

Preface

Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why

It Shouldn't Be All about Us

If you don't know how to fix it, please stop breaking it. . . . You are what you do, not what you say. What you do makes me cry at night. . . . Please make your actions reflect your words. [Severn Suzuki 1992]

THESE WONDERFUL WORDS were spoken by twelve-year-old Severn Suzuki who, along with two other youngsters, all members of the Environmental Children's Organization (ECO), paid their own way to the United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Severn started ECO when she was nine. Whenever I watch this speech, given at the close of a plenary session, tears of joy and deep concern come to my eyes. Severn Suzuki is right. We act as if there will be no future generations who will be inheriting the innumerable messes we leave behind.

Ignoring Nature No More raises numerous questions about who we are and what we have done to other animals and ecosystems. It is very much about the question "Who lives, who dies, and why?" We live in a troubled and wounded world that is in dire need of healing. We all should be deeply concerned and perhaps terrified by what we have done and continue to do. We humans are an arrogant lot and we have made huge and horrific global messes that need to be repaired now. Losses of biodiversity are stinging and many are irreversible. The overriding sense of turmoil is apparent to anyone who takes the time to pay attention. Researchers and nonresearchers alike are extremely concerned about unprecedented global losses of biodiversity and how we humans suffer because of our destructive ways. We are animals and we should be proud and aware of our membership in the animal kingdom. Our unique contribution to the wanton decimation of the

planet and its many life forms is an insult to other animal beings and also de-means us.

We're Running Out of World: What Must We Do

Humans are a force in nature. "Tell me something I don't know," I hear you say. We're all over the place, big-brained, big-footed, arrogant, invasive, menacing, and marauding mammals. No need to look for mythical Bigfoot: we're here! We leave huge footprints all over the place and have been rather unsuccessful at solving urgent problems. We're simply "running out of world" (Berry 2003, 131). Perhaps we've already run out of world, wild, wildness, and wilderness. Some go so far as to argue we've created a world that's so technologically and socially complex we can't control it (Allenby and Sarewitz 2011).

Our omnipresence and power call for more humility and responsibility, not license to do anything we want. We need to be small footed and big hearted and let each step on earth nourish us. Simply put, there are too many of us and we overconsume in the most selfish and unjust ways, influencing both nonhumans and humans (Mazur 2009; McKibben 2010). Indeed, the major cause of mortality in North American populations of large- and medium-sized mammals is humans (51.8 percent; Collins and Kays 2011). We cause the most deaths in larger North American mammals, including those living in *protected* areas (34.6 percent). To date there has only been one observation of a nonhuman overhunting (Lwanga et al. 2011). Chimpanzees in Uganda's Kibale National Park work together to catch prey, typically red colobus monkeys. Between 1975 and 2007 there was an 89 percent decline in the red colobus population while the chimpanzee population rose about 83 percent.

We're also extremely skilled at denying what is happening right in front of our eyes (Specter 2009; Norgaard 2011), including what we know about the amazing cognitive, emotional, and moral capacities of animals and the pain and suffering they endure (Wicks 2011). As *Homo denialis* we readily "see no evil, hear no evil, or smell no evil," although if we open our senses even a little bit to our surroundings it's impossible to ignore or deny what's happening and the dire consequences of our actions. We can ignore or deny the noise, but not the silence. We ignore and redecorate nature (Bekoff 2006) in incredibly self-serving ways, as if we're the only species who matters. It should not be all about us, but it often is. Nonetheless, I truly believe there is hope (Bekoff 2007a, 2010a) and that the essays included here will help us along. The animals are constantly telling us what they want and need. Their manifesto, simply put, is treat us better or leave us alone (Bekoff 2010a). As we save other animals, we'll be saving ourselves.

