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Going wild in space

The porous boundaries of wild animal geographies

Henry Buller

Like all zoos, by definition, Paignton Zoo in Devon, South West England, is a physically bounded space. Not only do the different animal exhibits live in variously designed enclosures within the general zoo space – including a Hagenback-style moat-and-concrete baboon display, a glass-walled and video-surveilled lion park, as well as a total-immersion hanger-like super-heated reptile environment – but the zoo itself, which lies in a wooded valley, is also enclosed by a large, secure fence separating it, to the north, from a large supermarket and, to the south, from a housing estate replete with sea views. This external fence defines the zoo as a distinctive space and the animals within it as fundamentally exotic to this temperate, generally rainy, coastal, and densely humanized region.

Yet every three or four metres along the perimeter fence is a small ground-level box, open at both ends, permitting passage from the outside to the inside, and visa versa. These boxes are for the badgers to pass through. Living in the surrounding woods, and in the wooded periphery of the zoo itself, the badgers move easily between the two worlds. Perhaps less taxonomically 'wild' than the lions and elephants whose enclosures they burrow into, the indigenous badgers are nevertheless relatively free to come and go as they please and to feed when and where they want to. They move to and from spaces beyond the human gaze and escape most direct human interference.

Staying with Paignton Zoo, there is a moment every afternoon when the pelicans are fed. On a purpose-built feeding platform, adjacent to a spectator viewing area, a zoo 'keeper' throws fish, imported in wooden crates from South America, at the gathering pelicans, who, with clipped wings, float almost stationary on the water's surface. No sooner are the fish released from the keeper's hands, however, than gulls swoop down from the Paignton skies to seize them before the pelicans can scoop them into their distinctive beaks. Frenzied scuffles break out between the foreign water-bound pelicans and the wholly familiar airborne gulls.

In 2011, an Egyptian cobra 'escaped' from New York's Bronx Zoo. Newspaper vendors in the Manhattan subway stations soon launched into an original refrain, 'Cobra, cobra, one bite, it's over', while anxious passengers stared up the northbound 2 train tunnel as if expecting the reptile to emerge from the dark at any moment. The cobra was later found; it had never left its enclosure in the zoo park. This incident recalls the famous 1874 Central Park Zoo escape story, when the *New York Herald* published an entirely fictitious article claiming that

many wild animals had broken out of the zoo and were savaging the New York population. 'The scene at the Fifth Avenue Hotel', claimed the account, 'where the Malayan tapir that killed the two policemen burst in among the mob of gentlemen standing in the portico, can never be forgotten' (*New York Herald* 1874). Like the fictitious tiger in Jonathan Lethem's novel *Chronic City* (2010), which stalked the municipal population of lower Manhattan, these animal stories challenge the reassuring boundaries between the city's otherwise largely fictionalized fauna and, in doing so, reanimate the threat of the 'true' wild.

The 'placing' of animals within human-ordered and human-defined spaces has been a foundational step in all human-animal relations, yet one that has long since moved away from a singular reliance on straightforward ecological or natural locational predispositions. The distribution of many categories of key species of the world's fauna has far less to do with Sclater-Wallace's bio-regional classification than with the spread of various human desires, whether material or metaphysical. Under Leroi-Gourhan's mytho-grammatical analysis of the Upper Palaeolithic cave art, the physical spacing and patterning of animal species depictions constituted an early form of language and thus spatialized world-ordering (Lewis-Williams 2002), echoing Berger's (1980) contention that animals first entered the human imagination as metaphors rather than as flesh and bone. Similarly, Morris's (1998) account of the power of animals in Malawian culture draws particular attention to the symbolic distinction between the chaos of the exterior, in this case, the 'woodland', where the animals live, and the ordered human space of the village, a distinction that has come to structure their thought, their cosmology, and their social practices.

The terms 'wild', 'domestic', 'companion', 'feral', 'pet', 'invasive', 'alien' all contain implicit – and sometimes explicit – spatial categorizations that ultimately say less about the animal than about us. 'That is why', write Deleuze and Guatarri, 'the distinction we must make is less between kinds of animals than between the different states according to which they are integrated into family institutions, State apparatuses, war machines, etc.' (1987: 268). Zoos, homes, parks, cities, the countryside, parade grounds, the 'wilderness' are all spatial categories that encompass normative animal orderings in which animals are both materially and semiotically 'placed'.

