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The Animal Question in Ecosystem Restoration: Foregrounding animal kin through Environmental Restorative Justice (ERJ)

La cuestión animal en la restauración de los ecosistemas: Poner en primer plano la familia animal a través de la justicia restaurativa medioambiental (JRM)

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Summary

I draw attention to the context of ecosystem restoration where a wide number of contestations impact how animal kin are included or excluded from restorative efforts. In part 1, I explore why the Animal Question is an important one for ecosystem restoration and identify the issues of habitus, deep harm and contested spaces. Following in part 2, I discuss why I think ERJ is relevant for engaging with the Animal Question in ecosystem restoration and situate ERJ's conceptualisation of harm. Part 3 delves deeper into some of the pathways I consider ERJ ethos and practices might engage the Animal Question in the context of ecosystem restoration. My consideration starts by discussing the values of relationality, care and connectedness. I then examine the need for reflection before examining the contestations through examples of expert-to-expert, expert-to-volunteer, and giving animal kin voice. I finish this part by suggesting that taking the long view, what I term 'ongoing attentiveness', must underlie ERJ's direction. In conclusion, I advocate that having a restorative imagination will encourage far-reaching, transformative engagement with the Animal Question.

Keywords

Animal Question; ecosystem restoration; animal kin; environmental restorative justice.

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Resumen

Me centraré en el contexto de la restauración de ecosistemas, en el que un gran número de elementos polémicos se refieren a la forma en que los animales se incluyen o excluyen de los esfuerzos de restauración. En la primera parte, comienzo explorando por qué la cuestión de los animales es importante para la restauración de los ecosistemas e identifico las cuestiones del habitus, el daño profundo y los espacios en disputa. A continuación, en la segunda parte, analizo por qué creo que la JRM es pertinente para abordar la cuestión de los animales en la restauración de los ecosistemas y sitúo la conceptualización del daño por parte de la JRM. La tercera parte profundiza en algunas de las vías por las que considero que la ética y las prácticas de la JRM podrían abordar la cuestión animal en el contexto de la restauración de los ecosistemas. Mi reflexión comienza con el análisis de los valores de la relacionalidad, el cuidado y la conectividad. A continuación, examino la necesidad de reflexión antes de abordar las controversias suscitadas a través de ejemplos de experto a experto, experto a voluntario y de dar voz a la familia animal. Termino esta parte sugiriendo que la dirección de la JRM debe basarse en una visión a largo plazo, lo que yo denomino "atención permanente". En conclusión, defiendo que tener una imaginación restaurativa fomentará un compromiso transformador de gran alcance respecto de la cuestión animal.

Palabras clave

La cuestión animal; la restauración de ecosistemas; el parentesco animal; la justicia restaurativa medioambiental.

Introduction

In the 'age of ecological restoration' (Cross, Bateman & Cross, 2020, p. 4), underpinned by the highest level of global recognition possible through the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030), humanity has important restorative work to do—and to continue doing. This restorative effort is urgent, as many of Earth's ecosystems have deteriorated 'at rates unprecedented in human history' as a result of human activities, and the health of the planet is in decline (United Nations, 2019). Ecosystem restoration is not meant for humans alone, however. Its benefits, methods, applications and reasoning must be inclusive of the more-than-human world, inclusive of all animal kin (Brooks, 2021).[2] In saying this, there is much in need of untangling and weaving together, for ecological restoration as a theory and practice is fraught with complex socio-ecological challenges, and most keenly of all, the oft neglected and multitudinous 'Animal Question' that asks us to consider the moral and

2 I chose the term 'kin' for this article because it expresses the sense of connectedness reflective of human beings as animals too, the necessity of acknowledging this and actively always seeking to be forming and tending the 'human-animal relationship'. I draw inspiration from scholar Nickie Charles (2014, p. 726), who says: 'kinship is the idiom of connectedness and belonging; it is the language we use to indicate significant and enduring connectedness in personal lives even across the species barrier'. In the ecosystem restoration context, the term 'kin' helps to emphasise the relational sense of proximity, reflectivity and awareness needed to raise the Animal Question.

practical implications of how we commit to animal kin, as societies generally, and in future restorative efforts.[3]

Bringing the Animal Question into ecosystem restoration involves directly raising and addressing the challenges of how animal kin are viewed, treated, and included by participants during restorative efforts.[4] Behind this specific context of ecosystem restoration stands the broader issue of how human cultures view and use animal kin generally, requiring examination of this as a starting point. Dismissive, instrumental and dominating views towards animal kin are rife and often stand in the way of deeper moral contemplation of our relationship with animal kin, instead sublimating our responsibility towards the more-than-human in denial and silence (Wicks, 2011).[5] When human-centric dismissiveness of animal kin is predominant, we tend to argue that human needs and preferences have greater importance, regardless of how harmful, wasteful or alienating this line of reasoning is towards animal kin.

In the past, not striving to understand or respect the sentience, intrinsicality, and thriving or flourishing of 'the other' (Ferguson, 2019, p. 137) was considered normal and even beneficial, and we created an artifice of separation between ourselves and animal kin. Drawn from a range of justifying beliefs that included Abrahamic faiths and influential cultural conceptualisations such as Cartesian dualism, this separateness fuelled a narrative of human domination over animal kin, which permitted us to equate animal kin with being beasts, machines, objects and owned property (Bridle, 2022, p. 253; Donovan, 2017; Seamer, 1998). We now live in an era where excuses for reticence to engage with the Animal Question and commit to living harmoniously with animal kin are no longer justifiable, dispelled by increased calls for just relations and growing scientific awareness that animal kin have life interests, cultures, communications, realities and capabilities that are every bit as complex, intricate and special as our own. Renewed reverence for ancient, formerly overlooked

3 Throughout the article, my use of the term 'restorative efforts' denotes ecosystem restoration project work. This includes activities like tree/vegetation planting, weeding, rewilding, erosion control, river care, managing animal species, scientific assessment/decision-making, project management, education, etc.

4 Concerning participants, I mean to include everyone with an interest in ecosystem restoration, vocationally, situationally, or self-professed, including ecological scientists, expert practitioners, Indigenous communities, grassroots eco-care groups, civic ecologists, etc.

5 It is clear that not all individuals, communities or cultures take this approach. In particular, many Indigenous cultures have not dissociated from nature and nonhumans and 'the idea of an interrelation of beings arguably has always been an integral part of their tradition' (Jürgens, 2017, p. 26). There have also been animal welfare movements for centuries (e.g., see Ferguson, 2019, pp. 150-151). My focus is upon the heavily pervasive attitude across societies (especially the industrialised ones) that treat animal kin as separate and dominated, often resulting in a denial of inter-relationality.

but never forgotten Indigenous cultural and spiritual worldviews of human interconnectedness with all beings (both animate and inanimate) has revealed the lie and harmfulness of the artifice of separateness. Moreover, millions of humans have 'close, emotional bonds' with animal kin, and scientific confirmation of the deep attachments we have with animal kin comes as no surprise but rather is 'the continuation of a long-standing trend' revealing that mechanical viewpoints of animal kin have never reflected every person's experience (Charles, 2014, p. 726). Thus, past failures to take responsibility for wrongdoings towards animal kin are an injustice, requiring from humans a recognition of the vulnerability and agency of animal kin and a willingness to 'reconnect the tie' (Bertolesi, 2017).

These reasons, along with the dedication of zoological, ecological and other related scientists (both Indigenous and Western), animal welfare practitioners, animal studies scholars, and animal-sensitive citizens worldwide to engage with animals as kin, provide urgent impetus to acknowledge, research and interact with the ethical complexities, multiple intelligences and well-being of the animal kin with whom we co-dwell on this planet, in order to respond to the Animal Question in earnest. For one such response, I put forward environmental restorative justice (ERJ), restorative justice's environmental offshoot, as having the potential to provide a range of ethical and practical approaches suitable for engaging with the Animal Question. In particular, I draw focus to the context of ecosystem restoration where a wide number of contestations impact how animal kin are included or excluded from restorative efforts. In part one, I commence by exploring why the Animal Question is an important one for ecosystem restoration and identify the issues of habitus, deep harm and contested spaces. Following in part two, I discuss why I think ERJ is relevant for engaging with the Animal Question in ecosystem restoration and situate ERJ's conceptualisation of harm. Part three delves deeper into some of the pathways I consider ERJ ethos and practices might engage the Animal Question in the context of ecosystem restoration. My consideration starts by discussing the values of relationality, care and connectedness; I then examine the need for reflection before examining the contestations through examples of expert-to-expert, expert-to-volunteer, and giving animal kin voice. I finish this part by suggesting that taking the long view, what I term 'ongoing attentiveness', must underlie ERJ's direction. In conclusion, I advocate that having a restorative imagination will encourage far-reaching, transformative engagement with the Animal Question.

Part 1. Why Responding to the Animal Question Matters for Ecosystem Restoration

In this part, I discuss the Animal Question, first broadly, then in relation to ecosystem restoration. Secondly, I explore how distancing ourselves from nature is a form of habitus that results in 'deep harm'. The part ends with an overview of various contestations common in ecosystem restoration, setting up the rationale for involving ERJ.

The Animal Question

The Animal Question refers to the complex, often unspoken and widespread challenging disparities of how we think about, relate to, use and live alongside animals in ways that dismiss, abuse, and deny the well-being, agency and realities of animal kin. It refers to 'the whole sticky mess of human views' about animal kin (Mason, 2007, p. 203). In particular, asking it surfaces how human beings put themselves above nonhuman beings, leaving us 'with no sense of kinship with other life on this planet' (Mason, 2006 p. 178). In asking 'how much do animals matter morally?' (Varona, 2022), the Animal Question acknowledges animals as sentient beings with personhood (Wallach et al., 2020), and that 'science recognizes fundamental similarities when it comes to neurophysiology, cognition, emotions, and sentience' (de Waal & Andrews, 2022, p. 1352). These facts require 'us to also notice—and consider—our impact on other species … [even though this] is bound to complicate an already complex moral world' (de Waal & Andrews, 2022, p. 1352). Responding to it is a challenging, multi-tentacled, entangling undertaking.

The Animal Question is 'a central issue for how we theorize the nature of our political community, and its ideas of citizenship, justice, and human rights' (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011, p. 1) and requires us to reflect upon 'what *positive* obligations we may owe to animals' (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011, p. 6). From a big picture angle, the Animal Question causes us to 'grapple […] with capitalism's specific transformation of socio-ecological life' (O'Key, 2021). This includes but is not limited to the *unthinkingness* we practise daily, manifested by our habitat-destroying bulldozed housing estates and outlet store sprawls, industrial 'meat-making' factories, migration-disorienting blazing night lights, water-thieving agriculture, and much more on a list that proceeds ever onwards. Human-centric conviction of the sacredness of our consumption and production choices leads us to think that the current way is the only way to 'survive well'. At a relational level, 'animal political questions challenge us to think and view the world from the animal's perspective' (Ratamäki, 2020, p. 254), requiring us to view animal kin as individuals deserving of a good life (Ratamäki,

2020). When responding to the Animal Question, whether or not we can directly relate to or communicate with animal kin is not the litmus test, for our perception of reality most likely differs markedly from the majority of animal kin. We often fail to account for the animal kin's *Umwelt*, instead substituting our own conceptualisation of reality as the standard, thereby assuming animal kin lack intelligence, or intelligence deserving of admiration (Bridle, 2022; Ball, 2022; Gregg, 2022; Jürgens, 2017).[6] Animal kin tend to be better attuned to their *Umwelten* than we are with ours (Jürgens, 2017), so it is we who need to be more curious about and respectful of what constitutes intelligence. The Animal Question reminds us that whether or not animal kin are alike in intellectual, physical and spiritual experiences, 'the Earth is bursting with animal species that have hit on solutions for how to live the good life in ways that put the human species to shame' (Gregg, 2022, p. 16). Thus, the Animal Question calls for us to be both more humble and more attentive to the ways in which our actions impact animal kin.

