Wildlife Photography: Ecological Tool or Invasive Practice?

A Study of Wildlife Photography and its Practitioners

By

Elizabeth Jane Cooper

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Program in Environmental Studies

in conformity with the requirements for the

Degree of Master of Environmental Studies

Queen’s University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

November 2017

Copyright © Elizabeth Cooper, 2017
Abstract

Based on participant interviews this project describes and interprets the practices, self-understandings, and motivations of contemporary wildlife photographers. It seeks to contextualize these practices within the history of animal hunting, the genesis of animal photography, and with regard to the contemporary surge in biodiversity loss. The central paradox of this work lies in the diminishing numbers of wildlife populations compared to the proliferation of images produced through animal photography.
Acknowledgements

Without the support of my close friends and family, I simply would not have been able to complete this project. To my fiancé, Jean-Mathieu, I thank him for his good-natured and unwavering support. I thank my sister Louise, her husband Adam, their children Henry and Sam, and my parents, Brock and Mary, for understanding why I was not always present, both mentally and physically. Thank you to my friends, including, but not limited to, Caitlin, Dave, Jean, Cassandra, Sandra, and Viara for always listening to me during moments of indecision and for offering excellent advice and constructive criticism.

To my supervisor Mick Smith, thank you for remaining patient and hopeful as I proceeded through this project. Our discussions on wildlife photography and life in general were enjoyable both academically and personally. Thank you to Alice Hovorka, my committee member and early reader of my thesis. I greatly appreciate not only your excellent feedback but also the invitation to be a part of your research group, which provided me with camaraderie within the academic environment as well as access to new and exciting research.

Thank you to Petra Fachinger whose Eco-Critical Literature graduate seminar will always be fondly remembered as my favourite course in graduate school. Thank you also for attending my defense and offering up so many insightful questions. To Graham Whitelaw and Ryan Danby, thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to attend my defense.
# Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... ii

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ iii

Table of Contents .......................................................................................................... iv

List of Figures ................................................................................................................ vi

1.0 Introduction ............................................................................................................... 1

   1.1 Research Motivation .......................................................................................... 2

   1.2 Research Aims .................................................................................................. 2

       1.3 Theoretical Considerations ............................................................................. 4

2.0 Literature Review .................................................................................................... 8

   2.1 Birth of Photography ......................................................................................... 8

   2.2 Trophy Hunting and Photography .................................................................. 12

   2.3 Conservation .................................................................................................... 17

   2.4 Benefits for photographers and animals ......................................................... 23

3.0 Methodology ............................................................................................................ 28

   3.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................... 28

   3.2 Sampling Strategy ............................................................................................. 28

   3.3 Data Collection .................................................................................................. 31

   3.4 Interview Guide .................................................................................................. 34

   3.5 Transcription and Analysis ............................................................................... 37

4.0 Results & Discussion .............................................................................................. 41

   4.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................... 41

   4.2 Trophy Hunting & Collecting ......................................................................... 41

       4.2.2 The Usefulness of Animal Photographs ...................................................... 43

       4.2.3 Transition to Collection .......................................................................... 45

   4.3 Ethics of Wildlife Photography .......................................................................... 49

       4.3.2 Baiting and Calling ................................................................................... 50

   4.4 Encounterable Animal ...................................................................................... 58

   4.5 Spiritual Restoration ......................................................................................... 64

   4.6 Education and Conservation ............................................................................ 73

   4.7 Wildness ............................................................................................................. 82

   4.8 Technological Mediation of Nature ................................................................... 88

5.0 Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 95
Works Cited................................................................................................................................................. 104
Appendix 1.0 - Recruitment .......................................................................................................................... 109
   1.1 Participant Recruitment Poster ............................................................................................................ 109
   1.2 Recruitment Email.................................................................................................................................... 110
Appendix 2.0 Interviews ................................................................................................................................. 111
   2.2 Interview Guide......................................................................................................................................... 111
Appendix 3.0 Respondent Figures and Respondent Quotes .............................................................................. 112
   Figure 3: Respondent 001 .............................................................................................................................. 112
   Figure 4: Respondent 002 .............................................................................................................................. 114
   Figure 5: Respondent 003 .............................................................................................................................. 114
   Figure 6: Respondent 004 .............................................................................................................................. 116
   Figure 7: Respondent 007 .............................................................................................................................. 117
   Figure 8: Respondent 008 .............................................................................................................................. 119
   Figure 9: Respondent 009 .............................................................................................................................. 120
   Figure 10: Respondent 010 .......................................................................................................................... 121
   Figure 11: Respondent 011 .......................................................................................................................... 122
   Figure 12: Respondent 012 .......................................................................................................................... 123
   Figure 13: Respondent 014 .......................................................................................................................... 124
Appendix 4.0: GREB Approval Letter ........................................................................................................... 126
List of Figures

Figure 1: Barbary Sheep..................................................................................................................22
Figure 2: Illustration of Visual Methodologies...............................................................................34
Figure 3: Respondent 001..................................................................................................................112
Figure 4: Respondent 002..................................................................................................................114
Figure 5: Respondent 003..................................................................................................................114
Figure 6: Respondent 004..................................................................................................................116
Figure 7: Respondent 007..................................................................................................................117
Figure 8: Respondent 008..................................................................................................................119
Figure 9: Respondent 009..................................................................................................................120
Figure 10: Respondent 010...............................................................................................................121
Figure 11: Respondent 011...............................................................................................................122
Figure 12: Respondent 012...............................................................................................................123
Figure 13: Respondent 014...............................................................................................................124
1.0 Introduction

Wildlife photography is the central focus of this study. The real animals that wildlife photographs capture and fix in time are ephemeral in more than one sense; in their wild habitats, animals move in and out of sight (more often out) while their continued existence is often threatened by human activities. Moreover, in the modern world, wild animals themselves are not apparent in the day-to-day life of many humans. Consequently, most humans recognize wild animals from pictures, not from first-hand encounters. Wild animals are becoming relics. Ironically, in many cases the existence of wildlife photography runs counter to the real-life narrative of the animals in the photographs, the pictorial representation becoming more prevalent and circulating more widely than its referent.

As one of the respondents of this study said: “It has never been a better time to be a wildlife photographer and never been a worse time to be one of their subjects” (Respondent 006).

This project seeks to explore the act and multiple meanings of wildlife photography by studying its practitioners, the photographers. Examining their wildlife photography practices through an analysis of semi-structured individual interviews, I attempt to tease out the complex relationships between the photographer, the subject, and the images, all within the context of continued, and what is surely unsustainable, biodiversity loss. This project also seeks to problematize wildlife photography as unquestionably aligned with ecological movements and to interrogate its place within broadly accepted notions of sustainability.
1.1 Research Motivation

The reasons for embarking on this research are personal, rather than academic in nature. Firstly, I am a photographer. My photographic practice dates to childhood and I eventually went on to study photography at Ryerson University. Photographic images have played an influential role in most aspects of my life, emotionally, professionally, and artistically. Secondly, the ongoing degradation of the environment is more than an issue I hear about in the news, it is something that is consistently at the forefront of my mind. It affects the way in which I live, the jobs I have taken, and the daily decisions I make. As a person who is very aware of both photographic imagery and conservation issues, I was motivated to start this research project because it seemed that though every day we are exposed to more images of a variety of ecological tragedies, things continue to get worse, rather than improving.

1.2 Research Aims

The research goals for this thesis are acknowledged to be wide in scope. Those concerned take photographs for a variety of reasons, some to document or draw attention to rare species, perhaps even to assist in their conservation, some for more personal reasons, including the enjoyment of finding and capturing, displaying and sharing, images of unusual beings and / or circumstances. Such motivations often overlap and or conflict in complex ways. The research is concerned to ask practitioners why and how they photograph animals, and what they do with their photographs, linking their own personal insights and accounts to previous work on the history of animal photography, artistic expression, and conservation. In this way, the intention
is to draw out specific elements of the complex paradox already noted between the profligate circulation of images and the decreasing and spaces available for many species in those changing circumstances, sometimes now referred to as the Anthropocene, a new geological time period, named for human-created impact on Earth. The interview data exposes something of the way in which the respondents feel about animals, how they relate to animals via imagery, and how that translates into a discussion of cultural relationships between humans and non-human animals. It reveals issues around both the sustainability of species and or a practice that relies on those species.

In keeping with the central paradox of this work, the research seeks to uncover how animal photographers see themselves in the context of the continued decline of so many species. Sustainability here is key; How does the practice of wildlife photography fit into a sustainability framework? Sustainability is often defined as maintaining the environment, natural resources, and wildlife (among many other indicators) in such a way that all are available for future generations of human and non-human animals. *Limits to Growth*, one of the original works on modern sustainability, concluded that continued economic and industrial development were not compatible with environmental preservation (Vos, 2007). One could argue that the industrial development of cameras and photographic equipment, the capitalist system of trade by which they are distributed, as well as the car and airplane travel to locations where animals live – are all activities which fly in the face of sustainability, seemingly making wildlife photography an inherently unsustainable activity. On the other hand, photographic images may play crucial roles in drawing attention to endangered species and habitats.
In *Our Common Future* (1987), otherwise known as the Brundtland report, the section on extinction states: “There are numerous signs that the loss of species and their ecosystems is being taken seriously as a phenomenon that carries practical implications for people all around the world, now and for generations to come” (p.137). While this is true, and the loss of species is still being taken seriously, biodiversity loss has not been solved. The optimism and urgency expressed by the Brundtland Commission has not yet translated into widespread success in the realm of sustainable biodiversity conservation.

This research aims to drill down and question the sustainability of animal photography in reference to the material lives of animals, rather than examining global trends. This project attempted to focus on the level of encounter – between human and non-human animal – and through a discussion of the study results, notions of sustainability will be applied to that encounter.

1.3 Theoretical Considerations

The tension around wildlife photography exemplifies the divide between nature and culture and with it, humanity’s position along that divide. For many of those who photograph nature and its inhabitants, it is an attempt to bridge that mysterious gap between modern humans and nature. For others, the photography of animals serves to increase the imbalance of power between humanity and animals – with humans occupying the role of the viewer – the gazer – and animals the gazed upon. John Berger’s *Why Look at Animals* (2009) and *Ways of Seeing* (1972) are influential texts for this work, as they relate to the inherent power dynamics of viewing animals and the relationality of images and viewers, respectively. The work that
photographs can do, or should do, is a central point of discussion for this study. This is because photographs of animals are used for work; to inform, to educate, to raise awareness, all on behalf of animals. Animal photographs are part of an extensive philosophical, cultural, and sociological debate, with writers discussing their role in conservation (Blewitt, 2011), the expression of human control over nature (Brower, 2010), and expressions of achievement in both colonial and scientific realms (Chakrabarti, 2010; Tucker, 2005).

Sontag and Rose provide two views on this “work.” In *On Photography* (1977), Sontag describes the act of photography in many ways; as an act of collection, a method of ownership, and as a way of knowing. Among other things, the growing volume of photographs in the world was important to Sontag, as she stated: “Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire” (p.4). Here the photograph appears as an object, something that can be owned and multiplied ad infinitum. Sontag complicates photographs when she describes them as more than just objects, but as things that can perform specific actions. Here she writes:

“To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them that they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed. Just as a camera is a sublimation of the gun, to photograph someone is a subliminal murder - a soft murder, appropriate to a sad, frightened time.” (1977)

From the perspective of Gillian Rose in *Visual Methodologies* (2007), visual images are seen as dynamic objects whose meanings can shift and change dependent upon the context in which
they are viewed, the viewers, and the photographers who made them. Rose describes images as “multimodal... – they always make sense in relation to other things, including written texts and very often other images – they are not reducible to the meanings carried by those other things (p.11).”

To illustrate this point, Rose draws also from Berger. Berger claims that “we never look just at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves” (as cited in Rose, 2007, p.8).” On one hand, Sontag’s view of photography depicts how the photographs consume and exploit the thing photographed – they memorialize it, they capture it, they transport it. However, Rose describes images as capable of metamorphosing dependent upon their context: their methods of distribution and collection, their creation, how they are viewed – all circumstances which can change, giving the images a life of their own and which tell a variety of emotional and cultural stories. By looking at photography from these two perspectives, wildlife photographers could well be acting on several motivations; they are collectors, rhythmically obtaining and cataloguing imagery of nature (so-called “miniatures of reality,” according to Sontag), while simultaneously struggling with their place in relation to or within, the natural world.

By breaking down the data into 7 themes (Trophy Hunting and Collecting, Ethics, Encounterable Animals, Spiritual Rejuvenation, Conservation and Education, and finally Technical Mediation of Nature) this study probes the biodiversity paradox using a multifaceted approach.

There is a very large body of work from which to draw inspiration for this project. Wildlife photographers, conservation photographers, and environmental photographers have been the
subject of study from the invention of photography. This study will draw upon those who deal only with photography or image-making in a broad way (Hand, 2012; Songtag, 1977; Sontag, 2003); those who speak about looking at animals and animal imagery (Berger, 2009; Blewitt, 2011; Matthew Brower, 2011; Farnsworth, 2011; Seelig, 2015); those who discuss emotional or spiritual connection with nature (Bulbeck, 2005; Curtin, 2010; Smuts, 2001); and finally animal ethics (R. C. Collard, 2016; Lunstrum, 2014; McKibben, 1997; Mills, 2010).
2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Birth of Photography

Photography, from its plural birth in the 1830s, was immediately lauded as the ultimate communion of science and nature; a tool to capture the literal interaction of nature (light) on a chemically treated surface. The pre-digital image acted to “denote the real” (Hand, 2012, p. 30) and was universally accepted as reality. Photographic images were thought to be unbiased and non-judgemental as witnessed through the camera’s “disinterested ‘eye’” (Rosenblum, 1997, p.16). A photograph was objective; far more so than humans and the hand-drawn sketches made by them. Humans could make errors or use artistic license to interpret events or objects; at the beginning, photographs were considered immune to this phenomenon. Photographic processes were inherently scientific ones; the combination of optics and chemistry made photography inseparable from science. The fixing of ephemeral information, such as a scene in nature, permanently on a piece of paper exemplified the contemporary expansion of scientific endeavours which were demystifying natural phenomena (Tucker, 2005). Animals, already hunted for food and sport, also became targets for the newly formed imaging process.

What could be known was strongly connected with what could be seen; the emerging practice of photography was intertwined with the proliferation of scientific study (Hand, 2012). That science and photography “grew up together” (Berger & Mohr, 1982, p. 99, as cited in Hand, 2012) informed the way photography was viewed and used. Photographic images were considered to be reliable, uncomplicated pieces of the world, not interpretations of it (Songtag, 1977). If an image was created by a camera, as seen with Roger Fenton’s images from the
Crimean War, the Victorian viewer presumed that the image was untranslated and unmediated, even when this was not the case. Fenton’s images were created explicitly with sales in mind. Though he was photographing a war zone, his subjects were chosen specifically to avoid offense or cause disgust (Green-Lewis, 1996).

The permanent images made with a camera represented an extension of humanity’s perceived dominion over nature. To photograph something was to capture it, to fix it permanently in the scientific discourse of the day. To photograph something was to know it intimately, to appropriate it, as well as to provide evidence of something (Songtag, 1977). “For Victorians, rendering visible the unseen with scientific instruments was a matter of conquering new territories in a spirit of adventure and disciplining the social order” (Tucker, 2005, p.23). Here the social hierarchy places humans above or in control of the non-human was crystallized through photographic practice.

Natural items, such as plants, shells, and rocks were frequently photographed in the first few decades of photography (Tucker, 2005). The photographic technology in place meant that the long exposure times (as long as 20 minutes) were only suitable for immobile objects, extremely cooperative humans, or taxidermied animals. These fragmented images of nature went on to augment Victorian collections which already included other natural specimens such as taxidermy. Taxidermied animals were in high demand in Victorian England. During the decades leading up to the invention of photography, the production of taxidermied specimens was growing, as was the public interest in naturalist pursuits, such as shell and bug collecting (Youdelman, 2017).
The explosion that was 19th century scientific discovery was tempered by an anxiety around Nature and its function in the context of Victorian culture. Victorians considered nature to be a restorative place, where one could venture in order to be refreshed and renewed (Brower, 2011). The relationship between Victorians and nature was strongly associated with religious symbolism, a heavenly utopia available for their spiritual regeneration (Brower, 2011). Science began to demystify nature, making it little more than a “series of physical phenomena” (Knoepflmacher & Tennyson, 1977, p. xxii), rather than piece of God’s creation. The removal of the sublime from Nature was destabilizing (Youldeman, 2017). Youldeman goes on to connect this to anthropomorphic taxidermy practices, but in the context of photography, those who created images with animals were as imaginative as others concerned with clear physiological representation. While both symbolic and representational animal photographs used taxidermied animals, their use of animal bodies diverged. Many photographed animals in a way that displayed the animal body in such a way to illustrate its physical attributes; as pure scientific specimen. Other photographers manipulated the animal bodies by placing them in a variety of contexts in order to express their own artistic visions about nature and wildlife.

Victorian photographers were caught between two modes of thinking: they wanted Nature to continue to hold meaning (Knoepflmacher & Tennyson, 1977) in a spiritual capacity, but they were swept along with the current of scientific discovery and positivistic attitudes toward photographs. The images used the taxidermied animals as compositional elements placed purposefully by the photographers to evoke specific emotions or ideas within the viewer. “The Victorian nature photograph is thus about the mood evoked by the picturesque more than it is about any particular element within it” (Brower, 2011, p.8).
Brower also mentions, and importantly so, that modern-day viewers cannot view early photographs of taxidermied animals in the same way as their historical counterparts. Victorian viewers would have understood that any photograph containing an animal was necessarily a photograph of a dead animal. Modern-day viewers of those same photographs are perplexed by these images, in that they are only able to read in one very particular way (as a live animal) (2011). Early photographic viewers prided themselves on their ability to view images with a critical eye for details and flaws (Tucker, 2005). These images were made not to fool (as a modern viewer might think), but to inspire very particular feelings about nature which were already present in poetry, paintings, and religious sentiments (Brower, 2011; Knoepflmacher & Tennyson, 1977). The Victorian photographic viewer was a mercurial consumer of images – able to regard an image of a taxidermied animal as two (or more) things: a premediated artistic interpretation of the natural world designed to evoke emotions or as an exact copy of reality.