Why Do We Ignore Nature and What Can Be Done about It? Ecocide Is a Form of Suicide

When did we begin ignoring nature (Bekoff and Bexell 2010)? Why did we start ignoring our need for untainted and healthy food, clean water, clean air, and reasonable shelter? How did we become so disconnected from nature and an understanding of basic ecological processes? What allows us to tolerate human-induced losses in biodiversity? What can we do about the distance and alienation from nature and other animals that allows us to be so destructive? It's difficult to isolate one or even a few factors as we ponder a number of questions including why we ignore nature, who we are in the grand scheme of things, and what we're doing to animals, plants, entire ecosystems, and precious, unimaginably beautiful, and fragile webs of nature of which we are a major component although we often act as if this isn't the case.

Clearly, in the current hustle-and-bustle-world, it's easy to ignore nature as we run here and there not even knowing why we're doing what we're doing. Being removed from our own daily lives makes it highly unlikely we'll have any meaningful appreciation of our destructive ways and the wide-ranging consequences of them. In addition to ignoring nature because it's convenient to do so, we also live in oblivion and removed from directly knowing and feeling what we're doing because we are so detached from other animals and other nature.

People also are influenced by their failure to recognize that what they do *does* make a difference. Doomsday thinking that there's nothing we can do to turn the tide; a lack of long-term goals, and visions that fail to recognize that future generations really do rely on our goodwill and efforts that we ourselves might not live to see; the need for immediate gratification; outright laziness; hierarchical speciesistic thinking that we're "higher, better, or more valuable" than other animals—a psychological barrier justifying human superiority and exceptionalism, religious proclivities, economic contingencies (it's too expensive to care and make changes), political alignments, and dogma—all factor into negativity. Humans are not "better" or "higher" than individuals of other species. We share many similarities, but we're also different, but different doesn't mean better.

Regardless of why, much of our abuse comes down to the blatant fact that we do indeed ignore nature as if we are immune to both the incredible destruction for which we're responsible and the good things that result from our concern about our destructive ways. Much of it also comes down to rampant anthropocentrism. No matter what we otherwise claim, most of the time "it's all about us." Frankly, it's enough to make one sick, sad, depressed, and unmotivated to

do anything. But this is the wrong response, for we *must* do something and must do it now, not when it's convenient, for that time rarely if ever comes. As Zoe Weil (2011) says, we must be "solutionaries." We need to love what we're doing and love the planet for which we're working. We must get out and interact with nature and embrace her beauty and magnificence.

It's easy to deny what's happening or to let others do something about it because "I'm too busy or I'm not at fault." Passing the buck is easy, and scientists often do it so they can avoid thinking about the ethics of their actions or inactions (Wolpe 2006). The fact is each and every one of us is at fault. We are individually and collectively responsible for destroying our one and only Earth, and most people don't seem to give a damn. Or we say we do, but don't do much if anything to change our destructive ways.

What This Book Is All About

This eclectic and forward-looking book was conceived in the spirit of broad and open inquiry. The contributors are experts in their diverse and respective fields and in their essays provide refreshingly new, and in some cases controversial, light. I chose to be an editor, not a censor, in that we need bold and forward-looking ideas and action as we move ahead to heal our wounded world. Each essay deals with a different aspect of the innumerable areas concerned with what's called the human dimension (Evernden 1999; Manfredo et al. 2009; Wilson 2012) and human-animal connections (anthrozoology: <http://www.anthrozoology.org/>; Bekoff 2007b), and each could stand on its own. Each essay also shows clearly how we need to get back in touch with who we are and the complexity of nature as a whole so we can change our wounding ways. The reference sections alone are invaluable resources not only for information about past research but also for future endeavors. The diverse field of human-animal-environmental relationships is burgeoning and attracts scholars from numerous disciplines. It seems as if there are new articles or books appearing almost daily (see for example Ehrlich 1997; Hilty, Lidicker, and Merenlender 2006; Hawken 2007; Meyer 2007; Sobel 2008; Anderson 2009; Clayton and Myers 2009; Crompton and Kasser 2009; Ehrlich and Ehrlich 2009; Ehrlich and Ornstein 2010; Blumstein and Fernández-Juricic 2010; Cole and Yung 2010; Herzog 2010; Hribal 2010; Koger and Winter 2010; Cooney 2011; McCardle 2011a, b; Ryan 2011; Wilson 2012).

