“Wildlife and Society: Challenges for a Shared Future”

Thursday the 21st of March 2013, from 9.15 to 16.45hs

Canterbury Christ Church University, North Holmes Road, Canterbury CT1 1QU, Rooms Ng09 and Ng03

Organised by Dr Adriana Consorte-McCrea (adriana.consorte-mccrea@canterbury.ac.uk), Wildlife and People Initiative- ERG. Dept. Geographical and Life Sciences. Funded by The Futures Initiative.

Photo by Edu Fortes
Welcome to the Conference!

The Wildlife and People Initiative is a branch of the Ecology Research Group of Canterbury Christ Church University, created in 2006 as a forum for the interdisciplinary discussion of issues related to the relationships involving people and wildlife worldwide.

Wildlife provokes strong responses in people from all backgrounds, working in different research fields. The multifaceted nature of our relationship with wildlife is explored here today by a wide array of approaches sourced from the arts, literature and film, ecology and wildlife conservation, environmental education, geography, and religious studies.

In a world of limited natural areas and resources, all living organisms are affected by economic and social demands driving changes in land use, and impacting natural habitats. The Convention on Biological Diversity has directed efforts and set out targets to halt biodiversity loss, in close connection with the directives of the UN on Sustainable Development. Co-existence between people and wildlife is an aim to be achieved within this framework. Promoting the discussion of the issues involved in people’s relationships with wildlife can help promote the development of better understanding to foster co-existence. Promoting the discussion of such issues within the academic and learning environment can be a powerful tool for change, by bringing together practitioners and students, by engaging reflexion, by fostering informed decisions.

The present conference aims to discuss the relationships between people and wildlife in the context of sustainable living, education and professional development for a shared future. I wish to thank The Future’s Initiative for funding the project, Prof Peter Vujakovic and Dr Stephen Scoffham for their input, John Hills, Felicity Ravenwood and Edu Fortes for their photos, Jade Barker for filming and photos, and the Wildlife and People Research Group students for their assistance today. A great, big thank you to all speakers, who will take us through their thought-provoking interpretations of these key issues.

I hope you enjoy the journey! Adriana Consorte-McCrea
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<td>Pheromones – A new tool for biodiversity monitoring - Dr Joseph Burman, Dept. of Geographical &amp; Life Sciences CCCU</td>
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*A photography contest was launched in connection to the Conference. The 20 finalist are being exhibited today in Ng09. Please use your purple ballot to vote for your favourite photo! The 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners will be selected today by the Conference attendees and announced tomorrow.*
Abstracts

Interdisciplinarity, biocultural diversity and conservation

Dr Helen Newing, Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), School of Anthropology and Conservation (SAC), University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7NS, H.S.Newing@kent.ac.uk

Research into relationships between people and the environment is carried out within a great variety of disciplines, spanning all three of the three major faculties: the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. However there is limited cross-fertilisation between disciplines and research that successfully integrates different disciplinary approaches remains relatively uncommon. Interdisciplinary research is notoriously challenging, both because of theoretical differences in the way that different disciplines are framed, and also because of institutional barriers. In theoretical terms different disciplines frame their research differently: they ask different kinds of questions, use different vocabularies, and value different kinds of 'knowledge', to such a degree that researchers may find each other's work 'opaque and impenetrable (Marzano et al, 2006). In institutional terms, Geertz has characterised academic disciplines as tribal in terms of their allegiances and territorial defences. Interdisciplinarity is a place where "researchers, teachers and practitioners cross the ‘no man’s land’ between the disciplines, making their way across the ‘academic demilitarised zone’" (Klein 1990: 78). This paper discusses the concept of interdisciplinarity, the barriers to interdisciplinary research and progress in overcoming them in relation to two particular subject areas: wildlife conservation and biocultural diversity, defined as ‘the diversity of life in all of its manifestations: biological, cultural, and linguistic, which are inter-related (and likely co-evolved) within a complex socio-ecological adaptive system’ (Terralingua, 2008).
The use and application of digital technology, new media and creative practice to connect people and wildlife
Dr Denise Taylor, Education 4 Conservation, UK Wolf Conservation Trust, IUCN, denise.taylor@btinternet.com

The modern world has never been more connected since the advent of digital technologies and the ubiquity of the Internet, and yet we have also reached an age where we have never been more disconnected from nature as the world’s populations increasingly live in urban environments and farming and agriculture are mechanised on an industrial scale.