Asking the Animal Question is not just about highlighting our complicity in harm done to animal kin. First, it causes us to delve into what is termed the human-nature or human-animal relationship, namely the requirement to reconnect to nature and animal kin, and our ability to attune ourselves to the subjectivities and realities of animal kin to be able to appreciate their lifeworld experiences (Jürgens, 2017; Seeber, 2014). This relationality aspect of the Animal Question holds promise for restoring deeper understanding of, respect for, and connectedness with our animal kin. Secondly, thinking from a transformational perspective, it further demands of us to ask what needs 'to be radically changed' (Mason, 2006, p. 182)? In this way, the Animal Question pries open reflection space to encourage the emergence and growth of a more hopeful, conscious and engaged attitude towards animal kin. We need to keep asking ourselves: What can we do to make nonhuman animals visible in our daily lives? In what ways can we make a commitment to understanding and reducing our impacts on animal kin? How can we respect animal kin? Ultimately, the Animal Question includes asking whether we're able to place animal kin 'on the same footing as us humans' and whether we're able to 'embrace equality for all our conspecifics?' (Alves, 2021 p. 137). To be answered across-the-board and across-time, the Animal Question demands from us long-term commitment and attentiveness, unearthing of committed champions and creation of

6 *Umwelt*, plural *Umwelten*, is a German loanword that expresses the idea of a particular being's sensory experience with the environmental surroundings or world, its subjectivities and 'ways the world is meaningful for it' (Favela, 2019, p. 2). In some cases, such as the octopus, it may even be relevant to acknowledge a collection of *Umwelten* within one being, whereby decentralised sensory capacities enable multiple subjectivities (Favela, 2019).

animal-sensitive justice structures to keep it centred and actively upending the *unthinkingness*.

The Animal Question in Ecosystem Restoration

In the context of ecosystem restoration, activist Jim Mason (2022) sees the Animal Question as akin to being 'off limits', noting that many conservationists and environmentalists 'are much more comfortable in their relations with trees than they are with animals' and that anyone considering the Animal Question is 'regarded as emotional, sentimental, neurotic, misguided, and missing the bigger picture of human relations with the living world'. Highlighting the 'uncomfortable assumptions' we have about ecosystem values and animal kin, scholar Mihnea Tănăsescu (2019, p. 106) says our assumptions remain 'buried deep inside'. Mason (2022) emphasises that avoidance or trivialisation of the Animal Question is not unique to conservation science but serves as a 'red flag' for all scholars and practitioners concerned with restoring nature and our relationship to it. The rarity of the Animal Question in ecosystem restoration is therefore a starting point from which the remaining discussion proceeds.

Distancing Animal Kin: From Society to Ecosystem Restoration

Failure to voice our deep-inside assumptions about animal kin treatment in the context of ecosystem restoration is reflective of broader societal silence about the Animal Question. Thus, this attitudinal stance of distancing ourselves and our actions as a broader social disposition towards animal kin needs addressing before approaching integration of the Animal Question into ecosystem restoration.

The Industrialised World's Attitude Towards Animal Kin – A Habitus of 'Deep Harm'

Despite a wealth of information confirming that we humans are but one kind of animal, our industrialised societal worldview of animal kin remains stuck in a 'wholesale denial of respect to our fellow creatures … all but blinded … to the lessons of interdependence' (Ferguson, 2019, p. 142). What we view as daily 'normal' practices often alienate, dismiss, set aside or control animal kin. Normalising-of-harm towards animal kin practices include: education that 'tames the subjectivity of the student' so as to sever relationality with animal kin (Spannring, 2019, p. 2); pastimes that involve and often harm animal kin (e.g., racing, hunting, rodeos, baiting, fighting); production systems that deny the autonomy and well-being of animal kin (e.g., factory farming, large-scale abattoirs, animal transportation, animal testing; see further Wicks, 2011); and workplace expecta-

tions (e.g., pressuring staff into office bets on animal racing, meat-filled snacks for meetings). Yet, this distancing attitude of humans towards animal kin continues against a backdrop of major scientific learnings confirming similarities or equivalents in sentience, ability to feel pain, intelligence, relationality, emotions, and cultures of animal kin (Bekoff, 2021; Bridle, 2022; de Waal & Andrews, 2022; Ferguson, 2019). How can it therefore be that we don't take much notice and change our ways?

Citing sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, ethical leadership commentator Mark Crosweller (2021, p. 2) refers to the unspoken, unacknowledged influences on our behaviours that formulate and pervade over time, including the behaviours of our institutions and leaders, as 'habitus'. Habitus is the 'system of dispositions and ways of acting in the world … which is never imposed or explicitly set out, but rather takes place insensibly, gradually, progressively, and imperceptibly'. Crosweller (2021, p. 3) further notes that human-centric habitus is 'a specific habitus that separates and elevates humans from non-humans, privileges some humans over other humans, disavows vulnerability, and prioritises individualism, self-interest, competitiveness, the commodification of nature, and the exploitation of humans and non-humans to advance economic development'. In this way, 'lucrative mistreatment of animals [can] continue at the same time that the shape of social and political life is reinforced by the very forms of exploitation it denies' (Wicks, 2011, p. 189).

I've already alluded to what I call *unthinkingness*. This, along with denial and silencing, nest within and support the habitus, affecting every human. In denial, we think about animal kin as research or testing objects, livestock, products and materials, entertainment, and other utilitarian objectifications. In *unthinkingness*, we do *not* think about convenient, sanitised packages of meat or leather car seats as animals, and we and our 'children are trained to ignore the reality of meat' (Wicks, 2011, p. 191). To suppress any dissonance we experience, we resort to a coping strategy of 'distancing' to reduce any sense of feeling threatened or bad 'because it is more convenient to change your attitudes than to change your actions' (Ojala, 2013, p. 173). Wicks (2011, p. 188) calls out the denial and silence about animal kin and the harm caused by our daily practices engaged in across society as a 'collective endeavour and which involves a collaborative effort'. This silence includes unspoken collusion to maintain our denial, such as not referring to abattoirs at a barbeque and feeling squeamish when the vegetarian turns up because 'their presence raises into consciousness all those ideas and images so carefully "not known" and "not seen"' (Wicks, 2011, p. 188). Even for those whose work directly involves interacting with animal kin, there are taboos on 'letting our emotions gain the better of us' so that we can compartmentalise our treatment of animal kin (Bekoff, 2021). For example, in explaining how veterinarians are inculcated in their habitus, femi-

nist veterinarian Vanessa Ashall (2022, p. 4) refers to how 'vets' bodies are trained to respond in specific ways to the bodies of animals and their by-products' so as to shun discussion of the emotionality, complex emotional toll or sensory experiences vets must face daily. Failure to communicate our feelings about the societal-wide harm inflicted on animals not only distances us from animal kin but from each other too, specifically in that those who do notice the discrepancies often feel like an outcast, unable to express these inconvenient truths in the company of others (Wicks, 2011), and more generally in the sense of humanity's separateness from animal kin.

Conservationist Marc Bekoff (2013) refers to what he calls 'redecorating nature' to explain what we do as a result of our habitus. It encompasses the insistence we can constantly embark on 'building homes in the living rooms of other animals, building highways where they travel, or decimating habitats and not only killing individuals but breaking up closely knit families' (Bekoff, 2013, p. xx). Habitus lies behind the rapid decline and extinction of animal kin and their habitats. Our voracious consumption, mindless resources covetousness and denigration of animal kin as inferior, odd or undesirable gives way to not caring and not being bothered by the harms our choices inflict. For example, zoologist author Jack Ashby (2022, p. 288) explains how colonial settler depictions of Australian marsupials as 'too stupid to survive' and as invariably weird, ugly and strange persisted over time. This denigrating attitude has reduced government willingness to prioritise their protection, infused a societal-wide devaluing of marsupials in both language and scientific/cultural representations and 'contributes to the extinction crisis' (Ashby, 2022, p. 289). In particular, he emphasises that 'it really does matter how we talk about' animal kin and decries the social conditioning that sanctions speaking derogatorily of certain animal kin because it compounds the challenges of conservation efforts (Ashby, 2022, p. 315).

Unthinkingness, denial and silence normalise harm done to animal kin, thereby 'implicitly encouraging potential offenders to regard it as morally acceptable' (Wicks, 2011, p. 189). The *unthinkingness*, denial and silence that underpin habitus create a form of 'deep harm'. Harm can be understood broadly as the collective detrimental and negative impacts of human behaviours (or assaults) on other humans, on the environment, and on animal kin. Deep harm results when we fail to address the Animal Question as part of our daily activities and decision-making and when we fail to speak to the proverbial 'elephant in the room' and break our silence (Wicks, 2011). In keeping humans separated from each other (humans who do see the harm versus humans who do not/do not want to) and in separating humans from animal kin (subjects versus objects), deep harm potentially pervades every human activity. Habitus directly harms the animal kin whose homes, nutrition, migration paths, birthing spaces, nurseries, and chances for the good life, are constantly embattled in myriad changing

ways. Indirect or 'unintended harm' is equally inexcusable because it reveals our lack of foresight, failure to wrangle with complexity and lack of attentiveness to consequences, thinking skills supposedly unique to the human mind that we pride ourselves on (Ball, 2022). Indirect harm shows up in examples like inept city planning, where animal kin who 'choose to live near or among humans' are negatively impacted by the built environment, freeways and barriers that fail to account for animal kin presence (Spannring, 2019, p. 11). When we aver all of our senses and direct them solely to doing what counts for us as humans, whilst neglecting the realities and needs of other beings, we cause deep harm.

Animal Kin in Ecosystem Restoration: A Contested Space

Ecosystem restoration is the practice of restoration, whilst restoration ecology is the theorising and conceptualisation behind the practice (Burke & Mitchell, 2007), each mutually reinforcing and informing the other. The natural scientists involved have backgrounds in such fields as ecological science, conservation biology and habitat restoration. It is a challenging area of science, with constant questions as to how to restore particular ecosystems, whether or not a certain historical baseline should inform the restoration or if a novel ecosystem would be more appropriate, how to anticipate future changes, and whether or not to leave an ecosystem to restore itself or to intervene (e.g., see Burke & Mitchell, 2007; Coleman, et al., 2020; Martin, 2022). Clearly, restoring ecosystems requires a plethora of thinking across the scientific disciplines involved, requiring many complex choices. This also means, however, that ecosystem restoration is not a task for natural scientists alone but rather requires a range of skills, viewpoints and knowledge from other scholarly and practice areas such as social sciences, philosophy, law, and community engagement. This need for broader involvement is not always apparent in the literature, projects and decision-making though, a reason why integrating the Animal Question requires remaining focused on a broader inclusion of perspectives, as I address below.

