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‘Animals Are Their Best Advocates’: Interspecies Relations, Embodied Actions, and Entangled Activism

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Since 1986, the Coalition Against Duck Shooting (CADS) has sought to ban the seasonal practice of recreational duck hunting. Several states around Australia have prohibited duck shooting: Western Australia in 1990; New South Wales in 1995; and Queensland in 2005. Duck shooting continues in other states, with Victoria having perhaps the strongest social base for the practice. Campaigners, known as 'duck rescuers', have developed and refined techniques to disrupt shooters, rescue injured water birds, and gain media coverage. CADS is part of a wider animal movement that has aimed to challenge the politics and culture of exploitation of farmed animals, animals in research, animals in sports and entertainment, and wild animals. Duck rescuers, like other animal activists, care about the well-being and rights of animals.

As with other movements, emotions are woven into the fabric of the animal movement. They can aid or hinder mobilisation, frame ideologies and goals, inform strategies, and contribute to the success or failures of campaigns (Jasper, 'Emotions and Social Movements'). Basic sensibilities, emotions, affect, morals, and beliefs are the building blocks of any social movement and are inseparable from action (Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest* 154). Through an interplay of morality, cognition, and emotions, moral shocks can be a way of recruiting individuals to animal rights campaigns. These can be in reaction to graphic, sometimes confronting, visual material of animal cruelty (Jasper and Poulsen). Emotional experiences have an embodied dimension, in addition to the cultural norms and meanings that shape affective and cognitive responses (Hansson and Jacobsson 267). Due to the intensity and costs of animal activism, participants contain, ventilate, ritualise, and normalise a variety of emotional work (Jacobsson and Lindblom). While the study of emotions has examined animal activists, there is scope to more directly foreground the role that actual animals play in social movement activities. Embodied activist encounters through the engaged witnessing of nonhuman animals in spaces of exploitation can help us rethink interspecies relations (Lockwood). Based on a multispecies autoethnographic account of the 2018 anti-duck shooting campaign, this article explores the relational entanglements that exist between humans and nonhuman animals. It interrogates how avian agency figures into and shapes this entanglement, how it co-constructs the embodied actions and tactical choices that activists make.

Understanding nonhuman animals and their agency can inform how humans empathise, relate, and interact with animals. Ethical encounters between humans and nonhuman animals, argues feminist philosopher Lori Gruen, arises from co-constituted social and material agential entanglements. Gruen refers to this as entangled empathy. This is a type of moral and caring perception that involves an intertwining of 'emotion and cognition in which we recognize we are in relationships with others' (Gruen 3). Entangled empathy is not necessarily reducible to an emotion, but is an embodied process of engaging moral perception (Gruen, 'Expressing Entangled Empathy' 454–455). The intended outcome is being responsive, responsible, and attentive to another's wellbeing. Empathy with others requires us to understand, as best we can, the perceptions and senses of others from their position – not so much to 'stand in their shoes', but to be situated within oneself and connect, through affect and cognition, with a specific human or animal other (Gruen 66). For this, one must distinguish between one's own self – perception, experience, and beliefs – and that of the other (Gruen 61). It is a reflective and caring process that is not limited to those who are in close proximity but can transcend spatial and contextual differences. In short, entangled empathy motivates and moves one to act on behalf of those who co-constitute our agency. Building on Gruen's concept, I want to advance the notion of 'entangled activism' to emphasise interspecies agential networks in social movement mobilisations. Using the term entangled activism recognises the ethical and empathetic motivations, but also highlights the embodied actions, adversarial interactions, performances, and claims-making that arise from multispecies interrelations. Adopting the entanglement approach can redress the problematic ways in which animals have been traditionally represented by social movement actors.

Within certain quarters of the animal movement, there are those who view animals as 'voiceless'. Whether it is established groups, loose networks, or individuals, the rhetoric that humans are a 'voice for the voiceless' is widely used. The trope is arguably an attractive one, as it suggests advocating for a vulnerable and marginalised group, one who cannot or does not possess agency or the ability to act on behalf of their own interests. However, voicelessness is a problematic concept. As Sunaura Taylor (63-67) argues in *Beasts of Burden*, phrases like 'voice for the voiceless', whether applied to animals or disabled people, reinforce patronising,

paternalistic, and ableist assumptions. 'Considering animals [as] voiceless', she argues, 'betrays an ableist assumption of what counts as having a voice – an assumption that many disabled and nondisabled people alike often make about animals' (63). Taylor's criticisms are not only directed at activists, but also aimed at those outside the movement, those who treat animals like property, afford them little-to-no moral consideration, or perhaps retain outdated Cartesian assumptions that animals cannot feel pain and that their suffering is irrelevant.