Some of the basic ideas behind this volume were outlined in an essay that called attention to the need for interdisciplinary input to allay the incredible and unprecedented losses of biodiversity that we're experiencing (Bekoff and Bexell 2010) in what's called the "Anthropocene" (the "age of man"), the current geological period of time when our actions have had enormous and unprec-

edented global consequences (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropocene>). It's rarely a lack of knowledge and concrete data that results in missed opportunities to preserve biodiversity or that informs decisions about who lives and who dies, including animals and ecosystems (Stolzenburg 2008, 2011; Blumstein and Fernández-Juricic 2010; Saylan and Blumstein 2011; Bekoff in press). Rather, losses are typically due to problems of human psychology and social and cultural factors that result in the inadequate protection of animals and their habitats. Science alone doesn't hold the answers to the current crisis, nor does it get people to act. As historian Lynn White (1967) wrote in his classic essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," "More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one." More than four decades later this claim still holds: we don't need more science to know we need a new mindset and social movement that center on empathy, compassion, and being proactive. The "putting out the fires" mentality hasn't and can't work, and is not sustainable. Along these lines, Michael Shermer writes, "The majority of our most deeply held beliefs are immune to attack by direct educational tools, especially for those who are not ready to hear contradictory evidence. Belief change comes from a combination of personal psychological readiness and [a] deeper social and cultural shift in the underlying zeitgeist, which is affected in part by education but is more the product of larger and harder-to-define political, economic, religious, and social changes" (Shermer 2011, 4; see also Clayton and Myers 2009; Cooney 2011; Bekoff in press). Joe Zammit-Lucia (2011) says it poignantly, "Conservation is all about people" (see also Schulz 2011).

Of course, science and the results of empirical inquiries are important, but despite all we know, environmental education has largely failed (Saylan and Blumstein 2011). Workable solutions to current and future problems depend on people from different disciplines first knowing about their common interests and then talking *with* one another, not *at* one another, and respecting one another's contributions. All the science in the world won't help us along if we don't get the results out to the masses and we don't learn about how human attitudes are formed, maintained, and changed for the better; how we can get humans to do something to right the wrongs; and how we can have a better understanding of what we can and *must* do. Biologists of many different stripes, psychologists, sociologists, social workers, economists, political scientists, religious scholars, people working in journalism and media, and philosophers have much to say on the notion of ignoring nature and what we can and must do to remedy this practice. Cultural differences also need to be factored in. So it was in this spirit of wide-ranging inquiry that this book was envisioned and realized.

As I was writing these introductory comments an issue of *New Scientist*

arrived in which there was an excellent essay called “Unnatural Selection,” informing readers “humans have become the biggest force in evolution.” I wonder, though, if it’s really *unnatural* selection because we’re an integral part of nature and it doesn’t look as if we’re going to disappear any time soon. Michael Le Page writes: “The Zoque people of Mexico hold a ceremony every year during which they grind up a poisonous plant and pour the mixture into a river running through a cave. . . . Any of the river’s molly fish that float to the surface are seen as a gift from the gods. The gods seem to be on the side of the fish, though—the fish in the poisoned parts of the river are becoming resistant to the plant’s active ingredient, rotenone. If fish can evolve in response to a small religious ceremony, just imagine the effects of all the other changes we are making to the planet.” He goes on to note, “We are turning grassland and forests into fields and cities, while polluting the air and water. We are hunting species to the brink of extinction and beyond, as well as introducing new pests and diseases to just about every part of the world. And that’s not to mention drastically altering the climate of the entire planet. It is no secret that many—perhaps even most—species living today are likely to be wiped out over the next century or two as a result of this multiple onslaught. What is now becoming clear is that few of the species that survive will live on unchanged” (Le Page 2011, 32–37, http://www.newscientist.com/special/unnatural_selection). We’re unrelentingly reminded daily of our destructive ways, both in popular media and scientific literature.

