Wild Becomings: How the Everyday Experience of Common Wild Animals at Summer Camp Acts as an Entrance to the More-than-Human World

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Abstract

This paper describes the partial results of a research project which investigated conceptions of nature and the role of place in environmental education in children who attended Camp Arowhon. Through interviews and observations, utilizing a hybrid research drawing from phenomenography and ethnography, local common wild animals emerged as playing an important role in campers' embodied connection to place. Through structured "nature programs" and unstructured "free-play," campers discovered and increased their familiarity of common local animals. Using the deleuzeoguattarian concept of becoming*, these interactions are proposed to serve as a starting point through which a child can move on to engage with increasingly abstract aspects of the natural world. Implications for urban environmental education, where these children spend the majority of their year, are discussed.*

Résumé

Le présent article décrit les résultats partiels d'un projet de recherche de 2003, lequel étudie des représentations de la nature et le rôle de l'espace dans l'éducation écologique chez les enfants qui fréquentaient le camp Arowhon. Par des entrevues et des observations, se servant d'une ébauche de recherche hybride sur la phénoménographie et l'ethnographie, on a découvert que les animaux sauvages communs du coin jouent un rôle important dans les rapports que les campeurs incarnent par rapport à l'espace. Par des programmes structurés, axés sur la « nature » et le « jeu libre » non structuré, les campeurs ont découvert et accru leur connaissance des petits animaux sauvage communs du coin. En utilisant le concept de deleuzeoguattaria du devenir*, on propose ces interactions comme point de départ par lequel un enfant éventuellement aborder des aspects de plus en plus abstraits du monde naturel. On discute des implications de l'éducation écologique urbaine, où ces enfants passent la majorité de leur vie d'élève.*

Keywords: animals; children; summer camp; local knowledge; deleuzeoguattarian thought; urban environmental education

If someone were watching you this morning, it would have looked like you disappeared into the forest. You, however, know the secret of your disappearing act. The worn path through the forest that you are on now is well hidden from view along the gravel road. No longer bordered by trees on the road, you are surrounded by them as you walk towards a small log building, no larger than a camper cabin inside this forest. As you walk along this path, you notice on your left and right the dappled, pattern shadow and light play on the forest floor that surrounds you. Looking back towards the road, you see the hole, now bright and backlit, through which you entered. You were warmed by the sun as you walked along the road, but now that you are sheltered by the shade of the canopy overhead, the heat of the morning sun is replaced by a certain feeling of respite.

It is, by all accounts, a beautiful morning. Walking up the steps to the screen door, you look at the thermometer screwed into one of the building's log supports. It looks to be about 22 degrees in this mottled shade. It's a comfortable temperature. For mid-morning it's warm, and while you're comfortable in your sandals, shorts, and a tee-shirt, the sweatshirt you started the day with comes off as you walk into the lodge. To greet you, a light breeze blows through this big screened-in building and across your arms. The little hairs on your arm move just enough to register the fact that the atmosphere is moving. From the periphery come the noises of a typical camp morning: feet running along the gravel road, distant shouts between cabin mates, and the sound of a sudden gust blowing through the upper boughs of the nearby white pine.

The screen door slams as a young boy enters the building and you are reminded that this lodge is not a secret, the forest path not a surprise to most. Today, like yesterday, you are charged with the responsibility to share your insights and wonder of the natural world with the campers who are now joining you in this nature lodge.

"What are we gonna do today?" the boy asks as the screen door closes quickly behind him. Before you get a chance to reply, he's off to one of the terraria that you set up earlier this month. "What's in here today? Is the toad still here?" The questions are coming quickly with little time to respond. You can sense his excitement.

The door opens and shuts again, a young girl entering the nature lodge this time. The young girl, hearing the earlier questions, moves over to the terrarium and answers the boy. "We caught a kind of frog yesterday after we let the toad go." The girl pauses for a moment. "I think we caught…it's called…a wood frog?" She turns to you, looking for some sort of agreement. You nod your head. "Yeah," she continues, "it was a wood frog. It looks like it's wearing a black mask. We caught it behind the Junior Boys' cabins yesterday. It was in some moss." She speeds up as she continues to share the story. "It kept hopping away. Man, was it hard to catch!"