When it comes to how animal kin are viewed, treated and included in ecosystem restoration, a read through restoration ecology scholarship and grey literature reveals numerous disparities, tensions and challenges—and more hard decisions to be made. From the perspectives of animal kin, ecosystem restoration theory and practice often hierarchise which species and entities are prioritised, moved or removed, killed/culled, given contraceptives, rewilded/reintroduced, and so forth (Martin, 2022; Marris, 2021). In numerous cases, 'conservation [has] often overlooked the interests of individual sentient animals' (Coghlan & Cardilini, 2022, p. 9), their welfare and interests downplayed or undervalued in the service of the ecosystem as a whole or in preference to preserving some species over others (Capozzelli, 2020; Coghlan & Cardilini,

2022; Marris, 2021; Martin, 2022). A preference may be accorded to wild status over domesticated, placing the 'focus on species preservation and the wild and overlook[ing] the lives of individual animals and domesticated animals' (Seeber, 2014, p. 175). Language conventions that use terms such as invasive, wild, domesticated, native, and rare, each determine how animal kin are managed, perceived and treated in conservation processes (Marris, 2021). How animal kin fare as a result of ecosystem restoration is not often determined and animal kin are 'poorly represented in restoration goal setting, monitoring and assessments of restoration success' (Cross, Bateman & Cross, 2020, p. 4).

Ecologists also face an emotional contestation facet akin to Ashall's (2022) observations on veterinarians having to suppress emotionality, wherein the fraught emotional reactions of restoration professionals towards directly harming animal kin using 'lethal control' vie with getting the 'task of conservation' done as a professional matter of course (Lynn et al., 2020). Saving species within ecosystems tends to involve a lot of killing of animals (Marris, 2021; Wallach et al., 2020): '[c]onservation readily embraced and still embraces mass killing and poisons and technologies that cause great suffering, often implemented without adequate knowledge of the likely consequences and effectiveness of those actions' (Coghlan & Cardilini, 2022, p. 9). This 'entrenched violence regularly enacted against sentient beings in conservation programs' (Wallach et al., 2020, p. 1104) can be viewed as a form of deep harm to both those having to perform the task and the affected animal kin. This emotional contestation is a major reason behind why there is a call to develop compassionate conservation (Wallach et al., 2020; Coghlan & Cardilini, 2022). It is important to acknowledge this emotional aspect of conservation work, as many ecologists do not like resorting to lethal control approaches personally but see it as a profession-condoned necessity (Marris, 2021). Moreover, this aspect is poorly known by the wider public (Colwell, 2018), adding urgency to the need to open up the dialogue about the Animal Question in restorative efforts.

Another reflection on contestation relates to the example of viewing certain animal kin as 'unwanted' in the process of restoring an ecosystem. Such animal kin are often termed 'feral', 'invasive', 'pest', or 'non-native', thereby marking them as an outsider, of alien status. This denial of belongingness creates a rationale for humans to commit harm in the name of a perceived greater good. Leaving aside the scientific rationales motivating scientists' decision-making, there is the concern that 'some less compassionate attitudes are entrenched in conservation cultures' (Coghlan & Cardilini, 2022, pp. 9-10). This, in turn, leads to a wider concern about negative attitudinal permeation through society, cascading from aggressive, derogatory and polarising terminology being applied to animal kin (Ashby, 2022; Colwell, 2018). I contend that this can lead to *our attitudes* becoming at the very least de-sensitised, and at the worst, brutal or 'fe-

ralised'. Terminology that targets or demonises specific animal kin and species as being a pest or a threat carries with it inherent implications of what Mason (2022) terms misothery, or 'a kind of prejudice, an attitude of hatred and contempt toward animals', an othering consisting of embedded prejudices cobbled together from reasons such as 'I like to hunt' to 'animals are dirty'. In some cases, misothery promotes a 'moral panic' that certain animal kin species are a perilous threat to humans or causing large-scale environmental harm even though the full spectrum of viewpoints and evidence remains missing (Lynn et al., 2019). As noted earlier, our language about animal kin matters, and the 'feralising' of our attitudes towards unwanted animals in ecosystems has broader societal implications that extend beyond ecosystem restoration, including ongoing objectification of animals and creating euphemisms for practices like 'mulesing, crutching, and beak trimming' (Wicks, 2011, p. 193) which normalise practices that cause cruelty and pain. Giving credence to speaking ill of animal kin can lead to committing acts of violence against animal kin with a sense of 'justification'. Little reflection space is spared to pondering that animal kin lack awareness of human-centric rules and ethical orientations, did not choose to be transported to a non-native location, and are neither directly nor indirectly intentionally committing environmental harm (Margonelli, 2018). Little thought is given to the human redecorating of nature that invades, disrupts and removes the habitats and nutrition sources of animal kin, native and non-native alike. The incessant pace and unlikely cessation of human activity continues to do deep harm yet is ignored in preference of battle cries to 'kill all the invaders!' or to pursue a 'war on invasives', backed by science and promoted by conservation agencies. In this way, the feral designation resurrects an authoritarian, domination psyche within human culture that excuses harm to animal kin.

Shifting the Space of Contestation towards a Space of Pluralities

The aforesaid discussion does not deny that there may be valid and caring reasons to intervene (humanely and wisely) or not in relation to a particular species, predator or introduced animal from scientific, safety and all-kin well-being perspectives as part of restorative efforts (Jürgens, 2017, p. 50). That aside, I have sought to clarify that a range of contestations concerning ecosystem restoration and animal kin exist, revealing a surfeit of difficulties, differences of opinions, tensions and socio-ecological entwinements. The contested space therefore leads me to conclude that asking the when, why, and how of integrating the Animal Question requires ongoing dialogue and nuanced decision-making informed by a wide range of perspectives. Before I progress to discussing the value and means of bringing in more perspectives, I summarise some of the current contestations in Table 1 (noting that my round-up is indicative, not exhaustive).

Table 1. Existing and potential contestations in ecosystem restoration cognisant of animal kin.

Contestation	Brief overview
Ecosystem restoration vs animal welfare	The holistic concentration on the ecosystem or the individual focus on animals by welfare proponents; the value of individual beings versus the value of complex ecosystems (Coghlan & Cardilini, 2022)
Populations/species vs individuals; collectivism vs individuals	Prioritising populations/species of perceived ecosystem benefit, requiring trade-offs between population recovery and animal welfare (Capozzelli, 2020; Celermajer et al., 2020; Marris, 2021; Wallach et al., 2020; Wyatt et al., 2022)
Animal Question vs environmentalism	Not focused solely on ecosystem restoration, however, the Animal Question is not usually raised during restoration decision-making (see discussion throughout)
Compassionate conservation vs traditional conservation	An ongoing dispute between those who consider mass killing, pain-inflicting approaches inherently wrong, with others arguing that more harm than good will be done by not killing certain species (Wallach et al, 2020; Klop-Toker et al., 2020; Marris, 2021); 'differential intrinsic moral value of different sentient animals (including humans)' (Coghlan & Cardilini, 2022, p. 14)
Native vs invasive/non-native; wild vs domesticated; common vs rare	The ways in which we make conceptualisations of animal kin in separating categories, from which flow differentiated consequences and viewpoints, such as viewing populations established by humans as 'unnatural' versus seeing them as co-existing or even potentially beneficial (Marris, 2021; Wallach et al., 2020; Tănăsescu, 2019)
Natural sciences vs humanities/social sciences disciplines	What will bringing in humanities/social science perspectives do for practices requiring scientific decisions? Who is best placed to deal with the ethics, values and interpretation? The need for pluri-/trans-/inter-/multidisciplinary approaches
Animal rights activists vs community traditions; animal rights vs farmers' rights; animal welfare vs conservation	Pitting animal welfare concerns against traditional hunting (including that of Indigenous peoples) and sustenance practices; pitting farmers against activists (Celermajer et al., 2020; Stevens, Aarts & DeWulf, 2021); similar moral high ground but competing credibility narratives (Stevens, Aarts & DeWulf, 2021; Lynn et al., 2019)
Experts/professionals vs lay/public volunteers	Interpretative differences between experts and professionals and the volunteers (citizens, civic ecologists, general public, etc., about what restoration, nature, animal kin, science and public participation mean (Weng, 2015; 2022)
Intentional vs unintentional harm	Deliberate and planned mass killing of animals and other forms of harm (Coghlan & Cardilini, 2022); rhetoric over human-caused suffering versus animal kin-caused suffering through natural predation and fighting (survival needs) (Coghlan & Cardilini, 2022)

Contestation	Brief overview
What to preserve?	There are difficult questions in ecosystem restoration about what to preserve, what to leave as it is, what to remove or change, etc.
Rights, responsibilities, or other ways?	Is the treatment of and relating to animal kin within ecosystem restoration a matter of rights, responsibilities, both, or other approaches such as stewardship and duty of care?
Anthropocentric, eco-centric, animal-centric?	Which emphasis and whose interests get prioritised in ecosystem restoration? Where do animal kin fit?
Should humans assist in ecosystem/animal kin restoration? If so, how far?	How interventionist should we be? Whether or not humans 'interfere' or 'get involved' at all? If humans do intervene, how far? Assisted migration, assisted evolution (Martin, 2022)? Reality that there is 'no wild' anymore and that humans have impacted all (Marris, 2021)
More space or less space for animal kin?	Some argue for half the Earth to be spared for animal kin (see half-earthproject.org), others worry it would be detrimental to vulnerable human communities (Martin, 2022)
Humans as animals or apart from?	The current call to heed our own 'animality' via accepting and improving the human-nature/human-animal relationship and interconnectedness. This comes up against institutional, corporate, societal habitus premised on apartness (complicity)
Conflicts: Have resort to law or alternatives to law?	Should mistreatment of animal kin in ecosystem restoration go to court systems or are alternatives like ERJ preferable? (Noting that ERJ is a supplement to and a way of thinking, not a replacement for justice systems.) Ability of alternative systems to address the big picture causality, hubris, habitus, etc., which is needed for moving us all forward in heated debates

Long within the purview of ecological scientists trained in the natural sciences, the theory and practice of ecosystem restoration are faced with 'a growing call for restoration to integrate with a broader suite of environmental issues and disciplines' (Capozzelli, Hecht & Halsey 2020, p. 267). In this century, we are 'witnessing a fundamental reassessment of the science and practice of nature conservation' (Jepson, 2022, p. 5), which lends itself to broadening ideas, participatory input, and ways of perceiving. Scholar Yeng-Chu Weng (2015; 2022, p. 138) raises the challenge that restoration professionals tend to view ecosystem restoration from scientific practice viewpoints, whilst restoration volunteers hailing from the general public tend to see it as 'restoring the relationships between people and nature', as part of which they care about the socio-ecological benefits that arise from their participation.

Responding to the moral questions concerning animal kin in ecosystem restoration is as equally valid as responding to the scientific ones, especially given that 'certain orientations in conservation are partly expressions of values

and not merely of science' (Coghlan & Cardilini, 2022, p. 13). Such questions need to be addressed through an active pluralist[7] responsiveness rather than relying solely on conservation-as-usual champions who may close ranks defensively or on institutions reflecting worldviews of times past (Coghlan & Cardilini, 2022; Jepson, 2022). When decisions are being made about the place and role of animal kin in ecosystem restoration, a pluralistic approach is essential to enable deeper exploration of the 'moral encounter' with animal kin in ecosystem restoration (Brooks, 2021). Opening up discussion about the Animal Question in restorative efforts will help to ensure that a breadth of knowledge, considerations and understandings is brought to the decision-making, enabling the choices made to be informed widely and transparently. This call to open up the discussion and input more broadly is reiterated by others. For example, environmental studies professor Laura Martin (2022, p. 232) states: 'We can ask these questions of ecological restoration proposals and practices: How are sites of ecological repair distributed in relation to sites of ecological harm? Who benefits from restoration? Who is harmed? Who does the work of care, and who is cared for?'. Other conservationists further emphasise that where harmful methods are used towards animal kin in ecosystem restoration, that 'rigorous and ongoing evaluation of their need and monitoring of their efficacy' must occur and this should be open to broader evaluation than that of scientists alone (Lynn et al., 2019, p. 773; also see Bekoff, 2021). Coghlan and Cardilini (2020, p. 13), noting the entanglement of scientific and value claims in conservation debates, suggest that accounting for 'the long-term public appeal, and the associated practical value, of more animal-centered approaches to conservation' makes good sense. In the related area of animal behavioural sciences, calls are being made for 'greater integration between ethics and affective science … to reach moral conclusions' requiring 'students of animal behavior to engage with the ethical implications of their work, which until now most have been reluctant to do' (de Waal & Andrews, 2022, p. 1352). De Waal and Andrew's call is one that ought to apply to all professions interacting with animal kin.