To make his case crystal clear Le Page considers topics including predation by humans and how we go for the biggest and the best animals, climate change, pollution and pollution resistance that crosses species, disease, pests becoming immune to poisons, and invasive species. Contributors to the collection of essays herein also consider some of these topics, and considerably more. We’re not only making a difference in places we live. Climate change seems to be the cause for the loss of populations of Adélie and chinstrap penguins across the west Antarctic peninsula (Strain 2011). Our effects are wide ranging and far reaching and we most likely understate the extent of our destructive ways. As some of the essays here point out, sometimes we really don’t know what we’ve done or how to fix what we think we did.

Leaving Our Comfort Zone:

Does Caring and Compassion Mean Letting Go?

The sum total of human behavior translates into nothing less than an epoch-making disaster for global biodiversity, habitat, human rights, the empowerment of women and children, and the full potential of any democracy. That’s why rich nations like the

U.S. need to lead the way in showing compassion through human (particularly women's [sic] rights), through the smart and generous use of green technology, like that employed in contraceptive options and green legislation. [Tobias 2011]

We all agree our troubled and wounded world needs a lot of compassionate healing, right now, not when it's convenient. There is a compelling sense of urgency. We live in a messy, complicated, frustrating, demanding world, and it's impossible to do the "right" thing all of the time. Compassion is the glue that holds ecosystems and webs of nature together. We're an integral part of many beautiful awe-inspiring webs of nature and webs of consumption, and we all suffer when these complex interrelationships are compromised. We should work for the planet because we belong to it despite our imagining and acting as if we stand apart and above nature as natural aliens (Evernden 1999). Pat Shipman (2011b; see also Shipman 2011a) asks poignantly, "If our species was born of a world rich with animals, can we flourish in one where biodiversity is decimated?"

We're all over the place and it's arrogant to think we can pick and choose where we have impact, for we have impact everywhere. Many different animals display compassion for others, so it's natural to call upon compassion to alleviate the suffering of others. It is natural and "animal" to be good, compassionate, empathic, and moral (Bekoff and Pierce 2009; Keltner 2009; Rifkin 2009; Bekoff 2010a, 2012; de Waal 2010; Corning 2011) and "more science" will not necessarily make us better or compassionate (Bekoff and Bexell 2010; Shermer 2011; <http://motherjones.com/politics/2011/03/denial-science-chris-mooney>). It's who we are. Wayne Pacelle (2011), president and CEO of the Humane Society of the United States, argues that we need a "humane economy," one that makes compassion and caring profitable. This will surely make coexistence more likely. So be it.

Redecorating Nature, Rewilding Our Hearts, and Expanding Our Compassion Footprint

We are continually and inevitably redecorating nature either intentionally or unintentionally by building homes, shopping centers, and parking lots and also by decimating species or moving them from one place to another. Redecorating nature refers to our global tendency, almost a human obsession, to move into the living rooms of other animals with little or no regard for what we're doing to them, their friends, and their families. We unrelentingly intrude because there are too many of us and because it's so easy. The year 2011 saw the world's seven billionth person and there will be around nine billion by 2050. Because our population now is still growing and there are more mouths to fill and people

to home, we need to do something with deep internal effects, within ourselves, to prevent even more from being born.

Our big brains should caution us that we can't go on living as we have, but something doesn't seem to click because we're so resistant to changing our ways on a scale that would really make a difference. People are often shy about talking about having fewer babies, but let's face it, there are far too many of us and we don't take lessons from other animals: we need to live within our means. Part of the rewilding strategy (Bekoff in press) is for us to stop making so many of us. An insane and unsustainable reproductive strategy clearly spells doom, and the rampant collateral damage and ripple effects of more and more of us puts us right in the center of blame for what's happening in what's rightfully called the Anthropocene, the period characterized by widespread and egregious human decimation of our one and only planet. Melanie Challenger rightly points out in her book *On Extinction: How We Became Estranged from Nature* that we're not only losing species, but languages, cultures, and ways of life are disappearing as well. As I conduct children's events all around the world I often wonder what the world will look like in the future for someone who's ten years old now? The sobering thought keeps me up at night.

