

[Back to Issue 9](#)

# Invisible Culture

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## “Take Only Photographs”: Animal Photography’s Construction of Nature Love

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Contemporary woodlore suggests that to properly respect nature we should “take only photographs and leave only footprints” when we enter the wilderness. This expression takes photography as a model of non-interventionist right practice and offers a vision of nature as a non-human space in which humans do not belong. <sup>1</sup> In this schema photography appears as a non-intrusive, environmentally friendly activity that shows proper respect for the fragility of nature. This rhetoric positions nature photography as maintaining a separation between humans and nature.<sup>2</sup> It assures us that photography keeps us at an appropriate distance from nature. Thus, nature photography is the figure of an ideal relation to nature; it provides access to nature while leaving it untouched. Nature photography offers us an image of nature that it at the same time forbids us to occupy.

It is this relation to nature that is at work in wildlife photography. In his essay, “Why look at Animals?”, John Berger argues that wildlife photography presents an image of the animal as fundamentally separate from

the human.<sup>3</sup> He further suggests that nature photography is not simply a convenient rhetorical figure for humanity's separation from nature but is central to the operation of this ideology. Wildlife photography shows images marked by their "normal invisibility" positioning the animals depicted in a realm outside the human.<sup>4</sup> The photographs show us animals we could not normally see. The wildlife photograph erases its taking, offering its viewer transparent access to nature. But, by erasing its taking, it leaves no space within the image's economy for the viewer to occupy. Thus, the images provide their viewer with access to a deep nature from which they are fundamentally excluded.

The "invisibility" in these images functions as evidence for Berger's argument that late-capitalist westerners can no longer really be in nature. It is no longer possible for us to have an 'authentic' encounter with an animal. Because of our alienation we can no longer engage with animals except as figures of nostalgia. "The image of a wild animal becomes the starting-point of a daydream: a point from which the day-dreamer departs with his back turned."<sup>5</sup> Wildlife photographs function as a substitute for a real nature that the images themselves assert is impossible for modern humans to occupy.<sup>6</sup> We are offered images of wild animals as compensation for our complete domestication. Berger argues that capitalism's reorganization of society has separated us from the animals with whom we used to live and offers us instead images of animals that compensate for this disconnection by functioning as an ideal figure of freedom.

While Berger's image of wildlife photography is seductive (like the images it describes), it too is a compensatory fantasy haunted by a desire for an unmediated relation with animals. As Donna Haraway has taught us, the desire for an innocent relation to nature does not provide us with a secure ground for politics but rather leaves us in a double bind between an innocence that must remain passive and victimized and a guilty teleology culminating in apocalypse.<sup>7</sup> This logic leaves us longing for an unrealizable relation to animals or denying the possibility of any appropriate relation with animals. It is for this reason that Jonathan Burt insists that Berger's position represents a "flight from the animal."<sup>8</sup> As Burt notes, "The idea that the animal as a natural non-human object is always automatically corrupted or falsified as soon as it is visually troped" denies the possibility of any appropriate human-animal relation.<sup>9</sup> More importantly, he notes that this logic "*reinforces* at a conceptual level the effacement of the animal that is perceived to have taken place at the level of reality even whilst criticizing that process."<sup>10</sup> Thus, the criticism of wildlife photography offered by Berger retains the ideological construction of nature – as fundamentally separate from humanity – that is at work in the wildlife image.

However, it should also be noted that this separation only occurs within the logic of the images, not in their production. As Bill McKibben has argued, the production of wildlife photography can be enormously disruptive to the lives of animals.<sup>11</sup> McKibben describes wildlife photographers chasing animals with helicopters to photograph them. James Elkins observed "a

man with a camera” in Yellowstone Park “running full-tilt after a bison.”<sup>12</sup> More seriously, he notes “Some national parks have problems with tourists who lure bears with food in order to take their pictures.”<sup>13</sup> This behavior not only endangers the tourists but ultimately threatens the life of the bear. While these behaviors may stem from a love of animals they do not maintain an ideal distance from the animal.<sup>14</sup> These examples highlight the work involved in the production of the animal image that the wildlife photograph generally obscures. McKibben’s and Elkins’ allegations suggest that in seeing nature photography as a model for being in nature we fail to understand animal photography and in particular that we fail to appreciate its mode of production. Correcting this misunderstanding calls for an analysis that de-naturalizes wildlife photography.

