FYS 18: Ten Ways to Know Nature
Barbara Olivier and Kevin Robinson

Transcript for “Animals” Chapter of Podcast Episode

B= Barbara Olivier
K= Kevin Robinson

[Under the Sea intro]
*Down here all the fish is happy*
*As off through the waves they roll*
*The fish on the land ain't happy*
*They sad 'cause they in their bowl*
*But fish in the bowl is lucky*
*They in for a worser fate*
*One day when the boss get hungry*
*Guess who's gon' be on the plate*
*Under the sea*
*Under the sea*
*Nobody beat us*
*Fry us and eat us*
*In fricassee*

B: Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of *Animals and Nature*.

K: For you first time listeners, my name is Kevin Robinson and this is my apprentice Barbara Olivier. On today’s podcast, we will be discussing how humans come to know nature through their interactions with animals.

B: But before we give our opinions on this topic, let’s see what our community has to say about it.

[B: How do humans come to know nature by interacting with animals?
   Random girl A: “Wait, what? Um, uh…”
K: How do you come to know nature through your interaction with animals?
   Random girl B: “Uhh, I don’t even know what that means”
B: How do humans come to know nature by interacting with animals?
   Random girl C: “I don’t know”]

K: So it seems no one knows how to answer this question.

B: Okay so let’s reexamine the question. What do we humans come to learn about nature if we judge nature through our interactions with animals?

K: Our peers seemed to be struggling with the complexity of this question so we’ve researched what some scholars had to say on the issue.

B: Besides Jane Goodall, we came across Professor Paul Waldau, an animal studies specialist.
K: For Paul Waldau, animal studies are the answer to this question. By learning about animals and recognizing their imminent presence, we start to feel personal responsibility towards the nature around us, and push for sustainable living in respect to animals and natural resources.

B: So for scholars in the field of animal studies there seems to be a balance between the roles of humans and animals.

K: But wait, let’s assume most of our listeners don’t specialize in the field of animals studies. What would they come to know about nature if their interactions with animals are completely different?

B: Let’s look at the three most common types of human-animal interactions; consumers, farmers and pet owners.

B: Well to begin, I think we should mention the intro song, which I know you were all wondering about. The lyrics in this snippet of the classic song ‘Under the Sea’ from Disney’s movie The Little Mermaid talks about the lives of aquatic animals under the sea in contrast with animals up on land. It seems Sebastian was saying that animas should stay away from humans or else we’d fry them and eat in fracases.

K: That seems to be the theme in many Disney movies though. Animals have to avoid humans in order to stay alive.

B: Really, I never thought about it like that. When I was younger and began watching Disney movies, all I’d notice were the furry and cute animals.

K: Barb, it seems like you don’t believe me, let’s look at the movies like Bambi and the Little Mermaid, in these movies man is depicted as the destructive force. For example, Ariel’s father, the king of the sea, forbids her from interacting with us whatsoever.

B: So is that why when man comes into the forest in Bambi all you hear is this [Snippet of Man] Looking at animals through Disney movies or films in general, it would seem that what we’d know about nature is that humans are not allowed and we should not be a part of it.

K: Look barb you’re learning

B: Oh gee thanks Kev, well you know, I don’t see us as that bad…

K: You’re right, Disney doesn’t solely make these films to depict us as the bad guys, but to show us that we need to think of nature as something that needs our protection. See Disney makes these creatures human like so that we can relate to them, but then all we get is an inaccurate model of what animals and thus nature is.
B: I see what you mean now. So if Disney movies give us an inaccurate model of what animals are to us, then I wonder about pets?

K: You lost me Barb

B: It would seem my owning a dog should help me understand nature more right? But I am only understanding the nature that we humans can train and control. Nature in the safari, away from tourists, is a lot different. So as a pet owner, what do I understand about nature? It is something that I can control and make domesticated? Or is that just a separate version?

K: I see what you mean. When I think of a pet dog my mind doesn’t automatically jump to “natural” or nature at all, but something completely controlled by humans. It’s kind of similar to what I think of farming.

B: How so Kev?

K: Well let me be clear, there are two specific kinds of farming, one is the more organic and traditional and on the other side of the spectrum there is factory farming in which animals are looked at as machines. Both types of farming involve human and animal interactions but seeing nature through these entities means completely different things depending on the type of farming.

B: Okay, listeners, In case you may not know, many companies employ factory farms to produce their meat because it is more cost effective. Now let me walk you through the set-up of a Purdue chicken farm. [Audio of a chicken coup begins to play] You walk in and are hit full blast by an atrocious smell of excrement and decaying chicken bodies. As you began to notice the chickens, you’d see that they are all sitting because they’ve been pumped up with steroids making their bodies too heavy for their legs to support. They are in cramped, enclosed spaces and probably won’t take more than 5 steps in their entire lifetimes.

K: It’s hard to believe that that’s even legal. This reminds me of what professor Elton of Sterling University said, “If you insist on thinking about animals as a mere machine, then you won’t do justice to animals”.

B: I totally agree. If you work in a factory farm, then animals and thus nature are money-making machines, which is not natural in any sense of the word.

K: On the other side of the spectrum, organic farms are more pastoral. The animals are fed grass, allowed to roam, and interact with their natural surroundings. If you’re a farmer in the traditional sense, then nature is something that you can take care of day in and day out. The difference between the factory farmers and traditional farmers is what animals and thus nature means to them. For factory farmers, nature is mass produced and disposable, but for traditional farmers nature is more personal and cyclical.

B: So Kev, most of our listeners probably aren’t farmers
K: Right, and some might not even own pets

B: And believe it or not, there may be a fair few that have never seen a Disney movie

K: So what do you know about animals?

B: It’s pretty impossible to say that you have no relationship with animals. Just think of the meals you’ve had today, involving meat or not.

K: There isn’t a definite way to come to know nature through human-animal interactions because those interactions are different for everyone including those listening to this podcast.

B: By learning and studying animals, we also come to learn a lot more about human nature and we find that there is much overlap and this overlap causes us to realize that to downgrade animals is to downgrade ourselves.

K: Animals build families and communities the same way we do. There are even hierarchies in the insect world, just think of queen bees. Learning about animals also helps us to understand that we have faults. We cannot smell nearly as well as a dog, nor can we see as far as an eagle.

B: What we hope is that because of this podcast you begin to wonder about the animals around you. You don’t have to become a vegetarian, like me. But you should be more aware of the choices you make and what you’re exposed to.

K: Well said barb. Well this is Kevin Robinson

B: And Barbara Olivier

K: Signing off. This has been another episode of animals and nature, thanks for listening!

B: Bye

[Under the Sea outro song]
What do they got? A lot of sand
We got a hot crustacean band
Each little clam here
know how to jam here
Under the sea
Each little slug here
Cuttin’ a rug here
Under the sea
Each little snail here
Know how to wail here
That’s why it’s hotter
Under the water
Ya we in luck here
Down in the muck here
Under the sea