As a geographer, I am fascinated by these in-placings and out-of-placings and more particularly by their active subversion and contagious transgression. The city and its defining segregation from the 'wild' stands as perhaps the most robust of these exclusionary spatial forms, and the countryside, to a lesser extent. Both, however, are arguably becoming more and more the sites of animalian transgression. Whether this is because the transgressions are themselves multiplying or because we are becoming more simply aware, and more critical, of the explanatory limitations (and inherent porosity) of pre-fixed categories and structures and more attentive to things placed within them as 'knot[s] in a field of relatedness' (Haraway 2000: 290) is moot.

In this chapter, which draws upon contemporary geographical scholarship, I look at these various incursions and boundary transgressions that challenge our conventional understanding of the category of the 'wild' animal and its distanced spatialized expression. Today's truly 'wild' creatures are closer than we might think.

The wild is not us

Conventional wisdom, and popular representation, has cities as first and foremost actively de-wilded and de-natured spaces in which humans are, partly as a consequence of that de-wilding, 'condemned to live' (Park 1984: 3). Tuan explores the idea that cities are

'artifacts and worlds of artifice placed at varying distance from human conditions close to nature' (1978: 1); while Anderson (2003) links the realization of 'full humanity' to such distanciation. There are few if any trees or animals in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. Deliberate manoeuvres of careful eradication and exclusion, coupled with a wholly anthropocentric, two-leg apartheid have sought to draw an unequivocal and 'foundational' (Hinchliffe 1999) boundary between cities and towns on the one hand and nature and the 'wild' on the other.

Escaping from Central Park Zoo, the animals in the 2005 film *Madagascar* know their place:

> 'Do you ever see any penguins running free around New York City?'
> 'Of course not. We don't belong here. It's just not natural.'

The city, by definition, has no place for wild creatures, unless they are carefully domesticated or enclosed and displayed as purposeful others, messengers from a spatial and temporal elsewhere, whether they be the 'live' animals of a central city zoo or the taxidermized fauna of early-twentieth-century natural history museums. Of the former, Braverman remarks that zoos materialize the traditional separation between humans and animals and between nature and culture: 'Without the city', she quotes from a zoo manager, 'there would also not be a zoo' (2013: 29). Of the latter, Haraway (1989) makes the point that the purified nature, truth-telling, and faux realism of Carl Akeley's famous African Hall in New York's Natural History Museum came at a critical time when civilized, masculine urbanity felt itself increasingly threatened by new forms of human wildness. Only after animals have been shot, skinned, and then recreated as taxidermized re-presentations of the wild is the 'hygiene of nature' able to 'cure the sick vision of civilised man' (Haraway 1989: 30).

For Jane Jacobs, urban environments are 'as natural as colonies of prairie dogs and the beds of oysters' (1992: 443), while the geographer David Harvey famously proclaims that 'there is nothing unnatural about New York' (Harvey 1996: 186). Though cities and nonhumans might ultimately be 'inseparable in thought and practice' (Lynn and Shepherd 2004: 54), it is nonetheless the city that seeks to define the parameters of its naturality: no penguins running free, for a start. A city is above all an act of placing, a spatial ordering and selecting where 'civilization' seeks both to remove 'nature' from itself and itself from 'nature.' The gradual removal of livestock from the streets of the modern Western city (Philo 1995) has purified and foreshortened what was once more of a continuum of human-animal relationality into a starker and more contrasting taxonomy. In contradistinction, we might think of the non-city, the countryside, as its faunistic foil, where nature roams free. But even though 'animals (wild, companion, domestic) are players in the construction of the material ecological rural, and also the imaginative and economic rural' (Jones 2013: 1), the countryside too is an ordered space (Buller 2004; 2008) and many of the animals that inhabit it are largely pre-selected through centuries of human activity; few penguins run free there, too.

Over the last fifteen or so years, animal studies – and animal geography in particular – has questioned many of the assumptions that underlie such narratives of exclusion and anthropocentric ordering. Writing in 2002, Wolch called for scholars of human-animal interaction to 're-imagine the *anima urbis* – the breath, life, soul and spirit of the city – as being embodied in its animal life' (721). Her project has been to rethink urban theory and try to unsettle its anthropocentric heritage: 'to create a new political ecology of people and animals in the city' (734–5). In an earlier paper (1998), she draws attention to the persistent duality between 'pets' and 'pests'; city animals, it seems, are either one or the other.