This paper is part of an ongoing project to denaturalize wildlife photography and its construction of the animal. While I agree with Berger that the image of the wild animal is deeply ideological in its positing of an essential separation of human and animal, I argue against Berger’s conclusion that it is no longer possible for contemporary humans to have an “authentic” unmediated encounter with animals. I suggest that we need to understand how we look at animals, not why. To this end, I examine two animal images from the 1850s that pose questions to the model of photography as the ideal relation between nature and viewer. The analysis of these photographs makes clear that the image of the animal in photography is produced in relation to its social conditions and is not simply found in or extracted from nature. This analysis also

opens up the possibility of thinking and reading animal photography differently. I foreground the social production of the wild animal in wildlife photography to argue that we must understand wildlife photography as producing a social relation with animals.

## Section 1. A Read Heron

The Photographic Exchange Club's *Photographic Album* of 1857 contains a photograph of a heron titled *Piscator No. II*. [\[Fig. 1\]](#) The photograph is accompanied by an epigram that reads, "And in the weedy moat, the heron fond of solitude alighted. The moping heron motionless and stiff, that on a stone as silently and stilly stood, an apparent sentinel, as if to guard the water-lily."<sup>15</sup> John Dillwyn Llewelyn (1810-1882) took the photograph in 1856. Llewelyn, a cousin of photographic inventor Fox Talbot, was a pioneering Welsh photographer.<sup>16</sup> He specialized in images of nature taken from around his family's estate, Penllergare.<sup>17</sup>

The image is a rectangle taller than it is wide (24.2 x 18.9 cm). At first glance, the image appears to be of a common type; it reads as a genre photograph — specifically, a nature, or wildlife, photograph. As such, it appears to be immediately legible, presenting us with an image of deep nature: a wild animal in its natural environment. It depicts a heron standing in a pool of water in front a rock wall. The heron is centered about one third of the way up in the image and its reflection extends almost to the edge of the image. The water is dark, almost black, and against it the bright white of the heron stands out in marked contrast.

The right side of the photograph is a lighter band of gray composed of two separate elements. In the upper right corner the light illuminates a bulge in the rock wall. In the lower right corner the light illuminates a grassy bank topped by a mound of stones. The bank in the foreground situates the viewer and provides an entry point to the image by giving a sense of scale and distance with which to read the image. By contrast, the overgrowth along the back wall suggests a space of human absence. The heron falls on the non-human side of this divide.

There is a large clump of bulrushes directly behind the group of stones. The bulrushes are echoed on the other side of the pool by another clump of rushes that together frame the heron. This framing provides a strong diagonal line to the composition. The sharp contrast of the heron with its background, its compositional framing by the other elements of the image, its central positioning in combination with the image's title (piscator meaning fisher) and the attached epigram from Thomas Hood suggest that the image is focused on the heron. The structure of the image announces that the heron is its center (subject); this *is* a photograph of a heron.

Like any wildlife photograph, the image has a timeless quality that makes it appear contemporary.<sup>18</sup> There are no markers within the image restricting it to a particular historical period. The heron, the rocks and the rushes are not marked by historical traces. Within the visual rhetoric of the wildlife photograph there is no meaningful difference between a contemporary heron and one from 1856. While the image is labeled with a particular date, as a wildlife

photograph the elements it presents are not determined by that date. Although the image of the heron was taken in 1856, the meaning of the heron as it appears to us is not confined to that historical moment.

What I am appealing to is the notion that wildlife photography operates within a semiotic in which nature as non-human is ahistorical. Estelle Jussim and Elizabeth Lindquist-Cock argue “the inclusion of a human figure, clothed in the appropriate fashions of the day and season, removes the photograph of Nature from the generalizing, abstracting experience which would place the contents of the photograph in some iconic eternity.”<sup>19</sup> Jussim and Lindquist’s argument implies that, given that the wildlife photograph is predicated on the absence of the human, the wildlife photograph presents an image of ahistorical eternal nature. The image gives us access to deep nature -- an essentially unchanging nature untouched by human hands. Although since Darwin we understand that nature changes, those changes are thought to occupy a deep time accessible only through science.<sup>20</sup> Evolution’s timeframe is vast and inhuman, positing changes over millions of years.<sup>21</sup> The evolutionary temporality of nature positions nature as an eternal and unchanging base outside of human affairs.<sup>22</sup> Thus, in presenting us with an image of deep nature, the image detaches itself from the moment of its taking adhering instead to a deeper chronology.<sup>23</sup> It is in this sense that the image remains contemporary. The nature that the image depicts continues “essentially unchanged.” If there is any particular interest in the date of the image, it is that we could be looking at one of the earliest examples of a wildlife

photograph: a heron in its natural environment. Read as a wildlife photograph there would be no significant change to the image's meaning if the date attached to the image was 1840 or 1890.<sup>24</sup> The date would only acquire an additional meaning if an ecological catastrophe had intervened in the time since the image's taking. If there were no more herons, or, at a minimum, no more herons in Wales, the image's date would be charged with significance. For example, the pictures of the last Quagga from the London zoo are difficult to view without experiencing a haunting sense of loss.