These calls for broader input provide a foothold for integrating the Animal Question into ecosystem restoration debates. Integration of the Animal Question into ecosystem restoration, through an opening up to plurality,

7 Plurality carries both a passive and an active sense. The passive sense means 'the simple presence of others', whilst the active sense refers to presence of varied interests and perspectives coming together in 'a common meeting ground of all' with the expectations of sharing ideas, wants and hopes, to reach common conclusions or agreements (Studdert & Walkerdine, 2016, p. 35, citing Arendt, 1958). Plurality in the context of ERJ in this article tends to assume the active meaning for the participants being centred; even where the passive sense is meant, such as where there are expectations senior management will be present to answer community questions, it quickly flips to the active sense when such managers are required to participate, take responsibility and produce repairing solutions.

unknitting and disentangling of the habitus, and working through what multispecies champion Donna Haraway (2016) terms 'staying with the trouble', is long overdue. How this might be achieved in part through ERJ providing both nurturant practices and guiding values towards integrating multiple viewpoints and perspectives is where I turn to next.

Part 2. Addressing the Animal Question through ERJ

Part two discusses why ERJ has relevance for addressing ecosystem restoration contestations relating to animal kin and how ERJ's conceptualisation of harm is sufficiently broad to confirm this relevance.

What Can ERJ Contribute?

Environmental restorative justice (ERJ) is 'restorative justice … infused with an environmental sensibility' (Forsyth et al., 2021, p. 18). ERJ brings into play the ethos and practices of restorative justice with a socio-ecological emphasis that is fully cognisant of 'the interwoven interconnectedness between humans, more-than-humans and nature, to achieve both social *and* environmental benefits, human *and* environmental healing/health' (Tepper, 2022, p. 277). In response to querying what we should do about the injustices towards animal kin, scholar Lorenzo Bertolesi (2017, p. 122) proposes that 'the spirit of restorative justice' provides one suitable means for repairing such injustices to 'reconnect the tie with a world of otherness which has been controlled, submitted, subjugated and dominated'. Through ERJ's requiring all of us to take responsibility for harms both past and present committed against animal kin, and seeking to 'reconnect the tie', we can begin to centre the Animal Question and refashion 'solutions for coexistence' (Bertolesi, 2017, p. 123).

The contestations discussed above raise a plethora of questions in need of ongoing dialogue and reflection. For example, Coghlan and Cardilini's (2022, p. 14) review of the debate concerning compassionate conservation concludes that there is a need for 'further exploration of questions' surrounding the compassionate element of the Animal Question in ecosystem restoration, and a 'need for ongoing interdisciplinary dialogue about ethics, value[s], and conservation'. Compassionate conservationists Arian Wallach et al. (2020, p. 1104) note the importance of 'ongoing dialogue' for addressing the morally relevant issues around animal kin in conservation, whilst Lynn et al. (2019, p. 773) state that any harm to 'sentient, sapient, and social individuals … requires strict ethical and scientific scrutiny'. Martin (2022, p. 232) exhorts us to ask that '[w]ith procedural justice in mind … Who decides where restoration happens? Who

decides which species, ecosystems, or other entities are restored? Whose vision of wildness is acted on?'. On whether or not human beings should be standing back or getting involved in caring for nature, Jax et al. (2018, p. 24) consider this 'an important matter of controversy that needs to be addressed in processes of societal deliberation'. Capozzelli, Hecht and Halsey (2020, p. 269) call for conservationists to 'engage with the perspective of animal welfare to advance a human-nature relationship that is infused with empathy and altruism'. Nussbaum (2020) suggests that 'we ought to ask … what each creature strives for and needs, and how various arrangements made by humans foster or impede that striving'. Many commentators also point out that a valid reason for looking at the Animal Question is that 'animal welfare is human welfare' (e.g., see Mason, 2022; Wyatt et al., 2022), reflecting the reality that treatment of animal kin in ecosystem restoration often mirrors mistreatment of marginalised and vulnerable persons, to which any call to justice should be responsive (Marris, 2021).

Entreaties like these provide a cogent reason for bringing in broad perspectives and the Animal Question. ERJ is one possible way forward in that it can effectively enable and support discussion, reflection, plurality of involvement, and a respectful space to think past the habitus. Through 'providing a commonly shared language and set of principles' (Forsyth et al., 2021, p. 36), ERJ can help widen the conversation and deepen the thinking about and engagement with the Animal Question. When implemented in a 'forward-looking' way, ERJ is 'an especially appropriate way to deal with complex environmental issues when various injustices are present' (Hill et al., 2022, p. 182), indicating that ERJ's practices and principles provide both structure and guidance to aid the complex problem-solving likely to arise during dialogue confronting the challenges of the Animal Question. Before I turn to discussion of some of these ERJ approaches in part three, I situate harm in the context of the Animal Question and ERJ, to provide additional grounding for the use of ERJ.

Responsiveness to the Animal Question: ERJ's Expansive Notion of Harm

In terms of addressing harm, ERJ shifts the justice focus beyond crime to broader, deeper thinking about and responsiveness to healing environmental harm and the disruptions such harm causes human communities and animal kin. ERJ is equally concerned with prevention of future environmental harm. This expanded emphasis or framing of harm enables inclusion of the Animal Question as a relevant matter for ERJ. First, much of the harm committed against animal kin is not considered as crime and animals are not seen as victims. Harms committed in human activities such as sport, wildlife trafficking, the meat industry, transportation, breeding, polluting, habitat clearance, and the like, are often given a free pass or do not even register as harm because the end results

(entertainment, exotic pets, delicacies, products, housing, etc.) are considered to justify the means, especially when coupled with our habitus of devaluing animal kin. Yet, from the cruelty inherent in the wildlife trade (Wyatt et al., 2022) to cruelty in slaughterhouses (Grandin, 1988); from the unforgivable toll on animals of meat waste in which we raise animal kin to kill, only to discard the meat[8] (Torrella, 2022), to the penchant for disfiguring animal kin like flat-faced dogs and cats (Davies, 2022) and hot branding cattle (Jones, 2020), we humans have a million and more ways to inflict harm on animal kin.

That what we do is harm is clear. The evidence for the fact that animals matter morally exists and continues to increase daily—not only is this about sentience (which we have been aware of for centuries, e.g., Seeber, 2014) but it also encompasses certainty about the ability of a wide spectrum of animal kin (not just vertebrates) to feel pleasure and pain (de Waal & Andrews, 2022; Wicks, 2011; Wyatt et al., 2022). Moreover, we have ever-mounting knowledge that just like human beings, numerous animal kin: have language (Brensing, 2019; Ferguson, 2019); play (Brensing, 2019); have emotions and feelings (de Waal & Andrews, 2022; Nussbaum, 2020; Wrage, 2022); understand cause and effect (Ferguson, 2019); have long-term memory (Brensing, 2019; Bridle, 2022); use strategy (Brensing, 2019); use tools (Brensing, 2019); are sociable and have empathy (Ferguson, 2019; Wrage, 2022); have strong family bonds (Wrage, 2022; Radinger, 2017); react to stress as humans do (Ferguson, 2022); punish disloyalty, remember wrongdoers and can forgive (Brensing, 2019; Ferguson, 2019); perform cultural transmission (Nussbaum, 2020), and more besides. They are us. We are them. We can no longer stand around pontificating that animal kin do not feel, think, or perceive these harms. Even if they perceive the world differently from us, that is a matter of degrees and as earlier discussed, variants in intelligence are adaptations to environmental conditions, not lesser intelligences, and there is no excuse for wholesale harms. The expansive approach to harm in ERJ enables animal kin to be viewed as victims of harm even where criminal law does not reflect or sufficiently respond to this reality, and can provide an array of approaches to address the harms (see part three).

Secondly, ERJ's expansive sense of harm takes us out of having to prove that a particular individual or entity has committed a crime but rather relies upon the notion of taking responsibility for harm. In the case of environmental harm, a wrongdoer may not be identifiable or a single wrongful cause often cannot be attributed. However, we are still left with the reality that the envi-

8 Astonishingly, Torrella (2022) reports that 'Americans throw out 26 percent of meat, poultry and fish at the retail and consumer level'. That is a quarter of the lives given for human consumption simply thrown away, not even giving nutritive value to another being (unless you count bacteria and fungi, which seems a stretch of a reason for killing animal kin).

ronment needs cleaning up, repairing, and restoring and future harm needs to be prevented. This equally applies in the case of harm towards animal kin, for example, where those trafficking wildlife illegally have disappeared and left a truckload of caged animal kin, or where pollution of a habitat kills and injures many species but the source cannot be pinpointed. We still need to tend to the injured, restore their habitat and work on preventing such harms recurring. By focusing on taking responsibility for the harm and obliging relevant parties to take action, ERJ extends the accountability to multiple actors, including government agencies, industry groups, and other actors with the power, resources and practical/moral obligation to effect the necessary improvements and take broader social action to ensure future prevention.

Thirdly, a focus on harm and harm prevention brings in *everybody*, from those impacted directly (e.g., local communities and individuals) to those who want to participate in fixing or minimising the harm (e.g., civic ecologists, NGOs, community groups, Indigenous organisations, etc.). This matters a great deal because even though requiring those with the ability and resources to effect change to take responsibility for the harm caused, we cannot leave the bureaucrats, technocrats and industry leaders to determine alone the why, how, and where of ecosystem restoration. To do so would risk entrenching dominant paradigms of expert-only decision-making that excludes grassroots involvement. For example, there is a tendency to consolidate and corporatise ecosystem restoration instead of keeping it 'democratic and locally focused' (Martin, 2022, p. 232), something which must be guarded against assiduously. Instead, through ERJ centring those harmed by environmental harm, affected communities, individuals and animal kin (through surrogates) can have input into and relevant control over what happens next. ERJ can provide an avenue for affected stakeholders to inform those responsible of what they want to happen, where they want the resources to be directed, and how they want to be involved, kept informed and included. This third element of widening stakeholder participation brings in ERJ's participatory, deliberative and citizen empowerment values. It is only through ensuring broad participation of communities, citizens, activists, educators, practitioners and the average person from the streets, farms and waterways, that habitus can be untangled and rewoven with animal kin in mind, openly talking about our relationality towards animal kin and how to give them the chance to flourish.