This duality is important to the study of animal photography, particularly the close-up, highly intimate wildlife photography we are used to seeing today. That mercurial ability of Victorian viewers has been lost and many modern-day viewers are unable to see wildlife photographs for what they really are – artistic interpretations of nature created by a human. They view them as fact, as the depiction of reality, as that is how they are presented.
2.2 Trophy Hunting and Photography

Photographing animals began as photography of dead animals. These hunted, and subsequently taxidermied animals were the product of obsessive collecting and labeling of wild animals (Youdelman, 2017). Taxidermied animals and the act of hunting that first produced them are an intrinsically colonial product and practice (Jones, 2016). Specimens of foreign trophy hunts were gathered from throughout the British Empire and brought home to England as evidence of the breadth of the empire and the bravery of its explorers/conquerors (K. Jones, 2016). These specimens were important markers of accomplishment, and importantly, dominion over nature (Jones, 2016; Youdelman, 2017). In order to collect dead animal bodies for the purposes of taxidermy and display, practitioners required a “fulsome use of colonial networks and regional infrastructures” (Jones, 2016, p. 717). The hunting, killing, and stuffing animals from colonized lands for display also fuelled the fanatical collection of sets. For example, all of the animals from one geographic region, species group, or family groups (Jones, 2016).

Trophy hunting was intrinsic to the formation of colonial masculinity (2016). Nature was seen as a place to find emotional restoration, it was also seen as a place for men to establish themselves as truly masculine. “As trophy animals, heads and horn provided material evidence of masculine prowess and imperial authority” (p.726). The ability to hunt and kill an animal and the ability to survive in the woods became vital to the discourse of masculinity. Within the British Empire, this practice was not only about masculinity, but helped foment pride in the Empire as a controlling force over nature. “...the white hunter and adventurer represented a
type of energetic, pioneering Englishman upon which the empire depended” (Ryan, 2000, p. 205).

In the face of a rapidly developing America, used animal hunting as a way to prove their grit in an ever-modernizing world (Brower, 2011; Dunaway, 2000; Kalof & Fitzgerald, 2003; Loo, 2001). “Nature photography reveals the tensions and longings felt by elite American men who worried about over civilization, who sought to reinvigorate their masculine strength and prowess, who craved intense experience while they criticized the inexorable, destructive march of progress” (Dunaway, 2000, p. 210). Photography immediately became wrapped up in the practice of trophy collecting and hunting. As camera and film technology improved and exposure times dropped, cameras could be used to capture not just dead animals, but living animals. Hunting animals to photograph them soon became considered the craft of superior woodsmen (Brower, 2011). The outdoors skills which were required to photograph an animal exceeded the skills required to shoot an animal. In order to create an excellent photograph, the shooter required stealth, animal behavior knowledge, and the technical photographic skills required to make an acceptable image.

James Ryan explains *Hunting with the Camera* (2000), that the practice of taxidermy actually relied on photography to increase the “realness” of taxidermy animals. He mentions Rowland Ward (1848-1912), publisher and taxidermist, who encouraged hunters to take photographic equipment on expeditions, to “re-create the life-like forms of animals within their habitat” (p. 208). Traditional hunting, camera hunting, and taxidermy of animals were joint practices, each one relying on the other to develop and expand. As the photographs helped to increase the realness of taxidermy poses, taxidermy helped to foment ideas of how wild animals should
“look” in photographic imagery, gradually establishing what would become the genre of “wildlife photography” in the photographic discourse.

In Derek Bousé’s book, *Wildlife Films* (2000), he describes the popularity of early hunting films made in colonized sites such as Africa and India. These “safari films” often resulted in the deaths of several dozen animals per film, with animals being violently roused into exciting activity for the purposes of filming, only to be shot when they became threats to the filmmakers. Eadweard Muybridge’s well known still photographs of animals in motion were complimented by his moving picture work. Muybridge helped to popularize staged animal action films by facilitating the filming of a tiger attacking a possibly tethered buffalo at the Philadelphia Zoo; a “disposable subject” was how he referred to the animals who died in the process of acting as subject either in a film or in a photograph (Muybridge, cited in Bousé, 2000, p. 44). Since its inception, and often as a matter of course, animal image making has often been associated with the exploitation, harassment, or death of the animal subjects.

As Brower explains in *Developing Animals*, (2011). “Camera hunting was articulated in relation to the discourse of American sport hunting” (p. 66). Interestingly, from the perspective of sustainability, as North American wildlife populations and natural spaces became threatened by human development in the early 20th century, trophy hunting was not blamed for this reduction (Brower, 2011; Loo, 2006). Although eventually guns gave way to cameras, at the beginning of the conservation movement, the maintenance of natural spaces as the site of masculine production was too important to consider trophy hunting an enemy of wildlife.
Trophy hunting was also a function of class. Tina Loo, in her book *States of Nature: Conserving Canada’s Wildlife in the Twentieth Century* (2001), describes how trophy hunters were not discouraged from hunting, but that those hunting to feed themselves or supplement their income were the ones blamed for the reduction in animal populations. In America, subsistence hunting was actually banned, leaving the shrinking number of game animals to the wealthy elite (Herman, 2014).

Since animal photography was developed within the same discursive space as animal hunting, and wildlife photographs were seen also as trophies, modern day wildlife photography has a strong shared history with colonial practices around hunting and nature management. That wildlife photography has this shared history with colonial trophy hunting is important for the purposes of this study as current wildlife photographers often operate, often unknowingly, in a similar manner. Songtag’s (1977) work on photography also delved into that of animal photography, she wrote about safaris thusly:

“The photographer is now charging real beasts, beleaguered and too rare to kill. Guns have metamorphosed into cameras in this earnest comedy, the ecology safari, because nature has ceased to be what it always had been – what people needed protection from. Now nature – tamed, endangered, mortal – needs to be protected from people. When we are afraid, we shoot. But when we are nostalgic, we take pictures” (p. 11)

The reduction of North American hunting and the crossover to wildlife photography was considered a necessity by early conservationists, as animal populations began to decrease. Conservation movements championed photography as a way in which to continue to
participate in outdoor “hunting” activities while maintaining wildlife populations. Daniel Herman, quoted by Brower, points to wildlife photography as one of the ways hunting became less popular, due to the increasing amounts of imagery depicting “anthropomorphic” animals to the American public (Herman, 2014, cited in Brower, 2011). Ralph Lutz, in his essay, “The Trouble with Bambi (1992) describes the animated feature Bambi (1942) as unapologetically anti-hunting. The Disney film received much criticism from those who continued in what they considered humane hunting. Lutts also describes the general feelings toward hunting in America as cruel, though this was among those who could afford not to hunt for subsistence. The notion of wildlife management was also alluded to, since apex predators like wolves had been pushed back, creating a spike in deer populations, for whom there was not enough food. Critics of Lutts claimed that hunting controlled the deer population, making it an act of mercy. Importantly, Lutts describes how Bambi served to recreate the lush, Edenic view of nature, free from people, a label used by Brower when describing most animal photography. Brower defines what he calls the “genre” of wildlife photography; imagery that creates a mythical and timeless world which is highly populated by animals and plants, but free of humans and other elements of the post-Garden of Eden world in which we now live. Brower and Lutts both argue that this type of imagery serves to displace humans from nature, which in turn allows humans to feel both above, apart, and protective of nature, but not a part of nature.

These prevailing sentiments during the early part of the 20th century lead to a decrease in hunting and an increase in wildlife photography as an alternative, though hunting and photography are often maintained as dual practices by contemporary hunters. The work of Kalof and Fitzgerald on modern day trophy photographs (Kalof & Fitzgerald, 2003) is interesting
In its analysis of current sporting magazines and the photographs of hunters and dead animals. In it, they describe modern day trophy hunting photography as “driven by ideologies of domination, colonialism, and patriarchy” (Kalof & Fitzgerald, 2003, p. 119). This study analyzed images of animal trophies and hunters holding the animal trophies. The imagery reinforces and repeats historical colonial patterns by highlighting white males in much of the imagery. When women of any ethnicity or men of colour were depicted in the images, it is always as guide or assistant, never as hunter and never in possession of the trophy animal. They are there as supports to the central figure, a white male, holding or displaying his trophy – a dead animal or a piece thereof.

2.3 Conservation

Historically, photography has played an integral role in the conservation and environmental movements. Photographs taken during geological surveys by William Henry Jackson were instrumental in the creation of the first national park, Yellowstone National Park (Wickliff, 1997). Similarly, Carleton Watkins’ images of the Sierra Nevada mountain range helped to create Yosemite National Park, which in turn inspired much of the work of Ansel Adams, a photographer and member of the Sierra Club, an environmental organization with chapters all over the United States and Canada (Spaulding, 2016). More and more imagery was created like this, depicting, as outlined earlier in this chapter, the ethereal beauty of nature which was empty of people and ready to be categorized by the governments of the colonizers. These images were among the first conservation photographs, though they functioned also to colonize, re-name, and re-package and to catalogue as well as to conserve. With the advent of
digital photography both professional and amateur nature photographers are numerous and prolific in their output. The International League of Conservation Photographers lists their primary objective as “...use the power of photography to help educate the world community and to further conservation goals” (ILCP, 2017). Using photographic images, conservation groups are going to great lengths to ensure the plight of threatened species and landscapes are publicized widely.

Conservation scholars have identified trends in historical conservation policies whose repercussions remain evident to this day (Adams & Hutton, 2007; Loo, 2001; Lunstrum, 2014; Powell, 2015): That natural spaces are seen explicitly for the use of white, elite men, to the exclusion of all other peoples. Not only were other peoples not welcome in these protected areas, indigenous peoples were never really recognized as having been there in the first place. Some scholars have gone as far to say that this exclusion of indigenous people and other people of colour lead to “…an enduring understanding of wilderness as unpeopled space reserved for individual, national, and perhaps even racial rejuvenation” (Powell, 2015, p. 198). The natural spaces North and South America, and Africa were seen as void, pristine and waiting for the development of resources, leisure spots, hunting, and eventually, conservation.

Issues of conservation are the nexus of this study, as it was the initial motivation for the project. Most species on the planet are suffering from declines in population. Education and awareness-raising are often cited as motivation for photographing and displaying photographs of animals, in light of their declining numbers. However, does viewing animals increase one’s willingness to engage in environmental activities? While this study does not address this question directly there have been species-specific studies which have explored the role of visual material in
conservation issues. These studies (Bizerril, Soares, & Santos, 2011; Pearson, Dorrian, & Litchfield, 2011) show strong links with visual imagery and action on conservation. However, these projects do not simply offer images alone; they give context, information, and very specific activities to perform to provide benefits to the species in question. According to Myers (Myers, 2006) in his paper written for the International League of Conservation Photographers (https://conservationphotographers.org/) images alone cannot convince viewers of anything that is not already part of their personal experience or belief system. This is not to say that viewers cannot be convinced of change – just that images alone cannot do the entirety of the work. In addition, viewers have to believe that actions they engage in are achievable, important, and in-line with their core beliefs. Viewers bring their entire life experience to engage with photographic works. In the paper, Closing the Hermeneutic Circle? Photographic encounters with the Others (2008), Caton describes the photographs created by tourists as recreations of images they had viewed in tourist brochures. The study “…demonstrated empirically that tourists do, in fact, complete the hermeneutic circle by producing photographs that look very similar to those found in the brochures that target them” (p.8). It is difficult for viewers of photographic material to move beyond the scope of meaning that has been previously presented to them via cultural discourse. More work should be completed by the producer of the image in order to facilitate real change on the ground. If the viewers of conservation imagery face physical, emotional, or financial barriers to completing conservation activities, they often will not overcome these barriers and the visual material will have not succeeded. Information on site-specific context and the reduction of barriers to action must be provided.
Bruce Farnsworth and Michelle Seelig’s papers (2011; 2015) both hold up photography as an important tool in conservation – but acknowledge that the photographers and those who use the images should have specialized education to both make acceptable images and to then use those images effectively. Farnsworth splits up imagery of nature into two categories. Nature photography (which for the purposes of this paper can be used interchangeably with wildlife photography) and conservation photography (Farnsworth, 2011). Brower has already named wildlife photograph as an identifiable genre of image. Nature/wildlife photographs capture the majesty of the planet and are awe-inspiring, attempting to imbue nature with a supernatural quality. Early conservation photographs were like this, attempting to insert the sublime into the wild. Contemporary photographs which mimic this style hope that the beauty of the natural world will spark the urge to protect. Much of the current photography by amateur or hobbyist photographers often fits into this first category, due to its focus on aesthetics rather than any specific message.

Environmental or conservation photography is a newer genre, one that attempts to do more work than the average nature photography, it is “more than pretty pictures” (Farnsworth, 2011, p. 770). This second type of photography requires a very specific knowledge around the ecosystem and species being photographed. The photographer knows where to tread, where to look, and when to leave, so as to best photograph in non-disruptive manner. For these images, beauty is not a requirement, and indeed, often attempt to depict natural processes as savagely interrupted by human activity is the end goal (Seelig, 2015). These photographs are meant to make visible the degradation of the environment, which is often rendered as invisible by nature photography. Again, Brower and Lutts are relevant here as their analysis of most nature
photography states that it falls into the first category; its loveliness allows the viewer to feel safe, knowing there is natural beauty out there, somewhere— but untouched and untouchable by humans.

Farnsworth discusses how photographers who are not specifically conservation minded, but who have been given the paid assignment to photograph wildlife, are often unsuccessful. They do not possess the behavioral knowledge of the animal or the conservation issues around the species’ continued survival to gain access to the animal and make an acceptable photograph.

Seelig interviewed conservation photographers who were working towards a more meaningful use of the images— moving beyond traditional media of newspapers and magazines. These photographers would be classified as conservation photographers by Farnsworth as they are doing more work with their imagery— they have a deeper understanding of the ecological issues that surround biodiversity loss, they are not simply collecting images. The narrative that these photographers are trying to push is not one of a lush and unpeopled wilderness, but of dire urgency— that the animals with whom we have learned about through photography are not thriving in their habitats as most wildlife photography would suggest. They are struggling for survival and that struggle is often ugly and painful to witness.

While it is true that this type of work might serve to create interest in the animals themselves (Farnsworth, 2011; Pearson, Dorrian, & Litchfield, 2011), the evidence that simply viewing these types of images alone serve to protect species is not strong (Myers, 2006). The imagery of Joel Sartore, a wildlife photographer working for National Geographic, is an interesting case study. Sartore has embarked upon a continuing photographic project called the Photo Ark (the name
in itself conjuring images of apocalyptic extinction and human dominion over non-human animals), which seeks to “…capture an animal’s form, features, and in many cases its penetrating gaze” (Hartigan Shea & Sartore, 2016) in order to engender sympathy and conservation action on the part of the view. With his use of plain black or white backgrounds and stylistically rigid composition, Sartore’s images do not immediately evoke a message of conservation; indeed, in many cases they replicate historical representations of animals as trophies by being virtually indistinguishable from taxidermy.

Figure 1 – Photograph of captive barbary sheep. Photograph by Joel Sartore, retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/BSTjGiO0M0H/?hl=en&taken-by=joelsartore

Figure 1 depicts a barbary sheep. We know this only because of the accompanying caption from Sartore’s Instagram post. It is stock still, frozen within and decontextualized by an inky black background. It has been physically removed from anything resembling a natural habitat. The image is cropped at the neck leaving only the head of the animal visible, mirroring the mounted heads of trophy rooms. There is a glint of white in the eye; a catch light which in visual representations, connotes life; here it is created artificially with a studio lighting kit. This also
mimics taxidermied practice, as the eyes were important parts with which to achieve a convincing impression – glass eyes are chosen carefully to ensure the gaze is life-like.

This animal is alive. It will live out the rest of its days in captivity in the Italian zoo, where this and other animal photographs were made. As a critically endangered animal living in a zoo, it is a “monument” (Berger, 2009) to its species’ former wild existence; an object worthy of photographic collection and depiction. A trophy worthy of note. An animal in need of protection. Despite Sartore’s intent to capture the animal’s natural majesty, this image visually recreates the visual tropes of taxidermied animals, rendering it characterless and isolated.

Sartore himself claims that he has not been successful at “moving the needle very much in terms of getting people to care” (Hartigan Shea & Sartore, 2016) in relation to biodiversity loss.

After years of taking photographs of animals in situ his photographic methods changed to address what he saw as a failed attempt generate concern around for animal deaths. The resulting images ironically and unintentionally visually recreate the historic process of trophy hunting which continues to be a contributing factor in the reduction of animal populations.

2.4 Benefits for photographers and animals

That humans benefit from looking at and spending time with animals has been well documented (Bulbeck, 2005; Candea, 2010; Curtin, 2009; Smuts, 2001). Even simply being in green spaces can reduce stress levels in humans and increase their physical health (Richardson, Pearce, Mitchell, & Kingham, 2013; Roe et al., 2013). When exposed to natural spaces and the wildlife therein, humans are removed from their day-to-day linear timelines (Curtin, 2009;
Smuts, 2001) and sometimes feel as though they are (re)connecting with some sort of lost ancient wisdom of the past (Bulbeck, 2005). Whatever the actual or perceived benefits exist for humans, evidence tells us that they do indeed exist. Humans are better off for almost any time spent in nature or around animals. Therapy animals even offer health benefits for those humans who are ill, providing an excellent supplemental treatment when combined with conventional medicine (Marcus, 2013).

How do animals benefit from these encounters? If there is a benefit, can it be measured? In biological surveys, such as ones completed on lions in Kenya (Blackburn, Hopcraft, Ogutu, Matthiopoulos, & Frank, 2016) and brown bears in Norway (Ordiz et al., 2013) shows that very broadly, wild animal populations generally go down when human populations and encounters increase. The lion study discusses conservation issues in the context of how to best preserve lion numbers. Certainly, there are issues of (human) food security, land use, increased urbanization, post-colonialism, and systemic poverty at work here, which are important factors in the lion study. However, those are beyond the scope of this project. What the study determined was that lions outside of conservation areas will only remain at stable populations “...if communities gain benefits from wildlife”(Blackburn et al., 2016). Here we see that animal populations are contingent upon human wellbeing, rather than having the opportunity to thrive independent of human populations.

Norway’s brown bears are beginning to experience more encounters with humans, due to increased human land use. What the authors of this study found was that brown bears are not interested in voluntarily encountering humans. Their encounter-based study showed that bears were solitary, avoided open spaces, and almost never reacted aggressively. The bears
concealed themselves well, all with the hopes of remaining so, if it were not for scientists attempting to intentionally encounter them. After being encountered by scientists a few times, the bears would change their habits and forage at different times to avoid encounters (Ordiz et al., 2013). They go on to say that bears and humans should be “temporally and spatially separated” (p.306).

These two studies were highlighted not to advocate for the further separation of humans and non-human animals, nor to extend the nature versus culture debate. These two studies, and there are many like them, were included simply to address a basic idea around animal benefit – the lions of the first study and the bears from the second do not directly benefit from encounters with humans, indeed it is the opposite. Whether it is due to threats of animal attacks or loss of agricultural land, descriptions of wild animal populations are often couched in terms which relate them to humans. This constant relationality of humans and non-human animals is built upon our history of human domination over animals – the discourse of animal conservation has been built around this idea of non-competition with humans. Conservation of animals certainly, but only when human way of life is not threatened. Once tension arises, human interest often subsumes that of the animals.