This period, lasting for an hour, you decided will be spent looking for insects along the shore of the lake. Inevitably, you'll come across others, like a garter snake sunning itself, or perhaps, if you are as lucky as you were last week, another garter snake in the process of eating a green frog it managed to catch.

Regardless of the final inventory, you know that the experience for the campers here this morning will be one of discovery and excitement. Stories to answer the inevitable "what is it?" will be shared as you move along the shore on your hunt. You smile at the anticipated enthusiasm and excitement that you know will come of this experience. Walking towards the door of the cabin, you

collect magnifying glasses and nets and gather the group. The boys and girls collect outside in a gaggle around you.

Setting

During the summer of 2003, I had the opportunity to work as the nature instructor at Camp Arowhon, a children's sleep-over camp, located in Algonquin Park, Ontario. Having spent 18 summers "away" at camp both as a camper and a staff member, the summer camp experience holds a special place in my heart. Beginning my post-graduate studies[1] focusing on environmental education and environmental thought the previous fall, I decided I wanted to return and investigate some of my summer camp experiences. I was interested in investigating two related concepts: children's conceptions of nature and the role of place in the summer camp experience. My motivation lay in anticipation that the implications of this research could lead to a better understanding of what nature is to the children attending camp and an understanding of the role a place like summer camp can have in the process of connecting to the "more-than-human world" (Abram, 1996).

Although I was the nature instructor in the summer of 2003, I could not be everywhere at every time to facilitate environmental education of one sort or another. However, I did have campers coming up to me on a daily basis, sharing with me their day's experiences as a naturalist: they shared stories of snakes they caught;[2] where they had seen bullfrogs; that they had caught a grasshopper and were keeping it in a jar. While I was surprised initially at campers' enthusiasm and engagement with the animals, this enthusiasm continued over the summer. These campers were finding the places around camp where they could become their own naturalists, without instruction or being led. As the summer progressed, I began noticing how important the common wild animals found around camp were in the ability to engage and excite the campers. During explorations, adventures, and on their own, we were most likely to come across individual garter snakes (*Thamnophis sirtalis*); spotted salamanders (*Ambystoma maculatum*); red efts (*Notophthalmus viridescens*); other common salamander species; green frogs (*Rana clamitans*); bullfrogs (*Rana catesbeiana*); wood frogs (*Rana sylvatica*); American toads (*Bufo americanus*); spring peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*); yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*); pumpkinseed sunfish (*Lepomis gibbosus*); and various insects (of the biting and non-biting variety). As we would often meet these wild animals on a daily basis, these animals were the living beings that made up part of our neighbourhood.

Over the course of that summer, I attempted, through the nature programming, to provide lived experience with the more-than-human world and opportunities for the campers to reflect on those experiences. I hoped that through these encounters, campers would have the chance to feel intimacy (though they may not call it that) and grow to value their discoveries as sub-

jects, rather than objects. From these interactions, my observation of campers' reactions to the common wild animals that they discovered and rediscovered, and in listening to the campers I interviewed, I believe that common wild animals played an important role in campers' development of a relationship with the more-than-human world.

Methodology

Phenomenography and Ethnography

Given my interest in investigating children's conceptions of nature and the role of place in environmental education, I was interested in selecting a methodology that would allow for the multiple voices of the interviewees and the potential differences to emerge, be heard, and not be "flattened" in analysis. Phenomenography, where the understanding of the qualitative variation and discernment of a phenomenon becomes the outcome of the research (Trigwell, 2000), met these requirements. A methodology developed to answer questions about thinking and learning, phenomenography aims to "identify the multiple conceptions, or meanings, that a particular group of people have for particular phenomenon" (Orgill, 2002, p. 3). The results of a phenomenographic inquiry are a set of "second order" categories (Richardson, 1999) that attempt to describe how relevant phenomenon is experienced.

When I write of the more-than-human world, I'm writing of the biotic and abiotic components that together create the biological communities that are often called nature. To have meaningful knowledge of these communities means to have important knowledge acquired at the local level. This is knowledge that develops from in-context, first-hand experiences. As such, I was interested in a methodology that would allow me to include and reflect on these kinds of experiences. Camp is a social place and phenomenography alone was not enough to encapsulate these kinds of engagements. Ethnography, in its ability to "describe a culture" (Byrne, 2001, p. 82) and the origins, values, roles, and material items associated with that culture (Byrne, 2001) appeared to meet my methodological needs. Thus I decided a hybrid method based on aspects of phenomenography and ethnography would best suit my research goals.