Lastly, in relation to the 'deep harm' discussed earlier, arising from our unwillingness to challenge our habitus towards animal kin, ERJ has some potential to provide practices and principles that respond to Mason's (2006) call for radical transformation towards an animal kin-aware habitus. ERJ is 'explicitly emancipatory, anti-oppressive and oriented to transformation' (Llewellyn. 2021, p. 382). Through ERJ's ethos of care and relationality, its ability to provide

space for reflection and dialogue, and its focus on citizen empowerment, ERJ provides a practice and way of thinking that could provide opportunities for working through the moral, practical and complex implications of the Animal Question. I now turn to discussing some of these ERJ values and approaches to see how ERJ might help us grapple with the Animal Question in the matter of ecosystem restoration.

Part 3. Exploring ERJ's Pathways of Responsiveness to the Animal Question in Ecosystem Restoration Projects

This part discusses some of the values and practices of ERJ supportive of enabling integration of the Animal Question in ecosystem restoration projects. I begin by discussing the values of relationality, care and connectedness underpinning ERJ and how these support attentiveness to the Animal Question and animal kin. I then turn to ERJ practices which can help us address the Animal Question in ecosystem restoration projects.

Valuing Relationality and Care in ERJ

In this section, I discuss the values of relationality, care and connectedness in the context of ERJ. It should be noted that these three values can also be viewed as practices and mindsets in which we engage and through which we perceive and respond to the world.

Relationality

ERJ is underpinned by the key value of relationality. Relational approaches embody core values, skills and principles such as deep listening, accountability, respect, humility, collaboration, empowerment, trust building, inclusive language, empathy and compassion (e.g., see Marshall, 2019). In turn, these values and principles inform doing justice restoratively, and as such, restorative justice is a 'relational theory of justice' (Llewellyn, 2021, p. 379), with 'human beings … constituted *in and through* relationships at interpersonal, institutional and structural levels' (Llewellyn, 2021, p. 382). Connectedness is a key part of relational justice (discussed below) and the 'fact of connection and interconnection' constitutes both 'a metaphysical claim and an empirical fact about the world' (Llewellyn, 2021, p. 382). In practice, 'restorative practices share an appreciation for the significance of relationships' (Deery & Chiappino, 2021, p. 107), and the restorative practitioner works hard to 'build and maintain positive relationships to prevent harm and to maximise cooperation, progress and healing' (Oranga Tamariki, 2019).

ERJ, in its motivation to heal existing harm, prevent future harm and restore relationships, further extends to valuing relationality with the more-than-human and nature (Braithwaite et al., 2019), for 'we belong in a bundle in life' (Braithwaite, 2006, p. 398). The 'relational perspective regards humans as beings who fundamentally depend on others—and on nature, too' (Jax et al., 2018, p. 25). Cognisant of the importance of nurturing and sustaining 'meaningful relations and responsibilities between humans and between humans and nature' (Arias-Arévalo, Martín-López & Gómez-Baggethun, 2017, p. 44), ERJ places emphasis upon healing, restoring and maintaining relationships between humans impacted by environmental harm and those responsible for it, and between all humans with the more-than-human (Braithwaite et al., 2019; Forsyth et al., 2021). The relationality of ERJ is therefore expansive and focused upon 'humbling humans' domination of nature … to harness collective human power to forge a new vision of humankind as bearing a harmonious, restorative relationship with nature and each other' (Braithwaite, et al., 2019, p. 9).

The Ethic of Care

The building and maintaining of relations with each other in restorative approaches is motivated by the ethic of care.[9] Care is a 'fundamentally *relational* reality' (Marshall 2019, p. 175) and 'restorative justice constitutes a relational justice of care' (Marshall 2019, p. 178), summations equally applicable to ERJ (Braithwaite et al., 2019). Deriving from a feminist tradition of valuing relationships, '[t]he ethics of care starts from the premise that as humans we are inherently relational, responsive beings and the human condition is one of connectedness or interdependence' (Gilligan, 2011). This connectedness between humans extends to 'the human-animal relationship, calling for a situational ethic of care and responsibility … care theorists see all living creatures as having value and as embedded in an interdependent matrix' (Donovan, 2017). Attentiveness is an important aspect of the ethic of care. In centralising our relationality with animal kin, the ethic of care compels us to be attentive to our responsibilities towards animal kin, and attuned to the causal systems behind the commodification and consumption/consumerism paradoxes that lead us to visit harms upon animal kin (Ashall, 2022; Bridle, 2022; Spannring, 2019). Attentiveness is an antidote to the habitus and *unthinkingness*, it calls on us to pay attention to the denial and silencing of the Animal Question and reveals why we should care.

Importantly for exploring the space of contestations, where emotions can shape perceptions and behaviour, and create conflict (Stevens, Aarts &

9 I note that the ethic of care is often also referred to as ethics of care or care ethics, each is treated the same way in this article.

Dewulf, 2021), an ethic of care does not shy away from the reality of emotionality. Instead, it values having a core focus on feelings and emotions because '[c]aring is actually a multidimensional concept that includes the full range of emotions' (Vining, 2003, p. 95). Emotions are important for raising awareness of 'the values at stake' (Løvaas & Vråle, 2020, p. 278) and are often the very reason behind why people are willing to get involved in a deliberative process (Ojala, 2013); moreover, emotions can help people co-construct shared meaning of relevant values, thereby '"binding people together"' (Løvaas & Vråle, 2020, p. 278). A focus on emotions includes having awareness of repressing or devaluing them. Sociologist Deidre Wicks (2011) considers that cultural denial of animal kin harm is a form of 'emotional management'; whilst it enables people to avoid the unpleasantness of having to acknowledge the moral case for animal kin, this comes at a price, for it is 'psychologically exhausting' and does nothing to improve our relations with animal kin (Wicks, 2011, p. 189). Thus, it makes sense to consciously and collaboratively channel 'the emotional work' in a deliberative process, shifting this psychological energy in a more positive and constructive direction.

Emotions towards animal kin are a valuable part of reconnecting humans to nature—'the emotion motivating care is crucially a "feeling with the other" that centers their needs' (Wrage, 2022, p. 18). The care ethic can 'foreground emotional bonds between humans and nature' and treats 'emotions, context, and concern for particular others as comprehensible reasons' (Jax et al., 2018, p. 25). The framing of emotional attachment to animal kin will vary depending on the role and perspective each participant brings to any interactive forum or situation. This can lead to 'competition over collective action frames' whereby people want the same overarching goal of animal welfare but differ on suitable solutions and willingness to forego autonomy of decision-making or actions (Stevens, Aarts & Dewulf, 2021, p. 87; see also Ojala, 2013). The emotional arousal and communication surrounding differing moral framings can lead to conflict as participants struggle to put their framing of animal welfare at the forefront without acknowledging the validity of the other sides' framings (Stevens, Aarts & Dewulf, 2021). This confirms that attending to emotions is vital as part of ecosystem restoration decision-making; doing so is an action of care that can account for and foster the 'holistic worldview' and 'value pluralism' many people feel towards animal kin in ecosystems and is crucial to participants being able to consider different perspectives, even changing their mind (Arias-Arévalo, Martín-López & Gómez-Baggethun, 2017, pp. 50-51; Koch, 2020; Ojala, 2013). Rather than seeing what people value about nature as binary choices between instrumental or intrinsic reasons, or between one group's idea of animal welfare versus another group's, by embracing care and relational values, there is a potential to reduce conflict in ecosystem restoration projects

and improve the human-animal relationship (Arias-Arévalo, Martín-López & Gómez-Baggethun, 2017).

ERJ, which explicitly holds care for the environment as part of its ethos (Forsyth et al., 2021), is ideally placed to be attentive to and supportive of emotional awareness during deliberative processes raising the Animal Question. ERJ's values of relationality, care and respect, and its practices of deep listening, dialogue, and storytelling/narrative presentation, mean that 'a range of emotions can be expressed, including anger, fear, anxiety, shame, guilt, remorse, and hope. This expressive dimension … is a particularly compelling part of restorative justice … Indeed, the emotional element of restorative justice may be its defining characteristic' (Rossner, 2017, p. 14). What this means in practical terms is explored more in the discussion below on responding to contestations.

Connectedness: 'Being Within and Doing With'

Drawing on the values of relationality and care, connectedness as a value undergirding ERJ relates to 'building a relational ecology, which relies on relationship and belonging' (Todić et al., 2020, p. 2). Connectedness connotes a sense of belonging to and 'being within' nature, place and animal kin subjectivities, and 'doing with' alongside animal kin. A sense of being connected can help us be 'healthier, more resilient, more productive, more vibrantly creative' (Murthy, 2020, preface). It includes developing emotional attachments to animal kin, through which we perceive the individual animal, not just its species, 'with different characters and personalities' (Charles, 2014, p. 722); this individuation-and-attachment aspect reveals one important explanation for why many people find the collective, end-justifies-the-means focus of conservation biology towards 'unwanted' animal kin confronting (Wallach et al., 2020). Connectedness or '"feeling with" others or empathic connectedness can allow for … transformational experiences' and recognition of the 'common space [we] share' (Bender & Armour, 2007, pp. 256-257). Connectedness to nature and animal kin can reduce human self-absorption (human-centric focus) and increase attentiveness to and attunement with nature (holistic focus) (Frantz et al., 2005). Importantly, connectedness is not about mere 'contact' with nature; rather, the benefits that accrue to humans and animal kin arise from nature connectedness being an active, attentive activity not just '*in* nature' but *'with* nature' (Richardson et al., 2022, p. 14)—echoing the ethic of care's insistence on attentiveness. Active involvement in nature can foster a sense of reciprocity towards 'giving back' to nature and animal kin due to the 'entanglement of experiences … encouraging caring for nature and animals' (Yerbury & Lukey, 2021, p. 1).

'Being within' nature is a re-acknowledgment of an understanding once widespread, that human beings exist within nature and alongside all biotic

kin (and abiotic for that matter[10]). It includes acknowledging we are 'a global force of nature' (Ellis, 2015) and that what we do 'is an entanglement of the economic, environmental, social and cultural with the political and biological, if not more' (Gough, 2018). 'Doing with' in ecosystem restoration refers at the very least to humans learning to do restorative work alongside animal kin—be that as stewards (interventionist and caring for), observers (hands-off but still monitoring) and students (learning from, experimentation, and respecting animal kins' perceiving and experiencing of the world), often likely a mixture of all three attentions in any given context. This requires understanding that the *Umwelt* of animal kin differs from ours and that we cannot expect animal kin to reflect or conform to our reality (Ball, 2022; Bridle, 2022; Gregg, 2022); instead, as part of 'being within and doing with', we have a responsibility to seek to discover and understand their reality, perceiving as best we can through science, emotion, and relationality what might be the animal-kin-centric viewpoint.

Another aspect of 'being within and doing with' concerns eschewing instrumentalism and instead letting wonder or awe guide our understandings of animal kin—'by seeking a relationship with nature, often through interactions with other animals, we may be able to connect with what is often a spiritual sense of wonder at being part of a vast interconnected network' (Vining, 2003, p. 88). Opening ourselves to the sense of wonder enables us to 'renew our energy and make plans for a more hopeful future' (Fessel & Reivich, 2021). Awe 'helps us transcend our frame of reference by expanding our mental models and stimulating new ways of thinking'; this can improve ethical decision-making, and 'helps us build relationships' (Fessell & Reivich, 2021). Through wonder, we appreciate the world. Scholar Uta Maria Jürgens (2017, p. 50) sees appreciation as crucial to us being able to access the *Umwelten* and the subjectivities of animal kin, to 'be within' and 'abstract from our own subjectivity' to relate to the subjectivities of animal kin. Wonder thus encourages us through empathy and creative thinking to find pathways to respond to the Animal Question.