Although human-animal studies and critical animal studies (DeMello; Taylor and Twine), which adopt interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches, have inserted the 'animal question' into the humanities and have carefully considered agency, animals can still remain invisible. Biological scientist and animal studies scholar, Lynda Birke, argues that what can predominate in some animal studies research is a privileging of the human experience, largely around questions of how humans symbolically represent animals. Birke's criticism should not be interpreted as a generalisation of all animal studies scholarship. Rather it is meant to highlight that there needs to be a focus on multispecies interrelations and how human and nonhuman animals co-construct their relations. Considering these difficult questions can enrich and advance interspecies relations. For example, some political philosophers have sought to conceptualise new forms of democratic interaction with animals, which is based on the understanding that animals have communication abilities, their own language and culture, and the capacity to make collective decisions, negotiate, and even deliberate (Donaldson and Kymlicka; Meijer, 'Animal Activism and Interspecies Change'; Meijer, 'Interspecies Democracies') 'Animal Activism and Interspecies Change', 'Interspecies Democracies'). This article emphasises that examining the entanglements in human-animal interactions deepens our understanding of activism and contentious political spaces, but also means we must conceptually and practically take animals seriously as agents who co-constitute our social world.

Animal Agency

Among animal scholars, the question of agency is a significant subject. Agency generally refers to the capacities of a being to act upon the world around them. The standard theory of agency is

predicated on intentionality, which is based on mental states, such as desires, beliefs, and conscious action (Schlosser). For example, a preprogrammed robot that builds an object would not be considered an agent. But an architect who designs and builds a house would be an agent. The robot just builds, whereas the architect thinks and purposively acts.

However, the standard theory of agency privileges certain kinds of actors. Scholars reassessing the histories of subaltern, marginalised, and oppressed actors have criticised normative assumptions about agency that are based on the idea of an autonomous, rational, self-aware individual (Swart 251). Furthermore, the standard conception of agency is highly ableist and anthropocentric, and is dismissive of the capacities of others, including nonhuman animals.

Alternative conceptions of agency involve initiation by an actor, which is not reducible to rationality nor intentionality. This position rejects agency based on causal mechanisms. Bruno Latour's actor-network theory posits that '*any thing*', whether that thing is a hammer or a cat, that impacts upon another actor, regardless of its reflexivity, ought to be considered an agent (71). Environmental humanities scholars argue that nature has agency, as it complicates the actions of humans and produces unpredictable consequences (Nash). Agency can be performed by actors that do not have the capacity for intentional action, and it has been argued that agency can be conceptualised without reference to causal mental states and events (Schlosser). Even if one were sceptical about the capacities of animals, it is possible to move beyond a limited focus on 'self-reflexive intentionality' and acknowledge that animals, intentionally or not, play an agential role (Fudge 5).

In contrast, Torill Christine Lindstrøm has criticised these alternative approaches, arguing that an all-encompassing concept of agency makes it meaningless. At best, 'things' may perform a secondary, distributive, or reactive function. Propensities to attribute agency to non-sentient things may be the result of anthropomorphic projection and different ontologies, such as what anthropologists would term animism. Lindstrøm advocates a narrow, 'scientific' definition based on four core characteristics, which resembles the standard theory: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness (233). Disregarding the hammer and all things, Lindstrøm concludes that 'only humans and animals have agency proper' (227). Drawing

on poststructuralism – Latour, Haraway, and others – Chris Pearson suggests that animals have displayed various degrees of intentionality, which is ‘relational, emerging, or disintegrating in relationship to other agencies’ (11).

The relational view of agency is perhaps the most widely adopted approach, and one that this article utilises. Gruen’s entangled empathy is premised on the relational account. Relational agency is considered dependent upon a positioning within the parameters of social relations (Carter and Charles 329), and upon the structures and environment in which it emerges (Nash). A human going on a walk with a dog, with the constant negotiations of where to walk, when to stop, how long to stop for, and whom to greet, is an act which reveals the relational complexities in canine-human relations (Platt and Fletcher). Agents themselves are part of collectivities that are historically, socially, and spatially contingent. For instance, a polar bear located in a London zoo has different agential conditions and possibilities for action from a wild polar bear (Carter and Charles 330). Importantly for nonhuman animals, agency exists in relation to human-dominated power structures and interests, and human-affected ecologies (Carter and Charles 331–32; Saha 3). In this sense, animals can act to resist and effect networks of power relations (Carter and Charles 335). Acts of individual resistance, such as animals escaping captivity, which have been chronicled by Jason Hribal, are considered deliberate, intentional actions against oppressive human institutions. Human instruments and tools of violence reveal relational agency at the point of conflict between humans and animals. Certain weapons of dominance, such as the fishing hook, are designed to counteract the resistance of animals (Wadiwel). As I will demonstrate, relational agency is evident in avian-human relations in wetlands during the duck shooting season.

Methodology

Whereas traditional ethnography is primarily concerned with humans, the theory and methods of multispecies ethnography focus on the more-than-human world. Multispecies ethnography invites inquiry into the ‘intimately intertwined enactments of violence, power, cruelty, love, care, and kinship that define the varied and ambivalent relationships between humans and other

animals' (Collard and Gillespie 206–07). It explores the entanglement of human-animal relations, the complex being and becoming of interspecies life, and issues beyond the exclusive symbolic or material domain of humans (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 151). Multispecies ethnography confronts epistemological and ontological assumptions of human exceptionalism and anthropocentrism, which conventionally underpins inward-looking social science research (Hurn 202–06). Despite its anthropocentrism, the principles and practices of traditional ethnographic fieldwork, particularly reflexivity and personal engagement and understanding, are equally valuable to multispecies ethnographers (Hurn 208). Similar to immersive ethnography, multispecies research can unfold in a slow, ponderous manner, attentive to the agency of nonhuman others, with a decentring of the human experience through embodied interspecies relations (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 152–62). Researchers can also closely observe the choices animals make in certain contexts, learn about their characteristics through observation, and be alert to both verbal and nonverbal communication (Alger and Alger 40). Such methodological techniques can reveal knowledges and understandings of both human and animal subjectivities and intersubjectivities that can escape other approaches (Buller 65).