Method

Participant Selection and Interviews

When selecting participants for this study, I chose a group of campers that represented a cross-section of the larger camp community (see Table 1).

	Participant Key
Juniors	
7 years, 8 months, M	JM1
9 years, 4 months, M	JM2
10 years, 5 months, F	JF1
10 years, 7 months, F	JF2
Intermediates	
11 years, 3 months, M	IM1
12 years, M	IM2
12 years, M	IM3
12 years, 2 months, F	IF1
10 years, 10 months, F	IF2
12 years, 5 months, F	IF3
Seniors	
14 years, 6 months, M	SM1
14 years, 1 month, M	SM2
15 years, 1 month, F	SF1
15 years, F	SF2

Table 1. Age, gender, and camper selection of participants.

To that end, I selected 14 participants to interview based on a representation of the camp's distribution of gender, age, and nationality. Interviews took place outside on a cabin porch or in the nature lodge. It was important to me that since this was a study about campers' conceptions of nature, they could easily point to the lake or a nearby tree and share a thought or insight, giving the study setting more authenticity.

I examined both methodologies and based on my own and others' critiques, appended my method. Specifically, I attempted to address criticisms of phenomenography's dependence on "discursive accounts" (Richardson, 1999, p. 68). Based on work conducted by Rejeski (1982), I modified the phenomenographic semi-structured interview method to include a set of worksheets that would allow participants, if they wished, to draw their responses.

After verbal consent was granted on the part of the camper,[3] I would begin by giving each participant the worksheets. On top of those sheets were the words "Nature is…," "Me and nature…" and "Camp is…". Most participants chose to complete the worksheets by writing short answers and some drew illustrations in addition to their short answers. Once this activity was completed, I asked the campers about their work. All dialogue was recorded for later transcription and analysis as I asked campers to read what they wrote or describe what they drew, and followed up with related questions.

Once they had finished describing their worksheets, I began to ask the questions I had developed (see Table 2).

1. Tell me about what you wrote / drew.
2. What is nature?
3. Do you care about nature, if at all?
4. What do you think nature includes?
5. Do you think you are a part of nature?
    a. How are you a part of nature?
    b. How are you different from nature?
6. Have you experienced nature? Where?
7. Have you experienced nature at camp? Where?
8. Have you experienced nature at home? Where?
    a. Is nature different at camp than it is at home? How?
9. When comparing camp and home, is there one place that's more natural? Why?
10. In your experience, is nature something that you experience yourself or with other people?
11. Do you have a favourite outdoor place at camp, if any?
12. What do you think community is?
13. Do you think that nature is a community?
    a. What kind of community?
14. In your years at camp, have you discovered anything about nature?
    a. What have you discovered?
    b. Did you discover it yourself?
    c. Was it important?
15. How are nature and camp connected, if at all?
16. What does it mean to be a part of nature?
17. How is camp important to you, if at all?

Table 2. Semi–structured interview questions.

I paid special attention throughout the hour-long interview process to ensure that my interview style allowed as full and descriptive answers as possible. I also attempted to get the most detail possible from the participants through the use of probing techniques, such as follow-up questions and questions that were related to a participant's answer but not necessarily on the sheet of questions to be asked.

Transcription and Coding of Data

I transcribed the interviews myself, paying particular attention to accurately reflect the emotions and emphasis of the participants (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). If a camper laughed, I would include that in the transcription. If a camper was emphasizing a point, I italicized those words which had force behind them. While I paid attention to the emotions and emphasis, I may have missed meaning that another would have picked up due to differences

in interpretation. However, because I did attempt to pay attention to these characteristics as I transcribed, I believe this led to a higher-quality transcription. Since phenomenography concerns itself with second-order knowledge, I did not code the actual drawings or text of the worksheets: I relied on the verbal description provided by the participant in the interview.