In Emma Power’s study on urban possums in Sydney, Australia, she discovers that some animals do benefit from human activities, but perhaps not human encounters (2009). Brushtail possums are declining in their traditional “wild” habitat, but are growing in number in the urban and suburban regions of Australian cities. The animals are protected under Australian law, but are often unwanted guests who build dens in the walls and attics of homes. Though not frequently seen, the possums can be heard and smelled by the residents. This fascinating wild versus
nonwild habitat breaks down the traditional barriers of nature and culture. The suburban homes are now a viable ecosystem for the possums—a definite benefit to their population. In some cases, the respondents to this study encountered the animals, providing benefit to the humans, in the form of “homeyness [sic],” (p. 31) familiarity, and a sense of place. In other cases, the possums caused damage to the home of the respondent, causing irritation. The possums are “simultaneously depicted both as pests that do not belong in the urban environment, and as symbols of biodiversity” (p.34).

While these studies are not linked specifically to the photography of animals, they are connected to the way we see animals, as is all the literature mentioned in this paper. Again, here Berger’s ideas about relationality are important. Animals are considered in relation to humans, but not often as entities in and of themselves. There are many examples of scholars who think about animals in ways other than in direct relation to humans. Kendra Coulter writes about humane jobs and the importance of recognizing animal labour in the human world (2016); Mills discusses animals and their right to privacy in the context of wildlife films (2010); Rosemary-Claire Collard examines the commodification of exotic pets which results in their disconnection from their wild past (2014). These voices are a vocal and growing group, however, a much of the existing literature on animals involves research done on animals rather than for or about them. Even biological research meant to help the lives of the study animal often requires invasive practices like radio collars, tagging, and in the case of lab animals, often animal death.

Very broadly, the arc of animal photography began with hunting and a continuation of the collection of trophies. The collection of these trophies was tied up in the expression of colonial
expansion across the globe. These trophies were brought back to the seat of the empires as proof of human dominion over nature and other peoples. Images of animals and animals themselves were used as evidence in scientific studies and as evidence of human’s ability to dominate animals and nature. The coarse dichotomy of human control over nature is not so clearly defined in contemporary wildlife photography, but the roots of wildlife photography, however benignly it is manifested, exist within a discursive and historical space consistent with the subjugation of animals.
3.0 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This research project seeks to understand the motivations and methods of wildlife photographers. Descriptive and interpretive in nature, I sought to allow space for the respondents to discuss their practice, rather than to have a definitive research hypothesis.

3.2 Sampling Strategy

Fourteen individuals were interviewed over the summer and fall of 2016. All participants were recruited in Southeastern Ontario, with the majority of the interviews taking place in Kingston, Ontario. Three interviews occurred in Belleville, one in Lansdowne, and ten in Kingston. The participants were self-identified wildlife and/or nature photographers. For the purposes of this study, the term “wildlife and/or nature photographer” could identify any individual who routinely spends time in natural spaces taking photographs of non-domestic animals or other wildlife life, including plants, trees, or landscapes. Throughout the course of the interviews, it became clear that animals, rather than plants, trees, or landscapes, were the prime focus almost all of the respondents.

To recruit participants, I sent informational mass emails to several local naturalist and photographic groups. This included the Kingston Field Naturalists, both the Kingston and Napanee Photographic clubs, Friends of Frontenac Park, and the Frontenac Arch Biosphere. Posters advertising the study were also placed in strategic areas of the BioSciences Complex at Queen’s University and at Camera Kingston, Kingston’s only photography supply store. The
poster and email can be found in the (APPENDIX # 1). Through the staff at Camera Kingston, I gained access to several additional wildlife photographers who might not otherwise have heard about the study.

The participants of this study were predominately enthusiastic and knowledgeable amateur photographers. These participants are labeled as amateurs as they do not earn a living with their photographic practice and support themselves through other means. The word amateur does not relate to the quality of their photographic work or knowledge of photographic practices. Ten of the participants fall into the category of amateur photographer, three participants earn some of or all their income through wildlife photography, and finally, one participant is not a photographer at all, but a bird watcher, and the spouse of another participant. This non-photographer participant was included in the study because she and her spouse act as a team during their outings in nature. Her input was valuable due to its direct impact on another participant’s photographic practice. Additionally, as an avid bird watcher, she is often in situations where she is in close contact with wildlife photographers and I believed that her insight would be valuable.

The participants included nine men and five women. The interview process did not explicitly ask for age, however, through the interview process, it was determined that eight of the participants (three of which were women) were retired or close to retirement age of 65. The other six participants (two of which were women) were still in the workforce. All the participants who remained in the work force were over 18 years old and I felt comfortable estimating the ages of all but one of the respondents as 40+ years. I did attempt to recruit individuals of a wider age range by recruiting through the university. Thus, this is not
necessarily a representative sample, however, the concentration of participants of a certain age range might suggest that there is a connection between age and this practice.

The interview process did not explicitly request financial information. However, due to the relative expense of photographic equipment, I can assume that each of the participants have middle to upper incomes levels, as they have the disposable income for photographic equipment, printing, and traveling. All the participants had some form of post-secondary education, either college or university. None of the participants were formally trained photographers, however eight of the participants received some form of training as biologists or naturalists. This last point could relate to the sampling methods, as I drew from naturalist groups and natural science departments at a university for participants.
3.3 Data Collection

In order to gather information on wildlife and nature photographers, this study used a well-established data collection method, the semi-structured interview (Bailey, 2007; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Neuman, 1997). Semi-structured interviews were preferable to unstructured, guided conversations due to the potential for lack of focus. The field of wildlife photography is so broad, the interviews might well have become unwieldy if given no structure whatsoever. For the opposite reason, surveys were considered too rigid for this study. A survey ran the risk of being too reductive in scope and not allowing enough space for the participant responses.

I created an interview guide (APPENDIX #2) with questions to ask each participant, but this list was used as a general guideline rather than a survey. If the participant spoke at length about topics different from those in the interview guide, but which were nonetheless relevant to the wildlife photography, I did not interrupt the discussion. When it was evident to me that the participant was finished speaking about a particular topic, I asked a new question. Ideally this question was related to the topic about which the participant had just been speaking. Otherwise I would refer to the interview guide. I attempted to give each participant as much time and space to answer questions in any way they chose.

I based much of my interview style on concepts outlined in InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). While they do not reject surveys or more rigid interview methods outright, this text holds up the conversational interview as a legitimate research tool and site of knowledge production. This production is fuelled not just by
the participant responses and the literal analysis of those responses, but also by the interpreted interaction between the interviewer and the participant (2015). “Interview knowledge is produced in a conversational relation; it is contextual, linguistic, narrative, and pragmatic” (p.21). It is the interaction between the interviewer and participant that serves to create knowledge related to the social phenomenon being studied (2015). Effective surveys can result in data that is “exactly reproducible by other interviewers” (p.70). The value of qualitative data lies not in its reproducibility, but in its interpretation of a unique occurrence between two individuals.

While there is an implicit power inequality in any researcher/participant dynamic, this style of interview should attempt to be as egalitarian as possible, “an inter-change of views between two persons about a theme of mutual interest” (p.4). I am a trained professional photographer and as such, I could participate in conversations regarding photography with a knowledge base comparable to the participants. I am not a wildlife biologist or a naturalist and therefore had much to learn in the realm of natural history and animal behavior. This was an excellent opportunity for me to probe the participants.

Conversations as interviews create a type of knowledge which is also valuable from an interpretive social science (ISS) perspective. According to Neuman (1997) “It [ISS] is concerned with how ordinary people manage their practical affairs in everyday life, or how they get things done. ISS is concerned with how people interact and get along with each other” (p.68). I am most interested with how the participants interacted with their subjects when spending time in nature to photograph their subjects as well as the treatment by the participant of the resulting photographs. While I am interested with the practical information regarding their photographic
practice (how they get things done), this study is ultimately more interested in underlying emotional, cultural, and conceptual underpinnings of their work.

Highly structured interview methods (such as surveys) and interpretive interview methods can be broadly labeled as the study of facts and the study of meanings, respectively (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The research methods practiced during this study fall between the pursuit of facts and the pursuit for interpretation of meaning. While the interview style practiced in this study aimed to give space and flexibility to the participants, there were some concrete answers sought by the interviewer, and so a balance was stuck between interview styles (Bailey, 2007, p. 101). These can be seen in the interview guide and the data itself. The questions related to logistical issues around photography, such as equipment, the use of social media and location of photographic practice. These survey-like questions were kept to a minimum and the questions which required more thoughtful responses were focused on in an in-depth manner. In some cases, logistical questions were excluded from the interview completely because the questions which focused on less concrete issues consumed all the time allotted for the interview. In some instances, questions would be answered in the course of answering other questions, or perhaps not at all.
3.4 Interview Guide

The interview guide was created using the methodological framework designed by Gillian Rose in *Visual Methodologies* (2007). While the subject of this study remains the photographers themselves, visual material is the foundation upon which I based my inquiry. Rose breaks apart visual imagery into “three sites at which the meanings of an image are made: the site(s) of the production of an image, the site of the image itself, and the site(s) where it is seen by various audiences” (p.16, emphasis added). The three sites – the making of the image, the literal image, and the viewers of the image – are then further broken down into composite pieces or “modalities” (p.16): *technological*, *compositional*, and *social*. An illustration of her framework can be viewed in Figure #2. These three modalities help to unpack each one of the sites where social meanings are created. As this study is concerned with the photographers who make the images, how they produce them, and what they do with them, according to Rose, the focus of this study is the site of production.

![Diagram of the framework](image)

*Figure 2 - Foundational premise of Gillian Rose’s Visual Methodologies as an illustration. Interpretation and illustration by Elizabeth Cooper*
Rose goes on to suggest that those seeking to analyze visual imagery at the site of its production (as in this study) might best achieve their goals by using discourse analysis (p. 166). Invoking Foucault, Rose describes how a discourse is constructed: through institutional apparatus, such as “architecture, regulations, scientific treatises, philosophical statements, laws, morals, and so on” and via “institutional technologies…the practical techniques used to practise that power/knowledge” (p. 166). To identify the dominant institutions that make up the discourse of wildlife photography, I designed the interviews to highlight these areas of discussion. This type of method “shifts attention away from the details of individual images...and towards the processes of their production and use” (p. 167).

Rose used similar methods with family photography (2003); using a semi-structured format, Rose interviewed 14 mothers regarding family snapshots. Rose was most interested in the photographs as objects, what happened to them, how often they were looked at, to whom were they sent, and how they were displayed. In this way, Rose was able to describe a variety of domestic spaces and relationships, all connected to the movement and viewing of photographs, rather than what was specifically shown in the photographs, or the audience viewing them.

As those who produce images are the subject of this study, I applied theories from the site of production when creating the interview guide (Appendix #2). The interview guide was coarsely broken up into three groups of questions, each one corresponding to a different modality (social, technological, and compositional). The questions included in the social modality focused on issues around personal reasons for engaging in photography, how their subjects were chosen, their time spent in natural places, what they did with their photographs after
producing them, and why and how their photographs were meaningful to them. Questions regarding their equipment, their editing practices, and their use of social media made up the technological portion of the interview. The compositional section included questions which discussed the actual visual components of a particular image. Participants were asked to provide one of their own images to discuss during the interview. I requested that the image be meaningful to the participant in some way and the way in which that meaning was interpreted was up to the participant. I gave as little direction as possible with this request. The participants were informed that the image could be chosen for a variety of reasons and that it was up to the participant to determine what that meaningfulness could look like.

I wanted an opportunity not only to see examples of photograph work by the participants, but to hear them speak about their work by using a specific image as an example. The visual imagery created by the participants is the result of all their time and effort spent pursing their photographic interests. It is therefore important to maintain the photographs and the act of producing those photographs as the underlying and constant driving force of this study. Without exception, the social modality dominated the interviews, with both interviewer and participants spending most of the interviews discussing questions from this section, leaving composition and technology as secondary.

To complete the Rose’s tripod, I included questions on technology in the interview guide. All of the participants obliged and told me about their equipment, but the technological piece seems much less important in the final analysis. While there is a theme entitled “Technological mediation of Nature,” that theme is not necessarily related to the technology used to take
photographs, rather that there is technology is present during human interaction with nature. This will be further discussed in the results section.

3.5 Transcription and Analysis

The interviews were designed to take approximately 30-40 minutes to conduct. Most of the interviews remained within this time allotment. Two of the interviews took up to 60+ minutes due to the enthusiasm of the participant. The interviews were recorded as MP3 files using my cellular phone; I transcribed in a word processing software program. Transcribing each interview allowed me to carefully listen to the content of each interview. For every 30 minutes of recording, I spent approximately 1.5 - 2 hours on manual transcription. This began the process of thematic analysis, the method used to analyze the data resulting from the interviews. Thematic analysis starts with the perception of a “pattern, or a theme, in seemingly random information” (Boyatzis, 1998, p.3). Thematic analysis is a thorough and lengthy process, requiring researchers to re-read their data frequently. This repetitive familiarization with the data allows the patterns, or themes, embedded in the data to slowly emerge. I chose to personally transcribe the data by hand rather than outsource it, in order to have as much contact with the data in as many ways (reading, listening, transcribing) as possible. This develops a connection with the text at several different levels, the beginning of a hermeneutical method of interpretation (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

Through the multiple readings of the interviews I hoped to uncover “underlying aspects of the phenomenon under investigation” (Boyatzis, 1998, p.16). These aspects or themes were developed by taking into consideration the participant answers individually, and then again as a
whole. By shifting between fragments of the data (individual interviews, individual images) and the data as a whole (all interview texts together, all images provided by participants), I employed a hermeneutical approach to interpretation of the data. Hermeneutic interpretation is grounded in the interpretation of text within a context. Words and phrases, or signs within a text, are not reducible to their literal meaning; their meaning is discerned through their relation to other signs or, their context. Hermeneutics begins with, according to Paul Ricoeur, via Klemm, the separation between explicit and implicit meaning. “The sentence cannot be reduced to a combination of signs but is an autonomous entity different in kind from the sign” (Klemm, 1983, p. 76). This interpretation process asks the researcher to continually move from small to large, from detail to concept. The researcher never assigns meaning to specific or repeated words, but rather attempts to formulate themes to find the tacit meanings within the text. This form of interpretation allows for the implicit meanings within the text to emerge yielding results which would allow otherwise hidden themes to emerge.

Studies like the one covered in this paper allows researchers to “be open enough to allow the text to speak” (p. 149) to them; to be “touched and moved by it” (p. 149). With this form of research, definitive “right” and “wrong” answers are limited, if non-existent. As the researcher’s own interpretation of the data becomes part of the process (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004), research findings can shift dependent upon the researcher themselves. As mentioned previously, this project asked the participants to discuss one of their one photographs. The content of the photograph itself was not as important as the discussion around the photograph, hearing the participant discuss their work and their own lived experience, using the photograph as the starting point. This discussion could in no way result in correct or incorrect data, it simply
tells a story of part of that person’s life. “Thus, it is in no way claims to reveal the complete definitive, or ‘correct’” meaning of the considered photographs; rather, it simply seeks to deconstruct them from one particular critical perspective” (Caton & Santos, 2008). All parts of the study, the participants, their transcribed interviews, their photographs, and my own preconceived ideas are taken together as pieces of a whole.

These themes were determined after passing over the data several times via the process of transcription, multiple readings of the data, and multiple times listening to the audio recordings. Each theme is not an explicit description of each respondent, nor is each theme meant to be a label applied to each respondent. The themes represent issues that many or all of the respondents mentioned, either in passing or in a more direct way (ethics, wildness, spiritual restoration) or things that are required for wildlife photography to occur and therefore were present in the data in either explicit ways or as undercurrents (encounterable animal, technical mediation of nature).

After this process, a list of themes was created and the researcher had the list reviewed by the project supervisor and a project committee member. This ensured that the themes developed by the researcher were not subject to projecting. Projecting occurs when a researcher attempts to interpret meaning from data by projecting too many of their own thoughts and opinions on to the participant (Boyatzis, 1998). This type of projection can be useful if the researcher is attempting to better understand the participant and their own lived experiences. However, too much projection can lead to “filling in blanks or ambiguous moments” (1998, p.13) which can result in potentially problematic interpretations. Though the application of hermeneutics to this study states that the researcher’s own interpretation is a relevant part of the project, it was
important to have to ensure the findings were not too skewed with only the researcher’s interpretive viewpoint. Important here is the wish to remain true to the participant’s ideas while allowing for interpretation by outside influences, in this case, the researcher.

In addition, a discussion of the context and existing discourse around photographs of animals aligns with Rose’s work on the study of visual imagery. This project focuses on the production of imagery; here Rose’s social modality is activated, as it allows me to discuss social mechanisms around the history of photographing animals, the individuals who traditionally photographed animals, who those individuals were, and very broadly, the history of wildlife photography (2007, p. 21).

Rose’s social modality also allows a critical look at a theme like trophy hunting and its application to the respondents of this study. For example, one of the resulting themes is trophy hunting. While very few of the respondents actually uttered the word trophy, the respondents are operating in a field whose origins are founded within a tradition of hunting and displaying animals. It is impossible to discuss animal photography without invoking its historical association with animal hunting and display. The photographs taken by the respondents are visual objects which are displayed for viewing either online or in their homes. The type of display and the function of display varied for each respondent, but the images remain tools for memory and examples of skill, as did the original animal trophies.
4.0 Results & Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the interviews according to the themes which were culled from the study data via thematic analysis. These themes are: trophy hunting and collecting, ethics of wildlife photography, the encounterable animal, spiritual restoration, education and conservation, wildness, and technical mediation of nature.