## Section 2. The Ready-Made Heron

Yet perhaps the image is not so easily deciphered. Our contemporary ways of seeing may cause us to assimilate the image too quickly to familiar categories of interpretation. What if, despite all appearances to the contrary, the image is not a wildlife photograph? How then could we read the image? More to the point, given the image's structural homology with a wildlife photograph what would convince us that the image is not a wildlife photograph?

The image is reproduced in *Nature and the Victorian Imagination* in a photo essay, "Images of Nature" by Charles Millard.<sup>25</sup> Millard suggests that in Victorian nature photography "animal and human figures were used for compositional accent and emotional overtone."<sup>26</sup> While briefly discussing the image, Millard mentions in passing that the heron we see here is probably stuffed. According to Millard, "The heron — presumably stuffed — in J.D. Llewelyn's *Piscator* ... acts merely to focus the composition."<sup>27</sup> Millard inserts



Llewelyn's image into a series of nature images of which animal images are only one kind. This is a tradition in which human and animal figures have a structural equivalence. Yet this equivalence is difficult for a contemporary viewer to comprehend; if it were a human figure standing in Llewelyn's pond we would read the image rather differently. Thus Millard's assertion presents us with two questions. One, why this assurance, what guarantees that the heron we see here is, or rather was, a dead heron and not a live one?<sup>28</sup> Two, what is this merely, as in, merely to focus? What might it mean to "merely focus a composition?"

The state of photographic technology at the time of the image's taking assures us that the heron is stuffed. According to the caption in the *Photographic Album*, this particular image required a 20-minute exposure. Thus, this photograph, as with all photographs from this period, was posed. Photography had yet to become instantaneous; we had not yet reached the technology of the snapshot. As Edmund White has noted, this is the reason that "In the earlier decades the chief subject of nature photography was scenery, mostly because it didn't move. The long exposures required ... gave the nature photographer little choice."<sup>29</sup> In other words, the length of the exposure time determined the available subjects. To be photographed, animals had to be rendered as stationary as the landscape they inhabited. Thus, the time required for the image's taking confronted Llewelyn with the problem faced by all depicors of animals; the less domesticated the animal, the less tame the animal, the more difficult it is to have it remain motionless long enough to depict without

first killing it.

The depiction of live animals was a problem.<sup>30</sup> Most animal paintings from this period and before were modeled from dead animals.<sup>31</sup> This was true of both artistic and scientific images. As Nicholas Hammond assures us “All the nineteenth-century illustrations of animals were based on dead specimens.”<sup>32</sup> This practice continued in animal photography as well. As common practice the use of a stuffed animal would not have concerned either Llewelyn or his audience. They would not have understood the emphasis contemporary viewers put on the distinction between an image of a live or dead animal.<sup>33</sup>

In 1856, photographing a stuffed bird was a perfectly reasonable solution to the problem of getting a heron to pose for twenty minutes. It strikes us as odd because we no longer accept a stuffed animal as an adequate substitute for a live animal. Realizing that the heron is stuffed changes how we see the image. By definition a photograph of a stuffed animal cannot be read as a wildlife photograph. How then are we to read the image?

Deciphering the image requires addressing the Victorian conception of nature. The Victorians viewed nature primarily through the lens of the picturesque. Although scientific discoveries were altering the understanding of nature, the romantic conception of nature continued to influence the Victorian experience. Nature functioned as “a repository of feeling” a healing space outside the confines of civilization.<sup>34</sup> Although this vision of nature still shapes our contemporary one, the type of sanctuary

that nature provided the Victorian was different. For the Victorian, the ideal landscape was an improved one and the nostalgic dream it embodied was Arcadia and not the pre-human landscape of the fifth day of creation.<sup>35</sup>