When coding animals that were mentioned in interviews, I worked to accurately reflect the distinct categories of description used by the campers. This meant that rather than coding for species of animals, I focused on coding animal *kinds.*[4]

Analysis

To analyze the data associated with the phenomenographical investigation of concepts of nature, I attempted to structure the data into coherent categories of description, working to avoid "premature closure for the sake of producing logically and hierarchically-related categories of description" (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 300). I analyzed data collected in interviews and through participant observation. Given my history and participation within the camp setting, I also used my own historical and contextual knowledge to analyze this data and develop theory from it.

Relationship to Place and Nature: Through Animals

Nature and Camp: Embodiment and Animal Others

In the experiences of the Camp Arowhon campers interviewed, the basis for all experiences at camp is the relationship that exists between the members of the community. At first glance, this means that important and integral to campers' experiences are the relationships that they make with the counsellors, campers, and instructors that surround them. Equally as important to these campers' experience is the connection they make to place that surrounds camp, often through common wild animals. This kind of connection speaks to a corporeal knowledge of the camp itself, and through that embodiment, a connection to the more-than-human world. Thus, for campers, it appears as though their concepts of nature and place are intertwined. For some, such as this 10-year-old female, camp, as they know it, would not exist if nature was not around:

JF1: Uh, it would just be a bunch of buildings.
G: Yeah, yeah. And what would that be like?
JF1: Boring, very boring. [laughs]
G: Boring?
JF1: If nature wasn't here, there wouldn't even be a nice lake to swim in and trees to um, make, even make cabins with.

Perhaps one of the strongest connections between a camper's conception of nature and camp can be seen in the words of this 12-year-old female (IF3):

> I learn something new every year that I come here and, like, every year something stays the same with me about nature is, I guess, the smell of everything is always the same. When you go to camp and you walk off the bus, and you see everyone there smiling and looking at you and then you're waiting for that moment to see what cabin you're in. And you get off the bus and immediately you smell the camp, like that's just my favourite moment, like walking off the bus and smelling camp and realizing everything and recognizing all the trees and stuff. Like you can know where each tree is every time you come here, you recognize it and stuff.

Camp, for her, is more than just friends or activities. This camper knows she's arrived at camp when she steps off the bus and recognizes "all the trees and stuff." More so, she goes on to link the importance of nature and place for her by saying that "you can know where each tree is every time you come here, you recognize it and stuff." Scent, sight, and familiarity of people and trees all add to her embodied knowledge of camp and place.

These embodied experiences not only connect the camper to camp, but connect the camper to the natural world. In this case, camp and nature become synonymous. Being aware of the place where we are requires more than a look at a map and a glance about. This awareness requires approaching the world and altering one's perspective so as to give significance and meaning to *all* that which is within our world. Our selves and the world in which we inhabit are deeply connected (Abram, 1996). If reality comes from the "mutual inscription of others in my experience, and (as I must assume) of myself in their experiences" (Abram, 1996, p. 39), part of what makes camp real is the familiarity of those around you.

While Abram's perspective has obvious extension to campers' existence in the lives of the other human members of the camp community, I also heard in campers' stories the inclusion of local common wild animals. This is striking because it has been suggested that the loss of meaningful contact with animals has led to a state in which animals are "increasingly endangered in our minds and in our direct experiences" (Fawcett, 2002, p. 126). Of the 14 children that I spoke to, 13 talked about animals in their interviews (see Table 3 for the variety of kinds mentioned).

As I shared earlier, I had campers approaching me daily with animal stories, sightings, and in some cases, the animals themselves. It appears as though for these campers, their experiences of the more-than-human world not only reverses the experiential endangerment Fawcett (2002) describes, but also connects them to the place of camp.

In fact, I would suggest that not only do these interactions with common wild animals introduce campers to the life around them, those animal lives serve as agents for children to engage with the greater natural world that

Category of "kind"	Number of campers who mention the "kind"
Insects	
ants	1
butterflies	2
caterpillars	1
cockroaches	1
insects	1
praying mantis	1
Herptiles	
crocodiles	1
frogs	3
lizards	1
salamanders	1
snakes	1
toads	1
Mammals	
chipmunks	1
horses	1
humans	5
mammals	2
squirrels	2
Annelids	
leeches	1
worms	1
Fish	
fish	2
Birds	
birds	3

Table 3. Summary of the "kinds" of animals mentioned by campers.