4.2. Trophy Hunting & Collecting

The participants of this study expressed great respect and genuine love for the animals which they photograph. However, the practice of leaving home, placing oneself within the (possibly orchestrated – important here because much of the achievement embedded in trophies comes from the ability to locate and “capture” wildlife) presence of wildlife, collecting imagery, and removing it through time and space to other locations remains an act which may well be harmless, but has dubious positive affects for the animals photographed. One respondent felt that the displaying of imagery, rather than just the creation of it – making it into a trophy – was negative. As such, he did not display his images on any online platforms. His ideas regarding online sharing of animal photography are illustrated here: “It’s like the early days of big game hunting where big game hunters had a trophy room of all the heads, and that’s how they displayed their prowess. Today in photography...Facebook sites are the equivalent of a trophy room to me” (respondent 007).
Several of the respondents (all male) in this study were avid hunters as children. One remains a hunter to this day and maintains his dual practices of hunting with both gun and camera. Another respondent reported giving up his rifle in a direct exchange for additional camera equipment. “I was collecting guns, even at the time. I was re-building guns, I was an amateur gunsmith. So, I sold off a few things and bought a decent set of camera equipment” (Respondent 002). The practices are so intertwined that they can be swapped with little change in the efforts or actions of the “shooter.” Here, Brower’s work is relevant, as it analyzes the discourse of animal photography at its inception, overlaying it directly over the corresponding practices of animal hunting. The methods used for hunting were simply transferred over to the practice of animal photography, hence solidifying the act of animal photography as a form of hunting (Brower, 2011). One respondent made a direct connection between hunting with a camera and hunting with a gun; “And we just wanted to take pictures of the turkeys. And it was hunting just the same, but it wasn't killing.” (Respondent 009)

The viewing and use of the images is related to the notion of trophy hunting because a trophy is a representation of an achievement, to be displayed to communicate that achievement. The way in which the photographer uses the images is an important clue as to how they view the animal. The use and display of the animal photographs varied greatly among the respondents. Several of the respondents regularly print out their images for viewing at naturalists’ societies, photographic contests, or post digital images online. Others include their images in digital slide show presentations designed for the public. In those cases, the photographers are actively looking for recognition and engagement with their images as trophies.
There was an interesting spectrum of uses beginning with those respondents who maintained close contact with their imagery, through to those who generally do not continue to look at or display their imagery. By “close contact” I am referring to continued review of imagery, continued editing of the images and displaying the images in their home or workplace. Respondents at the other end of the spectrum did not dispose of their images, but often do not continue to use them and view them in the same way that others do. They are often filed in drawers and folders or framed and placed on walls to disappear into the background of the familiar domestic environment of the living room.

4.2.2 The Usefulness of Animal Photographs

If modern images of wildlife are meant to be more than trophies, if contemporary animal image makers believe that the images do more than subjugate animals to the level of trophy, then certainly we should see evidence of these positive results such as increased biodiversity and habitat for threatened animals. How are the images created by the respondents elevated beyond a simple trophy? Both Brower and Farnsworth would state that a trophy photograph might well be indiscernible from their definitions of wildlife photographs and that in order to elevate an image, it must explicitly depict environmental problems and threatened animals.

For most of the respondents of this study, none would personally identify with the characterization of a trophy hunter. Subsistence hunters, but not trophy hunters. There are too many negative historical implications around the archetype of a trophy hunter. Many contemporary characterizations of trophy hunters are equally negative, in the case of the American dentist shot and killed Cecil, a lion living in Zimbabwe (Macdonald, Jacobsen,
Burnham, Johnson, & Loveridge, 2016). However, some clearly do connect contemporary wildlife photography to hunting, at least in terms of its being evidenced by the achievement of a specific set of skills.

We can see this in several respondent statements, which, while drawing attention to the high-level of skills required to take a photograph, also recognise the photographer’s own experience vis-à-vis their own pleasure around receiving praise. These quotes might be seen as indicative of some loss of connection between the photographers’ images and the animals who were the unwitting subjects of the photographs even though these respondents also appear in other statements to have strong emotional ties to the animals they photograph – but the photographs, how they were created and how they are disseminated, take on new meaning as trophies apart from the lives of the animals pictured within them.

“...but I think it comes back to why do we do it. And for me it's about the adventure first. If I can get really good photographs that please me, then that's important.” (Respondent 006)

“When some professional photographer faves your photo, [you think] ‘wow, a professional photographer actually really liked my picture.’” (Respondent 012)

“He said, ‘you'll probably never get a better picture.’ I said, ‘oh, it's that good?’ and he said ‘well, there's a competition.’ Well, we sent it in, and that's the one that got the top ten out of the 150,000. So, I was pretty pleased with that.” (Respondent 014)

My comparisons between wildlife photography and trophy hunting are not intended to demean wildlife photography or photographers’ activities but to highlight the continuing historical and...
discursive overlaps between trophy hunting and wildlife photography. Nineteenth century trophy hunting saw animals as a means to an end – a creature to be dominated and depicted in the name of achievement. The relations reproduced in contemporary wildlife photography practices are usually much more subtly articulated than this and, of course, most of the animals live on to be photographed another day. However, the latter appropriation of representations of animals as symbols of achievement by humans do as, Sontag earlier suggested, seem to circulate and produce a world quite different to that which the animals themselves inhabit, one with different values, purposes, and consequences.

4.2.3 Transition to Collection

Photographs were destined to be collected. As pieces of paper, they are small in portable. In their modern incarnation, they are easily produced and essentially invisible, caught up in the metal framework of the devices that carry them, which also gives them a mobility unimaginable just two decades ago. Cellular phones, WIFI-capable digital cameras, and portable laptops all contain the potential for the production and storage of almost limitless images. For some, photographs are like small pieces of the world, ready to be taken, reproduced, and distributed (Songtag, 1977). Photographs are indexical – seen by some as powerfully representative of the thing they picture (Hand, 2012). For the photographers in this study, the photographs they create and collect seem to exist simultaneously in both realms; both a literal piece of the world, a trophy in and of itself, and a representation of the something which is rapidly disappearing.

Whereas trophy hunting is associated with dominion over nature and the subjugation of animals. Collecting, at least the way it is expressed by the respondents, seems to relate to
experiencing nature, rather than dominating it. As already noted, those that remained hunters of animals numbered few in this study, despite several respondents noting the start of their interest in wildlife as associated with hunting activities. The collection of animal photographs and animal experiences is certainly a more applicable designation for the respondents of this study than that of trophy hunting.

The photographs collected by the respondents populated a variety of spaces in the homes and lives of those respondents. Only a few respondents placed the images on their walls at home; some printed out the images and filled storage drawers with the prints; others entered them in nature photography contests or gave them away to friends. Regardless of what they did with them, the respondents are all in possession of thousands of images, both digital and physical, stored in their homes or offices. After showing me hundreds or prints in his office, a respondent said in exasperated, yet joking tones, “Yes, but what do you do with it?” (Respondent 003).

The respondents in this study were careful record keepers, being careful to never delete or throw out, such as this respondent: “of course, I have every negative I ever shot!” (Respondent 009). Another respondent reported filing their images according to species or other categories; “I would take my pictures, from say a hike, put them under ‘camping date’ and then I would transfer the caterpillars to ‘caterpillars.’ I have files for all these different things ‘butterflies,’ ‘toads,’ whatever” (Respondent 010). While the photographs made by respondents are used in other contexts, those applications are secondary to the initial motivation of creating the photographs. The ultimate destination is a safe place in a file, with the practical applications of the photographs being considered only after the photographs exist.
A majority of the respondents discussed photographing animals in the areas around their homes and gardens. This echoes the historical practice of those who began collecting natural objects and animals by means of impressive gardens, filled with local and exotic flora and fauna. As Ian MacGregor states in the Introduction to *Collecting Nature* (2014), these collections created a “systematic framework for the organizations of specimens” (p. xxi).

Images, not just the living species, were also collected and commissioned. Animal paintings by Bombi and Scacciati were commissioned by the Medici court – as a solution to the dukes’ urge to catalogue and classify their animal collections (Groom, 2014). That classification is an important function, if not the most important function of collecting is evident in the responses of the participants. While none of the respondents had lists of animal species they wanted to see, many of the respondents created lists of animals they had seen and where they had seen them, furthering the classification of natural species, through the act of collecting.

The creation and collection of these photographs seems to be largely about the experience when the photograph was taken rather than the physical photograph itself, although the photograph is the means by which they remember the experience. One of the most prolific photographers in the study claims that his camera is “more of an excuse to get out than anything.” (Respondent 007). The demonstrated collection of these images by the respondents is really a collection of experiences, of time, of enjoyment, and of educational opportunities, of which the photographs are representative. There is no end goal here for the photographers of the animals in this study. Their collections will never be complete, even with repetitions in animal subjects. Regardless of how many examples of an animal they might already have, the respondents will continue to collect more. It is the experience that they are collecting – the
sharing of space with something non-human of which the photograph is a physical representation. This respondent frequently sought out the same species at the same locations in order to have multiple experiences: “...because I'm here now, I can go down there every day, every day, every day, every day, and work on things like that” (Respondent 006).

The collections of photographs made by the respondents in this study are important in ways that are accessible only to them, as the authors of the images. In Gillian Rose’s work on family photographs (2003) Rose cites Roland Barthes’ *Camera Lucida* to illustrate the uniqueness of photographs in relation to their creators. The experience Barthes had with a particular photograph unreplicatable, “since its effect is unique to him” (2003, p. 9). Here she also invokes Berger’s relationality, that all viewers of photographs can understand what we gaze upon in relation to themselves. This speaks to the motivations of the photographers in this study – they are curating their own catalogue of images, memories, and experiences which are often only readable to them. A respondent made a comment about how intricately the images she made were connected to her memory, saying, “...I can look at a picture of a mushroom and know where I took that photograph. I don’t know how that happens because they look very much alike, but you can remember the day” (Respondent 010). The photographs are more than just trophies for display, they are private collections which align with the personal histories of the photographers. The combination of pleasurable experiences in nature and with animals and the deep connection to personal memory helps to drive the urge to continue the collection.

The reasons behind this urge to collect are evasive. David Morgan, in “On the Nature of Collecting,” states that, “Collections forever obsess their servant-owners with something they need, something one must find” (2016, p. 376), characterizing collectors as powerless when
faced with the urge to collect. Jones made note of the urge to collect whole sets of animals in her work on colonial taxidermy – with whole family groups and ecosystems being collected to complete the set (2016).

4.3 Ethics of Wildlife Photography

Wildlife photography, when compared to hunting, is often heralded as ethical as it does not lead to the death of the animal. This comparison helped to cement the idea of wildlife photography as an activity for those who cared for nature and animals. Brower highlights the “take only photographs” refrain of current outdoors culture as “a model of non-interventionist right practice” (2005, p. 1) as the basis for much wildlife photography. According to this thinking, by photographing an animal and removing its image from nature, the animal remains unharmed in its home. But what of the act of taking the image? What processes occur on the other side of the camera in the seconds, minutes, or hours before and after the shutter clicks? To “get the shot” photographers engage in a variety of practices which can occupy ambiguous ethical territory.
4.3.2 Baiting and Calling

The respondents of this study continually brought up ethical issues around the photography of animals. The animal encounter, which will be discussed later in this chapter, *must* occur for a wildlife photograph to be produced (unless the photographer is using motion sensing or trip-wire technology,). In order to facilitate encounters, photographers sometimes engage in a variety of activities such as baiting and calling.

Baiting occurs when photographers offer food to the animal which they hope to photograph in an effort to draw the animal out into the open. Calling occurs when photographers use instruments to produce sounds which are similar to the animal that they wish to photograph. If successful, this procedure will also draw the animal out in to the open, where a photograph can more easily be made. Many of the respondents in this study have engaged in those activities while also being openly critical of these practices. The exchange below, during a research interview, exemplifies the dichotomy expressed by several of the respondents. In this situation, the respondent was out with a naturalist group when they heard a bird that the group was very interested in viewing and photographing. Though best practices told them they should not engage in calling practices for the safety of the bird, the bird was called out of hiding nonetheless.

“Respondent: Well you shouldn’t really do it [calling], it's not ethical to do it. When birds are in their territories they're there to protect the egg and the female and the nest and when you call them out often you can, you can call them away and create a situation where they might be predated.”
Researcher: Oh, right, of course. but this bird was okay, as far as you know?

[respondent crosses fingers]

Respondent: As I said, they're quite rare.” (Respondent 004)

Despite knowing that this practice could result in negative consequences for the bird, the group still made the decision to call the animal from hiding. Here, it appears that the encounter and the resulting images were more important than the animal itself. Other respondents noted that they used their knowledge of animal behavior to identify animal stress levels in order to reduce the stress of encounters. In the following quote, the only non-photographer who participated in this study maintains watch on her husband’s photographic practice. While these respondents did not bait or call, due to ethical considerations, they often encountered ethical dilemmas once encounters occurred.

“...and she will say, ‘You're stressing it.’ Because I've been around long enough, it's not sure anymore whether it's safe or what's happening, but I have that reminder, she will let me know. And sometimes I get angry about it. I think, ‘c'mon, what does it matter?’ But really what does it matter if I have a photograph?” (Respondent 006).

Several respondents noted that baiting can have a variety of negative consequences: if done near a road or highway, the animals are vulnerable to collisions with motor vehicles. Many mentioned wild deer becoming habituated to humans via feeding, making them easy targets for hunters. Birds, specifically owls, were mentioned by several respondents as being lured into the open with food; lingering in one spot due to the unnatural increase in food could interrupt
migration patterns and the daily activities of a variety of species. Another respondent noted that feeding animals in order to gain access to them interrupted the “wild” aspect of the animal and that they become tame, changing the animal forever. The respondent felt that this was unethical and that they animals were being exploited for photographs.

Another respondent noted that there was a spectrum of feeding habits among those who feed animals and so the lines are blurred between right and wrong. Wildlife photography is not a managed practice; one does not require a licence or registration in order to hunt an animal with a camera and therefore, there can be many possible interpretations of what is ethical and what is unethical.

“…there's so many different levels of it. Some might say that my bird feeder out front is baiting. That's on one end of the spectrum. But I think that things like bringing mice to throw them out to a great grey owl to come and get, I don't think that's particular ethical... There is a continuum. I am not comfortable with that end of things, baiting with live mice to get the owl shot. They don't necessarily care about the owl. They don't care about the well-being of the owl and that's where I think I draw the line” (Respondent 004).

Calling appeared to also occupy ambiguous ethical territory, operating on some sort of spectrum. Another of the respondents, a professional wildlife photographer, reported “calling in” bull moose during mating season, to secure lively behavioral photographs, but this same person roundly criticized baiting in any way, calling it “repulsive” (respondent 007). Of the two practices mentioned above, the practice of calling does seem to be considered the more ethical
by the respondents in this study, as it has less of a chance of interrupting an individual animal’s ability to hunt or forage for food.

Bill McKibbion, in his essay *The Problem with Wildlife Photography* (1997) makes a convincing case for why any kind of wildlife photography is unethical. Simply by being there, a human can interrupt a wild animal while hunting or foraging, threatening its survival. As detailed in the literature review, wild animals tend to avoid other wild animals. However, some photographic practices can be more invasive. Brower describes the flash photography of animals by of George Shiras using disparaging terms. Shiras’ 19th century flash required an explosion that startled the animals, while the light blinded them in the darkness. Brower describes the animals as being “traumatized” by the light (2008).

While the respondents of this study roundly criticized the obviously harmful practices such as baiting and calling, they often remain in a more ambiguous position regarding their own practices. Several of the respondents relayed stories of other photographers who they felt had crossed the boundary between ethical and unethical behavior. The stories ranged from tales of a professional hummingbird photographer who used elaborate lighting set ups at artificial feeding stations; to a photographer who placed rare butterfly species in a freezer to slow their movements, resulting in their deaths; to the breaking of rare plants to prevent other photographers from securing a shot. These stories, the latter two certainly, occupy a very definitive ethical space; to harm or kill an animal or plant for the sake of a photograph is easily categorized as wrong. Every day, millions of animals die due to human activity and often for the so-called “benefit” of humans. They die for food, for their skins, and for scientific research. While these deaths appear to operate in some moral grey area, wildlife photography appears to
exist in black and white territory. It is either a good thing to do, or when it results in the death of the animal, it is a bad thing to do.

There are, however, other ethical discussions that are more ambiguous. Many have spoken about the power which wildlife photography has to communicate a lush wilderness, heavily populated with animal life (Brower, 2011; Lutts, 1992; McKibben, 1997). Imagery that depicts Brower's “deep nature” can help to create a few different, but complimentary discourses regarding the natural environment. Firstly, as argued by Brower, Lutts, and McKibbon, traditional nature photography is always free of humans. Animals in wildlife photographs are almost always alone, separated through space and time (Brower calls them “ahistorical”) from the rest of the world. By depicting nature as something devoid of humans, wildlife photography can serve to strengthen the divide between nature and culture, further separating humans from animals. Wildlife photography solidifies animals as mythical beasts, living separate lives from modern, urban humans. It implies a world that is foreign and unwelcome to humans.

Secondly, in Why Look at Animals (2009), Berger discusses the disappearance of animals from modern life, only to be monuments to their previous selves as occupants of zoos, and perhaps in this case, wildlife imagery. The humans are always the viewer, the animals always the gazed upon. The power imbalance of hunting and science is also present in visual representations of animals.

This mystical imagining of wildlife is added to by cartoonish and unrealistic representations of forest ecosystems seen in Disney films such as Bambi (Lutts, 1992) and anthropomorphised characters in live action wildlife shows such as Meerkat Manor (Candea, 2010). While the constructed cutesiness of the animals portrayed may allow the viewer to relate to the
characters, it simultaneously pushes humans further away from the very real lives of their non-
human animal counterparts by masking reality and adding previously nonexistent drama.

This way of viewing wildlife photography contends that images of wildlife, whether depicting
animals as existing alone in a remote, unpeopled wilderness or as engaging in bawdy, soap
opera-level drama (Candea, 2010), further alienate human animals from their non-human
counterparts as it is does not exemplify real animal lives. This seems to apply only to the
viewers of these images. The respondents of this study do not appear to have a similar way of
viewing this type of imagery and this is perhaps due to the fact that that they are physically
moving through spaces occupied by wildlife and are therefore looking at animals from a
differently mediated perspective, as the creators of the imagery, rather than simply the viewers

Derek Bousé’s *Wildlife Films* (2000) outlines a variety of methods by which wildlife filmmakers
seek increase access to the animal subjects, creating an exaggerated close encounter for the
viewer. This is achieved using zoom lenses for intimacy, adding audio “nature” sounds in post-
production, artificial lighting, and concealed cameras (p. 24). Other than the audio piece, these
practices can all be applied to the practice of still photographers. Many of the respondents in
this study had high powered lenses which allowed them to view and image animals from a
great distance. These tactics mean that viewers believe that the natural spaces depicted in the
film (or in the photograph) have an unrealistic sense of what it truly is like when moving
through natural spaces. According to McKibbon the tactics used in wildlife photography and
film media also unintentionally allows the human viewer to feel comfortable with the large
quantity of animals available to humans for image-making purposes. He writes: “How can there
really be a shortage of whooping cranes when you’ve seen a thousand images of them – ten
times more images than there are actually whooping cranes left in the wild?” (McKibben, 1997, p. 53). Elephants, whooping cranes, grizzly bear – all seem to be doing quite well if one was to use the number of photographs as the only metric.

The last ethical dilemma discussed will be that of access and privacy. Images of animals imply that humans have total access to any member of the non-human animal world in a way that simply does not apply to the images of other humans. That an animal should be left alone because it does not want to be seen, is not frequently considered (Mills, 2010). Indeed, Rosemary Collard calls Mills “a rare voice” (R. C. Collard, 2016, p. 476) in regard to animal privacy. As mentioned previously, respondents in this study reported using tactics to draw animals out of hiding, which implies that they do not want to be seen. Indeed, the technology such as zoom lenses, baiting, calling, and the use of local guides all mentioned by the respondents suggests that it is tough work securing the image of a wild animal as they often do not want to be seen. McKibbon writes, “I’ve come across bears twice in all my years in the Adirondacks and that’s twice more than most of my neighbours” (1997, p. 50).