Research shows that the Millenial generation spends more time in front of screens and less time outdoors, and yet rich media and digital technologies also offer myriad opportunities for acquiring knowledge, and is shaping the way societies are learning in the modern Age of Information. Millenial learners have also come to expect education as a participative, engaging and active environment, which can be used effectively for environmental and conservation education.

When integrated with creative practice and access to nature, digital technologies become powerful tools for educators and learners and provide a wealth of opportunities for blended learning. Also, technology does not need to replace experiential learning, but rather it can be used to enhance experiences of the natural world, and also to make nature more accessible.

The Internet is now a vast storehouse of data and information which is accessible by even the poorest societies - children at the Butterfly Project in Uganda regularly use Skype and Facebook to connect with communities in their own country and throughout the rest of the world, and write and disseminate blogs online about their work both as learners and as educators; demonstrating the effectiveness of communities of practice.

Ecological landscapes have changed rapidly especially in the last two hundred years, but so too has the landscape of learning, and as educators and learners we need to harness the power of technology to help address the environmental issues and problems.
Animals’ natural behaviours are increasingly constrained and altered by the effects of human actions. Species are transported from one part of the world to another. Animal and plant forms become altered through selective breeding and modification and then released back into the wild. How have these processes altered our relationship with “wildlife”, and how are contemporary artists responding to these changing dynamics? I will discuss works by contemporary artists such as Brandon Ballengee, London Fieldworks, Beatriz da Costa, Rich Pell, Rachel Mayeri and Ariel Guzik that reflect on our interrelationships with other animal species, in the context of the impact of human activity on animal behaviour and well-being, and on biodiversity. Sometimes working with scientists, sometimes exploring alternative visions and values to those of science, these artists highlight the circulations, disturbances and interconnections between humanity, technology, ecology and animal species in our contaminated seas, invaded forests and technologised landscapes. I will also focus on projects that are exploring ways in which participatory science can be applied in a wildlife research context, both increasing understanding and appreciation of nature and enabling participants to conduct independent research or collect ecological data, and how these methodologies are being picked up and developed by artists.
In film, wildlife is relentlessly anthropomorphised, either as an infantile subject of identification or as a hostile antagonistic force against which masculinity is measure. The term "wildlife" structures nature as other, opposed to tame or civilised, as well as to death; "wildlife" in "nature" is constructed as an ideological tool both to obscure humanity's ongoing intervention in the environment and humanity's attempt to define itself as other than nature. James Cameron's Avatar constructs a contradictory representation of alien nature and a Gaian ecosystem as well as a patriarchal myth of an intervention on behalf of the noble savage, all within the three-dimensional discourse of a Hollywood capitalist machine that declared it would change the nature of cinema. As Haraway argues, "The discursive tie between the colonized, the enslaved, the noncitizen, and the animal — all reduced to type, all Others to rational man, and all essential to his bright constitution — is at the heart of racism and flourishes, lethally, in the entrails of humanism." This paper will pick over some of the entrail.
Title: The Redemption of Evolution: Does God love the animals and plants too?

The Revd Dr Jeremy Law, Dean of Chapel, CCCU,
jeremy.law@canterbury.ac.uk

Abstract: Despite the best insights of its origination, Christianity has, at times, been guilty of paring salvation down to just human beings, and more than this, to merely a select few, and then just their souls and not their bodies! It is as if the whole of creation has been viewed as merely the disposal stages of a rocket aimed at getting the payload of human souls into heaven: non-human creation is necessary, but ultimately dispensable. Thus it is that Christianity has been used as the ideological accompaniment to the downgrading of nature to the level of ‘raw material’ in the industrial race for economic gain. This presentation will examine why such a distortion of Christianity is illegitimate, and will propose a series of ways in which Christianity can be used to support the value and eternal significance of the community of creation of which *Homo sapiens* is just one distinct part.
Protected areas, tourism and education

Dr Ian Bride, Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), School of Anthropology and Conservation (SAC), University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7NS, I.G.Bride@kent.ac.uk

This presentation offers a critical analysis of tourism in protected wildlife areas in poorer countries. Focussing in particular on educational aspects, it seeks to explore some of the deeper meanings associated with such experiences and to posit some uncomfortable questions about the underlying values and ideas that are embodied in the PA tourism process.
Children as the Future Stewards of Wildlife

Mrs Bridget Somers, Senior Lecturer, Department of Childhood Studies, Faculty of Education, CCCU.