surrounds them at camp. I would suggest that these engagements with common wild animals act as a conceptual handhold on which a child can move on to engage with the more abstract aspects of "Otherness." In turn, campers, such as this 11-year-old male, experience and learn powerful lessons:

IM1: I remember seeing my first frog in nature at camp…
G: What does that mean to see—had you seen frogs before?
IM1: Yes.
G: What does—what does it mean to see your first frog in nature?
IO1: People—I've seen pictures of frogs, I know what frogs look like, but I've never seen a live frog and then I came to camp and I was exploring one day in the wetland and saw a frog.
G: Yeah? And what was that like?
IM1: It was just, "Wow. This is what a frog is. How it looks like. A frog in real life and it's a frog in *its* life."
G: Mmm, interesting, a frog in its life. So what does that mean, to see a frog in its life?
IM1: Um…
G: Why is that important?

IM1: It's important because, ah, if you look at the frog and you see where it's jumping around, you know where it lives, you know that it knows what it's looking for and where it's going. Um, and frogs, frogs are just funny. They just jump, jump, jump.

Coming to experience a frog first-hand led to a powerful moment in this camper's understanding of frogs. This boy has now experienced many things about this frog's existence first-hand. He has walked through the wetland where the frog lives, felt the same water on his legs and got to see what a frog really looks like. Rather than living passively in the pages of a book, this boy can now denote personal experience and agency to frogs' existence. It is through their identification with those common wild animals, as Evernden (1992) has written, that one "discloses one's own existence. Like the traveler in a foreign land who suddenly becomes aware of his or her own cultural assumptions because they are no longer shared by everyone around, the child becomes aware of itself through the experience of the otherness" (p. 112). These living beings are no longer abstract thoughts or objects. This camper has attended to the frog and now knows "where it lives," "what it's looking for and where it's going." Sensuous, embodied knowledge and attention to those others around you allow you to become aware of place. Thus, I believe that there exists a relationship between their concept of nature, animals, and themselves.

Importance of Unstructured Discovery

Campers' interaction with, and experience of common wild animals in their daily life not only came from formal camp "nature" programming, but also from acts of discovery and unstructured play. While the focus at Camp Arowhon is on structured interest groups, there still remains time in the daily schedule (up to four hours in a day) for campers to play and hang out on their own. These activities, more often than not, occur outdoors.

I believe that this access to, and time spent in what campers consider nature is important in the development of an awareness of the more-than-human world. Interestingly, children and youth, on average in Canada, spend 8 to 9% of their time outdoors (Leech, Wilby, McMullen, & Laporte, 1997). Little is said in this research on the structure of that time, however, work in the United States suggests that children only spend half an hour a week outdoors participating in unstructured activities (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001). Recent research in the field of significant life experience has suggested that "participation with 'wild' nature before age 11 is a particularly potent pathway toward shaping both environmental attitudes and behaviors in adulthood" (Wells & Lekies, 2006, p. 12). While this may seem like an obvious statement for those in the field of environmental education, interesting in this research is the conclusion that childhood participation in environmental education programs had little effect on adult environmental

behaviours (Wells & Lekies, 2006). Wells and Lekies (2006) were surprised by this conclusion, and go on to suggest that this may be due to certain types of environmental education, described as "structured modes" (p. 12) rather than "hands-on and engaging" (p. 12), being often the only kinds counted.

With the little amount of unstructured time that children get to have outdoors and the seemingly ambivalent status of highly structured environmental education programs in the formation of environmental behaviours, it seems as though the Camp Arowhon experience offers campers something different. Given the campers' synonymous identification of camp and nature, their ability to spend unstructured time in their day outdoors and their discovery of common wild animals while engaged in that unstructured time, it appears as though a synergy begins to emerge. This synergy holds the potential to allow campers to develop relationships between other humans, non-humans, and non-living members of the camp community. While outside the scope of this research, these relationships may be significant enough to impact later environmental attitudes and behaviours. I theorize that this process is called *becoming*.