It seems that regardless of what an animal is doing, image-makers do not feel that it should be afforded privacy. Both Bousé and Mills describe activities such as mating, defecating, urinating, and giving birth as common elements of wildlife films and photography but would be considered unseemly and highly unethical if humans were the subjects. This is especially true if the human subjects were unable to give consent, as is the case with animal subjects. Asking for consent might denote shame – something uniquely human that was supposedly acquired after the Fall. However, photographic consent is not about shame, it is about control of one’s image, something that an animal cannot give.
McKibbon suggests that no other images of wild animals should be made and that those who require an image of an animal, such as an elephant or rhino, can purchase the images from a single managed photographic agency (1997). He believes this would help to reduce the impact on wildlife and rebuild their privacy. These clearing houses already exist, in the form of online stock photography agencies. Type in “elephant” or “rhino” into any of these libraries and literally thousands if not millions of images will populate the screen. Typically, these can be purchased for very low prices. The existence of these accessible libraries does not seem to have reduced the amount of animal photographs being produced, so McKibbon’s idea may not be an effective approach to reduce wildlife photography numbers.

McKibbon’s criticisms are leveled at what I have already established as fitting into the genre of wildlife photography. Conservation photography, defined by Farnsworth, was not mentioned in McKibbon’s diatribe against animal photography. Farnsworth would say that informative conservation photography is something that can help animals, not harm them; this will be discussed in the section on Conservation (4.6).

Ethics seems to play a large role in the respondents’ practice – it is a topic of conversation among photographers and they consider it when they photograph animals. However, even though it is something that is often discussed, the respondent’s adherence to ethical guidelines was less reliable. In practice, some respondents occasionally ignored their own understanding of ethics and pursued actions to gain access to an animal.
4.4 Encounterable Animal

Individuals who make wildlife photographs rely on an animal’s availability. They require access to the animal, access that might not be something for which the animal is able to provide consent (see 4.3). Rosemary Collard calls them “encounterable animals” (Collard, 2014; Collard, 2016) and lists them as requirements for wildlife films, ecotourism, and the illegal pet trade. Collard discusses how these animals must be not only encounterable, but also lively; in order to fulfill the viewers’ desire for an authentic animal experience, the animals must perform the characteristics we believe them to possess.

We have learned through wildlife photographs and films what constitutes a lively animal – running, jumping, hunting, fighting, mating etc. Thus, as Berger states in his critique of zoos, the experience of looking at an animal in a zoo is dissatisfying to us, it leaves us wanting something more, because the “essence” of what we are expecting simply does not exist in this context. Berger talks about the eyes of the animals as being unfocused, disinterested, apathetic (Berger, 2009). The animals are no longer “lively” they are “monuments” to their former selves.

To bring about these satisfying and lively encounters, the study respondents engaged in activities such as baiting and calling (see 4.3). Respondents also reported hiring local guides to help locate wildlife in parks, participating in pre-planned walks with local field naturalist groups, or simply photographing those animals who lived in or visited the backyard of the respondent. Almost all respondents reported taking the opportunity to photograph those backyard visitors who were easily encounterable. Many respondents who photographed their wildlife
“neighbours” augmented their photographic repertoire with animals in other locales, either local conservation spaces or further afield with trips planned specifically for looking at animals.

The respondents who facilitated their animal encounters alone, without the aid of a guide or group, were in the minority. This is important because in order to gain access to an animal encounter, one must possess specific behavioural knowledge of an animal in order facilitate these encounters, exemplified in the quote below.

“And they can, it's pretty easy now to get a good photograph with the equipment, however, it's not as easy if you want to photograph specific species. You have to know exactly what they're all about, their habitat and behavior and so on. And that's where the challenge is; many photographers photograph things and don't know what they're photographing. What's this insect? What's this bird? I usually know first what I'm photographing” (Respondent 007).

“to be a successful nature photographer on the animal side, not only do you need to be able to recognize...how they [animals] interact and how you can interact with them to get the images that you want and just to have the experience that you're seeking. I'm as much of a behaviourist as anything.” (Respondent 001)

Both above quotes hold up knowledge animal behavior as the key to successful images – and as Farnsworth would say, the key to successful conservation images. The second quote alludes to the lively encounter that Collard mentioned – the experience that these photographers are all seeking, gaining intimate access to a wild animal while it behaves in its natural environment.
If the photographer does not possess this species-specific behavioural knowledge, then often they pay for it by using guides or field naturalist memberships. While one respondent touted local field naturalist groups as a place to gain knowledge about wildlife, another criticized guided tours as artificial and problematic in relation to ethics. In their words:

“The guides are not magicians. Some of them are very good, I don’t want to belittle them, but they’re walking the same trails all the time, they have a good idea of what might be here, what to expect. So, they’re under a little bit of pressure to produce” (Respondent 006)

From an ethical perspective, this respondent felt that the guides were more likely to provoke hidden animals into an encounter due to either explicit or implicit pressure from tourists, who are directly responsible for the livelihood of the guide. The use of guides was mentioned in locations such as Brazil, Cambodia, Nigeria, and locations in Canada. These guides, who must facilitate these encounters with animals in order to have successfully fulfilled the expectations of the paying tourists, may well breech ethical lines in order to secure a suitable encounter. A tale of wealthy individuals traveling to historically colonized nations, using local or indigenous knowledge from potentially economically vulnerable people to their advantages has some unsettling neo-colonial undercurrents. The photographic trophies taken home as evidence of their success is equally unsettling.

All human engagements with non-human animals always have “freight” (O. Jones, 2000, p. 68).¹

¹ Jones uses the term “encounter” which is confusing for the purposes of this section, as he applies the term to any space in which humans and non-human animals come together (woods, slaughter house, pet store, etc.) and this paper uses it to describe a specific occurrence of a human meeting a wild animal in that animal’s natural habitat. Henceforth in relation to Jones the word “engagement” will be used and in relation to meetings between wild animals and humans the phrase “encounters” will be used.
Freight is defined by the unequal distribution of power between humans and non-humans. Jones goes on to say that while human ethics have not made adequate space for non-human animals, this lack of ethical implications toward non-human animals has also stripped non-human animals of their individuality. Taken as a whole, as a group, as a species, the animals are something – they are a flock, a herd, a pack; they are a worthy of a name and so they are labeled: as pests, as endangered, as critical, as indicators. But as lone creatures they are character-less representatives of their larger whole and, as Jones puts it, do not have normative human ethics applied to their existence. However, when an animal is known more intimately, it can have these anthropomorphic ethical frameworks applied to them. This intimate knowledge can occur in situations of domestic pets, in animals that garner media attention for unusual feats, or in the case of this research, a much anticipated and hoped-for encounter in the wilderness.

The wildlife encounters described by some respondents could certainly be described as intimate. At the moment of the wildlife encounter, the animals were transformed in the eyes of the respondent into something more than a photograph or drawing in a guide book – a bland representative of the species; during an encounter, the animals became fully realized individuals, replete with nicknames (“guy”) and anthropomorphic descriptors (“proud”). In the quotes listed below, we can see the respondents referring to their encounters using language which is demonstrative of this trend.
“The wolf stepped out and I was able to get some nice photographs. He was a bold guy, a really big, bold guy. He came out a little further and a little further, and I took some really nice photos.” (Respondent 014)

“Young, still young, but a very nice animal. He was afraid of me that night, so I had to work subtly around him, but the rut was coming on, so his attitude was building all the time, so he’s got nothing to fear on the tundra.” (Respondent 001)

“…and this guy, when I got home, I looked, I got out of the car and turned and there was this guy just sitting there. So, in the middle of a crappy storm, I come home to this very beautiful image of him sticking his face out of the box.” (Respondent 012)

“He just stood up on the top of his nest and he was just looking at me, and he was just proud, oh my god, you know?” (Respondent 008)

Taken as a whole, as all wolves, all moose, all screech owls, or all albatrosses (the animals referred to in these quotes, respectively) are monolithic and cannot be known as individuals. These animal encounters changed the way the photographer related to the animal. For the respondents, their personal experiences with these animals created the animals as something with whom the photographers could identify and relate. Barbara Smuts (2001), referred to this exact phenomenon after living in close proximity with baboons for the purposes of research. After meeting baboons with whom she could communicate, identify individually, and even name, the feeling then permeated her experiences with all animals. Smuts’ encounters with all animals are forever after the baboon experience, “freighted” differently, and her animal encounters are interpreted in a new way. Squirrels are no longer “members of the class
‘squirrel’ but are now “small, fuzzy-tailed, person-like creatures” (2001, p. 301). The work of Jones and Smuts particularly resonated in reference to the respondents and their feelings towards the animals they photograph. The respondents seemed to have a great deal of love and other positive emotions towards their subjects, feeling strong connections to them as a result of the time spent in the presence of the animals, in particular, these animals with which they have had a meaningful encounter.

Via the animal encounter, animals become, in a sense, like other humans, for the humans who encounter them. This makes them visible, both physically and ethically, for the humans who care to look. Whether there are benefits for the animal who is encountered is debateable (See 4.3) but the humans in this study seem to be overwhelmingly delighted by their encounters. Do we require these encounters to allow us to care or become invested in non-human animals (or other humans for that matter – the same points being made here could arguably be applied to humans encountering humans from other places or socio-economic backgrounds)? Why is the encounter so important to us? What makes an unencountered animal less important or less visible?

The encounter is particularly important for the purposes of this study because of the photographic element. Do those that view the animal through a photograph gain the same feelings of closeness and joy as those who encountered and photographed the animal? The parameters of a wildlife encounter that have been loosely laid out above suggest that looking at a photograph is simply not as powerful as being in close proximity of a wild animal. In the same way that photojournalism makes viewers care about world events but conversely turns us away, wildlife photography distances us from the animal subjects, while real life encounters
may have the ability to aid humans in seeing animals as individuals worthy of respect and consideration.

4.5 Spiritual Restoration

Every respondent in this study reported enjoying the time spent in natural spaces as separate from their photographic practice. During the interviews, I asked each respondent if they enjoyed spending time in nature even if they were unable to capture the photographs which they had been working towards. Everyone responded in a generally positive way, reporting that even if they were disappointed not to see and photograph an animal that day, their time was not wasted. Several felt as though they were rejuvenated by their time in nature and when asked how often they go out to photograph, many answered with some variation of “not often enough.” One respondent referred to nature as their “tonic” (respondent 007). The respondents go out into what they determine to be natural space between once and three to four times per week. Only one respondent answered that they experienced genuine disappointment when they failed to encounter the animal which they had planned to see. This respondent, curiously, was the only respondent interviewed who was not a wildlife photographer, but an avid birder and the wife of a photographer. Her explanation is as follows:

“I want to see the wildlife, I want to see the birds. That’s what makes me happy, I don’t know why, I can’t explain it. But I will, if I don’t see it, I will be disappointed sometimes.”

This respondent went on to say that she simply wanted to know that the animal was out there and “thriving” and that it brought her happiness. However, not to see the animal brought her frustration and poor mood.
Several of the respondents reported feeling as though time spent in nature is rejuvenating and that they felt better afterwards. When asked why they take photographs of natural spaces and animals rather than other subjects, they often stated that they were not interested in photographing people or the “concrete jungle” (Respondent 012). There was certainly a concerted effort on the part of the respondents to “get away from it all.” The respondents were not gendered in their description of this process. It is this “adventure,” “tonic,” and this “urge to see” that I group together here as elements of spiritual restoration. Spirituality is a catch all phrase that can mean religiousness, an adherence to mediation, belief in deities, or any number of associations or practices which may lead to a sense of general well-being. The Dictionary of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy defines spirituality as “An aspect of human existence which is characterized by an individual’s search for meaning and to answer fundamental questions about right and wrong, and the origin and purpose of life” (Molineux, 2017). For the purposes of the discussion of this theme and this study in general, spirituality will be loosely defined as the search for a sense of well-being and general connectedness to those around you – all animals, both human and non-human. It is acknowledged that this is a very general definition, however, this study did not ask specific questions on issues such as religious or meditative practices so therefore it cannot define the spirituality in this theme with highly specific language.

The loss of connection to the natural world, a simpler, more primitive life, is often cited as the reason why people seek out nature for spiritual restoration. That we, as Westerners have “lost something authentic in its march of progress” (Bulbeck, 2005, p. 133) and that we need to retrieve it by retreating, both spatially and temporally into nature. Animals have replaced
indigenous people as the representatives of the natural and spiritual world, as “guides to a simple, true and sacred life” (Bryld and Lykke, 2000, as cited in Bulbeck, p. 131). Bulbeck talked about this phenomenon specifically in relation to dolphins in Monkey Mia, Australia, a resort area which receives regular visits from wild dolphins. Many visitors claimed to have highly emotional and even telepathic connections with the dolphins at Monkey Mia (2005).

The benefits of spending time in nature and having animal encounters are well-documented, as I have described below. However, are there benefits for the animal facilitators? What are the potential negatives side effects? Catherine Faver discusses this topic with a definitive tone as though animal encounters are necessarily the route to our happiness. “Relationships with animals can guide us to an awareness of the interconnectedness of all life; this awareness is a springboard to compassion” (2009, p. 365). Faver is writing from a social work perspective, so here the human condition may be privileged over that of animals. However, she does provide an interesting definition of spirituality to use as a potential framework in this context:

“Spirituality is the process of taking our rightful place in the web of life. In using the term ‘web of life’ this definition assumes that all life is interdependent or interconnected” (2009, p. 364).

That all life is interconnected and even dependent on one another is something that often makes people feel more content and nestled within their small pocket of the world, as though they have a place within the larger ecosystem. That does appear to apply to many of the respondents within this study, as one respondent noted, she liked knowing “they [animals] were out there.” (Respondent 005)
Certainly, this particular search for spiritual rejuvenation can be critiqued from a variety of perspectives. As I have already mentioned, the benefits to the animals in this story are not clear. At best, they are innocent purveyors of good will, unharmed but providing a much-needed service to the city-weary visitors and photographers. At worst, they are harangued and unwilling participants in the quest of strangers, (see 4.3). More appropriately for this section, we could see this as the worst kind of cultural appropriation; the image and experience of one culture (that of animals) being used for the improvement and benefit of another (that of humans). Like the ways in which indigenous peoples were seen by white, Western, colonial peoples to be the point of access to ancient understandings of the world (and how that is correctly criticized as a process of essentializing and othering), seeing animals in this way could be argued as being problematic.

The literature around the benefits of nature and wildlife encounters for humans certainly backs up the respondents of this study. Susanna Curtin’s study of eco-tourists who specifically travel to experience wildlife encounters found that not only were respondents happier after having these encounters, they experienced sensations such as loss of linear time, helping them to step out of their day-to-day lives (2009). Several respondents in my study reported feeling like time slipped by while they were watching wildlife or that bodily discomforts were less bothersome to them while they were waiting for and watching animals. One respondent reported reducing his intake of food to heighten his awareness of his surroundings.

“It’s almost a form of mediation. Where you can have the time and things roll through your mind, you know. It’s quiet time, you can, I don’t close my eyes, but you could close your eyes and meditate. But focusing on something far away, and you can get into a
feeling of being in tune with your surroundings. For me, it’s pretty amazing. I prefer to do it on an empty stomach.” (Respondent 014)

Fasting has been used by many religious and spiritual groups for thousands of years as a method to amplify ones divine experiences (Persynaki, Karras, & Pichard, 2017). This type of literal connection of wildlife encounters to spirituality, mediation, and quasi-religious experiences is not something that I had predicted would come through in these interviews. Another respondent noted that, “when I’m focused on something, if I’m waiting for a behavior to happen, I’m just watching and listening and observing things around me, totally oblivious to my discomfort” (Respondent 007).

Certainly, Curtain’s study exemplifies the psychological benefits of animal encounters, but the long-lasting power of the experience of this study’s respondents and the drive to continue to have these experiences vis–à–vis happiness and positive spiritual health was unexpected. Ignoring their discomfort, hunger, or tiredness aligns with Csikszentmihalyi’s state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), where by a person is so innately happy and focused on what they are doing, that they lose sense of time and awareness of their physical surroundings. The practice of the above quoted respondent is not representative of all of the respondents, however, as I have already mentioned, many respondents reported losing time in nature, feeling better after time in nature, and of course, ritualistically going out into nature time and time again.

Even when with a trained guide who is familiar with the local area, most wildlife encounters are not reliable as they are at Monkey Mia. They require a lot of time spent simply sitting, waiting, and listening. This is especially true for those encounters that could result in acceptable
photographs\(^2\). The availability of time seems to encourage the respondents to consider things outside their day-to-day lives and to be more present in the moment. For many in this study and others already cited (Bulbeck, 2005; Curtin, 2009), this is the only portion within their busy lives that is relatively unstructured in terms of time and activities.

Bulbeck, writing about ecotourism and animal encounters in Australia and Antarctica, found that her respondents had profound reactions to viewing the teeming seal and bird colonies of the Southern Ocean. In Bulbeck’s own words, “She wound down, as many of us did, knowing our descriptions were dust in our mouths by comparison with what had vibrated through our bodies” (2005, p. 151). Curtain describes the encounters her respondents had with wildlife as an experience which “exists on the edge of verbal consciousness” (2009, p. 470). They are unable to express with words the powerfulness of their experiences with wild animals. This inability to articulate the profundity of an encounter and its emotional impact was echoed in this study. While touring the coast of British Columbia in a sailing boat with the hopes of photographing Kermode or white spirit bears, one respondent had a surprise encounter with a humpback whale. All the members of the tour came onto the deck to view the animal and despite inclement weather, the whale remained by the boat for 45 minutes. My impression of this encounter, as told by the respondent, was very powerful, as he was nearly moved to tears in his retelling. His emotional description of the encounter remains with me to this day as a positive and poetic meeting of two worlds, whale and human. Upon reading the transcript, I found that he had not used any sort of profound language or to describe the incident. “She

\(^2\) As culled from the data, an acceptable animal photograph appears to be one that depicts the featured animal as an anatomically beautiful representative of its species and also, very often, magnificently. There are many aesthetic considerations as well such as uncluttered or neutral backgrounds and “good” lighting conditions.
sprayed us with her... blowhole, and it smelled, and everybody smelled it and it was so great. It was good. It was really nice. It was good” (Respondent 014).

This respondent was barely able to find the words about this encounter, but his feelings regarding this encounter were made very clear to me, through his facial expressions and physical gestures. An impression was made on me, despite the lack of articulate language. Powerful animal encounters defy explanation and often operate within the realm of emotion. With the intangible qualities of an encounter such as this, it is unsurprising that language generally reserved for spiritual or religious experiences is frequently used. This respondent’s acknowledgement of the other passengers on the boat and the shared experience of their whale encounter made it more special because it was experienced as a community. That sense of connectedness, between the respondent and the whale, the whale and the other passengers and finally all of the other passengers created that sense of interconnectedness to something larger than oneself.