But such binary distinctions have become too simple. Many non-companion animals live and have always lived in cities. What is needed is a way of accounting for their newly acknowledged co-presence. As I have argued elsewhere (Buller 2013) – paraphrasing Richard Leakey's famous response to Jane Goodall's observations of chimpanzee tool use – animal presences in the city call for us either to redefine 'city', redefine 'wild', or accept such animals as citizens. Of the latter, de Planhol (2004: 399) recounts the example of the Paris-based group 'L'Ecole du Chat', which has successfully lobbied the city's administration for official recognition of the 300 or so feral cats of Père Lachaise cemetery, as well as cats in other parks and cemeteries, as 'animal citizens' of the capital. Of course, companion animals may have already reached the lofty heights of citizenship (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011). The explosion of dog parks in US cities, including one in New York's Washington Square – a focal point for many historical movements for the formal recognition of the rights of various 'others' – might be seen as testament to the growing role of canine New Yorkers in determining the spatial form of the city.

Taking up Wolch's (1998) call for a recasting of the metropolis as a 'Zoopolis', Braun argues that it is time to 'de-fetishize the city', redefining it as a 'more than human' place (Braun 2005:646). This is exactly what Hovorka's (2008) 'transspecies urban theory' achieves. Looking at urban livestock in African cities and, in particular, chickens in Botswana, she develops an urban theory that 'incorporates animal actors and recognizes that interspecies mingling is fundamental to city life' (2008: 96). In a recent paper, Srinivasan (2012) takes this further by considering the complex status and lives of Indian 'street dogs'. Accepted, and resolutely not 'strays', and therefore indispensable, these dogs exhibit a form of 'interspecies cohabitation' that is neither that of companion nor domesticated animals. 'In this kind of "living with"', she argues, 'animal autonomy does not necessarily imply spatial separation or wildness' (2012: 116). Yet these are still our categorizations. Arguing forcibly that different 'stories' contribute to the making and meaning of places, be they cities or elsewhere, Van Dooren and Bird Rose ask:

> Whose stories come to matter in the emergence of a place? [. . .] What might it mean to take storied-places seriously as multispecies achievements? More concretely, what would it mean to take seriously the way in which some specific animals story their specific places?
>
> *(2012: 3)*

In the city, human/nonhuman encounters are ordered by what Luther (2013: 36) calls 'narratives of socio-spatial belonging'. Dogs, chickens, cats, these are all, to some extent, familiar urban dwellers (Kean 2011). Urban wild animals too are actively and materially reconfiguring our notions of urban space and, in doing so, challenge the very category of 'wild'. In this, argue Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011), they become 'denizens' (rather than 'citizens') of the multi-species metropolis, an interesting compromise which, while it confirms 'otherness', nonetheless opens up a framing for potentially transformative ethical engagement (Luther 2013).

The rhetoric of the urban *animalia* is frequently one of spatial and temporal movement: of invasion, or re-colonization, of decline or explosion, of coming or going. Yet some of the animals concerned were here first and have simply remained, often unseen. Others have been displaced by urban expansion and are adapting to their new circumstances, re-colonizing old spaces if not former ecologies. Others still are genuine newcomers, migrants, like the human inhabitants of so many cities.

Leaving aside zoo animals for the moment – one is far more likely to see a tiger in an urban zoo than anywhere in the wild – there are a number of particular dimensions to the contested notion of 'wild', both within and beyond the city, that I want to explore in this chapter: first, a new and re-invigorated observational and empirical recognition of the city as redolent with wild spaces and species; second, a transgressive neo-wildness that derives from adaptive behavioural and physical animal responses to living in the presence of humans; and third, a less assured sense of the 'wild' animal that emerges from the processes and practices of wild animal reintroduction.