The Disruption of Becoming–Camper, Becoming–Animal, Becoming–Place

Through the opportunity to spend a summer[5] at Camp Arowhon, campers appear to increase their familiarity with common local wild animals. These animals serve as more than just a focus for an activity or free time. In campers' interactions and engagement with animals living their own lives, in their chosen natural habitats, the animals serve as agents for the campers to engage with the local natural world that surrounds them. Giving a frog importance and agency requires that frog to become something more than it originally was. In this act of becoming, there is something that occurs to the person who ascribes the agency, too.

That is the act of *becoming*, the re-territorialization and de-territorialization of what it means to be human (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), where deleuzeoguattarian thought models becoming as the "radically non-subjective view of the alliances that people may form with women, animals, vegetables, molecules, ad infinitum" (Morris, 2002, p. 1). Becoming is an act that takes place through alliances formed with "minoritarians," but is also a rejection of the "majoritarian:" man. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain:

> Why there are so many becomings of man, but no becoming-man? First because man is majoritarian par excellence, whereas becomings are minoritarian; all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian. When we say majority, we are referring not to a greater relative quantity but to the determination of a state or standard in relation to which larger quantities, as well as the smallest, can be said to be minoritarian: white–man, adult–male, etc. Majority implies a state of domination, not the reverse. (p. 291)

I envision campers coming to Camp Arowhon and *becoming*. When a camper gets on a bus or into a car to be driven to camp, they begin a process of becoming–camper. In deleuzeoguattarian thought, becomings occur "according to proximity rather than through processes of identification" and the zone of proximity for becoming "is characterized by defamiliarisation, estrangement, and monstrosity" (Day, 2003, p. 26). While monstrosity may not apply to the Camp Arowhon experience, for campers, the act of leaving parents, city friends, and home defines the zone of proximity and what it is to be "camper." Thus, becoming–camper allows a re-definition of what it is to be human and the location and type of power that can exist between the camper and others.

> It is in this sense that becoming everybody/everything, making the world a becoming, is to world, to make a world or worlds, in other words, to find one's proximities and zones of indiscernibility. The Cosmos as an abstract machine, and each world as an assemblage effectuating it. If one reduces oneself to one or several abstract lines that will prolong itself in and conjugate with others, producing immediately, directly a world in which it is the world that becomes, then one becomes–everybody/everything. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 280)

The deleuzeoguattarian concept of everybody/everything is similar to a subject/subject versus subject/object concept of relationships. We have seen that the potential exists for Camp Arowhon to be a place where the power of "man"[6] [sic] and the hegemonic view of nature are disrupted: a frog is seen as existing in its own life; nature, more generally speaking, is seen as having value, agency, and worth. This is a distinct difference from the anthropocentric point of view that permeates current Western culture, where humans "hyper-separate [them]selves from nature and reduce it conceptually in order to justify domination" (Plumwood, 2002, p. 9). These views are possible through the act of becoming. Yet, that act of becoming, for some, expands from becoming–camper to becoming–animal and becoming–place. De-territorialization and re-territorialization is in this case literal. The connection to the sensuous earth, the place, and embodied experience of the animals that live with the campers disrupt the taken-for-granted perspectives that seem to exist concerning nature prior to a child becoming–camper.

Implications

It is through the act of becoming–camper, becoming–animal, becoming–place that campers have the opportunity to redefine their relationships with others they encounter. Through in-place knowledge and sustained contact, campers have the opportunity to come to know some of the local common wild animals. If they attend to those others, they can become more familiar with them and, in turn, reverse the trend of loss of experience

with wild animals. These connections with common wild animals in turn offer connections with the biotic and abiotic community within which the animals and campers live.

The changes in perception that occur at Camp Arowhon are by no means a *fait-accompli* within the camper population and are not necessarily generalizable to other populations. If Camp Arowhon *is* a place where campers can come to know the more-than-human world, this *may* be occurring in part due to an intellectual enzymatic reaction: the presence of common wild animals in a readily-identifiable "nature" is needed before campers integrate this "nature" into their experiences and make a meaningful connection to it. While connections appear to be easily made in a place like Camp Arowhon, these campers spend at most a sixth of a year in this environment.

Even while the campers shared experiences of nature at camp, their stories of home life were often filled with digital music players, video games, telephones, and other objects that seemed to take the place of trees, lakes, and wild animals in their camp stories. In fact, while campers did see nature as existing in the city, it was not seen as being the same thing as the nature that existed at camp.

