionote. Jon is a third-year PhD candidate in biology and history at the University of Leeds. He studies extinction and entanglements between parasites, environment and society through attempts to eradicate and control hookworm disease in early 20th century British Caribbean and Cornwall.

“Almost Certainly Extinct”: Pedagogies of Hope and the Performative Power of Extinction

Garth Sabo

sabogart@msu.edu

Michigan State University, USA

To declare something extinct is to wield substantial performative power of the type J. L. Austin articulated in his seminal *How to Do Things with Words* lectures, for in many cases naming a species extinct redirects conservation resources away from it in such a way that its disappearance, if not yet complete, is assured. This is surely why such declarations tend to be so deliberative, as seen when the United States Fish and Wildlife Service finally declared the ivory-billed woodpecker extinct on 29 September 2021 despite decades of speculation about the species’ survival; at least as early as 1942, the American ornithologist Arthur Allen had bemoaned the species’ inevitable death as “the greatest tragedy in nature.” Extinction texts have navigated the ambiguous space between suggestion and declaration in a range of ways, and this project explores several methods for naming extinction. For example, prior to the USFWS’s official declaration, national birding guides avoided definitive statements about the ivory-billed woodpecker’s status, which surely drove the description of the species in the 2020 edition of the *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America* as “Almost certainly extinct.” This power can also be wielded in reverse, as modern readers notice when reading W. S. Merwin’s 1967 poem “For a Coming Extinction,” which is addressed to the gray whale – an animal that is not only not extinct but in fact is now listed as a species of least concern. By exploring cultural examples such as these, this project aims for a pedagogical approach to this topic that reflects the grim realities of the extinction crisis while maintaining an orientation toward action and hope for the future.

Bionote. Garth Sabo is an assistant professor in the Center for Integrative Studies in the Arts and Humanities at Michigan State University, where he teaches interdisciplinary courses on the literature of extinction, climate fiction, and birding as a lens for cultural analysis, among others.

Extinction in Public

Hannah Stark

hannah.stark@utas.edu.au

University of Tasmania

Extinction occurs within a complex affective economy in which a range of negative emotions are expressed and exchanged: rage, hopelessness, fear, grief, anxiety, desolation, trauma, loneliness. Grief has emerged as a dominant and powerful emotion in contemporary environmental discourse. This project aims to conceptualise eco-grief as a cultural and political phenomenon with a public life. In this way it builds on the framing of eco- and climate anxiety, climate trauma and pre-traumatic stress disorder, Anthropocene disorder, and solastalgia, which pathologise grief as a private emotion within individual psychology. Offering a different account of how emotions circulate and are exchanged, this project draws on the work of Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Ann Cvetkovich, and Nicole Seymour to examine how public affect can act as a potent catalyst for environmental action. In this way, this project finds a sense of hope for the dynamic public cultures formed in and through the extinction crisis.

Bionote. Hannah Stark is Associate Professor of English at the University of Tasmania. She is the author of *Feminist Theory After Deleuze*, and the co-author of *The Theory of Love: Ideals, Limits, Futures*. She has edited a number of books and special issues, most recently *Extinction and Memorial Culture: Reckoning with Species Loss in the Anthropocene*. She has been a visiting fellow at the University of Edinburgh and in 2023 will be a visiting fellow at the University of Oulu.

Estonian Forests and the Transmediality of Solastalgia

Elin Sütiste

elin.sytiste@ut.ee

University of Tartu, Estonia

This presentation explores the transmedial formation of solastalgia, or the perception of loss arising from the disappearance of familiar environments, in the grassroots movement Eesti Metsa Abiks (Estonian Forest Aid). Born in 2016 in response to widespread dissatisfaction with Estonian forestry policy, Eesti Metsa Abiks strives to bring logging activities into alignment with the sustainability of the forests as a living environment for various species and to elevate the influence of nature-friendly stakeholders to match that of the industry.

The term “solastalgia,” coined by environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht in 2005, describes the distress experienced by those witnessing significant forced transformations in their home environments. While for Albrecht, an important aspect of solastalgia was its psychological impact often resulting in actual psychological illness, this presentation moves away from the focus on pathology to explore the transmedial formation of the feeling of loss.