Urban wildlife

In her recently published book *Field Notes from a Hidden City*, Esther Woolfson (2013) describes her daily encounters with her home city of Aberdeen's wildlife, from pigeons and cormorants to spiders and worms. Rescuing a young pigeon from the winter snow and contemplating its return to the 'wild', she writes:

> I began to think about wildness in relation to creatures who live in cities, about whether or not we consider them less wild than creatures living elsewhere, or think of them as somehow lesser parts of nature itself. [. . .] Their presence may be the only contact many urban people have with the natural world but our relationship with them seems changed by proximity, diminished by the fact of their being here among us.
>
> *(2013: e-book location 99/4891)*

'Urban wildlife' is defined as 'non-domestic vertebrates and invertebrates of urban and urbanizing areas' (Adams 2005: 139). There exists a long tradition of both scientific and popular urban wildlife conservation, through the designation of reserves and wilderness areas by both statutory and voluntary agencies (Adams and Leedy 1991; Lorimer 2008). Much of this has been driven by a sense of 'human social need' (Adams 2005) and arguably by an enduring paradigm of boundary making (Harrison and Burgess 1994).

More recently, however, the status of urban wildlife is receiving renewed attention; 'things are brewing', observe Hinchliffe and Whatmore (2006: 123), as the 'urban green' becomes revalued politically, aesthetically, conceptually, even ethically (Luther 2013), into what Lorimer refers to as a more 'fluid biogeography' where fixed territories are replaced by 'open geographies of interpenetrating and overlapping networks (2008: 2056). As Thomson points out in her penetrating study of Melbourne's bats, for these animals 'the city is just another habitat opportunity' (2007: 89). Suddenly, urban wildlife, from voles and bats to peregrines and redstarts, is everywhere, no longer confined to labelled 'nature' spaces but recognized as an active co-presence on tower blocks, sewage plants, brownfield land, old cars, and abandoned sites. In Hinchliffe and Whatmore's words, cities have become co-inhabited 'with and against the grain of urban design' (2006: 128).

Alongside the renewed interest in urban wildlife amongst bio-geographers and others from animal studies, there has been a notable explosion in recent years of what we might term urban nature writing. A significant number of 'nature writers' have re-discovered the city as a haven of hidden wildness, with both popular and 'natural history' accounts of the often unacknowledged wild spaces and species of the urban environment flourishing over the last decade (Bennett and Teague 1999; Dixon 2002). Richard Mabey's groundbreaking book *The Unofficial Countryside* (1973) stands as a precursor to all of these. Described as a 'Doomsday

Book of a topography too fascinating to be left alone' (Sinclair 2010), it charts the urban wilderness of abandoned construction sites, backyards, and central reservations.

In many ways, the new urban nature writing is a challenge to the nostalgic, romantic, yet previously dominant countryside nature writing so prevalent in the UK, where the wild is essentialized as remote, apart, and, in some obscure way, 'natural'; where animals burrow below ground, out of site, not into subway tracks and along service conduits but into the earth and rock – genuinely natural environments; where birds nest in trees and hedgerows not on apartment house ledges and chimney stacks; where dead animals fall and are consumed, rather than being bagged and taken out with the rubbish. Macfarlane observes that 'if the wild were to come close to extinction, its final fastness would be the mountain tops, and the valleys they protected' (2007: 58). In his wild, yet hopeful, geography of the British Isles, he charts such extreme places and their 'fierce elementality'. Even Macfarlane, however, accepts that our contemporary understanding of the wild needs to be more nuanced. Wild nature is not just a product of civilization's self distanciation, but a ubiquitous and contemporary expression of relational vitality that is more than a mere vestige of a non-anthropocentric past, a wild of miniature as well as spectacular scale.

Despite this acknowledgement of the human construction of the wild and the spectral presences of past nonhuman passage through landscapes, there is still an inexorable sense of fixity in wild nature, whether it be in the repetitive vitality of natural growth and seasonal change, the indigenousness of wildlife, the seeming immutability of landforms, or the 'gravitational pull' (Macfarlane 2007: 176) of more-than-human time. Human longing for Nature, according to Jane Bennett, is 'the longing for something solid, fixed and final, something authoritative, divinely domestic. [. . .] But this very longing', she goes on, 'is also an ache for something that is larger than life, extraordinary, unencompassable – in short, Wild' (1994: 72).