U. C. Knoepfmacher and G. B. Tennyson argue that the composition of early Victorian nature photographs is both indicative of and determined by the Victorian conception of nature. The lengthy exposures required by early photography ensured that these images were carefully crafted and composed. This attention to the detail of the images made “the choice of subject and the arrangement of objects in themselves indicative of the Victorian attitude to nature.”<sup>36</sup> Knoepfmacher and Tennyson thus read “the setting, the placement, and the tones of the photographs” as revealing “Victorian Nature as it was perceived by contemporaries.”<sup>37</sup> It is precisely because these photographs are composed and artificial that they reveal to us how Victorians wanted to see nature. Knoepfmacher and Tennyson provide us with a program for reading Llewelyn’s image, seeing the elements of Victorian nature photography as overdetermined by the romantic conception of the landscape. Millard concurs, noting that it was a common Victorian practice to increase the picturesque qualities of the landscape by adding props.

Millard sees the Victorian nature photograph as a textual image coming out of an “essentially literary tradition.”<sup>38</sup> The imagery is determined by a conceptual ideal exemplified by Wordsworth’s depictions of the Lake District.<sup>39</sup> It is also shaped by the

pictorial tradition of landscape art. Ultimately, Millard argues, “For the Victorians, Nature photography becomes a species of portraiture, inevitably revealing the spirit of place, an inviolable atmosphere.”<sup>40</sup> The Victorian nature photograph is thus about the mood evoked by the picturesque more than it is about any particular element within it.

The heron is a prop added to create, or increase, the picturesque quality of the image.<sup>41</sup> Reading the image through the lens of the picturesque makes plausible Millard’s claim that the heron is not the focus of the composition that rather it “acts merely to focus the composition.”<sup>42</sup> Although we might see the heron as *the* focus of image, Millard indicates that, Victorians would have seen an aura of place (of *the* place), and the heron would have appeared as merely a compositional object. The Victorian viewer would have been led from seeing the heron to the contemplation of the picturesque. The heron thus appears as an adjunct to the spirit of the pond and not that which proclaimed the pond’s authenticity as a natural space. Thus in “merely focusing the composition” the heron acts as a vehicle for the apprehension of the picturesque.

### Section 3. Staging

Analyzing an earlier photograph by Llewelyn of a deer in forest taken around 1852 makes the staging of his animal images more apparent. [Fig. 2].<sup>43</sup> The photograph, *Deer Parking*, is a calotype measuring 20 x 25 cm.<sup>44</sup> The image presents a stag in a clearing surrounded by oaks and ferns. Large trees flank both sides of the image.

The tree on the left sits on a slight hill giving a diagonal thrust to the composition. A raking light from the left side of the image produces sharp contrasts of light and dark. The stag stands mid-image with its head cocked. The stag's head is highlighted while its body is in deep shadow emphasizing its look of noble alertness. The stag's head occupies the focal point of the diagonal formed by the two trees positioning it and its antlers as the focus of the composition.

Yet, a closer look at the conjunction of the stag's head and body reveals that something is not quite right. The deer's pose seems at odds with its surroundings. The angle of the neck is wrong. The stiff front legs and square chest betray the deer's status as a stuffed animal. Rather than merging with the natural background the deer stands out as a human intervention. The deer is "abrasively visible" appearing as what Steve Baker has called "botched taxidermy."<sup>45</sup> According to Baker, the botched taxidermy used in post-modern art opens a space for thinking the animal outside of the already known. Similarly, the botched taxidermy in Llewelyn's photograph undoes the temporal logic of the wildlife genre.

The marked difference between the deer and its surroundings leads to one of the most striking differences between the photograph of the deer and that of the heron -- how dated the image of the deer seems in comparison. Unlike the image of the heron that appears contemporary in its timelessness, the photograph of the deer appears antiquated and historically distant. As a stuffed animal, the deer falls on the culture side of the nature-culture divide. The deer appears as a cultural artifact

embedded in the time of its making rather than as a natural object participating in an evolutionary temporality.