Current issues around children’s relationships with nature will be discussed; in particular, consideration will be given to recent concerns about children’s limited engagement with the natural world and the possible impact this might have, both on our children and our wider society in the future.

Bridget will also be sharing some of her findings from a recent small-scale Knowledge Exchange research project conducted (mostly outdoors!!) during her Forest School Leader training.

Interaction and questions from the audience will be gratefully received, as she would like to pursue this line of research and is keen to identify future inter-departmental collaboration opportunities.
Biodiversity, heritage and sense of place: the Canterbury Christ Church University Bioversity initiative

Professor Peter Vujakovic, Head of Geographical and Life Sciences, CCCU, tel: 01227 782460, peter.vujakovic@canterbury.ac.uk

‘Christ Church Bioversity’ involves the creation of a unique identity and sense of place for Canterbury Christ Church University, based on its central location in the Canterbury UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS). The site, which includes the University’s campus within the former precincts of St Augustine’s Abbey, is recognized as being a centre of learning for over fourteen hundred years. The WHS also includes Canterbury Cathedral and St Martin’s Church (the oldest Church in in the English speaking world still used for worship). The focus of the ‘Bioversity’ concept is on the enrichment of student and staff experience through a transformation of the site into an urban biodiversity hub which reflects its rich cultural and environmental heritage, but which also focuses on the future through a concern for social and environmental responsibility.

The concept focuses on responsibility for the environment in which the staff and students work and the communities that the University serves. The concept is underpinned by the adoption of an approach to biodiversity with the university’s core activities of teaching and research at its heart. The initiative involves developing the wildlife and biodiversity potential of the site by nurturing current sites, and innovative restoration and management elsewhere. This includes the planting of species and rare varieties that represent the monastic and other traditions of the site, and the wider Kentish agricultural and environmental heritage; for example, heritage varieties of apples and pears. The scheme looks to the future, not just the past, and engages with such issues as local food initiatives, protection of biodiversity, and community health and well-being.

The concept focuses specifically on cultural aspects of biodiversity in relation to the history and heritage of the site and is explicitly linked to the fact that the Christ Church and St. Augustine’s has been a centre of knowledge, community and stewardship in the city for over fourteen hundred years.
Pheromones – A new tool for biodiversity monitoring.

Dr Joe Burman, Ecology Research Group, Dept. of Geographical Life Science, CCCU, tel: 01227 78 3104, joseph.burman@canterbury.ac.uk

As world populations increases, the demand for natural resources also continues to grow, increasing the pressure on the world’s ecosystems. Agriculture in particular exerts a significant pressure on these systems, leading to habitat fragmentation and reduction in the amount of natural habitat altogether. One of the most dramatic effects of habitat change of this kind is a decrease in biodiversity and habitat stability. As these threatened ecosystems provide vital services to people (drinking water, energy, oxygen, nutrient cycling, culture etc.), their sustainability is vital to our everyday lives.

The EU aims to halt biodiversity loss by 2020 as part of an ongoing effort to mitigate mankind’s effect on the natural world. However, biodiversity is difficult to sample at low cost and, in many cases, the same applies to the services it provides. Hence, there is a strong need for cost efficient and valid indicators of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Bio-indicators can also be claimed to have “societal validity”, i.e. to what extent they manage to function as flagships for biodiversity conservation, and in communication among stakeholders. In the present project, we are working to use insect bio-indicators to monitor and assess the biodiversity of woodland and grassland environments in Europe. I will talk about exciting new research into insect pheromones which could fundamentally change the way we monitor terrestrial bio-indicators.
The purpose of the creative writing workshop will be to provide a space for creative reflection on the morning sessions. The main focus will be writing three short pieces on our relationship with biodiversity. We will work individually and as a group to write three pieces:

1. Early childhood memories of a place (short pieces of writing, using Laurie Lee’s *Cider With Rosie* to inspire us)
2. A response to wildlife conservation (group poem)
3. How we misuse the environment. Tourism and biodiversity (flash fiction pieces, no more than 250 words. A cautionary tale for adults or children, looking at Michael Foreman’s *Dinosaurs and All That Rubbish* and *The Lorax* by Dr Seuss as a starting point)

This workshop will be suitable for beginners and those with some writing experience. After the workshop we hope to be able to contribute some finished pieces to the Wildlife and Society conference organisers as a concrete “result” in response to the day.