Although urban wild animals, for all their recent championing, may well remain, for many, 'unofficial' (Pyle 2002) and 'uncanny' (Kaika 2004), somehow 'lesser parts of nature' (Woolfson 2013), especially when held against the charisma and magnificence of more distant fauna, it is perhaps in their very spatial proximity and unexceptional daily encounter that a new sense of interspecies sharing may flourish. Recent urban nature writing acknowledges numerous urban species, particularly birds, as representing a critical element not only of that natural fixity that Bennett identifies, but also of a vital connectivity:

> Living in a city, we are all elements of a biological and ecological chain described by words that express the complex web of connection between us and hint of dependency and need – commensal, mutual, symbiotic, predatory, synanthropic. [. . .] In different degrees, we share our vulnerability.
>
> *(Woolfson 2013: 132/4891).*

Becoming urban wild

Urban wilding and re-wilding, be it literary, material, or conceptual, has been largely a re-wilding of the urban space that *Homo urbanis* has made his/her own through adapting and evolving social practice (and maybe even biological processes) to become urban. However, many animal species have also similarly adapted, not only through colonizing cities with their physical presence but also displaying ecological and behavioural changes in response to their adopted environment (and, in some occasions, to direct human interference). A new and distinctive urban 'wild' is arguably coming into being: a wilding that is more than merely a

spatial and ecological presence; the hybrid wild of the new urban fauna (Herda-Rapp and Marotz 2005).

Pigeons and foxes, whose numbers in cities have often become higher than in their neighbouring traditional 'natural' habitats, tend to exemplify this trans-boundary status. Of the former, Jerolmack writes:

> This animal is what I would call a double hybrid. It was created by humans for domestic use but then escaped to become feral. Its physical and biological structure, as well as its reproductive abilities and habits such as dwelling on window ledges, are the product of millennia of human intervention in nature. This particular type of pigeon *never* existed 'in the wild;' its 'natural habitat' is among humans.
>
> *(2007: 90)*

That being said, as Jerolmack (2009) points out, pigeons have more recently undergone a further taxonomic re-shuffle to become a despised and nuisance species, generative of social disorder in urban settings. They have crossed (and arguably re-crossed) the human socio/spatial, material/semantic boundaries of 'nature' and 'culture' to be somehow 'out of place' in all. The pigeons' error was to get too close. Contrast their treatment in the representational politics of urban wildlife with that of the exotic New York parakeets (native to South America), described as the 'blameless victims' of accidental release. Though they number many hundreds in the metropolitan area, they are praised for their 'good ecological behaviour' as metaphors of successful integration (Seymour 2013).

Much has been said about urban foxes, from the poems of Ruth Padel (2004) to the scientific investigation of their responsive sociobiology in urban settings (MacDonald and Newdick 1982; Soulsbury *et al.* 2010; 2011). Here, too, we find a species of vigorous boundary-crossers (Knight 2000). Researchers have shown, for example, how urban red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) alter ranging patters to smaller areas in cities to avoid traversing roads, thereby reducing pack mortality (Baker *et al.* 2007); how they live in smaller packs than they would in the countryside; and how they learn and adapt to changing food sources and the rhythms of their availability. Such adaptive social organization, while not (yet) supported by evidence of specific genetic differentiation from non-urban foxes (Wandeler *et al.* 2003), nonetheless suggests that urban foxes might be said to constitute a distinctive urban vulpine 'society'.

> One cub has died on the road. Magpies
> have eaten her. The last two play-learn, eat solid food
> and follow their parents through dusk. Twins
> of the Greek night sky, Castor and Pollux, shine
> through damp London nights as earthworms
> leave burrows. Parents spoon crane-flies off lawns
> with their tongues, teach young to deadhead the bins
>
> on Bemerton and Havelock, lift black plates
> for frankincense, rot-lustre gems
> of sunk baconfat. To strip flaking bark
> for silverheave woodlice, listen
> for worm-bristles rasping through grass.
> If worm-tails are gripping the burrow –
> even a worm can be frantic – the grey-black lips

pull gently taught – and pause – and pull again.
A technique used by bait collecting fishermen.

Ruth Padel, 'The Worms' (2004)

Of course, for foxes, with their new found suburbanity has come human reprobation, just like pigeons with their new-found feral status. On occasion, this rises to the level of 'moral panic' (Cassidy and Mills 2012), comparable in many ways to the increasingly frequent reports of 'alien big cats' roaming the British countryside (Buller 2004). Estimates place the population of 'urban' foxes in London at around 10,000, provoking periodic calls for a programme of systematic culling. Yet the urban fox also has many defenders not only for its representational and symbolic potency as a messenger of rustic rural naturality in an otherwise metropolitan setting, but also, and perhaps paradoxically, for its shape-shifting urban sophistication. Commenting on the growing public awareness of urban foxes in British cities, Mugford suggests that 'they are coming closer, collecting food, rolling over, even allowing petting – in some instances the behaviour is more dog-like than fox-like' (quoted in Anon. 2013).