While the heron offered itself to us as an immediately legible image, the image of the deer resists our interpretation, initially becoming legible only as a fake or a fraud. Although Millard cautions us to read the animals inserted into Victorian nature photography as accent pieces, to not read the photographs as animal or wildlife photographs, it is difficult to resist seeing the deer, standing out as it does, as the focus of the image. Yet, because the deer appears to a contemporary viewer as a foreign object in a natural setting, it is difficult to read the image as anything other than a failed or faked attempt at a photograph of a deer. The image does not read as a photograph of a stuffed deer precisely because of its use of a 'natural' setting. The "deer" in this photograph is obviously "fake," a crudely stuffed specimen that appears to be masquerading as a live deer – and failing. This failure is double. There is a taxidermic failure to achieve life-likeness and there is the failure of the photographed deer to merge with its surroundings. It is only due to this second failure that the first failure seems so marked. A photograph of a stuffed animal in a different setting would not read as a failed wildlife photograph. Ironically, while the forest is the natural setting of a deer, it is an unnatural setting for a stuffed animal whose natural habitat includes trophy cases, game lodges, and natural history museums.

#### **Section 4. Stuffed Animal Pictures**

To reiterate, the image of the deer was not intended to be a wildlife photograph. Taking

it as such misreads the image, presuming as it does an ideal towards which the image is not striving. What was absent from the Victorian experience of nature was the very concept of wildlife. Although Victorians often spoke of wild animals and savage beasts, the notion of “authentic” animals existing outside the realm of the human was not significantly present in a culture that celebrated the discovery and capture of exotic species as tangible evidence of their civilization’s triumph.<sup>46</sup> As such, we cannot read the image of deer according to our own familiar categories of authenticity or naturalness. As Miles Orvell reminds us “Our contemporary conception of photography is in many ways narrower than [a nineteenth-century viewer’s], shaped as it has been by our predilection for ‘straight photography,’ which we think of as an ‘honest’ use of the medium.”<sup>47</sup> Pointing to this gap between contemporary and Victorian viewers, Orvell cautions us on the temptation to misread nineteenth-century photographs. Our sense that we know photography and understand its meanings makes it difficult for us to see early photography as anything other than a prefiguration of present practices.<sup>48</sup>

But while the image of the deer is not a wildlife photograph, it is not clear that it belongs simply to the picturesque. The image appears to be strongly influenced by a different image-making tradition. The deer’s pose resembles the stag in Landseer’s *Monarch of the Glen*. Landseer’s image was painted in 1851 a year before the photograph was taken. This similarity of pose suggests the influence of the tradition of sporting art exemplified by Landseer.<sup>49</sup> This would further suggest that the photograph attempts to portray the

nobility of the deer by having it stand erect with its head held high displaying its “crown” of antlers.50

However, while the poses are similar, the images’ effects are different. Rather than expressing nobility the photograph of the deer appears bathetic. In animal photography the encounter with the animal necessarily registers itself in the image. This registration interferes with the practice in the sporting art tradition of deploying the animal as a site for projection: Llewelyn’s deer cannot do what Landseer’s does. The biological specificity of the photographed animal’s behavior interferes with the process of cultural construction; the deer fails as an evocation of idealized nature.51

The erect pose of the deer is a response to a potential threat. It is a momentary pose held while the deer evaluates the threat. This pose implies an engagement with the image’s off-stage. Head up, the deer’s gaze appears fixed on the camera and through it the viewer. The viewer is assigned a position within the internal economy of the image. Our space becomes enfolded into that of the image. We come to occupy the position of the camera. In other words, the deer’s pose positions us as an outside threat to which it responds.

Yet, as a taxidermic object the deer has already been appropriated and serves as a cultural artifact. The viewer is placed in the position of appropriating an already appropriated object. How then does the viewer come to experience the photograph’s appropriation of nature? Does the double sense of appropriation increase the viewer’s implied control over nature, or do these acts



of appropriation conflict with one another and, as a result, remove the image from the realm of the natural? For a contemporary viewer the answer is the latter. The awkwardness of the taxidermy exposes the limitations of the nineteenth-century's attempts to assert its domination over nature. The poor quality of the stuffed animal betrays an incomplete knowledge of animal anatomy and its deployment in a photograph "reveals" the inability of the photographer to capture an image of a live animal. Both the taxidermist and the photographer fall short of the contemporary vision of the wild animal — a vision predicated on the further development of wildlife photography.<sup>52</sup> By violating the logic of this vision the deer appears unnatural.