It's difficult to live in the demanding world and not occasionally do unintentional harm. It's the intentional redecorating that needs to be confronted head on before we do so much irreversible harm that nothing will really work to make the world a better place for all beings, human and other-than-human. Redecorating is often a lack of compassion that includes our many serious impacts on diverse ecosystems—building homes in the living rooms of other animals, building highways where they travel, or decimating habitats and not only killing individuals but breaking up closely knit families. If we redecorate nature, and we surely will, we must do it with compassion and caring for the animals we are displacing.

We need to add more compassion to the world and expand our compassion footprint to include individuals of all species, including ourselves (Bekoff 2010a, in press). There will always be trade-offs in deciding who and what to save (Aitken 2004; Macdonald and Service 2007; Bekoff 2010b; Duffy 2010; Leader-Williams, Adams, and Smith 2010; Moore and Nelson 2010; Russell 2010; Brakes and Simmonds 2011; Stolzenburg 2011), and the decisions that need to be made are incredibly difficult and frustrating and require each of us to think deeply so we do the best we can.

We need to ask some hard questions, whether we like it or not. These include: Should we kill in the name of conservation or research? Should individuals be traded off for the good of their own or other species or for ecosystem integrity? Can we really put a price on animals to reflect their value (Vucetich

and Nelson 2007; Butler 2010)? Are we trying to do too much? Should we focus our efforts on what seem to be the more soluble problems and realize that we can't do everything? When do we pull the plug and admit defeat? Is it more compassionate to let some species go rather than compromise our efforts because we're spread too thin? How can we rewild our hearts and bring animals back into the picture (Bekoff in press)? How can we build and maintain clear and unobstructed corridors of compassion and coexistence? How can we cross disciplines and work together? How can we walk the talk so that something actually gets done? Would the world be better without us (Weisman 2007)?

So the real question is, what are we going to do with more heartfelt healing concern? Where should we focus heartfelt concern as we try to rewild our hearts (Bekoff in press), rewild urban areas (Beatley 2010; Stefanovic and Scharper 2012), rewild the wild (Foreman 2004; Fraser 2009), and build corridors of coexistence and compassion? Rewilding on any scale, ranging from wide-ranging landscapes to the deeply personal, will mean that we must never ignore nature.

First Do No Harm:

The Case for Compassionate Conservation and Justice for All

If all mankind were to disappear, the world would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that existed ten thousand years ago. If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos. [E. O. Wilson n.d.]

Where to begin is a challenge, but perhaps a moral imperative that can ground our collective efforts is "First do no harm" (Bekoff 2010b). In his book *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (1986), one that should be required reading for everyone working in the conservation sciences, philosopher Paul Taylor proposes four broad rules for how we should interact with animals and other elements of nature (172–92). These duties are the rule of nonmaleficence, the rule of noninterference, the rule of fidelity, and the rule of restitutive justice. Taken together Taylor presents compelling arguments that we must take seriously the lives of individual animals. We must be committed to looking for the most humane solutions to the problems at hand, and we have to make compelling and forceful arguments to override these strictures. The interests of all stakeholders must be taken into account, and a "hands off" should always be considered in our deliberations of what is the "best" thing to do.

My colleague Jessica Pierce stresses we need "ethics with teeth." In this vein, some trade-offs, for example, breeding and raising golden hamsters solely to be practice prey for endangered black-footed ferrets (Bekoff 2010b), are not permissible. Until different parties agree, a project might have to be put on hold. We need to decide on what can be compromised, if anything. What values can be tweaked for the common good? The real world demands that

we come to terms with incredibly difficult and challenging situations, most of which we've created.