The growing presence in cities of species and individuals generally considered intolerant of coexistence with human animals, or unfamiliar with the ecologies and materialities of urban infrastructure, implies considerable adaptation (arguably on the part of both nonhuman and human). Long-term and permanent behavioural change, both in response to novel stresses, induced by proximity to humans and their domesticated animals and environmental affordances have been widely observed while some evidence suggests that 'micro-evolutionary' shifts are also beginning to be discerned in species of lizard, moth, and finch (DeStefano and DeGraaf 2003; Ditchkoff *et al.* 2006).

Blue tits (*Parus caeruleus*) pecking off the tops of traditional doorstep milk bottles to get at the cream have become part of British urban folklore. Other species, including the blackbird (*Terdus merula*), the magpie (*Pica pica*), and the red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*), have been highly successful in their adaptation to the new ecological niches provided by towns and cities (Jerzac 2001; Rutz 2008). Scientists have given the name 'synurbanization' to these biological and behavioural adjustments of wild animal populations to urban environments (Luniak 2004). Although it remains to be confirmed whether, genetically, these urban populations differ or will differ from their non-urban confreres (Jerzac 2001) or whether such adaptations remain within the broader plasticity of the species, synurbic populations, many of which were once drawn from largely 'shy' species, now occupy spaces in which a co-existing human presence is ubiquitous and multiple. Thus, while the general impact of urbanization on wildlife has been fairly catastrophic, with declining numbers of species and ecologies, 'the growing tendency towards synurbanisation observed recently in birds and mammals is an optimistic chance for enriching the biodiversity of urban wildlife' (Luniak 2004: 53).

Introducing wildlife

If, through an engagement with the notion of multi-species encounter, our project is to challenge those 'ossified' (Jerolmack 2007) categories of 'culture' and 'nature', 'human' and 'nonhuman', then we must look at the 'city' and other wild spaces differently too. These become 'not so much an objective fact as [. . .] a specific material mode of storying [. . .] a story told and enacted by many creatures' (Van Dooren and Bird Rose 2012: 18). Hence the spatial fetishism, the taxonomic absolutism, and the nonhuman exclusivity of the 'wild' needs to be overcome. Wildlife, argue Whatmore and Thorne, should be reconceived as a 'relational achievement' that is 'spun between people and animals, plants and soils, documents and

devices, in heterogeneous social networks that are performed in and through multiple places and fluid ecologies' (1998: 437). Whatmore and Thorne's own work traces the mobilization of animals (in this case *Caiman latirostris*) in global networks of science and natural history that intertwine Latin American jungles and the international boardrooms of global conservation institutions. Quoting Elspeth Probyn's assertion that 'a thing's place [is] no longer anything but a point in its movement [. . .] a space that takes for us the form of relations among sites' (1996: 11), they show how wild-ness is a constantly re-negotiated performance that can rarely be encircled in thick boundary lines (Hinchliffe *et al*. 2005).

In 2009, the Scottish Wildlife Trust initiated a 5-year trial reintroduction of beavers (*Castor fiber*) into an area known as Knapdale in the far west of Scotland. Having been extinct in the UK for over 400 years, the reintroduction of this initial batch of 16 genetically pure, heavily quarantined, and disease-tested Norwegian animals into the remote and sparsely populated forest area, some distance from any concentrated human population or activity, was seen as a way of restoring a lost ecosystem, encouraging biodiversity, and closely studying and monitoring the process of wild species reintroduction. Since the start of the programme, some of the beavers have died or disappeared and a large number of scientific monitoring reports and studies have been produced following relatively intense observation of the animals and the site, leading one commentator to describe the site as an 'outside zoo' (Fisher 2011). Estimates of a re-established population of 30 to 40 beavers by the end of the trial have had to be significantly revised downwards.