However, James Ryan argues that for a nineteenth century British viewer the two appropriations would have been mutually reinforcing. According to Ryan, "Photographs of stuffed animals ...represent a kind of double mimesis, and reinforce the shared ways in which photography and taxidermy are manifestations of a desire to possess and control nature."<sup>53</sup> Ryan differs from Millard in seeing Victorian animal photography not simply as an evocation of the spirit of nature but as an attempt to possess and control that spirit. Images of nature assert power over place. Although Ryan acknowledges that photography ultimately supplants taxidermy, he maintains "as modes of representation the two practices are closely related."<sup>54</sup> In arguing for this connection Ryan is influenced by the work of Kitty Hauser. In her discussion of the use of taxidermy in contemporary photography, Hauser argues for a strong conceptual link between photography and taxidermy. For Hauser, both photography

and taxidermy are based on their isolation of a surface from the world as “both peel a layer from the world which they then present as truth.”<sup>55</sup> It is their shared indexical quality as representations that permits “their social function as trophies and souvenirs” by functioning as “the visible proof of experience.”<sup>56</sup> Hauser argues this indexical appropriation of the world links both forms of representation conceptually and structures their social reception as evidence. Ryan takes up this conceptual relation identified by Hauser and grounds it in the historical interplay between early photography and taxidermy. As Ryan notes,

Early photographers employed taxidermy in order to capture portraits of animal in a seemingly live pose and outdoor setting. In the 1850s J.D. Llewelyn took photographs of stuffed deer, badgers, otters, rabbits and pheasants posed as if photographed in the wild. Just as photographers drew on the skill of the taxidermist to overcome their cameras’ technical shortcomings, taxidermists drew in turn on the photographer to provide them with an appropriate model of realism for their displays.<sup>57</sup>

Ryan situates Llewelyn’s work photographing stuffed animals within a larger movement in which photography and taxidermy progressively sharpened each other’s appropriation of nature.<sup>58</sup> Thus according to Ryan the image of the deer would have been unproblematic because the taxidermic deer would have been the model used to validate the success of the image.

Ryan situates the interplay of photography

and taxidermy within the larger context of the Imperial British appropriation of nature.<sup>59</sup> Focusing on African colonial photography, Ryan argues that animal photography functions as part of the Imperial politics of display.<sup>60</sup> The wild animals appropriated by colonial photography and taxidermy became objects for the display of white Anglo Saxon male power. This emphasis on the creation of object for the display of prowess leads Ryan to argue that the interplay between stuffed animals and photography was such that the photograph of the stuffed animal is the paradigmatic example of early nature photography. “Stuffed animals,” he writes, were “the ideal photographic target: a recreation of nature as apparently authentic, yet utterly docile.”<sup>61</sup> Ryan suggests that it is in the photograph of a stuffed animal that the logic of British colonial nature photography is at its most apparent.

Ryan’s argument indicates that, as an image of a dead animal, the deer photograph is in part a trophy shot. Yet rather than appearing on the walls of a hunting lodge or an aristocratic shooting club, Llewelyn has placed his trophy in a picturesque ‘natural’ setting. An image that initially appeared as a wildlife photograph becomes a form of still life; a *Nature Morte*, literally dead nature, in which a dead animal is re-presented as a live one. It is a substitution in which dead nature is re-added to nature as a supplement intended to bring out the qualities of untamed nature.

## Conclusion

The difficulty in reading Llewelyn’s photographs highlights two points: the

strangeness of early photography and the instability of the concept of the animal. It is this second point that challenges any thinking of human-animal relations based on a conception of the animal as an unchanging given outside of history. The image of the animal body connects to a network of practices relating to the conceptualization of nature, the human and technology. The analysis of Llewelyn's heron shows that local contexts and practices shape the function of the animal image.<sup>62</sup> What seemed obvious on first reading, that the image of the animal was a wildlife photograph, quickly became impossible to sustain. The image of a stuffed animal is, by definition, not a wildlife photograph and this shift in genres entails a concomitant shift in the perceived temporality of the image. This shift in temporality highlights the role of photography in producing an image of the animal as timeless and ahistorical. The reading of the deer photograph brings out the relation of animal photography to taxidermy and to trophies.<sup>63</sup> More importantly, it shows how the realism of the photograph, while undercutting traditional animal symbolism, inscribes different cultural values onto the animal image.

As the analysis of the two images by Llewelyn demonstrates, the production of the photographic image of the animal occurs in a complex reciprocal relation with the broader cultural understanding of nature. Photography is not one site among many in the construction of the animal but rather a privileged site in the constitution and maintenance of the contemporary conception of the animal. Analyzing how we see animals in photography is the first stage in denaturalizing the image of the animal

presented in wildlife photography. While wildlife photography's image of deep nature is seductive, it fundamentally obscures both its own production and our social relations with animals. Escaping from its logic of human-animal separation, implicated as it is in the myth of the Garden and the Fall, this analysis opens up the possibility of understanding that our relations to animals are necessarily mediated. The illusion of an unmediated encounter is fostered by a nature photography that both offers us transparent access to the animal while denying us any appropriate relation to it. As Donna Haraway has argued, accepting the necessity of mediation requires abandoning the innocence of nature and opens up the possibility of new forms of nature love.