Challenges exist in conducting animal studies research, such as the ethical considerations of how to interact with animals in a non-exploitative and respectful manner (Birke 71–73). Within the research process, Birke argues, 'we have to try very, very hard to think about minimizing exploitation and maximizing space for the agency of subject animals' (84). In relation to animal others, Gruen cautions against anthropomorphic encounters, where we may project our desires and interests. These encounters can lead to profound mistaken judgements and practices. Care needs to be exercised when representing the interests and preferences of animal others (Gruen 66–73). The complexities of navigating these engagements can be addressed by understanding individual species-behaviour and their specificities, learning from experts or long-time caregivers, and committing to critical reflection (Gruen 60).

For nearly three months of the duck shooting season, from the opening weekend on 17 March 2018 until its final day on 11 June 2018, I volunteered with the CADS team. Participating as an activist-scholar, I conducted multispecies auto-ethnographic research.

Situating myself within the research process provided a direct way to ground and interpret the results and focus on specificity and subjectivity, and to critique the relationship between self and nonhuman others (Griffin 117). In addition, I conducted three semi-structured interviews with key individuals – Laurie Levy, president of CADS, Georgie Purcell, CADS' social media coordinator, and Kristen Leigh, a team leader – who were involved in the campaign.

The opening weekend of the duck shooting season conventionally draws a large number of shooters and rescuers. In 1986, when Levy started the campaign, there were 96,000 registered shooters in the state of Victoria (Munro), however, this figure has declined dramatically over the decades. In 2018, there were 26,000 licensed duck shooters; however, there were only 2,100 active shooters out on the opening weekend (AAP). The number of rescuers amounted to around 150. Thereafter, the seasonal rescue team that I volunteered with was a small, committed crew, with an average of 8-9 rescuers most weekends; however, there were some periods when there were 16 volunteers. Thirty-three per cent of the seasonal team were long-term campaigners, with the majority having joined in recent years.

Being a 'duck rescuer' involved spending most weekends, typically from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon, travelling around rural Victoria's wetlands and camping. Out of the thirteen weekends, I missed out on three, largely due to sickness. Throughout this period, I kept field notes, and photographic and video material, on which the following discussion is based.

Each weekend consisted of a number of routine activities. One of the main tasks required locating shooters across Victoria's vast archipelago of wetlands. This year was considered 'quiet' by long-term campaigners, who believed declining shooter numbers, stricter regulations, and declining bird populations resulted in fewer shooters being out on the wetlands. In practice, this meant that some days we struggled to actually locate shooters.

When shooters were located, the operation typically involved trying to disrupt their activity. As ducks' vision is sensitive to colour and movement, rescuers wear fluorescent clothing and wade out into the water to wave tall, bright flags to alert flying water birds to the presence of camouflaged shooters and signal to them to avoid the area. Another essential task was finding wounded water birds and taking them to a veterinarian or wildlife carer. Collecting

dead birds is also considered important, as proof that shooters are acting in contravention of the regulations by failing to retrieve the birds they shoot. Given my skills and access to equipment, my specific role involved doing photography and videography during the campaign. From a multispecies ethnographic perspective, visual methodologies are potent tools for witnessing nonhuman animals and grasping various forms of knowledge that elude other approaches. These aid in reflecting on micropolitical power (Lorimer 238–42).

Finally, the writing that follows employs a descriptive style and analytical insights. The following presents two thematic sections that centre on duck-human relations and illustrate entangled activism. Similar to the work of the immersive ethnographer Timothy Pachirat (18–19), I try to focus on both context and emphasis of the finer details, and let the ‘sensory, corporeal complexity’ emerge. As Pachirat observes, the descriptive account is not intended to be subsumed in favour of an abstract theoretical argument; rather, the details themselves are the argument (19).

Entanglement I: Species and Spaces

Understanding individual species plays an important role in activist decision-making and tactical reasoning. In Gruen’s conceptualisation of entangled empathy, she notes that a better comprehension of specific species-behaviours can guide ethical judgements and actions (*Entangled Empathy* 67). One of the ways entangled activism practically unfolds out in the field is through identifying waterfowl, and distinguishing between so-called game and non-game species. Rather than outlining each species, I will use the example of the chestnut teal, *Anas castanea*, a game species.

Male chestnut teals are small ducks. They have a dark head and neck, with the back of their head a shining metallic green. Their bill is slate grey. Their body is chestnut coloured, their thigh has a white patch, and their undertail is black. Females and juvenile males appear very similar to grey teals, although they are slightly larger and darker in colour – even so, they are still difficult to tell apart, especially from a distance. The male has a high-pitched call, whereas

the female has a lower, laughing quack. In flight, with their wings extended, they have triangular white markings on both the top and underwing. The top of the wing has the same metallic green markings as the head. They are fast, agile flyers, and navigate through dense vegetation (Game Management Authority; Menkhorst et al. 176). Overall, one can identify a bird based on: body topography and plumage (accounting for differences between males and females, and other similar species); bill shape and colour; body shape (in water and in flight); top and under wing patterns; calls and quacks; and flight behaviour.