The idea of 'being within and doing with' parallels with restorative justice, which values 'restoring connectedness' (Braithwaite, 2006, p. 401) and 'do-

10 Richardson et al. (2022), however, note that abiotic features tended to be less impactful of connectedness for their research participants. This is likely to be an expression of the habitus though, for landscapes and inanimate features of the environment do matter for connectedness, something many Indigenous cultures have always understood. Connectedness is thus also important, as 'being-in-the-world' includes the 'embodied engagement and experience … between the various lifeforms that together produce landscapes' (West et al., 2018, p. 35). Jürgens (2017, p. 26) notes further that the community of connected subjects encompasses 'all natural entities, including microbes, rocks, rivers, whole ecosystems, weather phenomena, even spirit figures'. Moreover, since everything is connected, 'we cannot split hairs, or rocks, or mycorrhizal roots' but must view ourselves, animal kin and the abiotic in a holistic way (Bridle, 2022, p. 278).

ing/working with, not doing to or imposing over', in recognition that 'human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive … when those in positions of authority do things *with* them, rather than *to* them or *for* them' (Watchtel & McCold, 2004; Vaandering, 2014). In restorative justice, 'doing with' requires that facilitators, experts, and others invested in running the restorative processes are 'non-directive' and use 'minimal interference', along with constant self-reflection, to make sure they are not seeking to impose their solutions and advice but rather are facilitating the generation of collaborative outcomes driven by those centred in the restorative process (Souza & Dhami, 2007, p. 60). In the case of ERJ processes set up for ecosystem restoration projects seeking to be attentive to all animal kin, those centred would include Indigenous peoples, grassroots environmental care groups, local animal welfare groups, civic ecologists, impacted residents, and of course, the animal kin. 'Doing with' means that animal-attentive ecosystem restoration *and* justice for animal kin are practices we can all do—'[a]nd that "we" is everyone—every singing, swaying, burrowing, braying, roiling and rocking thing in the more-than-human world' (Bridle, 2022, p. 279).

However, it is possible that the restorative idea of 'doing with' could be viewed as tricky, since activities such as ecosystem stewarding, conservation interventions and restoration work will require making careful, conscious choices to do things *to* and *for* animal kin for the sake of their survival and flourishing. Here though, I think we can turn to the concept of 'reciprocity' whereby we acknowledge our entanglement with animal kin and our stewardship duty (faith or secular based) to give back to and care for animal kin (Lynn et al., 2019; Seamer, 1998). First, we can do our best to listen to/perceive what animal kin communicate to us about restorative needs—I discuss this idea more below. Secondly, the restorative value of accountability requires us to accept responsibility for our actions and to be responsive to affected animal kin, including healing any harm we inflict. Thirdly, we have a continuous responsibility for and duty to animal kin (Lynn et al., 2019; Seamer, 1998), which includes providing them the space to learn to live with us (Tănăsescu, 2019) and in situations of direct care and close relationships, repaying the trust they place in us (Benz-Schwarzburg, Monsó & Huber, 2020). A good example of this can be given by way of the concept of rewilding, whereby people commit to giving space back to animal kin that have long been absent. Often this requires humans inhabiting the area and surrounds to re-establish understandings with the re-introduced animal kin that may have been eroded by habitus and the passage of time. Doing this requires both humans and animal kin to work out new patterns of being together, in what Mihnea Tănăsescu (2019, p. 106) calls 'a reciprocal project of spatial co-creation together', through which both reintroduced animal kin and human beings relearn to relate to each other in entirely new ways to ensure

co-existence. Usually the environmental baselines will have changed since the reintroduced animal kin lived in that place, so that what is being co-created is something novel. This requires that human inhabitants reshape the habitus, so as to incorporate the reintroduced animal kin that themselves are relearning to live in this space and 'dictat[ing] parts of the terms of the restorative project', which we must be attentive to and seek to abide by (Tănăsescu, 2019, p. 106). Co-creation of the ecosystem is likely to be an increasingly important element of ecosystem restoration, requiring human attentiveness to better understand and account for the ecosystem restorative capabilities and actualities of animal kin, such as water engineers like beavers (Baldwin, 2020), birds as seed dispersers and pollinators (Cross, Bateman & Cross, 2020), and soil engineers like worms, termites and burrowing animals (Cross, Bateman & Cross, 2020; Margonelli, 2018). A further step may include cooperating with animal kin, through which we develop working partnerships with animal kin (Cram et al., 2022), although this will require careful thinking around respecting animal agency (Blattner, 2020). Ultimately, 'being with and doing with' requires that we understand how important attentive, harmonious co-existence is essential for the flourishing of both humans and animal kin alike (Delon, 2019).

Learning from, shifting in alignment with, and making space for animal kin during rewilding and restorative efforts will require us to be open to the animal kins' realities and willing to keep experimenting. How ERJ might be of help here is as a practical, relationally attendant and regular means for bringing together the people who are doing rewilding, living with reintroduced animal kin and working on ecosystem restoration, to enable them to collaboratively share learnings and concerns, revisit emergent challenges and deliberate on shared approaches to making space for animal kin, all whilst still accounting for the important needs of impacted human communities. This is a suitable segue into discussing some of the practical possibilities of collective reflection, embracing contestations, and ensuring ongoing attentiveness.

Facilitating Restorative Reflection on the Animal Question

Through its practices and skills of dialogue and deep listening, ERJ can support restorative reflection on the Animal Question in the context of ecosystem restoration. Here, 'reflection' denotes both individual and collective or community reflection, both practices engaged in *with* others. Solitary reflection in a restorative process forms a valuable part of the restorative process, such as when people are asked to reflect upon what brings them to a restorative occasion. In the context of animal-sensitive ecosystem restoration, personal reflection could be enhanced by facilitators opening up quiet self-reflective moments or spaces, perhaps even outdoors, to 'prepar[e] us for relationships with others' and to

'notice patterns in nature, like an iridescent dragonfly', leading us to 'experiencing … connection *within* our solitude' (Murthy, 2020). In a restorative process, this personal reflection takes place within broader reflection as an active, discursive, *shared* process of talking through personal or institutional perspectives and experiences, and reflecting upon challenges *together*. As a collective exercise, reflection is 'a necessary element in evaluation, sense-making, learning and decision-making processes' (Boud, Cressey & Docherty, 2006, p. 6). Importantly, restorative reflection can be part of confronting collective denial and silence about animal kin across society.

Reflection can include reflecting on theory, work, shared experiences and action plans (University of Edinburgh, 2018) through pluralistic conversations and collaborative learning. This makes it appropriate for restoration professionals and volunteers alike. Collective moral reflection that is constructive and involves 'resolution-oriented dialogue' helps all participants to work together towards a 'deeper understanding' (Norman, 2021, p. 74), one cognisant of plural epistemologies whilst still being 'a deeply collaborative and compassionate … critical value inquiry' (Norman, 2021, p. 79). Group reflection can result in participants experiencing 'increased awareness of their own emotions', thus sensitising participants to 'new meanings and to their own feelings, values and thoughts' (Løvaas & Vråle, 2020, p. 278). As noted earlier, this emotional awareness is essential for coming to grips with internal, habitus-inculcated motivations and rationales behind Animal Question challenges, as well as understanding the perspectives of others. Internal recognition of dissonance can empower the participant to better understand the challenges (for example, the plethora of ecosystem restoration contestations concerning animal kin). Collective reflection focused on problem-solving action can promote a feeling of agency and inspire hope (Ojala, 2013), encouraging participants to move forward through improving their relationships, changing assumptions and habits, and in some cases, shifting towards systems thinking focused on understanding the causal factors behind distancing animal kin (Løvaas & Vråle, 2020; Owen, 2016).

ERJ, with its ability to provide a structured, facilitated talking space can support people coming together (Forsyth et al., 2021); this facilitated reflection space can be done in gatherings such as forums, circles, community open houses, talking events, workshops and visits to ecosystems. Through encouraging scholarly, practitioner and public discussion of animal kin in ecosystem restoration, ERJ's reflective and discursive practices can facilitate questioning assumptions, calling for and assimilating a range of perspectives, and gaining of mutual insights. ERJ should focus upon creating a space that emboldens participants to reflect upon their emotional attachments to animal kin in an ecosystem they consider relevant to them, encouraging them to share their stories of how harms to animal kin during particular restorative efforts have affected

them and their communities. In turn, ERJ carries the expectation that those responsible for actual or potential harm to animal kin will listen and reflect upon the storytelling, participate in dialogue to respond constructively, and be proactive about suggestions for repairing and preventing harm to affected animal kin. Genuine responsiveness of all involved requires active promotion of the skill of deep listening, which occurs where the listener 'strives for a degree of detachment from what they are planning to say in response and is willing to remain open to being changed themselves before desiring to change the other' (Vaandering & Reimer, 2019, p. 193). Used within the practice of reflection, deep listening puts participants in a state of openness, flexibility and intellectual humility that can promote critically reflexive engagement with the Animal Question (Koch, 2020).

More broadly, there is also the possibility that ERJ could provide the space for reflection on the Animal Question in society. This could be small scale, such as by way of facilitated conversations whilst walking through an ecosystem, nature reserve or park, observing animal kin. Or, it could be big scale, such as holding a restorative enquiry (Llewellyn, 2020) at bioregional or national levels to deliberate across the state/province or nation about the Animal Question. The conversational empowerment and problem-solving intent of restorative collective reflection has the potential to break the silence surrounding the Animal Question and restore a sense of connectedness to animal kin.

Contestations in Ecosystem Restoration—Embracing an Active Reality

In light of the fact that ecosystem restoration contestations about animal kin are here to stay, this section examines three different relational situations of the contestations: first, I look at contestations between ecosystem restoration experts; secondly, contestations between restoration professionals/experts and volunteer/general public restoration participants; and thirdly, contestations concerning the ability to give voice to animal kin. For each point, I discuss how ERJ might provide suitable approaches to play a constructive role in helping participants work effectively with the plurality of viewpoints and complexity of values.

Whose Ecosystem Restoration Expertise? Contestations Between Experts

In the context of the ecological restoration/conservation sciences, the various contestations outlined earlier are reflected across a range of academic literature, blogs, vlogs and websites, often resulting in robust exchanges between those who emphasise the need to account for animal welfare and emotions in conservation/restoration efforts and those who see emotions like compassion and empathy as holding up the work of scientifically-robust ecosystem restoration

(Coghlan & Cardilini, 2022; Hayward et al., 2019; Wallach et al., 2020). In daily conservation or restoration work practices, 'how widely one steers clear of the Animal Question' (Mason, 2007, p. 203) has often been regarded as an essential indicator of one's dedication and objectivity towards the tasks at hand of 'managing' (removing, culling, curtailing, etc.) animal kin. A restoration professional seeking to raise the issue of animal welfare or the Animal Question may become the subject of derision or scorn: 'it is common for silence breakers to be ridiculed, vilified and often ostracized' (Wicks, 2011, p. 196), whilst having emotions about animals is often considered as unhelpful at best and anti-science at worst, requiring the setting aside of 'emotion as a source of moral understanding' (Bekoff, 2021).

Yet, I think we should ask what problem exists from letting in emotions and feelings. Why not listen to the conservationist who feels deep pain at harming animals and learn from their wish to be more compassionate? Why not listen to the community member who finds hearing the shooting of kangaroos at night to protect grasslands soul-tearing and disproportionate? Why not listen to the conservation policymaker who hides the fact they share their life with well-cared for cats from colleagues out of fear of being ridiculed? These perspectives have validity, they have moral standing, and as discussed, emotions form an important part of ethical care, whilst emotional awareness helps us gain an understanding of other's perspectives (Ojala, 2013). The Animal Question cannot be met with blanket assertions that there is only one way to do conservation, and valuing emotions can help us to see the manifold unacknowledged dissonances we rely upon to justify harm.