Diverging from early conceptualizations of transmediality that focused primarily on content distribution strategies in entertainment industries (e.g. Kinder 1991, Jenkins 2003, 2006), in recent years transmediality has found increasing applications in non-fiction contexts, such as transmedia journalism and activism (Hancox 2018; Rampazzo Gambarato 2018). Viewing transmediality as an inherent characteristic of culture, where texts, despite their diverse media forms, coalesce into “mental wholes” (Trop 2008), this presentation explores how the framing of the sense of loss and of the strategies to cope with it extends across first-hand experiences, various forms of social action, and both “old” and “new” media.

By examining the activities of Eesti Metsa Abiks through the lens of transmediality, this presentation explores the relationship between the Estonian environmental activism movement and the concept of solastalgia. It also examines the transmedial formation of solastalgia and elaborates on the concept of transmediality, illustrating how real-life experiences combine with diverse media events.

References

Albrecht, Glenn 2005. ‘Solastalgia’: A new concept in health and identity. *PAN: Philosophy, Activism, Nature* 3: 44–59.

Eesti Metsa Abiks, <https://www.eestimetsaabiks.ee/eng/>.

Hancox, Donna 2018. Transmedia for social change: Evolving approaches to activism and representation. In: Freeman, Matthew, and Renira Rampazzo Gambarato, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Transmedia Studies*. New York: Routledge, 332–339.

Jenkins, Henry 2003. Transmedia storytelling: Moving characters from books to films to video-games can make them stronger and more compelling. *Technology Review*. www.technologyreview.com/biotech/13052.

Jenkins, Henry 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Kinder, Marsha 1991. *Playing with Power in Movies, Television, and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Rampazzo Gambarato, Renira 2018. Transmedia journalism: The potentialities of transmedia dynamics in the news coverage of planned events. In: Freeman, Matthew, and Renira Rampazzo Gambarato, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Transmedia Studies*. New York: Routledge, 90–98.

Torop, Peeter 2008. Multimeedialisuus. *Keel ja Kirjandus* 8–9: 721–734.

Bionote. Elin Sütiste is Associate Professor at the Department of Semiotics at the University of Tartu, Estonia. Her main research interests fall into the areas of semiotics of translation and semiotics of culture. Her recent publications include “Semiotics of translation” (2024), “Intersemiotic translation” (2021), “Lotman and Jakobson” (2022, together with Igor Pilschikov), “Translation seen through the prism of the Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics” (2021, together with Silvi Salupere).

The role of Neophilia and Creativity of Individual Animals in the Species' Survival

Siiri Tarrikas

siiri.tarrikas@ut.ee

University of Tartu, Estonia

Innovative behaviors, and therefore, the creativity and agency of individual animals might play an essential role in rapid macroevolutionary changes that can ensure the species' survival in the Anthropocene. Behavioral innovations that start from animal creativity and neophilia can spread through populations and change how animals interact with their environment, leading to adaptations and ensuring survival in rapidly changing conditions. Does a bigger proportion of neophilic individuals in the population help populations to thrive, or is it even useful for individual animals? Are new behaviors worth the risk taken? How does individual creativity emerge, what traits do animals need for that, and how can it be helpful for survival?

Innovative behaviors can even lead to morphological changes and new qualities, such as changes in the attentional processes of animals, which can, in turn, increase their ability to notice and solve new problems. Attention is important for meaning-making in new circumstances and for guiding creativity. Attention to other animals is necessary for acquiring the other animal's perspective and to learn from them. Here I will explore what processes help to speed up the transmission of these innovative behaviors inside populations and how learning occurs.

Individual neophilia and creativity are the factors that can determine the rigidity or flexibility of behavior in changing environmental conditions and, therefore, be essential for the survival of the whole species. Here an attempt is made to look at those questions through the prism of semiotics.

Bionote: Currently I am a PhD student and junior research fellow at the University of Tartu. I have an MSc in biochemistry and MA in biosemiotics. My fields of interest are zoosemiotics, ethology and animal cognition, especially attentional processes of animals and animal creativity.