Shooters engage in a similar exercise of identifying birds – but as I will explain shortly, this is where the similarities end. The above description is used as part of the waterfowl identification test, which is administered by the Victorian Game Management Authority (GMA). Other states have similar tests. Shooters must pass the test prior to applying for a Game Licence. Theoretically, a skilful shooter should know how to differentiate a game and non-game bird. However, this test does not ensure shooting accuracy, nor does it guarantee that non-game and threatened species, like the Freckled Duck (which have previously been shot), are not killed. Hunters claim to be naturalists, conservationists, and wildlife managers, who find the practice of hunting to be both necessary and enjoyable (Einwohner 176–77). Hunters are also agents entangled in the human-avian world. But while the actions of both have consequences on each other, it cannot be argued that hunters are engaged in an ethical, caring encounter. Shooting animals is often less about the sustenance derived from wild birds, and more to do with lifestyle, identity and the construction masculinity (Boddice; Einwohner 176–77).

Whereas power and dominance underpin the hunters' entanglements, care and compassion define the encounters between activists and waterbirds. While shooters camouflage themselves and try to subvert a duck's agency, by evading their sight and senses, rescuers, with their loud and bright clothing, act on the ducks' perception of colour and movement. By seeing a chestnut teal before a shooter, a rescuer might vigorously blow their whistle and wave their flag, to try to alter the bird's flight path away from the shooter. Being able to document whether a shooter has targeted a protected species, intentionally or not, is legally important, as CADS operates as an interventionist group. Throughout the course of the 2018 season, I developed an

ability to identify waterfowl, although there is still room for improvement. This knowledge was learned through other activists and being out in the field. For multispecies ethnography, the choices and behaviour that different duck species exhibit deepened my understanding and appreciation of duck agency (Alger and Alger 40), and it also fostered the kind of moral care and perception that Gruen outlines. Mindfully witnessing waterbirds express their behaviour and preferences engendered empathy and the desire to protect them from shooters, who callously kill and discard birds, often without even collecting their bodies for the meat they claim they want.

In addition to being alert to the specificity of species, the spatial location of waterfowl is crucial. The dynamics of CADS' contention is not only tied to nonhuman animals but also to spatial constitutions. Spatiality and geography 'matter to the imaginaries, practices, and trajectories of contentious politics' (Leitner et al. 158). Charles Tilly argues for particular mechanisms and processes, proximity and mobility, in spatial connections among social sites. Spatiality is co-implicated in complex ways, which intertwines place, scale, networks, positionality and mobility. Spatiality emerges from social relations and structures (Martin and Miller 145), and material and discursive processes that shape the conditions for political action (Leitner et al.). Spatialities link social processes, and provide certain openings, as well as limitations, to external challenges and collective actions (Marston). They are arenas where public claims-making is performed, and symbolic and material disruptions occur, whether it is around class, gender, sex, race, environmental, or nonhuman relations. Rather than reducing or abstracting spatiality, scholars argue that it is significant to pay 'close attention to how agency is distributed across the more-than-human world, and not solely located with humans' (Leitner et al. 158). The social processes that constitute the CADS campaign are not human-exclusive, but are entangled with humans (rescuers and shooters), various species of ducks, and spatial wetland ecologies.

In the weeks leading up to 17 March – the opening day of the 2018 shooting season – bird watchers were patrolling Victoria's wetlands, trying to find the locations that held a concentration of game species: native water birds like the grey teal, chestnut teal, hardhead,

mountain duck, pink-eared duck, and wood duck. By identifying where the birds are, CADS can predict where the shooters will be, and mobilise accordingly. Given that CADS has limited resources, the emphasis is on numbers: the more birds there are, the greater the attention to protecting that area from shooters. In contrast, if a particular wetland had a dozen shooters and no game species, then a smaller threat is posed. But a wetland with thousands of game birds and two shooters would warrant intervention. There is no satellite imagery and no Ministry of Ornithology with real-time statistics like a weather bureau to help locate water birds. The job requires people, usually a handful of individuals, driving around their regional area trying to locate birds. Based on their local knowledge and past experiences, several volunteers visit select lakes where they believe they will find the water birds that are constantly under threat from shooters. Even during the reconnaissance phase, the entanglement between humans and animals is evident: the presence of native water birds, particularly those so-called game species, encourages campaigners into action. The ducks' behaviour, preference or interest in gathering in a particular body of water at a certain point in time, guides humans. Similarly, it invites the shooter, who desires their flesh or wants to use them for his (or, less commonly, her) entertainment. But it compels the rescuer who wants to protect them.