During the same period, in the east of Scotland, in the region to the north of the cities of Dundee and Perth, an entirely different form of beaver reintroduction has been taking place. Unofficial, un-monitored, and un-planned, the apparent re-colonization of the streams and woodlands of Tayside by beavers of unknown origin (but probably escapees from captivity) was not only occurring without human intervention but the 'free living' beaver population in Tayside was proving to be a lot more successful than the official trial, with an early estimated number of some 100 or so individuals, later raised to 140 (Scottish Natural Heritage 2012). Various arguments were put forward by the official conservation and wildlife management organization Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) that the unplanned re-colonization needed to be halted and prevented (due to issues of animal welfare, predation, declining fish stocks, inappropriate beaver breeds, damage to water courses and private woodlands) and a decision to launch a recapturing programme was subsequently announced (SNH 2010a) though later rescinded following strong popular opposition. Significantly, SNH claimed at the time that the absence of sufficient monitoring of this re-colonization, as well as the lack of information on the origins of the animals, effectively rendered it unacceptable. Nevertheless, the irony of the situation did not escape the SNH:

> Capturing beavers is not something we ever thought we would have to be involved in, nor is it something we would want to be spending resources on, particularly in such times as these (SNH 2010b).

The 'bounded' and (bio)secure beavers of Knapdale, in their designated and policed reintroduction space, stand thereby in contrast to the 'free' and feral beavers of Tayside. While the former, for all their monitoring, pre-determined biological suitability, and unequivocally wild location are not reproducing as well as hoped, the latter, less scientifically proper and actively sharing co-constituted space with the human occupants of the Tayside environment, are thriving. In Tayside, SNH now recommends 'trialling mitigation methods to allow people and beavers to coexist' (2012: i). Both wild beaver presences, Knapdale and Tayside,

might be described as 'relational achievements' though the more successful of the two has been very much more on the beavers' own terms.

Endpoint

There is a closely defended ordering of the human world in the notion of the 'wild' as Jamie (2011) reveals in a remarkable re-appraisal of one of the most widely read 'nature' books of the last half-century, Maxwell's *Ring of Bright Water* (1960). This, she argues, was not about an otter; it was about the countryside (and about class, and about sexuality). It was a nostalgic yearning not only for a fast disappearing aristocratic rurality of elite landownership and social order, but also an innocent sense of nature and of the rural *animalia* in which otters could play in baths, where nature was benign, where wild animals could be tamed and owned as trusted pets. Here, we might tentatively claim, lies Freud's notion of the 'nature reserve' as a 'place where imagination can run wild even in the context of civilized society' (Oliver 2009: 254).

Today's re-conquering otters wouldn't be happy in a bath or riding in a rowing boat. They embody an altogether different nature and an altogether different set of relations between countryside and fauna, between human and nonhuman. Maxwell's otter apparently meant more to him than most human beings. Yet wild otters today, like urban foxes, pigeons, racoons, bats, and rats, stand both for a different 'wild nature', one whose 'difference', on the one hand, commands a certain respect and attention, yet on the other hand is open to, and invites, a combination of both greater multi-species conviviality – inclusivity, making room and being together, 'temporary identification with others in a shared place' (Van Dooren and Bird Rose 2012: 17) – and what Candea (2010) calls, drawing from his fascinating study of meerkat/volunteer interaction, 'inter-patience' or the allowing of things to happen. In this way, the city, for example, might become a 'space for flourishing of as many different forms of life as possible' (Van Dooren and Bird Rose 2012: 17).

The 'natural' remains, it would seem, ordered by the social, and yet it often appears to erase 'all but humans in the making of these wild places' (Whatmore and Thorne 1998: 437). Like all orders, this should invite our scepticism and critical investigation. Following Bruno Latour (2007), we might recognize that any such simplistic classifications of the world into 'wild' and 'not wild' has its own effects: first – after Foucault – in creating and reinforcing hegemonic orderings; and second, in actually transgressing those orderings through everyday relational practice. And it is through such cosmopolitical practice that we ultimately generate 'response-ability' (Stengers 2005). Urbanization, with its coming together of the social and the material, with its multiplicity of publics, networks, actors, and meanings, its design and its affects, offers, according to Barnett (2012), opportunities for a new responsibility. Paradoxically, perhaps, it is within cities that we will best learn to live with the wild:

> If you get rid of all the cats in Manhattan, then the coyotes will go home to Montana or wherever it is they call home (Thomas Payne, forum participant, *New York Times*, 25 March 2010).

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