One of the respondents, who earns their living as a professional wildlife photographer, has made several trips to Antarctica. He described to me the awe and excitement he felt at witnessing thousands of breeding elephant seals on the beach: “It was the most incredible, one of the highlights of my life, standing on the beach that day. Seeing nature” (Respondent 008). His passion and admiration for the wildlife he encountered there was evident by things such as the tone of his voice (it was a telephone interview, so I could not note his facial expressions or gestures) but he was also unable to find words which would adequately encompass his experience. He talked about the noise of the beach being deafening; the millions of sea birds, the thousands of seals; the male elephant seals fighting to defend their harem of females. Male
elephant seals have been given the name “beach masters” as they engage any other male elephant seal who attempts to challenge their territory in terrible and bloody battles. The power and emotional impact of this encounter was clear to me over the phone and I could imagine it perfectly in my mind’s eye as he described it. While the language he used was not highly descriptive, his evident emotion was evocative.

Many of the experiences that elicited these powerful, indescribable feelings were not necessarily represented in the photography of the respondents. I requested that all the respondents choose a photograph of their own so that I could hear them speak about their work (Figures #3-#13). The photographs they chose were chosen for aesthetic reasons, examples of excellent “specimen photographs,” and for visually demonstrating exciting animal behaviors. However, for all but one, the photographs were not easily readable in this way and required the interpretation of the respondent. On face value, many of the photographs are excellent technical achievements, but unremarkable in terms of emotional power. The emotional impact came upon hearing the respondents speak about their work.

Study respondents also reported being generally more aware of their surroundings and their place in the natural world. That their time in natural spaces or encounters with animals allowed them to slide into that mindset more easily when not explicitly looking for animal encounters. This ability to “gain access” to this mindset the more one does it harkens back to some forms of spiritual practice, such as meditation and yoga, or even physical exercise. Respondents described being more interested in the wildlife in their back yards, urban parks, and urban wildlife in general. Many of the respondents described the lives of local neighbourhood animals
as thrown into relief, rather than fading into the background as it can with humans who are not so tuned in. This was also the case with Curtin’s respondents, who felt more aware and appreciative of the local wildlife upon their return to the United Kingdom after their animal viewing vacations. Barbra Smut’s way of looking at local wildlife was also changed, with her newfound outlook on squirrels. This awareness and acknowledgement of your own space as also home to wild creatures is an act connection, which is exemplified here, in one respondents quote about urban wildlife:

“If I’m walking with friends I can see, there’s that bird, there’s this bird, I’m always aware of what’s going on around me, whereas other people will say, ‘Oh, I’ve never even noticed that bird’ (which is screaming because there’s a predator nearby).” (Respondent 012)

Some respondents can hear birdsong and identify it while they pass through a wooded urban area, or spot insects with which they are familiar; that act of recognition immediately inserting them into an alternative frame of our universe, a different way of knowing. I argue that having an awareness of animals and other wild things which creep into our lives is an act of recognition. The act of removing oneself, however briefly, from the everyday human world by dipping into the non-human world via this sense of recognition and awareness relies on alternative forms of knowledge and vision.

It is possible that being in nature, noticing wildlife, and becoming more “in-tune” with wildlife in nature, is a muscle that must be worked to remain strong. Those that are making efforts to not only spend time in natural spaces, but also to look for and “see” animals (to render them
visible) allow for some amplification of those senses the rest of one’s time. The respondents in this study demonstrated a real ability to notice the animals which exist with us in the everyday rhythm of urban life. The existence of these animals fades into the background for many of us; commonplace elements of our non-wild urban and suburban lives. I believe that the respondents can catch hold of something that many of us are not generally able to grasp, without practice.

4.6 Education and Conservation

In many, if not all, discussions of animal photography, the use of those images for conservation purposes becomes a central theme. The basic question mirrors the central paradox of this work: Does the dissemination of wildlife photographs help to improve the material lives (ie: continued survival) of animals in their natural habitats? If this is true, then what are the processes which surround the success of these images? Are there measurable results?

Though ideas around effective conservation messaging inspired this project, it quickly became apparent that individuals who photograph animals do so for a variety of complex reasons, the issue of conservation is only a small part of the complex relations around these practices. It has struck me that while the respondents care deeply for the animals they photograph, none of the photographers seemed to identify as activists. While several of the respondents certainly participated in activities designed to increase awareness on conservation issues (these will be described below), but their reasons for engaging in wildlife photography rarely included conservation. I asked direct questions regarding conservation and biodiversity loss during the interviews, so the respondents were obliged to answer those questions. I cannot be sure if
conversation would have been brought up as a motivating influence without prompting during the interview.

As discussed above, organizations like the International League of Conservation Photographers and Greenpeace certainly believe that influential images can help to push through governmental legislation that will protect threatened animals and landscapes. However, these images, as well as virtually all other images used in successful conservation campaigns, are combined with text and other stimuli to produce a message, rather than just an image. The images were just one part of a dedicated political campaign rather than being a catalytic silver bullet (Myers, 2006).

Simply seeing a photograph of a polar bear or a humpback whale will not effect change. Indeed, as far as McKibbon and Brower are concerned, beautiful wildlife photographs actually perform the opposite function: they communicate a diverse and rich ecosystem within arm’s reach of civilization. As detailed in the Literature Review, Myers’ work on the psychology of conservation photographs is important here (2006). The images themselves can have emotional influence over viewers but the emotions in question are reliant on the viewers’ internal world, rather than the content of the image. “So if the image arouses feelings that affirm values, the person will feel positive emotions, but if it threatens their values, the emotions will be negative” (2006, p. 23).

According to Myers, images that are created to convey emotions of empathy for the animal subjects will only be “successful” in doing so if those underlying feelings already exist within the viewer’s personality. Myers also points out something crucial: that while images may well
provoke powerful feelings, provoking similar actions is not as simple. Motivation to engage in any sort of activity, conservation-based or otherwise, is firmly rooted in things such as social context and cultural background (2006). An image alone cannot tap into an individual’s value system and change it. Photographs only work if the images accompanying images align with the viewer’s core values. Another piece of the action puzzle is the communication of a narrative, one that ends with a call to action, giving the audience a mission, a real-world task which can be easily completed (2006).

Myers work does fit into Rose’s framework used in this study, however, it is placed differently within the framework. The respondents in this study are the producers of visual imagery (Site of Production), while Myer’s work focuses on the audience and their reactions. Myer’s work is important to this study because it deals directly with the central paradox of this study: describing the motivations of animal photographers as animals disappear. The continued activity on the production side of this tripod ceases to make sense if the “audiencing” of an image disconnects from the production piece.

Some respondents participated in conservation activities in a variety of ways, direct and indirect. Two respondents are active volunteers (board members, members at large) in organizations which were directly related to the preservation of land and for wildlife habitat. Three more respondents volunteer their time with similar organizations as guest speakers. The presentations varied between respondents in terms of theme and purpose. One presentation combines the respondent’s love of gardening and wildlife. This respondent uses the presentation to instruct viewers on how to plant gardens with local plant and tree species that are useful sources of food and shelter for local wildlife. The local wildlife targeted in these
presentations might not be listed as threatened or endangered, but they can be at risk of food shortages due to human activity. Some respondents reported volunteering as participants in bird count surveys for their regions. Reporting to either government biological bodies or non-profits, the respondents would report the variety and number of bird species in their region.

A few other respondents created visual power point presentations for consumption by a wide variety of disparate audiences including school groups and naturalist groups. These power point presentations were designed to display the animals as majestic and beautiful creatures worthy of human consideration. One respondent discussed how he enjoyed giving these presentations to younger audiences as he hoped that would increase their interest in wildlife. He sets his presentations to music, creating a homespun version of wildlife theatre. This respondent’s hopes and wishes were very clear in that he wanted to communicate his love of the animal subjects to his viewers. The specific activities in which the young people could engage were not named by this respondent.

“...and I like to do it to young crowds, get them involved, talk to them about the animals, the wolves, because they really love wolves... and it teaches them a little bit about it and hopefully they'll keep involved. Hope it's a positive thing, maybe they'll get on to do something.” (Respondent 014)

It is probable that simply showing them images of animals and giving them information about their lives will not convince the audience members to engage in conservation behaviors. These slide shows may well increase knowledge regarding the animal it is likely that any activity on the part of the viewers would be dependent on their disposition, their social location, and their
core values. The presentations on wildlife would have to include instructions on achievable actions, such as the gardening workshops, in order to positively affect the lives of the animals in question.

Even with dedicated, prolonged, and focused media messaging it is extremely difficult persuade audiences to engage in conservation behaviors. A study designed around orangutan conservation (Pearson et al., 2011) measured participant activities after viewing visual material. One presentation was instructional, teaching the audience about the lives or orangutans and the issues which threaten them (currently, they are threatened in large part by habitat destruction as their rainforest homes in Indonesia are being replaced by palm oil plantations.) The second presentation consisted of viewing a film called Green which follows the life of a female orangutan after receiving treatment for injuries received after her jungle home was obliterated by fire to make room for a new palm plantation.

By all accounts both presentations, the informational presentation and the more emotionally charged film created immediate impressions on the viewers, long term behavioral changes (such as avoiding products with palm oil or donating money to appropriate organizations) were difficult to achieve. Only very small percentages of participants even bothered to respond at 12 weeks for the follow-up questionnaire. This study showed that those who previously supported orangutan work and those that did not were both moved to engage in new activities, however the percentages were small.

Two respondents of my study— one a professional photographer who routinely works for Parks Canada and Ontario Parks, the other a non-professional photographer who founded a local land
conservancy group – reported that to clearly communicate conservation and the value of nature, it was necessary to produce images which contained people. It was important that the humans in the images were using natural spaces for leisure and athletic activities – something that would draw more people into the space.

“It was a whole different approach to how we see our national parks in Canada – great unbroken landscapes, unbroken wilderness and that. So now it was sort of a, we want people in our landscapes, that’s what we want to do, that’s what we’re selling.”

(Respondent 008)

“It is communicating what’s of interest and value to people... Whether it's the bow of a kayak or some people involved in a pond study, or at an outlook or on a bird watching event.” (Respondent 002)

This is a diversion from traditional nature photography, which prioritized people-less wildernes ses of early environmental work – we need to see ourselves in “deep nature” in to care about it. What is important here is the inclusion of people in the images – showing nature as something that can be used by humans, and therefore should be protected. Again, we see here nature as something that can exist, but only within an anthropogenic context, which I discussed briefly in Chapter 2. The humans must exist in the image before it can be used (in their eyes) as effective. This could be interpreted in the following manner: images of nature and animals are not as effective at stirring environmental action as those images that contain humans using nature.
In his book, *Seeing Green: The Use and Abuse of American Environmental Images* (2015), Finis Dunaway analyzes a variety of images used in the American Environmental movement. Broadly speaking, Dunaway unpacks the way in which iconic images have been used not as an illustration of environmental degradation, but as tools to shift the responsibility for this degradation. For Dunaway, rather than accurately depicting environmental tragedy, the images are used to foment guilt on the part of the viewer – the individual. This makes individual actions like recycling, littering, donating money to environmental charities, the focus of the media campaigns rather than what is likely the real cause of environmental pollution and biodiversity loss: corporations, capitalistic systems of trade, and poor government policies.

Dunway’s critique moves aside individual blame and highlights the need for a societal paradigm shift in order to avoid environmental disasters like extinctions. This argument does not preclude the use of photographs in assisting with conservation campaigns, however it does perhaps allude to a flaw in our system for using photographs in conservation. Those respondents that do use photographs in an attempt to raise awareness around conservation issues are focusing their attention on individuals, not policy makers.

This project lends itself to a conversation about conservation issues because that is how we are accustomed viewing and contextualizing animal photography. However, while conservation is a rich area of discussion on this topic, the connection for between photography and conservation is dubious at best. While this section has described some of the conservation activities in which the respondents engage, many of the respondents struggled to name a substantive connection to their work and conservation or environmental issues.
That the respondents enjoy spending time in nature and would like to see natural spaces preserved was often well understood during the interviews, but a clear link between the work that their photographs could or should do and conservation issues was often lacking. This is certainly not to say that any of the respondents were ambivalent towards conservation, in fact most of them seemed to be passionate about biodiversity loss. What is interesting is that there may be a gap, one recognised by some respondents, between their practices as a wildlife photographer and their conservation values.

In the coda of John Blewitt’s book, Media, Ecology and Conservation (2011) he says that “[photographs] imprint themselves on the memory of the viewer and help to bridge the gap between passive spectatorship and action, then there is hope for the future...” (p.191). He goes on to say that this type of photography will always be beautiful and potentially inaccurate or ineffectual because to show the reality of many animals and ecosystems is to show pain, suffering, and death.

Blewitt introduces us to Karl Ammann a wildlife photographer turned conservation-based photojournalist. His work once existed solely in the realm of the beautiful, but now he has moved firmly into activism, creating images of the grotesque and disturbing violence that is animal extinction. After creating images that depicted only thriving and harmonious nature scenes, Ammann began to fight against animal poaching. His work is difficult to look at, but he rails against traditional conservation movements which he calls “feel good” conservation (Ammann, as quoted by Blewitt, 2011, p. 169). Ammann claims that most of the conservation organizations using this type of imagery are not only useless but a sham, with donors providing millions of dollars with no effect. In order to facilitate real change and disseminate truth,
Ammann believes that people need to witness the hard reality of what Irene Klaver has labeled a “holocaust” (2008, p. 489).

With Farnsworth’s opposing definitions of wildlife photography and conservation photography genres in mind (2011), the work by the respondents in this study would not be considered “conservation” photography. Though many respondents are interested in the conservation of animals which they photograph, their photographs are not located within this definition of conservation photography, but wildlife photography. While some respondents seek out specific species for the purposes of educational seminars, none of the respondents’ work depicts the messiness of extinction. As demonstrated by the following quotes, respondents appeared to me more interested in pursuing traditional wildlife photography, with an emphasis on aesthetics and animal behavior.

“I said to a friend of mine, I've never really learned to shout, like a Greenpeace shout. I have a soft sell, so I use the magnificence of the planet that we have, the beauty, to become stewards of our planet, your own back yard, the planet, where ever you are.” (Respondent 008)

“You know I do a measured approach in that I enjoy immensely these natural, wild places and opportunities...Because the beautiful image moves them [viewers] or there's some information, there's some statistical fact there that opens their eyes or something that encourages them to maybe wanting to go and experience that.” (Respondent 001)
These quotes demonstrate what is consistent across the respondents: that they care about the environment, but in reference to photography, they believe their images can help increase interest in wildlife, using beauty rather than the documentary-style conservation imagery.

4.7 Wildness

“As soon as one stakes out the wild, it is gone” (2008, p. 492). For Klaver, defining wildness means its destruction; its transformation into wilderness, something labeled, set aside, compartmentalized for later use. For the purposes of this study, wildness is a factor in the selection of animal subjects; some respondents are very specific in their wish to only photograph “purely wild” (Respondent 007) animals, which itself is problematic. How does one identify an animal as wild if there is difficulty in identifying the notion of wildness in general? The addition of humans into an ecosystem could for some reduce that space from wildness to simply wilderness.

As more of our wild spaces have turned into defined wilderness spaces, many argue that we have further pushed nature out of the human experience. Woodcraft has been mentioned before, as a sign of prowess and masculinity; the ability to survive in and with nature. Turner writes, in “From Woodcraft to ‘Leave no Trace’” (2002) that Aldo Leopold’s definition of woodcraft was characterized by the ability to walk into the woods with only an axe and not simply survive, but thrive. Using tree branches, lake water, and river stones, a practitioner of woodcraft could build shelter, a fire, and hunt for a meal. The ‘leave no trace’ mantra described by Brower as a “non-interventionist right practice” (2005, p. 1) and adopted by millions of contemporary campers and outdoors people eschews anything natural. To cut, burn, crush,
leave anything in nature means a human has marked it and therefore sullied it. This notion of
humans as foreign and harmful to nature widens the gap between humans and nature, just as
Brower’s interpretation of wildlife photography promotes an Edenic, human-free nature that
people can gaze upon, but exist apart from, as interlopers.

The respondents of this study are interested in wild animals, not domestic animals, pets, or
captive animals. Though the animals should be wild to merit a photograph, several respondents
mentioned that they photograph backyard animals and those that live nearby, so the subjects
need not be exotic but wild, certainly. The respondent who photographs only “purely wild”
animals does so for the challenge and for ethical reasons. His distaste for photographing
human-habituated animals comes from a place of animal welfare; he has witnessed tourists
feeding animals in order to gain photographic access to them, an act he believes to be
unethical.

Wildness or wilderness – perhaps two different things – are hard to define. In Something Wild?
Johnathan Maskit writes that “Wilderness, it sometimes seems, is like right action or
pornography: we may have difficulty in defining it, but we think we know it when we see it...it
must have a certain purity to it – the word ‘pristine’ is often used” (2008, p. 462). The phrase
“untrammeled by humanity” (p.463) has been repeated in a few places as well (Klaver, 2008, p.
486). These connote a lack of humanity, a separation from the damaging presence of human
industry, further extending the gulf between nature and culture. As Tina Loo writes in States of
Nature: Conserving Canada’s Wildlife in the Twentieth Century (2006) “wild and tame are ideas”
(p. xiii). The wild, wilderness, tame, exotic – these are socially constructed labels which are only
valid within the context of human language and thought. Alone, these terms that have
influence on the material lives of the animals given those labels. Within the context of human behavior, those terms can result in very different human actions towards those animals.

Irene Klaver amplifies the historical significance and arbitrary use of the words wildness and wilderness. Places and things which have wildness are untamed, unfound, and truly unmarked by humans. Importantly for Klaver’s definition, they remain unnamed. Wildness meant the frontier, something dark, something unknown. Unnamed, the land and creatures upon could retain their wildness. Modern conservation practices seek to carve out spaces of wildness and turn them into places of wilderness. This transformation occurs through the establishment of borders and the official names. Once a space is named it loses its intrinsic wildness and becomes wilderness. Knowledge of a space removes its wildness. Our knowledge of wild spaces makes them known, reducing their inherent mysteries, their magic.