One lake in particular proved to be a pivotal space during the 2018 season: Lake Martin, located 148km west of Melbourne. While the location of game species guides the formulation of weekend operations, other birds can also intervene in the decision-making processes of campaigners. The best critical example here is the Curlew Sandpiper, which is a small, slender bird, with a rich chestnut back. They are about 18-23 centimetres tall, weighing about 57 grams. Their necks and legs are long, as is their black curved bill. The Curlew Sandpiper is an extraordinary migratory bird, visiting Australia during the summer months all the way from north-eastern Siberia and Alaska. They feed on insects and larvae by the shore and edges of a mudflats, bays, lagoons, and around nontidal swamps and lakes. In Victoria, they are listed as threatened (Birdlife Australia; Department of the Environment and Energy; Menkhorst et al. 160). On the second weekend of the season, experienced campaigners successfully identify 700 Curlew Sandpipers at Lake Martin. We video their activity, as they feed by the water's edge. With this evidence, Animals Australia, who work in partnership with CADS, file an injunction

to the Victorian government, which results in Lake Martin being temporarily closed (and remaining so almost until the end of the season). The Curlew Sandpiper's migratory pattern and their timing on Lake Martin influences the actions of campaigners, policy-makers, and also shooters. Unbeknownst to the other native water birds that inhabit Lake Martin, they too were affected by the northern visitors.

On the penultimate weekend of the season at Lake Martin, a large, magnificent flock of pink-eared ducks is discovered. The lake and surrounding wetlands had frequently been visited throughout the season, so it is a surprise to have stumbled upon them. It is estimated that there are anywhere between 8,000 to 10,000 birds. Pink-eared ducks prefer shallow lakes and swamps created by inland floods, as well as billabongs and inland rivers (Menkhorst et al. 174). There is a cacophony of high-pitched chirruping. It is an extraordinary sight. I go to the muddy shoreline with my camera and an ultra-telephoto lens to film the ducks who are seventy metres away. I observe them through the lens, and note that many are sleeping, their heads turned around and their bills tucked under their wing. I wonder where they came from. With the aid of my camera, I track one duck who swims a great distance and ponder where he is going. Beneath the scale of the flock are individuals. Although there are no shooters to be seen, one of the campaign leaders says, 'we're in the right place'. Pink-eared ducks are designated as a game species, and an organised sortie by even a handful of shooters could produce a massacre. Our small crew is ready to mobilise if any threat presents itself – thankfully, that day not a single shooter shows up.

Entanglement II: Duck-Human Interrelations & Media

Over the years, the media's representation of dead and dying native water birds has been a pivotal avenue for campaigners. Levy sees CADS as an 'advertising agency, or public relations agency for animals'. Native water birds are integral to the narrative, because ducks cannot 'talk to the media and because they can't fight back, they can't go to court and put their case, we do that for them'. Levy considers the narrative a simple, adversarial one: on the one hand, there are shooters wearing camouflage, wielding shotguns, and blasting ducks out of the sky; on the other

hand, there are rescuers in the water wearing brightly coloured clothing carrying wounded birds. Shooters display violence, whereas rescuers show compassion and kindness. For Levy, this is a battle for the hearts and minds of the public. As an experienced, long-term campaigner, he views media coverage as an important avenue for stimulating public debate. Indeed, one of the reasons the duck rescue campaign has garnered so much coverage is because it appeals to the media's desire for novel and sensational imagery (Munro; Villanueva 127). Examining television news, Munro found that close-ups of dead ducks offered emotional, dramatic moments. Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that when viewers are confronted with evocative media stories and images of animal cruelty, they feel pity, which, according to the researchers, suggests genuine compassion for what has happened to the animals (Tiplady et al.).

In addition to mass media, social media is an important, effective tool for advocacy. Live streaming and online videos via social media can trigger various forms of connective, emotional activity. Online witnessing, which fundamentally involves perceiving an occurrence and communicating it to others, is a 'networked, collective, and political experience' (Martini 17). During transmission, live streaming can produce a high-intensity, interactive, and reflexive experience (Martini 16). The videos posted on the CADS Facebook page serve as a kind of short documentary film, which tells the story of the injured ducks and the efforts of humans to protect them. Animals can visually 'speak their suffering', they are 'individualised and personalised', and are entangled in mobilising affect with the viewers' ethical agency (Mummery and Rodan 12). Of course, such emotionally evocative material may be effective in reaching committed followers, but perhaps different kinds of strategies may be required to reach audiences that are reluctant and resistant to such imagery. Animal groups routinely publish digital media content that depicts both cruelty and non-cruelty. Using social media allows them to define 'the master frame' (Snow and Benford): they set the agenda, tone, and discourses for others to engage in.

The role of the media was evident from the first weekend of the 2018 duck rescue campaign. Three injured water birds are found by rescuers on Saturday, the first weekend of the campaign, out in Lake Cullen, a flat, swampy body of water with patches of vegetation around the edges, located 301km north of Melbourne. Two of them are protected, non-game species: a

blue winged shoveler and a coot. The third is a teal. Upon discovery they are rushed to a team of veterinarians at the shore. When they are brought in, I am part of a select media team able to film the scene, while Georgie Purcell broadcasts the veterinary assessment live on Facebook where thousands of viewers tuned in.