Compassionate conservation has become a buzz phrase, and there are global efforts to support this field (Bekoff 2010b). I had the good fortune to be at the first two international meetings devoted to this topic, the first at the University of Oxford in early September 2010 (Compassionate Conservation 2010) and the second, a special session at the 2011 meeting of Asia for Animals, held in Chengdu, China. Compassionate conservation is a new mindset and social movement that translates discussions and concerns about the well-being of individuals into action. For some it's not strong enough on animal protection but it is a good beginning for getting individual well-being into conversations about a wide variety of conservation projects. Indeed, it's impossible to argue against being compassionate, as a social value, as we try to right many of the wrongs for which we're responsible. Perhaps some of what we take to be gospel needs to be reexamined. Perhaps the answers we come up with are counter-intuitive even if we think we have animals' best interests in mind and heart. Thus we need to reconsider big questions such as: Should we try to re-create or restore ecosystems when we really can't do this? Should we be concerned with losses in biodiversity? Is "more" really "better"? Who are we really trying to benefit? Is a hands-off strategy more compassionate than trying to fix all that's wrong? If we accept that we're an integral part of nature, "just one of the group" as ecopsychologist David Abram (2010) says, doing very good and very bad things, should we just let ecosystems and their animal inhabitants evolve however evolution goes?

We also need to ask if we should try to stop possible extinctions when little is done to protect individual animals or to preserve their habitat because of excessive costs. And we also need to consider the species we *choose* to save, most often highly charismatic species, often with little remaining ecological value and sometimes too far gone to have a chance of rebounding to viable population numbers without massive ongoing human efforts. But other less-notables also are dwindling but are no less important to the integrity of ecosystems. Consider honeybees. These amazing animals are responsible for pollinating seven of the world's ten most important crops, but a single bee can contain twenty-five different agrochemicals (Eyres 2011). Should we let wolves and other charismatic species go and save ants? After all is said and done, we're not even very good at protecting charismatic species (Bennett 2011).

A lot of time, energy, and brain power go into trying to right wrongs, so maybe we need to be more selective in what we choose to fix and let other things just go as they may. We might be more successful if we put all our effort into

situations that are fixable rather than doing less by trying to do more. Maybe we just cannot do it all and by trying to do everything we're ignoring nature. Like natural selection, some make it and some don't. More and more researchers are taking the view that we can't fix everything and that we need to make choices about who to save and who to let go. In an Internet survey of 583 conservation scientists questioned, 60 percent agreed that criteria should be established for deciding which species to abandon in order to focus on saving others (Rudd 2011). Ninety-nine percent agreed that a serious loss of biodiversity is "likely, very likely, or virtually certain" (ibid.). I wish this weren't so, and I'm sure everyone would agree, but with limited time, money, and person-power it is. Current strategies, sadly, were developed at a time when they may have been more effective if our population had started tailing off and if our levels of global consumption hadn't skyrocketed.

Whether we agree or disagree with some of the essays in this volume or the arguments of others isn't the issue at hand. What is important is that we consider the arguments, accept or reject them, do something about our decisions, and then move out of our comfort zone, think out of the box, and realize that there really is true urgency in this time of crisis. If we allow the proverbial canaries in the coal mine to tell us something's wrong, I'm afraid it'll be too late to do much. We will already have been lamenting "where have all the animals gone," so the early warning systems to which we paid little or no attention will have disappeared right before our eyes and ears. Silence will be stifling. We should have listened to the canary who was warning us that we waited too long to make any meaningful difference. We've been living in an ethical cesspool and drowning in our own filth.

Please read on. Many of the essays could have found a home in a number of different parts, and it was a challenge to figure out where some should be placed. I hope the best-fit approach I used serves them and the topics well. My brief introductions provide a roadmap for each section. The overlap among people writing from different perspectives is indeed exciting and calls for a strong community effort to work on the problems at hand. Taken together they make a strong case for why we must ignore nature no more, move out of our mindset of domination and exploitation, and make compassionate conservation the only acceptable road on which to travel into the future. No one can be against adding more compassion to our troubled world.

References

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