Klaver writes “our relationship with the wild has been reduced to an organized expedition and is in that sense domesticated or tamed” (2008, p. 486). This is relevant to many of the ways in which the respondents in this study interact with natural spaces. While a few of the respondents are experienced lone expeditioners, most respondents explored the wild in groups with guides. In this way, their wild experience is packaged up and presented to them as wildness but remains named, predetermined experience of wilderness. The animals that are viewed and photographed in this wilderness are certainly not tame – but they may well be habituated in some way to the waves of humans who walk in their midst. Even the very presence of human photographers and human guides make this, by Klaver’s definition, wilderness having lost some of their original wildness. In keeping with this, one of the professional photographers told me that they were thinking of moving further north, “to some
place more wild” (Respondent 001). For this person, living in a rural part of southern Ontario, though certainly not urban by any means, was too well trod, too well known to be of continuing interest.

One of the respondents in this study told of a decades long connection with Everglades National Park. As a young person, the respondent decided to paddle through the park starting at the main entrance. Motivated by the quest to see and photograph wildlife, this respondent had planned to paddle for five days into the park, but found the area near the entrance of the park so rich with birds and other wildlife that they did not travel far and the trip came to its scheduled end. After seeing the teeming life at the entrance, the respondent predicted the inside of the park would be even more lively. Vowing to return, the respondent planned a trip with his partner almost 30 years after the initial trip.

Starting at the other side of the park, the respondent and their partner paddled for 11 days through the park and saw almost no wildlife save for biting insects. Upon emerging from the park at the original destination 30 years prior, the respondent was met with a heavily populated animal habitat, just as before. Here he discusses his journey: “You don't need to paddle the full length, you just need to go there. In fact, we saw more birds on the roadside, driving there, than we saw in the Everglades.” (Respondent 006). This story nicely illustrates our ideas of wildness and wilderness – and the expectations that go along with them. Humans have defined the borders of this park – a place established in 1947 with pressure from conservationists – and in this instance the animals are “ignoring” our constructed borders and living where they choose. Upending our expectations and unpredictability is a distinction of wildness.
However, as noted earlier in this section, many of the respondents are interested in photographing animals who share their homes – not their houses, but their backyards and local parks. This relationship reflects similar attitudes to those expressed in Power’s paper on suburban-dwelling possums (2009). The respondents of this study view many of animals living in their backyard as familiar, yet still wild, blurring the lines between wild and not wild.

Insects, spider’s webs, squirrels, rabbits and birds are all considered suitable subject matter. Several of the respondents reported taking daily walks around their houses and on their properties to investigate the wild animals and insects that could be sharing their spaces. The respondent who aims to focus more photographing local species praised them for being just as beautiful and interesting as more exotic animals. These animals are certainly wild, but have become habituated to humans, as we live in each other’s midst.

Despite interest in photographing local species, according to the respondent responses, it seems that a photograph of a coastal wolf or rutting bull moose is considered a greater achievement, a more exciting trophy, than a similar photograph of a pigeon or a squirrel. I contend that this is because the photograph and the animal in that photograph tell a story. They tell a story of hardship, of traveling great distances or enduring inclement weather or biting insects. A photograph of a squirrel does not tell a similar story. The photographs here express the experience of the photographer, not the animal. Pigeons and squirrels, while wild, do not possess enough wildness to tell an interesting story.

To situate wildness in the context of animal photography and ethics, Bill McKibbon’s article becomes useful again (1997). McKibbon talks about captioning animal photographs and its
relation to the wild or captive status of the subjects. He claims that many close-up images and those that capture hard-to-witness behaviours often depict captive animals, not wild animals. His interviews with biologists and wildlife photographers confirms this theory. These images are then captioned ambiguously or not captioned at all – leaving viewers to believe they are wild animals. This creates an impression of healthy animal populations, which has been discussed to previously; it also gives the viewer an impression of intimacy with nature that most modern humans simply do not possess. The access gained by photographing captive or tame animals is not easily or safely replicated with wild animals. This skewed impression of the accessibility of wild animals can lead to dangerous encounters between humans who believe bears and mountain lions will easily tolerate unknown visitors.
4.8 Technological Mediation of Nature

The technology in question here is the camera and its attendant processing technologies, the computer and smart phone. Out of the seven themes discussed in this chapter, four of them (Ethics, Spirituality, Wildlife Encounters, Wildness) could be included in a study that has nothing to do with photography or technology – the respondents could easily be avid hikers, wildlife enthusiasts, or birders who do not take photographs. The other three themes (Trophy Hunting and Collecting, Education and Conservation, and the current theme, Technological Mediation of Nature) involve the camera. The question in this theme is “why.” Why do those who spend time in nature seek to augment this experience with technology?

The simplistic answer is that photographs are a way to remember the occasion – to capture a momentary sighting of an animal, flower, or sunset and to bring it home with you. As a process which records, photography can be linked strongly to memory. Traditionally, photographs were taken to commemorate or remember someone or something, they act as physical or digital infrastructure for our memory (Coy, 1996). In Ubiquitous Photography, Martin Hand (2012) notes that the role of photographs shifts between personal memento and public tool for communication. He traces the transition of photographic practice from analogue photography and album creation (for personal memories) to digital photographic capture and instantaneous electronic online communication (p.14). This is strongly connected to the first theme in this chapter – trophies and collection. Not only does the photographer want to remember the moment, remember the sighting, but they want to show others that they were in the presence of a prize specimen and remind themselves of that time indefinitely.
For many conservationists, photography is an educational tool, used to teach people about the ecosystems which are under threat. However, reducing the technical piece down to a tool for memory or communication is simplistic and does not address the whole question. Many of the respondents in this study did not frequently look back on their photographs nor did they consistently display them, either publicly or in the home. We have already acknowledged the act of collection and to collect a thing does not always mean you must look at it often or display it. However, the mediation of nature has something more at play here than capturing a memory or curating a collection.

Hand discusses how photography, as a physical imprint of light on surface, was associated with both nature and evidence, a true depiction of what was real (2012). At the advent of photography, a photograph was an epistemic object, something that could change what can be known about the world (p. 31). Though digital photography has radically altered this dynamic via digital manipulation, the photographers who participated in this project often use their photographs as evidence, as a way of proving the encounter they have had with nature has occurred. The camera is permanently present, a constant and mediating presence between the individual and whichever piece of the natural world is being photographed. Gavan Watson’s (2011) work on birding is particularly useful here, as he examines how the act of birding has changed with the addition of digital cameras. Watson describes identification practices before the use of cameras as using a more intimate knowledge of the animal subject. Things such as bird location, behavior, physical appearance, and call were used to make accurate identification. After the advent of digital technology, some bird watchers simply snapped, then
left, identifying the bird later by comparing their image to a guide. The camera in this case reduces the ability of the photographer to gain insight or connection into the local ecosystem.

One way particularly useful way that photography can help when looking at animals is its ability to freeze time. The freezing of time, space, and movement within the millisecond of a photograph allows humans to see what is so often invisible to us. This gives the shooter a kind of visual ownership over the animal. Many of the respondents, both those who have backgrounds in biology and those who are untrained but knowledgeable enthusiasts, reported using their photographs as ways to gain knowledge and understand the physical attributes of the subject animal. Here the photograph is not just of an animal, but a way of knowing the animal in a way that uses photography to visualize things that are normally invisible. In the respondent quote below, we can see how, through the photograph, the animal is known and can be categorized in more ways than if it had just been seen with the naked eye. The quote below is exemplary of the attitudes of many of the respondents in their quest to gain access to the physical structure and appearance of animals via photographs.

“To really look at patterns in the feathers or texture in the feathers and you know, sort of go back and forth between looking at the shape and colour of the head and to the shape and colour of the tail and all that. It’s only the photograph that lets you do that. The photograph kind of freezes that moment in time and lets you just sort of stop and stare at it. It stretches out the time.” (Respondent 013)

Fleeting movements and blurs of colour can be transformed from a frustrating “almost” encounter to a souvenir to talk about with friends. It is almost like the real thing. The moment
could become, as they say in photographic parlance, a great “capture.” This type of photograph
typifies the genre of wildlife photography (free of humans and timeless) but it also speaks to
another type of photography, one that I began to refer to as “specimen photography.” These
types of photographs highlight the physical attributes of an animal, displaying them well for
those who wish to see the animals’ features for the purposes of categorization.

Technology does not just freeze, it also gives purpose. Sontag describes legions of tourists
moving about post-war Europe with cameras around their neck, looking for purpose and
structure in their trip, being so unused to vacationing. That structure is found in the camera, in
making photographs. Photography is a thing to do and product to be produced (Sontag, 1977).
The mediation of nature through the camera may come from a loss of connection with nature.
Again, Sontag states:

“*Needing to have reality confirmed and experience enhanced by photographs is an
aesthetic consumerism to which everyone is now addicted. Industrial societies turn their
citizens into image-junkies; it is the most irresistible form of mental pollution*” (p.18).

Looking back on works on spiritual restoration by Chilla Bulbeck and Susanna Curtin (2005;
2010), perhaps the nature/culture divide is so apparent that when in environments of deep
nature, we are unsure of what to do, as tourists in a foreign land.

One respondent in this study mentioned photography made her feel as though she had a
purpose and a reason for being present in an isolated or wooded area, and therefore was no
longer suspicious to others. She felt like she needed to be legitimated: “*I think photography just
gives you another reason to be out there. I've found that when you're walking alone in the*
woods, ‘well, where's your dog? I don't have a dog, I have a camera”’ (Respondent 010). For this respondent, a person walking through the woods with no visible purpose could be potentially sinister; without having a camera or a dog she felt that she was looked upon by passersby with apprehension.

Taking photographs legitimizes human presence, it provides trophies for memory’s sake, and it allows the photographer to feel as though they have produced something useful, rather than “wasted their time” walking through the woods. It also produces good “specimens” photographs which can have clear and organized categories assigned to them for the purposes of collecting. However, photographs are also a method of commodification. They are commodities in and of themselves – they can be bought and purchased, as are the cameras that produce them. Due to their use in modern advertising and marketing, they help to create new commodities every day (Hand, 2012). In Why Look at Animals, John Berger makes clear connections between animals in the modern world as examples of alienated commodities (2009). As such they are just segments of a previously unbroken whole. The human animal, seeking to recombine those segments into a whole, by spending time with animals perhaps inadvertently reinforces this commodification with a camera.

Three of the respondents are professionals who earn some or part of their living by selling photographs of animals. The other respondents reported occasionally selling their images to interested parties, but only when prompted by outside forces. Those respondents who do not support themselves financial with photography still occasionally sell their work, such as this respondent:
“I don’t sell a lot of my work, I would enjoy selling more because of my expensive trips, but I’m not pushing that part of it. I just enjoy it and if I make a bit of money, maybe I’ll buy another camera or support my next trip.” (Respondent 014).

In Rosemary Collard’s (2014) work on the illegal wild animal trade she discusses “lively commodities” which are commodities that must show vibrant signs of life in order to be valuable, comparing these illegal pets to trafficked humans and rodeo bulls. The animals in the trade are “disentangled” from their original lives and brought into a new set of entanglements – leashes, cages, humans. The photographs of animals produced by the respondents and many others do not require the continued “liveliness” of the animal after the photograph has been made, but there is a tacit requirement for the animal to do something interesting, to capture “behavior” as many of the respondents put it.

Many of the photographers traveled a long way and paid large amounts of money to gain access to these animals – an economic force that may well be contribute to the preservation of the ecosystem in which the animal lives. The professional photographers in this study literally transform these animals into commodities via technology by selling their images for profit. The technological systems around animal photography are certainly intertwined with issues of commodification and globalization. On an expensive trip like the ones some of the respondents take, the image of an animal can literally become be the product that they are paying for. In this next quote, but the same respondent as above, we see this literal connection:

“We did see one kermode bear in that hour time, whatever, back to the boat and that was the last photography for 10 days. The rest of the time, we were on the move, trying
to find safe anchorage, because of the hurricanes. So, there’s $10,000 with an hour of photographs. But it was a great experience!” (Respondent 014)

After speaking about technology and its importance to this study, it would be negligent not to discuss its relative unimportance in terms of the daily practice of the respondents. Although technology mediates human experience of nature in many ways the respondents of this study were surprisingly reticent to discuss technology per se in their interviews, despite it being a fundamental aspect of the means of photographic reproduction (Rose 2007) While the respondents certainly expressed the usefulness of their cameras, especially if they had recently purchased a new camera, the cameras really appeared to be very much a means to an end, that end being a photograph which represents a time, experience, and a place. To repeat Sontag’s ideas from the first chapter, the resulting photographs represent the ability to collect, own and know a thing – in this case, an animal.

Photography is inherently technological, as a sophisticated tool and materials are required. I predicted that the respondents would very interested in their equipment and talk a great deal about the specifications of their cameras. While they did mention their equipment, it was only in reference to the ease with which it allowed them to visually access the animals and render them crisply. The cameras themselves were not important beyond what they could produce for the respondents. Here the photographs, the images are the thing that matters – not the technology itself, despite it being integral to the production of the image.
5.0 Conclusion

This is a multifaceted study which has journeyed through a variety of interconnected topics all relating the photography of non-human wild animals. Those who practice wildlife photography had many reasons for engaging in this type of activity. Some photographed animals as a hobby; others earned financially, by selling their work to interested parties. Many of the respondents engage in this sort of work due to a strong affinity for natural spaces and animals. All the participants certainly took a great pleasure in the feeling of achievement when creating an image that successfully combines a pleasing aesthetic composition and a crisp close-up of an elusive wild animal.

The benefits to the participants of their described activities are clearly expressed within the data. Time for relaxation, meditation, exposure to fresh air, and feelings of general connectedness to the world were reported. Results such as these are well-documented within the literature as co-benefits from time spent in natural or green spaces. There are, however, as noted, ethical issues that arise that mean it is not possible to just see wildlife photography as a harmless or positive pastime for the animal subjects themselves, and many respondents were aware of this ambiguity. They questioned their motives, with one respondent specifically questioning their motivations to continue to photograph animals if the benefits to the animals and/or environment were unclear (Respondent 006). Many of the respondents disseminate their images for the purposes of awareness-raising and education, which, if done correctly, could provide tangible benefits for some of the targeted species. This is clearly the intent of some of the studies’ respondents and is clearly linked to the sustainability of the practice.
Respondents reported witnessing other photographers or bird watchers engage in unethical behavior. Not by the respondents of this study, but in general, animals are pursued, captured, harassed, tagged, filmed, recorded, and photographed all to produce imagery. While the data demonstrates that while many of the respondents of this study have animals’ best interest at heart, the benefits for animals are limited and often theoretical.

Photography of animals is a socially-acceptable activity whose basic tenets are a holdover of the history of the way we look at animals. The way we looked at animals was developed in part by the tradition of hunting and collecting (Section 4.2, Trophy Hunting and Collecting). We see animals as things to be gazed upon, objects for our viewing pleasure, rather than creatures with agency. In *Ways of Seeing* (Berger, 1972), Berger discusses both the tools of perspective and of the gaze in Renaissance painting. Of perspective he says, “every drawing or painting that used perspective proposed to the spectator that he was the unique centre of the world” (p. 18). On the gaze, in this case, the male gaze directed at female nudes, he writes, “This unequal relationship is so deeply embedded in our culture that it still structures the consciousness of many women” (p. 63). We cannot presume to know what animals think or feel, as such, this deeply embedded inequality exists on the side of humans, who have lived in a world where animals are subservient to humans within our social dynamics. These two ideas are useful in summation of this study of animal photography.

Our perspective as viewers of animal photography has always been a relational one (p. 9). As solitary viewers of animals, we are defining ourselves in relation to them, from the perspective that traditional wildlife photography asks us to. We are human, they are not. We are domesticated, they are wild. We are numerous, they are endangered. This power dynamic,
wrapped up in the human gaze upon animals, has defined our relationship with animals and is “embedded in our culture” so much so that animal photography is so ubiquitous it almost fades into the background of our visual culture. To continue to photograph animals without examining the historical significance of the way we see and relate to animals will likely perpetuate the culturally perceived power imbalance between humans and animals.

This imbalance of power, informed partly by hunting and trophy hunting (Section 4.2, Trophy Hunting and Collecting) contributes to the continuing human/animal discourse, creating a relationship which allows humans to engage in activities which can be ethically ambiguous (Section 4.3, Ethics), all to secure an encounter with a wild animal (Section 4.4, Encounters). The literature and the study data certainly points to benefits to participant mental health (Section 4.5, Spiritual Restoration), but does not necessarily support similar benefits for wild animals. The benefits are reported as coming in the form of awareness raising and conservation practices, (Section 4.6, Conservation and Education), however biodiversity loss has not slowed, it has increased. The question of wildness came into play (Section 4.7, Wildness) as the respondents were frequently interested in capturing hard-to-see wild animals. The respondents were interested in photographing those wild animals that lived closer to their homes, but there was certainly a difference between these two types of wildness. This is connected to trophy hunting and collecting; Photographing an infrequently viewed and elusive wild animal makes a for a better trophy than photographing a squirrel or pigeon.

The mediation of nature through technology (Section 4.8, Technological Mediation of Nature) acts as the coda for the thesis, discussing theoretical issues of memory, digitization, and commodification. Whether the photography of animals can be considered a sustainable
practice comes into high relief by looking at technology. The metal and plastic cameras and computers, and the fossil fuel-driven travel certainly do not make for a sustainable practice. In Chris Turner’s 2009 article for The Walrus Magazine, *The Age of Breathing Underwater*, he draws parallels between the modern and tech-heavy practice of scuba diving and the totality of knowledge we have of coral reefs. He writes,

“We simply wouldn’t know how the reef works as a living system, nor the true nature of the trouble it’s in, if Charlie Veron hadn’t learned to breathe underwater.

...neither Veron nor anyone else would have been able to breathe underwater in the first place were it not for the whole smog-belching mess of modern industry. There are indeed few things a human being can do that are as wholly industrial—as totally dependent on the development of an industrial society so complex and muscular it has changed the very chemistry of the seas—as scuba diving.” (2009)

What we know about coral reefs would never have been discovered without a fossil fuel-heavy practice of scuba diving. It was the foreign presence of human eyes that indirectly caused many of the problems coral reefs now face. What was seen was damaged by the seeing. The development of photo-chemical processes and the mass production of cameras rely on the same pieces of infrastructure that helped develop SCUBA.

Irene Klaver’s previously mentioned work on wildness vs. wilderness is connected to notions of seeing associated with damage; this line of thinking speaks to the transformation of something from the natural world after it encounters anthropogenic processes, both capitalistic and
scientific. The more technology we possess to see things which are hard to see, the more our industrial processes are churning through natural resources and emitting high levels of greenhouse gases. The industrial, colonial, and capitalistic processes which facilitate the photography of animals do not fit into even the most basic definitions of environmental sustainability.