Narrating Extinction in Ukraine: Encountering *Centaurea protomargaritacea* Klokov

Darya Tsybalyuk

darya.tsybalyuk@gmail.com

New Europe College, Romania

In Ukraine the sixth mass extinction of species is exacerbated by the ongoing Russian invasion. For example, in 2022 Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group published a list of twenty vascular plant species which are on the brink of extinction as a result of Russia's full-scale invasion. All species are steppe plants and herbs and are narrowly endemic, which means they only live in a few places in Ukraine. With the exception of the occupation of the northern parts of the country in spring 2022 and constant shelling of the northern borderlands, majority of military fighting in Ukraine takes place in the steppe regions. Ukrainian steppes are part of the vast grassland area known as the Pontic-Caspian Steppe, which as the name suggests stretches from the Black to the Caspian Sea. The Steppe is the most diverse and the most endangered ecosystem in Ukraine, where the unploughed steppes cover only 3% of the country's territory, a result of intense industrial agriculture (Burkovskiy 2021). The Pontic-Caspian Steppe is also one of the most biodiverse ecosystems globally, where some scholars claim its biodiversity exceeds even that of a rain forest (Bastow Wilson et al.)

In the summer of 2023 I went with a group of environmentalists to look for one of the plant species listed in the endangered list, the *Centaurea protomargaritacea* Klokov, a steppe plant that only grows around my hometown of Mykolaiv in the south of Ukraine. In this paper, I recount my encounter with this plant, and discuss what does it mean to talk about extinction in a country fighting for its survival? How is extinction accelerated by the war? And how do narratives of species extinction entangle with daily stories of death and mourning?

Bionote. Darya Tsybalyuk, PhD, writes, researches, and draws. She is interested in environmental humanities, decolonial, feminist, and critical theory. At the moment, she is working on a monograph about the environmental impacts of Russia's war on Ukraine, under contract with Polity press and forthcoming in 2025. Her research on the book has been supported by two visiting fellowships, the School of Advanced Study, University of London (October 2023 – February 2024), and New Europe College, Bucharest (March-July 2024). She is the author of multiple publications in environmental humanities, including such specialised platforms as *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*; *Environment & Society Portal*, *Arcadia*; *Springs: Rachel Carson Center Review*; *NiCHE: Network in Canadian History & Environment*, and many others. You can learn more about her work here: <https://daryatsybalyuk.com/>

A Mystery in the Dark: The Uncertainty of Life and Extinction in Robert Nugent's Night Parrot Stories (2016)

Alex Ventimilla

ventimil@ualberta.ca

University of Alberta, Canada

My paper tracks the feeling of uncertainty in Robert Nugent's documentary *Night Parrot Stories* (2016). The night parrot (*Pezoporus occidentalis*) is a critically endangered species with mythical status in its native Australia. Though long thought extinct, the film begins as a quest to document the ongoing existence of these birds following their "re-discovery". This opening initially situates Nugent's documentary within the mushrooming archive of eco-documentaries aiming to expose the machinations of mass extinction through emblematic species (Smaill 2010: 71). Yet rather than relying on visceral images of animal suffering and death to *move* (Ivakhiv 2013: 23; Gaines 1999: 89) viewers to support conservation initiatives as such films are wont to do (Smaill 2010: 81-82), I argue that *Night Parrot Stories* devolves into an uncanny meditation on the uncertainty that surrounds the more-than-human world. Notably, the film all but fails to produce footage of live night parrots. In addition to highlighting their other-than-human agency, the birds' refusal to appear on camera is juxtaposed with shots of preserved specimens in ways that question the parrots' ongoing survival and the true causes of their demise. Coupled with the voiceover's disorienting intertextual poetics, this interrogation emanates an ambiguous atmosphere that forestalls finality, anger, and grief. Most telling, however, is *Night Parrot Stories'* encounter with Aboriginal Australians. Drawing from Deborah Bird Rose (2011), I posit the enigmatic night parrot stories offered by Aboriginal Australians in the film as evocative of an *ecological existentialism* that realizes "our entanglement in the place, time, and multispecies complexities of life" (Rose 2011: 44). In this way, I conclude, the documentary unsettles the Western discourse of mass extinction through a "life-affirming image of death" whose episteme lies not in dwelling on the endless forms most beautiful that have been lost to anthropogenic activity but in the mystery and possibilities of life even in the darkest of times (Rose 2011: 114).