The first duck is a female blue winged shoveler. Also known as an Australasian shoveler, she is a slender bird with blue-grey head, a long broad bill, powder-blue upper wings, and a chestnut under body (Menkhorst et al. 174). Inside the veterinary tent it is difficult to appreciate her plumage, as the hands of two female veterinarians physically examine the bird, their hands sweeping over her body and wings. Her head is covered with a towel, a common practice to minimise shock. It does not take long for an assessment: 'we have a penetrating injury right into the [wing] joint of this little bird ... which isn't going to be compatible with rehabilitation', the vet says matter-of-factly. She keeps examining: 'great body condition, this poor little thing was thriving up until now'. The vet does not hesitate in calling it: 'it will have to be euthanised'. The bird is sedated, wrapped in the towel, and placed in the carrier. Further examination awaits. In the interval, the veterinarian is asked, 'if she wasn't retrieved by the rescue team, how long could she have gone on for?' The vet explains the variables: days, weeks, but the duck could also have fallen victim to predation.

'So, she has now been euthanised', confirms the vet as she lifts the stethoscope off the bird's unbeating chest. As before, this is live streamed on Facebook. Her lifeless, chestnut body is on her back, her head resting on one side. The vets quickly discover the fatal injury, where what I would describe as her upper chest, and they peel back the feathers so the round bloody wound can be seen. They open her wing to point out where the damaging pellet hit. They explain that it would be interesting to conduct an X-ray to determine which vital organs were damaged. 'But the poor girl', one vet says, 'these injuries are definitely not compatible with rehabilitation and life. Very lucky she was brought to us because it would have been a horrible death out there'. The nearly three-minute broadcast concludes with a final shot of the blue winged shoveler laying on the table (Coalition Against Duck Shooting Facebook Page, *A Bird Has Come in and Our Vet Team Is Assessing the Injuries. She Is a Blue Winged Shoveler – Protected & Illegal to*

Shoot This Season). The Facebook live stream is intensely focused on the individual birds under medical care. Although the camera pans to the vets, the duck is centred. The vets narrate the duck's bodily condition, adding to the visual suffering that can be witnessed.

While I do not physically interact with the injured duck, I am a mindful, close observer. Someone else had the difficult task of finding this bird, delicately holding and carrying her across the lake, and taking her to the vet, all the while navigating shooters and authorities.

Unfortunately, there can be times when this responsibility of caring for the injured can be overwhelming, when the numbers of dead and dying birds is too great to immediately comprehend. Multispecies ethnographers theoretically should slowly ponder their experience, but in the field, at least in this context, the warfare and cacophony of gun fire can be intense and chaotic. Events can unfold too rapidly and leave few opportunities for on the spot reflection.

However, on this day, the first day of the season, things are a slower, the number of victims fewer. I am able to engage with these ducks. Engaging with animals can be a transformative experience. In their literature review on empathy and prosocial behaviours in inter-species interactions, Maria Elide Vanutelli and Michela Balconi state that empathy is more likely to happen when there is closeness, proximity, and similarity between interactants (96-99). Similarly, Lara Drew argues that the corporeal and affective interspecies dynamics in 'open rescue' actions underpins activists' learning processes, and their emotional and moral development ('Embodied Learning Processes', *Radical Adult Learning*). While interspecies engagement might produce these kinds of developments for some, particularly activists, Marion Willetts concluded that mere social contact with rescued animals in a farmed animal sanctuary environment was insufficient for transformative learning, at least for the disengaged undergraduate cohort she studied (471-72). In contrast, I am someone whose empathy is already entangled with nonhuman others. The close engagement I had with these dying ducks reinforced my ethical motivations for being out there. As someone who had the privilege of filming the veterinary examination, I wanted to ensure that the footage showing the ducks' experiences – and their species-specific expressions of how they felt in the aftermath of being shot – could be shared and perceived by others.

By noon on Sunday, a video I made, using footage I filmed over the weekend, is published on the CADS Facebook page. It starts with rescuers getting ready at dawn, driving out as a convoy to Lake Cullen, and then scores of teams heading out. There is a scene with a shooter retrieving a shot bird and then swinging her around by her head. Further in, there are multiple angles of the aforementioned birds treated by the vets, their wounds viscerally on display. In the final scenes, the vet gently caresses the head of dead teal with her index finger. It cuts to a closeup of that teal's face, their half-closed, dark eyes staring back at the camera. An ambient song in a minor key that I chosen, described to me as 'haunting', plays throughout the video. The video is faithful, I think, to the chronology of the day, but it is also a reflection of my engaged witnessing (Coalition Duck Shooting Facebook Page, *Opening Weekend - 2018*).

I am driving back to Melbourne and have pulled over for a ten minute, much needed, nap. I look at my phone and notice that CADS has posted my video. In the editing process, I have seen it countless times, but now I sit in the car and watch it, and I know it is online and that others can also view it. As the video nears the end, the closeup of the teal, their head on one side, with their half-opened eye, pierces me. My eyes swell up and a sense of grief and sadness grips me. Re-watching this video, as I write this paper, I can feel similar emotions stirring within me. A re-shocking is observed here. Whereas graphic content can deliver moral shocks to an unsuspecting person, 're-shocking, or micro-shock, experiences sensitize and motivate' an already committed individual by connecting with the body, emotions and moral motivations (Hansson and Jacobsson 274). Furthermore, there is an embodied empathic identification with nonhuman animals, mediated at first through physical proximity and later through witnessing an online video. This can involve a process of empathic simulation, where one tries to perceive the feelings of the animal-other (Hansson and Jacobsson 276). This kind of re-shocking occurs multiple times, often unexpectedly, throughout the campaign.