In terms of future research within this field, a gap that became apparent to me during my literature review was on the material lives of the animals photographed. While there is literature on the effectiveness in photographs in conservation and photographs on specific targeted species (Bizerril et al., 2011; Pearson et al., 2011), that research focuses on the photographs after the fact – after they have been created and once the image has been viewed. There is also plentiful research on the benefits humans gain from spending time with wild animals (Curtin, 2009, 2010; Smuts, 2001). However, research on the effects of the presence of wildlife photographers on wildlife at the time of photography was not plentiful. There were reports how important ecological sites can be damaged by the presence of humans (Balakrishna, 2013) and how animals avoid people naturally, so therefore photographing them could result in some form of harm, either mental or physical (McKibben, 1997; Mills, 2010), but a quantitative study on the lives of wild animals who live in places frequented by animal photographers would be useful. An example of this could be the grizzlies or great horned sheep who live in and around tourist towns of Banff or Jasper Alberta and who are frequently approached for photographs.

This paper has focused on the social modality of the production element identified by Rose (2003). The technological and compositional elements, though related, became secondary to
the cultural and emotional discourses which were expressed through the participant interviews. The personal feelings of the respondents are related to the sustainability of this practice, because the respondents believe they are doing something that is harmless and inherently good; a “non-interventionist right practice” (Brower, 2005, p.1). Human treatment of animals has and often still is, brutal and violent. In comparison to our darker history and contemporary maltreatment of animals, photographing animals seems like a benign activity. However, though the benefits for humans expressed by the respondents are evident, the corresponding benefits do not seem to exist for animals in the same way. To look at and photograph animals for our benefit is another way of co-opting their existence for our purposes.

The central paradox of this paper focuses on the proliferation of animal photographs and the shrinking of animal populations. Considering this paradox, it is understandable why humans are so drawn to the photography of animals - they are becoming mysterious things that make for exciting discoveries. Photographs of wild animals are eminently collectible. Certainly, more research can be done around the specific instances of animals and how their lives benefit from photographic coverage. As this study focused on the producers of the work, examining this issue from the perspective of the animal subject was beyond its scope. This critique of wildlife photography is not meant to suggest that all wildlife photography should stop. It is a call to think about photography in a sustainable and holistic way, in just the way we look at the photography of humans. Photographers of humans ask for photographic releases to be signed, permission to post images publicly, and generally focus on how best an image can be taken and still respect the rights and wishes of the subject.
Photography of wild animals is an exciting new way to see animals who live far beyond the borders of our everyday lives. They were transported to us by way of magazines and Greenpeace calendars. Those images were brought to us by people who are concerned by the prospect of forever losing enigmatic and captivating species. In the Brundtland report, we were cautioned, “There is still time to save species and their ecosystems. It is an indispensable prerequisite for sustainable development. Our failure to do so will not be forgiven by future generations” (p. 138). The central paradox of this paper focuses on the decline of animal populations. Perhaps these images have only resulted in the urge to photograph more – sending out enthusiastic animal lovers on fossil fuel-intensive journeys to see various species before they become extinct. In a type of irony highlighted by Christ Turner, this could well be a self-fulfilling prophecy, or a negative feedback loop. The more we want to see a thing, the more we harm it.

This paper does not condemn the practice of wildlife photography in all its forms. The respondents in this study found great pleasure in sharing space with and learning from animals. This sharing of space has fomented a lifelong appreciation for natural spaces and the environment. However, the connection that can be felt when looking at animal photographs in the same way as family photographs, is utterly one-sided. Animals cannot gaze upon their image and remember the good times or friendships that they have experienced. The intimacy of images shared and saved (as in Rose’s family photography (2003)) is lost upon animals. It is a one-sided exchange, not experienced in a meaningful way by the animals photographed.

The rebounding of nature that these photographers would like to see has not yet happened and surely continuing to photograph animals in the same way is not a sustainable solution.
Photographing the downslide of a diminishing population, human or animal, is ethically treacherous territory. Sontag states in *Regarding the Pain of Others*,

“*Photographs that depict suffering shouldn't be beautiful, as captions shouldn't moralize. In this view, a beautiful photograph drains attention from the sobering subject and turns it toward the medium itself, thereby compromising the picture's status as a document. The photograph gives mixed signals. Stop this, it urges. But it also exclaims, What a spectacle!*” (2003, p. 56)

Wildlife photography, as a genre, creates spectacle. It is beautiful, awe-inspiring, and builds faith in the existence of a thriving natural environment. For the moment that the photographers are present taking a photograph, the photograph is true, it is a depiction of reality for the photographer. Once the image has been distributed in presentations, online galleries, and social media sites, it loses its immediacy, its emotional context and its intended meaning.

The introduction mentioned how photography is the way in which many people are introduced to animals as they are not present in our everyday lives. Animal photography might have aided in the development of interest and intrigue in wildlife for a new generation of humans. Yet, as Sontag alludes to above, animal photographers might be unintentionally documenting the downfall, rather than helping to stop it. This study’s data does not support the notion that animal photography is causing the decline of animal populations, nor does it claim to answer those questions; however, the continual practice of animal photography cannot be described as helping animals. This process could actually be characterized as a cycle, animal photographs
driving the production of animal photographs, which when viewed, inspire more animal photographs, rather than real-world action on biodiversity loss. Animals themselves are in a way, left out of the loop, the cycle being more about the photographers and their relation to nature, rather than the animal itself. This does not do much to further the cause of animals in danger if the photographs are not used in very specific ways as detailed in this paper. While the activity of animal photography does not necessarily harm animals, its continued practice might not be rightly justified with claims of connections to sustainability, specifically, conservation.
Works Cited


Balakrishna, S. (2013). Ruining the ecology of Hesaraghatta Lake - the Role of Bird Photographers, (February).


Earthscan.


Roe, J., Thompson, C., Aspinall, P., Brewer, M., Duff, E., Miller, D., ... Clow, A. (2013). Green Space and


Are you a wildlife or nature photographer?

Volunteers are needed to take part in research on wildlife and nature photography and photographers. The research will focus on this type of photographic practice and how it relates to human/nature relationships.

Volunteers will participate in one interview, approximately 40–60 minutes in length.

For more information, please contact Liz Cooper 15ejc2@queensu.ca or at 613-453-0054
1.2 Recruitment Email

Date

Name of Organization

Dear (Name of group president/leader)

My name is Elizabeth Cooper and I am a Masters student at the School of Environmental Studies at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario. My supervisor is Mick Smith, also at the School of Environmental Studies.

I am conducting research on wildlife and nature photography in the Kingston region. The purpose of the research is to examine the ways in which photography influences the way people think about and relate to the natural world. I am looking for people who actively seek out wildlife and natural spaces to photograph on a regular basis. Any person who wishes to participate, from beginners to highly seasoned photographers are welcome in this research project, though participants must be at least 18 years of age.

The research itself will consist of interviews with will be semi-structured in nature, rather than surveys. These interviews will consist of some guiding questions, but will leave space for the participants’ thoughts, opinions, and feelings.

In order to recruit participants, I am reaching out to groups like yours who might have interested members. You may forward your members this email and make them aware that both my supervisor and I are available to answer questions. In addition, if your group feels it is appropriate, I am available to attend one of your group meetings for the purposes of information and recruitment. An opportunity to speak in person with your members to facilitate participation in this research would be greatly appreciated.

Participation in any and all aspects of this project is voluntary. At any time during the research, participants can choose to withdraw entirely from the project, up until the point of publication. Participants can choose to be anonymous or identified in the project documents. The interviews will be audio-recorded with the participants’ consent.

If you have any concerns, any interested party can contact my supervisor, Mick Smith at ms24@queensu.ca or (613) 533.6000 ext. 78634. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter. Your interest in this research is greatly appreciated!

Best,

Elizabeth Cooper, 15ejc2@queensu.ca
Appendix 2.0 Interviews

2.2 Interview Guide

Social

1. When and how did you start photographing nature and/or wildlife?
2. Where do you usually make your photographs?
3. Do you travel for the purposes of photography? If so, where and for what reasons?
4. What do you usually photograph? (Animals, what type, plants, trees, landscapes)
   a. How do you choose your subjects?
   b. What role does conservation play in your selection of subjects?
5. Do you often know the species name of the natural subjects which you’re photographing?
6. What motivates you to photograph wildlife or nature, rather than something else, like architecture or people?
   a. What sort of conservation or environmental issues concern you?
   b. How does this type of photography play into those issues?

Technological

1. What kind of camera do you use?
   a. What sort of additional equipment do you use? (Lenses, binoculars, light meters)
   b. What sort of advantages does this equipment give you?
2. Do you edit your images using digital software?
3. Do you post your pictures in an online space? What kind of space? (is it for photographic purposes, wildlife/conservation purposes, etc.)
   a. What sort of benefit do you derive from this activity?

Compositional

1. Why did you select this image? (rare subject matter, composition? Technical ability required? Personal?)
2. Please talk about the creation of this image (subject matter, logistical, location, technical details)
3. Is this image exemplary of images you normally take or does it stand out as special? How so?
4. When, if at all, do you consider compositional issues: during the act of making the photograph, or later, while editing your images.
“This is in the Yukon. You spend a lot of time out there, and when you get that beautiful evening light and the animal and it looks and the colour, and it just a moving picture. And actually, it was the first time I'd found that bull. And he was very nice. Young, still young, but a very nice animal. He was afraid of me that night, so I had to work subtly around him, but the rut was coming on, so his attitude was building all the time, so he's got nothing to fear on the tundra. But he was a little leery of me, but it worked, it worked really well. And the next morning, I found him again, about a mile away, through the glass [spy glass] and hiked to him, expecting the same rapport as the night before. And this is one of the very few occasions, I've had lots of amazing and fun encounters with wildlife, the next morning, so was one of the few times that I was done. If it was going to happen, if he wanted it. He seemed to. So, what happened was I hiked down about a mile and there was this knoll, so I was trying for a similar kind of thing
where he'd come over the knoll and the skyline, so since the night before, we'd spent an hour and a half together, and he was used to me, a little leery, but not aggressive, so I just waited at the bottom of the knoll, I saw he was coming that way, so I just sat there and sat there. And he came over the knoll, and he saw me, and I took a picture which is similar, but not this picture, I got two, and then he charged, FAST. I was 40, 50 yards from him and there's nothing there, there are no trees, but there's shrubbery, and it's taller than we are so, I run, as fast as I can, because he's running at me as fast as he can. It was very exciting, in hindsight. So, anyway it was a mile back where'd I'd parked on this gravel road, uphill. And the tundra or taiga there is very hard to go through, you get used to it. I'm fast on it, because I've spent years on it. I mean there's game trails, and it's kind of spongy so you kind of bounce. But it's tricky. You want to pick the right route and the right colour of vegetation, because the yellow stuff you'll go right through, the red stuff's hard, the white stuff's hard. So, I'm running as hard as I can, and thankfully he slowed up, because if he'd kept for 50 yards, he had me. Anyway. “
“It is communicating what's of interest and value to people; now, that one doesn't have people in it, but it's speaking specifically to conservation people. So, the bottom ones do, there's an element of people in each one of those... The background was a misty morning on the St. Lawrence, a late spring day and it just sort of had interesting side lighting...it's kind of luminescent and it has those sort of elements, it's peaceful. It's bite-sized, you can get your mind around what that habitat is, and it contains those three elements.”
“It's because basically, the uh... what can I say? When I went there, it was more like a feeling. So, I can relate to it. Whereas people will walk in the house and they say, "what is that rocks?"

it's nothing, right? But it just reminds me of when I went there. And a lot of these died.

I always liked it and I put it the exhibition, and I didn't really get any comments, people look at it, but it doesn't do anything.”
“I got close enough to it that you can actually see the feathers and the light in the eye. It was early spring before the leaves came out, and golden-winged warblers are relatively rare, so it was nice to get a good clear picture of it. I have about four or five pictures of that particular bird, and that was the one that I liked the best”
“I like to get a photograph that is not just good of the animal but there's some interaction going on. So, this photograph here comes to mind right away. Because this is a flower called cardinal flower. It's red. Most insects don't see the colour red, they're red-blind, and therefore at least in the northern hemisphere, red attracts hummingbirds. So generally, up here, any red flower is pollinated by hummingbirds, not by insects. And this flower, a cardinal flower, blooms in late July, early August. At the time, the young hummingbirds are out of the nest, so there's a large number of birds that come to pollinate it. So, its sole pollinator is hummingbirds and often young hummingbirds, and that's really neat. And the way that the plant's designed is that it's got a long spur where the bird puts his bill down, his tongue down to get the nectar, but in doing so, the plant pollinia rub on the bird's head. So, I wanted to photograph a hummingbird at a cardinal flower, getting the pollinia attached to the head, because that is the whole pollination story, but I also wanted a nice photograph where the background was dark you know, no
distracting lines from branches, or hotspots because of lighting and so on. And so, the time to do this was in the evening, when the birds are really active before they go to roost for the night, and the sun is low, so you get softer lighting and you get shadow effect, so you can get darker backgrounds. Then you need to choose a spot where there's a lot of hummingbirds and cardinal flowers. Well, in Algonquin Park on the Petawawa River at Poplar rapids there's a large area of cardinal flowers, thousands of them, and therefore a good environment for hummingbirds. So, I chose a spot that was perfect: nice fresh cardinal flowers, a nice background that'd be shadowy in the evening, and I went there and lay down on this bed of gravelly rocks, because it's a fast-flowing river when the water's high, all the small things are washed away by the current, except for the larger boulders, so a boulder bed. So, I'm lying in a boulder bed, very uncomfortable, but I felt if I waited here long enough, then I would get the opportunity. And after two hours of lying on this terribly uncomfortable boulder bed, the bird began... they were all around me, but I wanted this particular shot for the lighting and composition. Finally, the bird came in, and I got my photographs, and he came in several times over the next half an hour. After two and half hours, I knew I had the right photograph because today, with digital photography, you can look at your result in the camera, you know if it's sharp, and the lighting is good, so it's simple, compared to the old days with film. Where you had to wait a week to see what you got. It's a whole different process now. So, I got what I really wanted to, and I doubt I could do better than this in terms of capturing the actual pollination moment, with everything else in play.”
“I could have sent you 100 different photographs and had a story behind each one, but I felt because the southern hemisphere has become a bit part of my life...

...there’s just thousands of black-browed albatrosses, and they’re co-existing and there’s rock hopper penguins, who burrow underneath, there’s no symbiotic relationship between the two of them, they just co-exist. It is one of the most magical things... you have to hike over this treeless island, more heather, like in Scotland. And you come down, and in front of you, with the South Atlantic in front, 300-foot cliffs or more, and there are birds everywhere. And they could a rat’s ass about you. That shot there was shot with a wide-angle lens. He just stood up on the top of his nest and he was just looking at me, and he was just proud, oh my god, you know?”
“I'd never seen them before, we were hiking on a trail, it was in fairly dense shade and I saw it. I had my first Konica with me. With a simple lens on it. A stock lens that came with them. So, I got down on the ground and took this shot and years later, my wife said to me, "you still got the negative for that picture?" I said, "of course, I have every negative I ever shot." "Oh, okay, can I have it?" "What are you going to do with it?" "Well I'm going to get it blown up." and there it is. Anyway, I'd forgotten how much it meant to me and we were hiking with our newborn daughter and so on and so forth. And that was the first time I'd ever seen them. And then she blew it up and had it mounted and it's been there ever since.”
“Yes, that’s right, it’s the mindset, and you know, people want to... the hunters, they want the biggest, the specimen, the magnificent whatever, but with macro lenses, it's just nature is absolutely... that's just in our back yard. I picked that one, because that was the first one I got really excited about. It wasn't the best technically, I've got nicer ones of the same kind of caterpillars. But it's just these two, and in my garden, it kind of tied the animal life to my garden, my two loves, my two interests.”
“Autumn is my favourite season, by far. I think it's just incredibly beautiful. The vibrancy of the colours, this picture captures that. I also really appreciate being reminded of the cyclical nature of the seasons and so... really, a picture of fallen leaves is very much like, death is upon us, that's what's happening here, these leaves are dying, they're incredibly beautiful in their death. And it will pass and it will all come back again. And the whole concept of things going in cycles, good, bad, and it all comes back around again, is very grounding, to me, and it helps me to keep perspective.”
“...and this guy, when I got home, I looked, I got out of the car and turned and there was this guy just sitting there. So, in the middle of a crappy storm, I come home to this very beautiful image of him sticking his face out of the box. I did send some of my photographs to the weather wall paper on the CKWS. Within half an hour of taking this picture, they’d already chosen it for the weather wall paper and they had a similar photo of one of the reporters who had snow all stuck to his face as well, so they had a great time, so it's just one of those nice memorable ones.”
“I’d go down there and I’d visit and I’d get to know the schedule of a lot of the herons. So, I said, this guy here, I can see in the distance, I have a new lens, but he’s way too far, but he usually works his way closer, and eventually he did. And I was waiting for him and I was ready for him. But I knew he was still too far away, so this one is quite a crop. It’s about half of the original frame, because I didn’t have a long lens, so I was waiting and I do all my pictures are hand held,
too, I don’t use a tripod very often. So, I had the camera up and I was looking at him getting
closer and getting closer, and it landed over here someplace and I’m watching it and I thought,
it’s really animated, it’s feathers are puffed up and I thought, this is great. So, he’s walking,
walking, walking, and I think well, I don’t know what he’s seeing, because I don’t want to miss it.
And then as I’m panning with him I see the babies. And I said, oh, he’s interested in the babies,
and then all of the sudden, within 30 seconds all this activity had taken place, so I took the
picture, and the heron flew away without getting anything and the mother went back to her
babies. When I looked at the photograph afterwards, actually I thought, this looks pretty good.”
June 06, 2016

Ms. Elizabeth Cooper
Master’s Student
School of Environmental Studies
Queen’s University
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

GREG Ref #: GENSC-577-16; Room # 0215475
Title: “GENSC-577-16 Wildlife and Nature Photography”

Dear Ms. Cooper:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled “GENSC-577-16 Wildlife and Nature Photography” for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS 2 (2014)) and Queen’s ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (Article 6.14) and Standard Operating Procedures (405.001), your project has been cleared for one year. You are reminded of your obligation to submit an annual renewal form prior to the annual renewal due date (access this form at http://www2.queensu.ca/iraq/signon.html; click on “Events”; under “Create New Event” click on “General Research Ethics Board Annual Renewal/Closure Form for Cleared Studies”). Please note that when your research project is completed, you need to submit an Annual Renewal/Closure Form in Room 159 indicating that the project is ‘completed’ so that the file can be closed. This should be submitted at the time of completion; there is no need to wait until the annual renewal due date.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at http://www2.queensu.ca/iraq/signon.html; click on “Events”; under “Create New Event” click on “General Research Ethics Board Adverse Event Form”). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example, you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To submit an amendment form, access the application by at http://www2.queensu.ca/iraq/signon.html; click on “Events”; under “Create New Event” click on “General Research Ethics Board Request for the Amendment of Approved Studies”. Once submitted, these changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Ms. Gail Irwin, at the Office of Research Services for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Sincerely,

John E. Freeman, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

Dr. Mark Smith, Supervisor