References

- Gaines, Jane 1999. Political Mimesis. In: Jane Gaines and Michael Renov (eds.), *Collecting Visible Evidence*. University of Minnesota Press, pp. 84-102.
- Ivakhiv, Adrian 2013. *Ecologies of the Moving Image: Cinema, Affect, Nature*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Night Parrot Stories. Directed by Robert Nugent, Looking Glass Pictures, 2016.
- Rose, Deborah Bird 2011. *Wild Dog Dreaming: Love and Extinction*. University of Virginia Press.
- Smaill, Belinda 2010. *The documentary: politics, emotion, culture*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Bionote. Alex Ventimilla is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta. His doctoral research focuses on the role of documentary representations of biodiversity loss and species conservation in the formation of the discourse and cultural politics of mass extinction.

Multispecies Design: Towards the Construction of a Space of Hope

Débora Villarrubia

Villarrubia.debora@gmail.com

Biotyka.ES Corporation, Spain

We are experiencing a profound ecological and civilizational crisis that reveals the normalization of a way of understanding and being in the world built on mechanism and separation from nature.

The perspective through which we look creates and reinforces our reality exactly like words, with them we shape the world and mean what surrounds us.

However, our lexicon is proving incapable of describing the current context; we play with prefixes and suffixes to try to draw new words that allow us to describe the apocalyptic collapse we have created (Antropocene, solastalgia, chthulucene...).

Our World is reeling, the context speaks to us, but we are left speechless.

If we think with them, if we think with language and it is incapable of describing the reality we live in, frankly, what have we created?

The aim of this paper is to descend through biosemiotics, using the vision of the semiotic body expressed by Hoffmeyer, the types of umwelt proposed by Kalevi Kull and the semiosis of the living by Timo Maran, to establish the bases of relational and multispecies design, in whose approach lies the perspective capable of making us build new narratives and capable of justifying that “hope belongs to life”, as Julio Cortázar wrote.

In the final part of the document, a semiotic decalogue for multispecies design is suggested along with a little methodological application.

Bionote. I’m an environmental scientist specialized in territory and GIS. Recently I have completed a master’s degree in biomimicry, which has led me to discover biosemiotics. I’m currently working on my own project, focused on transferring the biosemiotic and biomimetic perspective to the corporate environment, to help create designs and solutions that are kind to the Planet.

Beekeeping at the End of the World: Negotiating Moral Life, Through Honeybee Death, in Aotearoa New Zealand

Susan Wardell

Susan.wardell@otago.ac.nz

University of Otago, New Zealand

Reporting on Colony Collapse Disorder, from 2006 onwards, brought honeybees into public consciousness in a new way. Bees have since come to function as highly visible touchstones for conversations about anthropogenic climate change, in global media circuits. At the same time, there has been a documented rise in hobbyist beekeeping, bringing many people into closer contact with bees in their immediate environments. Beekeeping involves processes of hive management that create potential to both witness and cause the deaths of individual bees, and entire bee colonies. In an era of mass extinction, where bees have become semiotically saturated, this paper asks how hobbyist beekeepers negotiate the meaning of bee deaths, and navigate their own affective responses. To explore this, the paper draws on an autoethnographic and multimodal study of beekeeping in the small postcolonial Pacific nation of Aotearoa New Zealand. It identifies some of the learned and socialised ways beekeepers have of conceptualising bee death – including where the hive, rather than the bee, is seen as the organism; where beekeepers learn *not* to grieve individual bees (but still acquire tacit skills to reduce accidental killing); where the bees' own values and aspirations are intuited as justification for bees sacrificed in disease testing – highlighting the “more than human” lens these utilise. The bee becomes evident as an object of care, activism, hope, responsibility, connection, and grief: a flexible symbol for negotiating socio-moral quandaries around “how to live well” in an era of environmental change and loss. These questions are also articulated through the specific historical and sociocultural setting of Aotearoa, and the (gendered, racialised) social positionality of the beekeeper. Overall the paper argues that hobbyist beekeeping, as a form of intentional proximity to bees (and bee deaths) can be seen as a way of “staying with the trouble” of the Anthropocene.

Bionote. Susan Wardell is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Otago, in Aotearoa New Zealand, trained in social anthropology and communication studies. Her research interests include care, moral affect, health and wellbeing, digital sociality, and climate emotion. She also works heavily with creative ethnographic methods, both written and visual.