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1. The conception of nature as a space from which humans must be excluded is influenced by the myth of the Garden of Eden. The myth positions nature as innocent and humans as guilty and fallen. Thus their entry into nature is corrupting. On the political implications of this myth see Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," in *The Haraway Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 7-45. ↑
2. For an argument against this contemporary understanding of nature, which also acknowledges its seductive appeal, see William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1995), 69-90. ↑
3. John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?" in *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 1-26. ↑
4. Berger, 14. ↑
5. Berger, 15. ↑
6. The logic of animal imagery discussed by Berger parallels the logic of the spectacle articulated by Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle*. The spectacle offers a commodified image in the place of a now inaccessible real relation. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Red and Black Books, 1977). ↑
7. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto." ↑
8. Jonathan Burt. *Animals in Film*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 30. ↑
9. Burt, 188. ↑
10. Burt, 29. ↑
11. Bill McKibben, "Curbing Nature's Papparazzi," *Harper's*, 295.1770 Nov. 1997, 19-24. See also *Nature Photography: A Focus on the Issues*, ed. Peter Friederici (Jamestown, NY: Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History, 1993). ↑

12. James Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1996), 33. ↑

13. Elkins, 33. ↑

14. Derek Bousé has suggested that such behavior stems from the inappropriate conception of animals promulgated by wildlife representations. Derek Bousé, "False Intimacy: Close-ups and Viewer Involvement in Wildlife Film," *Visual Studies*, 18.2, 2003, 123-132. ↑

15. The epigram is by Thomas Hood. ↑

16. On Llewelyn's family history see David Painting "J. D. Llewelyn and his Family Circle," *History of Photography*, 15.3 autumn 1991, 180-185. On Llewelyn's photography see Richard Morris *John Dillwyn Llewelyn, 1810-1882: The First Photographer in Wales* (Cardiff: Welsh Arts Council, 1980). ↑

17. On the history of the estate see Richard Morris, *Penllergare - A Victorian Paradise* (Friends of Penllergare, 1999). ↑

18. On the temporality of the wildlife photograph see Berger, "Why Look at Animals?" ↑

19. Estelle Jussim and Elizabeth Lindquist-Cock, *Landscape as Photograph* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 31. Jussim and Lindquist-Cock also suggest that this reading may be the result of "some intense human desire typical of the alienated, overcrowded twentieth century," implying that, at the very least, a particular kind of historical consciousness is necessary for such a reading. ↑

20. On deep time and its relation to visual representation see Martin J. Rudwick, *Scenes from Deep Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). ↑

21. On the inhuman quality of scientific time scales see Jean-Francois Lyotard *The Inhuman*, trans. G. Bennington and R. Bowlby (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1992). ↑

22. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). ↑
23. On the concept of deep nature and its predication on human absence see Peter van Wyck, *Primitives in the Wilderness: Deep Ecology and the Absent Human Subject* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994). ↑
24. It should be noted that the materiality of the photograph will provide some historicity. For example, the use of sepia tone provides a dated quality to the image regardless of what it represents. ↑
25. Charles Millard, "Images of Nature: A Photo Essay," in U. C. Knoepfelmacher and G. B. Tennyson (eds.), *Nature and the Victorian Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 14-31. ↑
26. Millard, "Images of Nature," 25. ↑
27. Millard, "Images of Nature," 25. ↑
28. Live, that is, at the time of the photo, the heron being certainly dead now. On the relation between the temporality of the photograph and death see Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, R. Howard (trans.) (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981). ↑
29. Edmund White, "Animals, Vegetables and Minerals: the Lure and Lore of Nature Photography," in *Photographing Nature* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1971), 13. ↑
30. The depiction of live animals continues to be a problem for wildlife artists. See my "Robert Bateman's Natural Worlds," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 33.2 (Summer 1998): 98-128. ↑
31. See Nicholas Hammond, *Twentieth Century Wildlife Art* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1986), 18 and Christopher Hume, *From the Wild* (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1986), 15. ↑
32. Hammond, *Twentieth Century Wildlife*, 14. Audubon was simply the most programmatic example of this phenomenon. He killed his subjects, wired them to



grids for accurate depiction, and then would often eat them when done Hammond, *Twentieth Century Wildlife*, 19. See also Hume, *From the Wild*, 15. ↑