One pink-eared duck's narrative and individuality made a distinct impact on me during the season. This particular entanglement began toward the end of the second Saturday of the at Lake Martin, where rescuers discovered two injured pink-eared ducks. Like the vet team, they cover the duck's eyes with a pillow slip, to minimise the possibility of shock. Painkillers are

administered, and the extent of their injury is unknown at this stage. At some time in the night, one passes away. In the early morning, I drive the one survivor to a wildlife carer in Geelong. Over the next week, I make a video for the CADS Facebook page, to tell the story of this one survivor and the efforts of the team. I interview the rescuer who found this duck, who was later named Little Miss Pinkie. Giving her a name is a useful device, as it provides 'an important way to establish individuality as well as a biography and thereby establish personhood' (Taylor 64). Near the end of the video, the rescuer concludes: 'One life of a duck might not mean something to a shooter, but it means everything for that one little bird' (Coalition Against Duck Shooting Facebook Page, *Pink Eared Duck Rescue - Lake Martin*).

In the coming weeks, I visit the Geelong wildlife carer, who has permitted me to video Little Miss Pinkie's recovery. Veterinary examination and an X-ray revealed that a pellet had passed through her body and another had fractured her wing. She may need surgery, but everyone agreed that her fracture is 'fixable' and that she should 'regain normal flight once healed'. In the meantime, she is on antibiotics and is being tube fed daily, as she is not eating on her own; pink-eared ducks are filter feeders, and her bill is lined with fine grooves to consume microscopic plants and creatures (Menkhorst et al. 174). When I arrive, I discover Little Miss Pinkie standing around on the tiled living room floor by the window, her injured wing bandaged with an old cotton legging. The carer tells me that the night before, Little Miss Pinkie had fallen asleep cradled in her arms while she was watching television. The duck's personality astonished me; her behaviour is expected of a domesticated cat or dog, not a wild water bird. A veterinarian, a friend of the carer, has visited to assist in cleaning the wound and administering the tube feeding. Little Miss Pinkie's tiny body is held and a long tube is inserted down her bill. It is an uncomfortable sight. She audibly protests, and the carer says, 'I know, I know, it's not very nice'. I later film her outdoors in her coop, where she stretches her good wing.

Two and half weeks have passed since Little Miss Pinkie was found injured at Lake Martin. The carer periodically sends me more videos of the duck bathing in a tiny swimming pool. On Wednesday, 11 April, at midday, I receive a text message from the wildlife carer:

I have some sad news ... We lost miss Pinkie yesterday morning. I found her in hiding in the trees tucked up. She must have passed in her sleep. Absolutely gutted. She was doing so well.

I am lost for words. We are both heartbroken. I relay the tragic news to the rest of the team.

Entangled empathy generates attention to the self and others (Gruen 91–93). There is an embodied reaction to the loss of Little Miss Pinkie. It is partially borne out of the suddenness and unexpected nature of the news. Having witnessed her individuality and personality makes me ponder about her loss. She could have been described as a 'person', at least in the way the utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer defines the concept. Moving beyond the anthropocentric assumption that only a human can be a 'person', for Singer, any living entity can be considered a person if they meet the following criteria: rationality, self-consciousness, and a sense of future (*Practical Ethics* 28). For Singer, the basis for ethical relations should not be based on species-membership, but should be governed by sentient interests (97). With evolving animal behavioural and cognition research (for example, see: Carere and Maestripieri; Waal), certain species fulfil Singer's criteria: apes, elephants, dolphins and some birds (Singer, *Practical Ethics* 124). In addition to a sentient being's capacity to feel happiness and pain, one of the reasons why a 'person' is ethically valued is because they are autonomous, possess desires, and have future plans (Singer, *Practical Ethics* 84). Pink-eared ducks supposedly mate for life – what impact did her abrupt absence from Lake Martin mean for her partner? Beyond the effect her loss had on me and other humans, her death, and the death of the other ducks I have described, is upsetting because her life mattered to herself as a 'person' with unfulfilled desires and interests. Groups like CADS try to visually communicate this message that nonhuman animals like Little Miss Pinkie are someone, not something.

In an effort to engender greater empathy toward nonhuman animals, groups like CADS focus on narratives and images that highlight individuality. Philosopher Elisa Aaltola (19–31) argues that images of animals – particularly of the visceral, confronting variety – may help spark 'moral epiphanies' in ways that words and rational arguments cannot. Beyond images of cruelty, narratives and images of rescued animals offer a way for people to subjectively connect to

animals, understand their agency and consider their corporeal experience. It is a strategy used by farmed animal sanctuaries like Edgar's Mission, whose rescued animals act as ambassadors for their kind, by representing those who are still confined and exploited in intensive farms. For CADS, Levy explained, 'If you say 400 birds were shot, it doesn't have the same impact on the public as when you show one rescuer coming out with one bird'. Other activists share a similar value judgement. Telling 'individual stories [is] really powerful', says Kristen Leigh, who has been activist and vegan for six years, and has led teams of rescuers. According to Leigh, individual stories are able to represent and amplify other comparable cases. Stories of individuals allow people to connect to broader issues, which Leigh believes is a less overwhelming way to comprehend confronting cases. Here, scale and proximity are perceived as facilitating greater empathic encounters. This perception is shared by Georgie Purcell, a twenty-six-year-old activist, whose professional job involves media communications for a trade union, and who, among her many activist roles, helps coordinate CADS' social media.