In urban settings, it has been suggested that "zoos, wildlife parks, and museums presently provide the only experiences most urban and suburban children have with wild animals" (Kidd & Kidd, 1996, p. 120). While summer camp is a privilege that not all urban children can expect, suggesting that zoos are the *only* place where urban children experience wild animals silences and excludes the variety of places and experiences where common wild animals could be found. I see the former perspective as more symptomatic of the blinders that seem to exist within current practice of the type of experience that counts as environmental education: this is too narrow a focus. Indeed, while good work is being done[7] to introduce children to the urban more-than-human world, valuable environmental education is often seen as structured: a class trip to the zoo, museum, nature centre or wildlife park; or enrolling children in after-school programming. I use the term "everyday experience" in the title of this paper on purpose: campers had the opportunity to interact daily with nature, the natural world, and the common wild animals found within. The opportunity for some campers to make these discoveries on their own is a powerful experience often lacking in children's urban lives. As such, I would suggest that urban environmental education needs to expand its focus and seek out experiences that problematize, re-think, and foster these more-than-human connections; indeed, suggestions along this line of thought have already been made (see Newbery, 2003; Russell, Sarick, & Kennelly, 2002, for example). A child's environmental education may not come in the expected ways and in the expected places, as I believe that more than one kind of experience in one kind of place can lead to a connection. Abram (2004) writes:

> Let us indeed celebrate the powers of technology, and introduce our children to the digital delights of our era. But not before we have acquainted them with the gifts of the living land, and enable its palpable mysteries to ignite their imaginations and their thoughts. (p. 22)

It would seem that there is a need for those who live in urban settings to facilitate the opportunity for experiences with common wild animals that surround, and in so doing, create an embodied and sensual urban nature. While summer camp is one place that appears to allow direct embodied experiences of the more-than-human world, we provide a disservice to campers if we tell them camp is the *only* place where the living land and more-than-human life exist.

Notes

1 This paper reports results of the larger investigation that I undertook in partial completion of my Master of Environmental Studies degree at York University, Ontario.

2 It is worth noting that all animals that were captured during a nature program were kept overnight in a terrarium and released the following day; the ethic of returning wild animals to their appropriate place was discussed with the campers. I often had a harder time sharing this ethic with campers who captured their own animals: younger campers believed that they should keep their animals as pets. I would often have long conversations with campers who chatted with me about what they imagined it would be like to be kept in a jar. Reflecting on their own feelings and then thinking about the animal that they had caught was enough for them to agree to let that animal "go."

3 Anonymous reviewers of this article were (rightly) concerned about the ethics involved with interviewing children. Though not overtly stated in the body of this paper, verbal consent was the last step in a long line of actions that I took to make sure that this research was conducted ethically. For this work, I worked to seek permission and approval from all groups involved, including: Camp Arowhon's directors; my faculty's committee to review research involving human participants; camper parents; and the campers themselves. Excluded from the standardized procedures are the animals themselves. However, I strove to approach them with the same ethical alignment as I would other humans. This perspective is not entirely unproblematic, as it could be argued that these organisms could not easily voice their consent one way or another. This is a tension that exists in the work and that I continue to struggle with.

4 I have used the term *kinds* rather than *species* as the distinct categories campers shared with me were not necessarily distinct in a speciation sense. For example, campers considered caterpillars and butterflies to be

distinct, and thus I considered them as different kinds. However, in a biological sense, caterpillars and butterflies are seen as being the same organism in different stages of development. In focusing on kinds, I have attempted to keep intact the richness of the campers' categories of animals, albeit at the expense of being biologically precise.

5 Campers can choose to attend camp for one session of four weeks or two sessions for a total of eight weeks a summer.

6 As an anonymous reviewer noted, connecting (perhaps even naturalizing) woman and nature as Deleuze and Guattari appear to do could be problematized by certain ecofeminist discourses. It's not my intention here to suggest that somehow women are uncritically closer to nature and this is the way things *ought* to be. Rather, I find the concept helpful to engage with the power of questioning what it is to be human.

7 Again, with thanks to an anonymous reviewer, these programs and places include: urban nature centres, naturalized schoolyards, backyard naturalizing projects, and through field naturalist clubs' "young naturalist" programs.

Notes on Contributor

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