It is likely that some of the answer to not wanting to address the Animal Question rests in professional inflexibility and not valuing 'outside world' input. Deep expertise is highly valuable but it comes with single disciplinary outlook limitations and 'often hard-fought identities as "experts"' (Koch, 2020, p. 56). One limitation this leads to is that of 'the curse of knowledge' and 'cognitive entrenchment' (Dane, 2010), whereby an expert is not always able to step up and out of what they know and do to see other possibilities: 'once experts hold a certain opinion about something, they will tap into their vast expert knowledge to find evidence to defend their opinion' (Trinh, 2019, p. 3) and 'as individuals acquire expertise, they tend to become inflexible in certain respects within their domain' (Dane, 2010, p. 583). Additionally, experts can find it hard to let go of the shielding ego that builds around expertise (Trinh, 2019), the ingrained belief that an expert must give 'learnt responses' (Ashall, 2022, p. 11), and that their professional respect is tied up in having all the answers and not revealing doubts. In response to a perceived 'identity threat', some experts can become 'overly precise in their judgments' and may resort to 'doubling down … as a way to reaffirm their self-worth' (Kang & Kim , 2022, p. 578). This need

to have concrete answers and work from a place of certainty is educationally and professionally instilled, and often requires sidelining of feelings, preventing professionals from responding from the heart or finding the courage to say 'I don't know, let's work through that messiness together'.

Regarding working through the Animal Question in a professional context, opening up to emotions can bring many benefits. Veterinarian Vanessa Ashall (2022, p. 10) notes in relation to her own profession that our human-animal relationships 'often combine love, neglect, tenderness and violence' and 'these feelings matter, in an ethical sense'. She further notes that instead of eschewing our emotional entanglement, it gives us a reason to explore how our emotional reactions might be indicating 'wider ethical problems in the veterinary profession and in society' (Ashall, 2022, p. 10). Bekoff (2021) believes that emotions matter and that 'compassion … as an emotional experience of interdependence and shared vulnerability … should be embraced as a core virtue of conservation'.

ERJ's foremost contribution to professional contestation would be to bring a focus on relationality first (Vaandering, 2014). This includes respecting the expertise brought to the table but expecting professional participants to be open to listening to and learning from each other's perspectives, willing to question the scholarly and media metanarratives, including their own profession's complicity in promoting these (Koch, 2020). To be effective and thorough, using a facilitator who is familiar with the professional context and science and who is adept at helping people articulate their varied emotional reactions in ways that allow for reflection and critical examination would be crucial (Ojala, 2013). Through setting up reflection space for identifying core values held by each participant, professional participants could discuss the messages their profession as a whole currently sends or would like to send to each other and the wider public about its practices (Vaandering, 2014). ERJ should encourage restoration professionals to raise constructive doubt without judgement, for doubt 'helps generate new perspectives by reducing habitual behavior, fostering creativity, and motivating a search for discovery' and 'provokes a need for updating or restructuring … beliefs' (Dane, 2010, p. 589). Where exceptions, new understandings or different ways of problem-solving are made evident to experts, this can improve the 'benefits of expertise while foregoing its inflexibility-related limitations' (Dane, 2010, p. 590). ERJ principles and practices can make space for professionals to learn from each other and play with different perspectives. In some cases, if it is possible, including professionals from outside of the restoration sciences would be beneficial, as the Animal Question in restoration efforts 'can't be left only to the biologists' (Bekoff, 2021, citing Michelle Nijhuis). By including varied socio-ecological, justice and animal welfare inputs, a stronger overall grasp of a very complex situation can emerge.

At the heart of this suggestion for ERJ involvement is not questioning expertise itself, nor the robustness of the sciences of restoration. Rather, it is to clarify that the contestations are a reality and as such must be tackled, doing so in a constructive manner that allows for the variety of perspectives to be listened to respectfully, promoting good faith attempts to work on the Animal Question together. Ultimately, it must be remembered that ERJ facilitates the expression and exploration of the issues, its facilitators do not solve the problems causing the contestations. Rather, the solutions or outcomes must emerge from the collective reflection and dialogue; it is those directly involved who must 'create, offer opinions on, and support any plans to repair harm' (Nusrat, 2021, p. 7; Vaandering, 2014). By making space for working with emotions, foregrounding current scientific knowledge on animal sentience and welfare, and having respect for professional expertise, ERJ can foster opportunities for restoration professionals to begin responding to the Animal Question amongst each other.

Conversing with Community: Empowering Plural Responsiveness to the Animal Question

Not all ecosystem restoration projects include citizens or volunteers and of those that could include community participation, many either fail to or do so in an impoverished way (Light, 2005). I have asserted previously that broad inclusion of interested citizens and groups in ecosystem restoration is vital (Tepper, 2022). Here I focus on why ERJ may be useful when the expectations of general public volunteers/restoration participants and those of experts/professionals towards the Animal Question in ecosystem restoration differ, as they invariably do and will continue to do.

Weng (2015; 2022) notes that there are often disparities between what restoration professionals and laypersons involved in ecosystem restoration work think their involvement entails. These differences of understanding include: the purpose of the restoration, what public participation is, whether it is science or broader socio-ecological factors driving restorative efforts, and how to bring both sets of expectations to align or co-exist. Citizens often express preferences for a range of plural values in relation to ecosystems that tend to not be reflected in ecosystem restoration science or project plans: these preferences may include: spiritual/emotional (Scaini et al., 2022); aesthetic (Arias-Arévalo, Martín-López & Gómez-Baggethun, 2017); and relational (Arias-Arévalo, Martín-López & Gómez-Baggethun, 2017). Environmental and forest biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013, p. 345) shares another concern that scientists 'convey these stories [about animal kin] in a language that excludes' all but other scientists. This 'expert distancing' may have begun to slowly change as the

discipline of science communication grows but there is still a vivid need for restoration professionals to engage with and involve the public directly, requiring clear communications and being aware of and open-minded towards the plurality of values citizen participants bring. Indeed, '[t]he task—for scientists and the rest of us—is to find a new common language for what we understand and also for what we don't' (Margonelli, 2018, p. 254).

Ecosystem restoration is a socio-ecological endeavour, not solely a scientific and management exercise. It is something in which all people and affected animal kin have a stake and the level and participatory inclusiveness of public participation go towards any determination that restorative project work has been 'good' (Light, 2005). The socio-ecological lens activates the expectation that restorative efforts will be informed by a breadth of knowledge and perspectives. It informs us that there is no single magic answer, no one right approach, for 'in a truly pluralistic society more than one coherent and well-grounded solution to a problem can exist' (Ojala, 2020, p. 169). Involvement of the general public in ecosystem restoration work 'provides the opportunity for volunteers to develop a hands-on, healing relationship with the natural world' and animal kin (Miles, Sullivan & Kuo, 1998, p. 39), whilst a focus on animal kin or 'animal-centered approaches' to restorative efforts has 'long-term public appeal' (Coghlan & Cardilini, 2022, p. 13). Thus, inclusion of a plurality of viewpoints relating to the Animal Question can bring many benefits for restorative efforts.

However, it is necessary for all participants to learn to be comfortable with the fact that 'the plurality of practices and contexts within which our lives are embedded ensures that contest and controversy are inescapable' (Meyer, 2015, p. 171). In ecosystem restoration, where different opinions are held about valuing what gets restored or how restoration takes place, contestation is a given. Adding more complexity through the Animal Question increases the likelihood of contestation. This necessitates learning to be comfortable with conflict whilst striving to turn contestations into collaborative dialogue, co-existence and even co-construction of solutions. Biologist Jane Capozzelli (2020) emphasises that '[i]t is crucial to cast people as active participants in ecosystems who can, and should, do more than just exacerbate environmental problems'. For example, Lynn et al. (2019) consider it beneficial for restoration professionals to engage constructively with members of the public who look after non-wild animal kin that can potentially cause ecosystem harm, for they often care about wildlife too, and it is more constructive to dialogue about suitable human behaviours to reduce and prevent potential harm than to hurl insults at each other. To be effective as a collaborative endeavour, participation in ecosystem restoration thus requires giving all participants an opportunity to clarify their understandings of what their involvement entails and what issues matter to them. Every site of restoration will be contextual, in need of starting from

its specificities, local meanings, acknowledging and involving its existing carers, and building consensus on ways forward collaboratively.

To actively discover what worldviews, first-hand experiences and expectations restoration participants bring to a specific restoration project, practitioners and ERJ facilitators alike must 'begin with respect for the complexity and sincerity of people's values and everyday experience' (Meyer, 2015, p. 171). There must be 'a commitment to be *with* people—not pushing them from behind or leading from the front, but walking with them in solidarity' (Brown, 2021, p. 262). Through setting up a restorative forum, community meeting or other suitable gathering for bringing together restoration professionals and public participants, ERJ can facilitate dialogue aimed at clearing up misunderstandings and creating shared meanings. Through having a structured space for discussing the Animal Question through restorative values, ERJ can facilitate reflection and conversations for working through the incommensurable challenges by opening the floor to pluralist views about the place of animal kin in ecosystem restoration. Focusing on the values of relationality, care and connectedness, ERJ can strive to ensure that everyone's viewpoints are expressed, heard and discussed in an atmosphere of respect, collegiality and openness.

As well as an opportunity to create shared meanings, empowering public participants and professionals alike through conversation is a problem-solving exercise and a form of creating collective intelligence together. In relation to problem-solving through an ERJ forum, restorative justice scholar John Braithwaite (2006, p. 396) notes how 'the existence of a wider plurality of voices in the conference circle … means that there are better prospects for creative problem-solving ideas to emerge. There are also more people who can offer ideas and practical help for plural forms of support to ensure that agreements are honored. … Plurality of perspectives enriches the problem-solving'. In turn, this problem-solving and learning together helps us to 'be at ease with our emotions and the emotions of other people', which fosters embodied awareness, being other-focused and creates 'the building blocks of … collective intelligence' (Critchlow, 2022, p. 217; see also Brown, 2021). With ERJ support, participants can build this collective intelligence and seek to reach a 'greater agreement upon means and identification of particular, shared ends' (Meyer, 2015, p. 171) to account for both professional and public viewpoints that enhance the human-animal relationship and care for animal kin.

Inclusion of a plurality of perspectives does not suggest, however, that people lacking requisite ecological scientific/policy/welfare expertise can derail decision-making that is properly based on the current state of knowledge. What it does mean is that all interested people who want to play a part in ecosystem restoration and how animal kin are treated therein, can contribute their under-

standings of what reflects the current state of knowledge, including reminding those in charge that this state of knowledge is extremely advanced in relation to the sentience and intelligences of animal kin. By sharing contextual/local knowledge, narratives, and experiences, the state of knowledge can be informed by broader, socio-ecological perspectives of the place and role of animal kin in ecosystem restoration. In helping to facilitate this knowledge sharing, feedback and mutual learning, ERJ can empower communities and citizens to talk to authorities in a space where they feel comfortable to 'challenge assumptions and long-held beliefs' and ask 'if there aren't any other ways to achieve the highest common good' (Brown, 2021, p. 263).