Purcell's social media work is guided by the principle that 'animals are their best advocates'. This approach was formulated from the social media experience she had with six orphaned lambs that she and her partner adopted. In late 2017, only months after adopting these lambs, a story about their interspecies family was popularised in a forty-five second video published by the *The Dodo*, a New York-based digital media company. Being entangled with the lambs transformed Purcell's orientation to advocacy:

telling their stories has been some of the most effective [forms of] activism I've ever done in my whole six years of doing things. I have just had so many people reach out to me. Strangers on the Internet say, 'I saw your lambs and I decided I can't eat animals anymore'.

Purcell and the lambs act upon each other and other actors. Facebook and Instagram condense time-space to mediate this interrelation. With Purcell facilitating and curating an online space, the lambs' agency, individuality, personality, and preferences are made visible to the 'strangers on the Internet'. Similar to Levy and Leigh, Purcell's core insights into her advocacy come from her nonhuman entanglements. Ultimately, she believes that individual stories are powerful; that

it is important to move beyond the rhetoric of animals as 'voiceless'; and that there is a need to decentre human activists and centre animal actors. This reasoning, which I also share, influences the social media direction of campaign. It is not only evident in the live streaming of the injured ducks but is also a strategic orientation for 'duck releases'.

Throughout the season, four ducks – a mountain duck, wood duck, and two grey teals, all of whom are considered 'game species' – are rehabilitated and released back into the wild. Many of them were discovered with injuries in the aftermath of the opening weekend. The first duck to be released is Monty, a mountain duck that was found in northern Victoria with a bloodied wing. The pellet passed through his wing, but after some care, he was ready to be returned to the wild – too much time in domestic care, as I was told, could undermine their chances of maintaining the capabilities necessary to survive in the wild.

It is a clear Saturday morning, although there is a strong wind. The chosen wetland is about 40 minutes from Melbourne, and it is a non-shooting area, meaning that Monty is likely to be safe. There is a small inlet, where the wind and water are gentle. The carrier with Monty in it is placed by the water's edge, and the door is opened. Monty takes a few seconds before appearing from the back of the carrier. He looks out, takes three steps forward, and then leaps out, his right webbed foot splashing into the water. He swims a couple of feet and happily wags his tail. Monty keeps swimming and comes to a stop. As though he is about to stand up, he extends his body and unfolds his wings, his magnificent green, white, brown and black plumage are fully on display. He beats his wings, back and forth – I am later told by another campaigner that this is a sign his wings are strong and healthy. He does this about five times, comes back down and, like a dog, wags his tail and swims on. Monty proceeds to move out into the lake and is some distance from us. He does not fly, but dives under water and re-emerges to bat his wings. He continues this routine for some time (Coalition Against Duck Shooting Facebook Page, *Mountain Duck Release – 2018 season*). The experienced wildlife carer looks out and says, 'he'll probably do this for the rest of the morning'. Minutes later, a dozen mountain ducks fly overhead. I imagine that Monty will have some company – perhaps he will join up with them and be part of a new flock?

Conclusion

Humans and nonhuman animals exist in entangled agential networks, and their interrelations have consequences upon the world they co-inhabit and co-create. The study of emotions and social movements (Jasper) 'Emotions and Social Movements') can be advanced by understanding this interconnected, complex human-animal relationship. Even activists, who can sometimes problematically perceive animals as voiceless, need to be mindful of individual species-agency, to not only better understand them, but to also improve their ethical encounters (Gruen 67). Drawing on Gruen's *Entangled Empathy*, this article has argued that entangled activism is an experiential corporeal process that arises from multispecies relations. It can guide ethical motivations, mobilisation, strategic choices, and media framings. Through the case study of the anti-duck shooting campaign, this article demonstrated that individual bird species-behaviour and spatial constitutions influence and direct activist decision-making. Learning about different waterfowl – their characteristics, specificities, preferences, and habitats – compels one to appreciate and care about ducks and makes activists more efficient campaigners in challenging adversaries and in protecting native waterbirds. Both mass media and social media can aid in communicating injustice and the visual suffering that animals experience. It can activate a cognitive and affective process that can morally and emotionally motivate and guide people to act. Tools like social media can de-centre human activists and centre animals, by providing them with a visual space for animal agency to flourish.

Human and nonhuman animals co-construct one another's identity, behaviour, and actions; the activism, strategies, and political choices that humans make, in many ways, depend upon individual animals, species, and habitats. Animal advocates could be more perceptive of the entangled activism that already underpins their motivations, ethics and actions, and overthrow the problematic 'voiceless' rhetoric. Through interspecies relations and by being more mindful of the agency of nonhuman animals (Donaldson and Kymlicka; Meijer, 'Animal Activism and Interspecies Change'; Meijer, 'Interspecies Democracies') 'Animal Activism and Interspecies Change'; 'Interspecies Democracies'), there are perhaps new opportunities that can grow from entangled activism.

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