Valuable Ecologies: A Geography of Angling

Submitted by Jacob Andrew Bull to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy* in Geography and Politics, March, 2008.

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

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(signature)
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Thanks must go to my examiners, Charles Watkins and Simon Naylor for my rigorous but enjoyable viva. Thanks also to all those who have read this thesis through; as it sits before me printed out, I realise just how large an undertaking it has been. I am sorry I used so many semi colons, colons and dashes and I probably will continue to begin sentences and paragraphs with a conjunction. And so many typographical errors!
Abstract

Animals have occupied a prominent position in geographical research for some time (Philo and Wilbert 2000, Wolch and Emel, 1998) and the importance of animals in personal narratives of identity, place and space is widely accepted (see for example Matless et al., 2005). However, such research is predominantly focused on understandings of mammals. This thesis contests this dominance by critically investigating the significance of fish in shaping understandings of animals.

The work also connects with the burgeoning geographical interest with water (see for example, Gandy, 2002; Swyngedouw, 2004; Gandy, 2004, Kaika, 2005; and Braun 2005) but through an approach which steps away from understandings of water as just a resource to recognise that it is a resource that connects different issues, scales and approaches and has a materiality that shapes, and influences understandings of people and places. It also contributes to debates surrounding nature/society as it examines the interactions between humans and non-mammalian animals to interrogate issues relating to escape, wildness, nostalgia and connects large scale ‘landscape’ approaches to close-up encounters with the more-than-human world. These connections flow from the connectivity generated through water as it connects ‘diffuse’ issues into particular organisms. This connectivity has been exploited as fish are used as indicator species for public policy. Alongside this use as indicator species, fisheries management is usually science driven. Therefore running through the thesis is a critique of the role of the natural sciences and economics in shaping understandings fish as the political ecology of which fish, in which locations, are made to count. All this was achieved through a methodology that encouraged anglers to address the complexities, inconsistencies and tensions within their angling experience.
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