33. It is only post ecology that the live animal comes to be a marker for the health (reality) of nature. We might position Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* as the origin of a North American mass consciousness of the animal as the marker of ecological health. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002). ↑

34. U. C. Knoepfelmacher and G. B. Tennyson, "Introduction," in U. C. Knoepfelmacher and G. B. Tennyson (eds.), *Nature and the Victorian Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), xvii-xxiii, xxi. ↑

35. On the conceptual role played by pre-human nature in contemporary ecological thought see van Wyck, *Primitives in the Wilderness*. ↑

36. Knoepfelmacher and Tennyson, "Introduction," xxi. ↑

37. Knoepfelmacher and Tennyson, "Introduction," xxi. ↑

38. Millard, "Images of Nature," 24. ↑

39. Bill Readings discusses the manner in which Wordsworth's inscription of meaning into the landscape underwrote its capitalistic exploitation through tourism. Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 96. I discuss the implications of Readings' argument for thinking animal imagery's charging of the wild animal with symbolic meaning in Matthew Brower, "Robert Bateman's *Natural Worlds*," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 33.2 (Summer 1998): 66-77. ↑

40. Millard, "Images of Nature," 24. ↑

41. On the use of animals as elements of the picturesque see also Basil Taylor, *Animal Painting in England: From Barlow to Landseer* (Hammondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1955). ↑

42. Millard, "Images of Nature," 25. ↑

43. The image is reproduced in Lanyon, "Frontispiece: Deer Parking," 168. ↑
44. The calotype is the photographic process invented by Fox Talbot in 1839. ↑
45. Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 62. ↑
46. Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate* (Cambridge: Harvard, University Press, 1987), 205-288. ↑
47. Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1989), 77. ↑
48. Orvell's caution in many ways parallels John Tagg's arguments on the historically constructed nature of photographic meaning. John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988). ↑
49. Among Llewelyn's images is a photograph of a sporting print that may be by Landseer. [http://www.swanseaheritage.net/article/gat.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=1174](http://www.swanseaheritage.net/article/gat.asp?ARTICLE_ID=1174) ↑
50. The aim of emphasizing the deer's nobility could also be ascribed to the taxidermist. However, Llewelyn's composition of the photograph with its emphasis on the deer's head and antlers indicates his complicity in this construction. ↑
51. The difference in function between Landseer's and Llewelyn's deer could also be because Llewelyn's deer is dead. However, what is decisive is the shift in the image's function. The deer fails as an evocation of idealized nature. Treating this failure as productive I argue that the image presents a different conception of the animal and of nature. I would further argue that it is due to the change in the conception of the animal brought on by photography that Landseer's deer now seem overly sentimental and anthropomorphized. ↑
52. Berger, "Why Look at Animals?" ↑
53. James R. Ryan "Hunting with the Camera: Photography, Wildlife and Colonialism in Africa," in Chris Wilbert and Chris Philo (eds.), *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places* (London: Routledge, 2000), 203-221, 214. ↑

54. Ryan, "Hunting with a Camera," 206. ↑
55. Kitty Hauser, "Coming Apart at the Seams: Taxidermy and Contemporary Photography," *Make: The Magazine of Women's Art* 82 (Dec. 98-Jan. 99): 8-11. ↑
56. Hauser, "Coming apart at the Seams," 9. ↑
57. Ryan, "Hunting with a Camera," 206-7. ↑
58. In locating the relationship between photography and taxidermy as being between *animal* photography and taxidermy, Ryan backs off from Hauser's larger claims. Hauser's arguments operate on the level of photography and taxidermy's structure of representation -- that both are "non-consensual" appropriations of surfaces from the world intimately related to death. "Coming apart at the Seams". ↑
59. John MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988). ↑
60. On the depiction of landscape as an Imperial form see W. J. T. Mitchell, "Landscape and Imperial Power," in W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 5-34. ↑
61. Ryan, "Hunting with a Camera," 214. ↑
62. Millard suggests that picturesque photography was localized in England and ended by the mid 1880s as the development of photographic technology brought made the practice of photography widespread. ↑
63. I analyze the relation between photography and hunting trophies in Matthew Brower, "Trophy Shots: Early American Non-Human animal Photography and the Display of Masculine Prowess," *Society and Animals* 13.1, (2005): 13-32. ↑