

Moving Beyond the Boundaries: Turning to Face the Nonhuman Animal



Anthrozoology Student Conference 2015

Call for Papers

Anthrozoology looks at the many dimensions of how humans and other animals interact, yet we wish to stimulate our thoughts towards the future of human-animal relations. The conference will be an exciting place to discuss new ways of being and seeing animals, both within academia but also in daily practice, and what can be done to facilitate better lines of communication between the two. With increasing discussions about animal sentience and salience, how can we, as researchers, respond and engage with this? We hope to inspire dialogue in how to move forward with our research, how to encourage active participation in our fields and to improve interspecies relations. We warmly invite you to participate in our first anthrozoology student conference, and join the exciting conversation.

Guest speakers to be confirmed!

The conference will be held at the beautiful location of Reed Hall, Exeter, in Devon. It will span the course of three days, from 10th – 12th August, with a lunch buffet, drinks and biscuits throughout. We are hosting an evening three course meal for all delegates, and as we think it is invaluable to practice what we preach, all food will be vegan and vegetarian only!

Successful applicants are invited to attend at no cost. All we ask is that you are able to cover travel and accommodation costs. All students from all disciplines are invited to apply, whether you are working through an undergraduate degree, or nearing completion of a PHD. Papers can either be delivered as a 20 minute presentation, or in the form of a poster to be displayed during intervals. You are welcome to submit more than one proposal, but just one paper will be selected per student, to ensure we hear from as many peers as possible!

How to apply

Please take a look at our topics of interest below, and if you have a piece of research that relates to any of them, please send the following information attached in a word document. Please do not state your name in the word document, as the selection process will be blind.

Type of Application (Presentation or Poster)

The topic (Listed from below)

Title of Paper



Long Abstract (Max 500 words – please note, on successful application this abstract will be included in the program).

Key Words (up to five words)

Applications are to be submitted electronically, to sam241@exeter.ac.uk. Please include your name, institution, contact information, the title of your paper, and a brief description of your interests in the email.

Closing date for applications is June 12th 2015. We will endeavour to inform whether your application was successful by June 26th 2015.

We welcome papers that deal with any of the below questions in a practical or theoretical manner. The listed questions are not exclusive though - they are meant to stimulate ideas, and the call is open to any research which falls within their general themes.

Topic 1: 'Seeing' the Nonhuman Animal

- Representations of animals, human and nonhuman: Modernism, postmodernism and beyond...

While an understanding of and reflection upon of the legacy of modernity is a necessary part of research that aims to challenge human exceptionalism, it might be time to move away from critique as the fundamental tool (or even purpose) of academic thinking. How can we use some of the inevitable concepts of modernism and postmodernism carefully, caringly and creatively instead of merely critically to understand the representation of animals, be that in the media, the arts, or elsewhere?

- Learning to see the nonhuman other

How can anthrozoological research bring in the non-human other without unnecessary anthropocentrism; is it possible or practical to see the nonhuman animal in its own terms, separate from the human world? Is centralising humans in anthrozoological study inevitable? If so, what are some of the ways to do so responsibly? What practices of respect (in all its modern and historical meanings) towards the non-human other can we apply in our own research, and how might this research permeate real lives and real subjects?

- Cognitive psychologies – a biocentric perspective

How can research into animal cognition help us not only appreciate non-human others as possessing some level of mental capacities, but move beyond the human-centred valuation of cognition. What can we learn about our own 'animality' through the study of cognition?

- Rethinking classifications

What are the political consequences of certain classifications in natural sciences, social sciences and non-academic spheres? Do such divisions between natural and social sciences still make sense? If yes, why? If not, how can we attempt to bridge it?

- Relational Epistemologies – building the human-animal bond through emotional ecologies.



How can we document and theorise the complex experiences that create bonds between humans and nonhuman animals? Can we identify, even formalise, the conditions that such bonds develop in? Where does the nonhuman stand in this relationship, and how may research be applied to encourage greater interspecies relations, closing the gap between 'us' and 'them'?

Topic 2: Fostering Coexistence – being with the nonhuman animal

➤ Human-wildlife conflict resolution

Should human-wildlife conflicts be viewed more as human-human conflicts? If yes, then how might our research help to alleviate threatened coexistences between wildlife and humans? If not, then can the nonhumans needs be prioritised over human needs? With often complex social and political dimensions at play, what is the role of the anthrozoologist in conflict resolution?

➤ Sharing Intimacies – from pets to pests

How do humans view those animals closest to them, when territories and personal spaces are shared with other beings? What defines how we view these animals – companions or intruders? Why might we except one species but not another, and how might our research challenge these ideas? Can speciesism be overcome?

➤ Health and Wellbeing: from One Health to biomedical models

What are the practical and ethical dimensions of viewing health issues as spanning across the species barriers? When animals are part of human health and wellbeing are they viewed as objects or subjects? What ethical position does this put us, the researchers, in?

➤ Anthrozoological cosmologies and animals in religion

The place of other animals in human religion is numerous as it is varied, and can present important cultural contexts for how animals are viewed and treated. Is a globalised, modernised world creating shifts in how animals are cosmologically viewed? If so, how does this impact nonhuman animals? Can other animals possess their own cosmological capacities? How might we begin to document this?

➤ Trans-species continuity

In what ways do animal species (including humans) share material and emotional domains? How can we attempt to acknowledge these entanglements, and see continuity rather than differences? What are the tools and best practices for promoting an awareness of trans-species ecological networks? How can we begin to think about the agents in these networks as not only interacting, but in Karen Barad's term, intra-acting?

Topic 3: Action Research, Methods and Considerations

➤ Applied anthrozoology

With increasing recognition of animal sentience, what steps are we taking to apply our skills and knowledge to real life situations? Are there specific areas that could benefit from applied research, and how should the researcher coordinate their work away from the study and into the real world?



- Bridging the gap between academia and practice. Pragmatic approaches for effective praxis

Should anthrozoology advocate not only for animal welfare, but also for action research? Or should research be reserved for intellectual discussion? How might this debate impact our informant's views towards research: does it create trust or distance? If we are aiming for practical efficacy in our work, then how can the crucial relationship between academia and practice be optimised?

- Fostering lines of communication in Action Research – approachable dialogues and inclusive networks

What problems might arise when attempting to apply our research to real life situations? Do our informants, human or not, feel like subjects rather than 'the subject'? What can we do to ensure we meet all as equals, and foster productive and fair lines of communication that encourages partnership rather than spectatorship?

- Giving animals a voice in research

How often do we hear the nonhuman voice? How can animals be given a stronger voice in our research? What is required of us: methodologically, philosophically, and ethically? What are the barriers we face in translating and prioritising the nonhuman animal voice?

- Trans-biopolitics and legislative issues

If we take a role of advocacy, how might we deal with legislative issues that extend beyond the individual to mass political power? When trans-biopolitics, politics that affect animals across the species border, are impacting the lives of animals can the academic become the activist? What political motives are most detrimental to animal welfare, and how can we work through them?

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact a member of our team on the below emails.

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We very much look forward to hearing from you, and good luck with your application!