Perspectives of Animal Kin—Perceiving Other Umwelten

Where contestations over actual harm or possible future harm to animal kin exist prior to, during or after ecosystem restoration projects, the voice of animal kin is another perspective that the Animal Question would require us to consider as a matter of ethical care and relationality. The ethic of care, 'grounded in voice and relationships' (Gilligan, 2011), makes it imperative that we use our emotional intelligence to hear, listen to, and learn from the voice of animal kin. Even where the human-centric nature of the ERJ process may not enable an animal victim to gain outcomes such as a sense of resolution or forgiveness, those responsible for the harm 'can learn a great deal and, in turn, this can protect future animal victims', such as by funding animal charities or trusts that care for animal kin or restore their habitats, and future human accountability (stewardship) for animal kin (Hill, 2021, pp. 237-238).

So, how can animal kin be represented in an ERJ restorative process? Varied possibilities exist, with the main one being to have surrogates or proxies appear at the restorative process, people who can give voice to animal kin and who can explain what it is like to be that particular animal kin when impacted by harm. It should be noted upfront that there is the potential for complication here in choosing who has the credibility, expertise, knowledge, experience and even right to speak on behalf of animal kin (White, 2022). In part, this can be overcome through the deliberative, participatory aspects of ERJ, through which collaborative representation of Indigenous, community, scientific, conservationist, naturalist, and other relevant human experiences of being with animal kin can be brought to the fore and presented together as a holistic understanding of particular animal kin impacted by harm. Legal scholar Brittany Hill (2021) notes that surrogate representation is not unique and is used for human crime where surrogate victims stand in for a dead or missing victim. Furthermore, precedent can be found in cases of animal cruelty, where people responsible for the animal victim(s), such as veterinarians (Hill, 2021), 'shelter representatives,

wildlife administrators, or family members can represent the animal victim' (Komorosky, 2015, p. 400). Scholar Lindsey Pointer (2022) has emphasised that whilst a designated role in relation to animal kin can be helpful for selecting someone who can speak for animal kin, what matters most is that the person 'has the heart and commitment' to speak on behalf of the animal victim. This proxy representation can be amplified through being informed by quality, up-to-date research on animal kin, especially given that scientific knowledge on animal kin sentience and intelligences continues to expand our understandings every year.

Furthermore, there is a need to respect the fact that animal kin can speak for themselves. Nussbaum (2022) punctures the assumption that animal kin lack voice, clarifying that their 'means of communication is vast'. Part lack of imagination, part hubris arising from human conceit that places our senses above those of other animals, '[a]s if the only communication worthy of being called intelligent is that expressed by human words' (Ferguson, 2019, p. 137), there is an unfortunate tendency both generally and in legal and other justice system fora, to overlook that animal kin do communicate their needs and wants to us. It is we who are not very good at interpreting the signals—'[w]hat of the languages of breath, of gesture, of eyes, of smell; what of voices so high, so low, so compressed or so rapid, that we can hardly register them as voices at all?' (Brooks, 2021, p. 13). We have the ability to think as animal kin, 'in images and tunes' (Nussbaum, 2022) and it is up to us to change how we view animal communications, not to expect animal kin to fit our paradigm.

This suggests returning to the skill of self-reflection that enables connection with the other. There is value in 'quiet time' to aid human reflection and heightening our awareness of what animal kin are communicating. Scholar Reingard Spannring (2019, p. 13) suggests that '[q]uiet time with animal Others can restore our own ability of subjective experience and of sharing subjectivity with animal Others'. This can include pondering how animal kin 'might want to live with us' (Spannring, 2019), an exercise of entanglement, 'opening ourselves to forms of communication and interaction with the totality of the more-than-human world' (Bridle, 2022, p. 52). Humility can also be an important virtue here—being aware of the limitations in our knowledge, valuing learning from animal kin and having 'an awareness that something is greater than the self' (Trinh, 2019, p. 6; see also Koch, 2020). Gaining deeper understanding through reflection and humility can help to influence the choices we make for ecosystem restoration, taking into account the perspectives of all affected animal kin. Perhaps asking human participants to sit still amidst the ecosystem being restored, setting aside a little quiet time for animal kin, could become an expected practice of ERJ.

Ongoing Attentiveness

A reality of ecosystem restoration is that there is never really a realisable endpoint to restorative work and environmental harm is rarely repaired quickly or completely. Setting aside the scientific challenges of deciding when an ecosystem is or is not 'sufficiently' repaired, from the perspective of tending the relationships with both humans and animal kin, at some point restoration efforts flip into enduring care—of the ecosystem and the beings who live, feed, work, play and thrive there. Restoration efforts create a sense of abiding connectedness that includes monitoring of the ecosystem's health, evaluation of interventions, supporting restoration participants to remain committed, and continuing guidance on and tweaking of restoration approaches. Key to this is the maintenance of relationships, for the endeavour to ensure just relations between humans and with animal kin is 'always a work-in-progress' (Tănăsescu, 2019, p. 106) and stewardship care of ecosystems long-term 'is a collective, inter-species endeavour' that is 'an "ongoing achievement" continually shifting through time' (West et al., 2018, p. 35). Since caring responsibilities are 'ongoing and cyclical', we must contemplate what care means or requires from us at all stages of the human-animal relationship in ecosystem restoration, including how we intend to continuously check the health of our relationships (Ashall, 2022, p. 12).

I call this long-term involvement 'ongoing attentivenesss'. This term embraces 'ongoingness' (Beckett & Keeling, 2019; Haraway, 2016; Kimmerer, 2013), attentiveness (from the ethic of care; Beckett & Keeling, 2019; Collins, 2021), sense of place or belongingness (Beckett & Keeling, 2019), healing and keeping faith with long-termism and care for the deep future (Capozzelli, 2020; Jones & Davidson, 2016; Rabb & Ogorzalek, 2018). Ongoing attentiveness reflects Donna Haraway's (2016, pp. 27-28) 'staying with the trouble', a commitment to 'multispecies recuperation and … "getting on together" with less denial and more experimental justice'. In restorative efforts, this will require of us a willingness to appreciate and build upon the small wins, readjust our learning as we go, and stay receptive to changing our minds in the spirit of ongoing learning cognisant of animal kin care needs.

ERJ's future orientation enables 'a continuous concern and commitment' to doing justice and its 'relational frame reveals the dynamic and fluid nature of relations … [whereby] the work of securing and ensuring just relations must be a constant and continuing imperative' (Llewellyn, 2021, p. 384). ERJ is well positioned to support ongoing attentiveness through its values of relationality, care, accountability, responsiveness, flexibility, safety, empowerment and healing. Long-term contestations require ongoing attentiveness to revisit, review and maintain the dialogue that can help unravel the knots and reweave stronger, updated pluralistic approaches to restorative efforts. Low-key ERJ-fa-

cilitated conversation and reflection spaces, such as walking-in-nature (Varona, 2020), community potlucks, or fireside chats at the end of a day's restorative efforts, could provide regular, informal deliberative occasions that take into account keeping down the costs and respect the time availability of participants. Using ERJ for addressing contestations as and when they arise, can provide restoration participants with the opportunity to assess where things stand and what adaptations may be needed, both by way of how restorative efforts are approached and to ensure maintenance of just relations between humans, and between humans and animal kin (Llewellyn, 2021, p. 384).

Conclusion: Nurturing the Animal Question through the Restorative Imagination

The Animal Question arises within the context of the animal turn, which refers to 'learned attention to animals' and the scholarly and practitioner shift towards more openly addressing the Animal Question (Ritvo, 2007, p. 118). Animal studies scholars are increasingly helping to make us all conscious of the challenge of 'perpetually unanswered questions' where '[t]he standing of animals, even those closest to us, still presents vexed moral, legal, and political issues' (Ritvo, 2007, p. 121). Whilst noticing that the animal turn still has some way to go to becoming a core aspect of many disciplines, and even more so interdisciplinary-wise, scholar Harriet Ritvo (2007, p. 122) does not decry this marginality. Rather, she sees this as its very strength because it 'allows the study of animals to challenge settled assumptions and relationships—to re-raise the largest issues—both within the community of scholars and in the larger society to which they and their subjects belong'. I agree with her that this endeavour must continue to be one for all of us—an ongoing interdisciplinary, practitioner and public effort.

To my mind, this endeavour will be helped considerably by engaging our 'restorative imagination' (Braithwaite, 2002; Llewellyn & Morrison, 2018). Imagination is a 'reparative and restorative experience' that supports healing, including mending the rift between humans and animal kin (Malchiodi, 2022). A restorative imagination comprises creative thinking, being proactive, experimenting, and envisioning the cosmologies of others. It is altruistic, both in having a sense of being part of something much bigger than each of us and in that thinking altruistically will be needed for unravelling the *unthinkingness* towards animal kin (Wicks, 2011; Rabb & Ogorzalek, 2018). It's an edge-nibbling pursuit, tearing at the margins of habitus to reach right in and disrupt the unspoken, the unheeded; to inform habitus stoutly that we are all entangled and have no excuses left. Interdisciplinary in vision, for '[n]o one discipline can be

expected to optimize every angle, especially for multidimensional environmental problems' (Capozzelli, 2020), kindling the restorative imagination can keep us all alert to the justices needed for creating and upholding just relations with animal kin, drawing not only from ERJ and its socio-ecological bent, but also from kindred justices like climate, Indigenous and multispecies.

Cultivating a restorative imagination means being willing to break the silence surrounding the Animal Question, 'to pivot between ways of knowing and being in these times, to leap nimbly across chasms of the timeless and ancient, imaginative and deductive, nature and culture, twining together the gifts of the scientific rational legacy and the wild imagination' (Dunn, 2021, p. 270). It means seeing ourselves as part of the solution long-term (Capozzelli, 2020). We can re-imagine another story for ecosystem restoration, one in which the presence of animal kin enthuses us towards entanglement, connectedness, reflection and care. The restorative imagination is also a group effort, for '[i]n order to really see any situation, we have to cast our imaginations beyond our individual self and comprehend that we are simply tiny parts of a much larger interconnected system' (Critchlow, 2022, p. 250). Recalling my suggested quest for 'being within and doing with', this then means that our restorative re-imagining must include drawing inspiration from animal kin too, via wonder, for '*nature is imagination itself*' (Bridle, 2022, p. 17). Exercising our restorative imagination endears us to taking a collaborative response to the questions of who is willing to take responsibility for the harms done to animal kin and how we can 'imagine a future in which people and other species coexist harmoniously' (Martin, 2022, p. 223). In exploring responsiveness to the Animal Question with a restorative imagination, ERJ can help reify the imaginaries of what we might do for and with animal kin going forward in both ecosystem restoration and more widely in all our societal activities, as we release ourselves from restrictive human-centric conceptualisations of animal kin.

This article arose from a desire to respond to two calls for action. The first is Bertolesi's (2017) call to further explore how we take responsibility for animal kin through restorative justice. The second is Forsyth et al.'s (2021) call to keep the conversation flowing on ways to evolve ERJ to prevent harm and heal our environment and all its beings. For ERJ and the Animal Question, both in relation to ecosystem restoration and more broadly in all areas of animal kin welfare and strivings to flourish, having a restorative imagination can help us to think beyond the expected and amplify hope. Being curious, drawing on wonder, and thinking about what might be possible, can allow us to contemplate very big changes. After all, transformation has to begin somewhere, so why not begin in a circle of restoration practitioners, expert and volunteer alike, sitting in the heart of the ecosystem they are intent on repairing, alongside the animal kin with whom they are reconnecting?

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