

# The return of the wild in the Anthropocene. Wolf resurgence in the Netherlands

MARTIN DRENTHEN

Institute for Science, Innovation and Society, Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

**ABSTRACT** *In most rewilding projects, humans are still the agents in control: it is us who decide to no longer want to fully control nature. Spontaneous rewilding changes the nature of this game. Once we are confronted with species that have their own agency, that cannot fully be controlled, and that behave in ways that we do not always like, then it proves hard to co-exist and tolerate nature's autonomy. Nowhere is this more clearly visible than with the resurging wolf, whose return to parts of western Europe challenges our existing ideas about ourselves and our place in the landscape.*

## Landscape Change in Europe and the Resurgence of Wildness

The European landscape is rapidly changing. To compensate for centuries of environmental decline, national governments' and NGOs' attempt to increase the size and connectedness of natural areas in Europe (Coleman & Aykroyd, 2009). The concept of rewilding is becoming more influential in European nature conservation.<sup>1</sup> Most often, the term often refers to the return of habitats to a 'natural state,' or to 'the mass restoration of ecosystems' (Monbiot, 2013b), or to the deliberate release of 'missing' species into the wild.<sup>2</sup> For others, rewilding refers to 'action at the landscape level with the goal of reducing human control and allowing ecological and evolutionary processes to reassert themselves' (Klyza, 2001, p. 285), some use the term for the reversal of human 'domestication.'

As a result of rewilding projects, the designation of new, large-scale habitat areas, and the reintroduction of extirpated species, wild nature is literally gaining ground. The establishment of large-scale wilderness areas, or so-called PAN-Parks (Protected Area Network), is meant to create stable refuges for biodiversity, whereas the European ecological network Natura 2000 will connect existing natural areas so that species can migrate more easily and biodiversity loss due to fragmentation is counteracted. Occasionally these developments meet local resistance, particularly in areas with a long cultural history, but mostly they are applauded by the general public.

Next to these conscious, anthropogenic changes towards 'new nature,' wild nature also resurfaces spontaneously (Höchtl et al., 2005; Hunziker, 1995). Overall, the European human population continues to decrease.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, people are moving to the urban centers, leaving rural regions abandoned.<sup>4</sup> As soon as the human influence on the landscape becomes less dominant, non-human species take the opportunity to occupy new habitats. But the resurgence of the wild is not limited to rural, fairly uninhabited zones. In some urban zones, too, urban adapters such as fox and stone marten increasingly roam the city centers and suburbs (Muskens & Broekhuizen, 2005). Lynx, bison, beaver, and wild

---

*Correspondence Address:* Martin Drenthen, Institute for Science, Innovation and Society, Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands. Email: [m.drenthen@science.ru.nl](mailto:m.drenthen@science.ru.nl)

boar are already repopulating areas where they had disappeared from centuries ago. The number of beaver showed an 14,055% increase since 1960, European bison 3,084% since 1960, Grey seal 893% since 1977, Pyrenean ibex 855% since 1960, Southern chamois 537% since 1970 (Deinet et al., 2013). A recent study found that today Europe has twice as many wolves as the contiguous United States, despite being half the size and more than twice as densely populated (Chapron et al., 2014). Large carnivores are re-populating Europe's humanly-dominated landscapes. Apparently, Europeans somehow manage to coexist with species that only recently were hunted down and extirpated.

One of the most spectacular examples of the spontaneous resurging of wildlife is the wolf. The wolf was exterminated in most parts of western Europe in the nineteenth century. Populations only existed in more remote areas in Eastern and Southern Europe. But in the last decade, wolf populations again are spreading across Europe. Italian wolves have moved north to the French, Swiss and Austrian Alps; Eastern European wolves have established themselves in former East Germany, and are moving westward. The first Danish wolf cubs were born Denmark in summer 2013. In early 2015, the first wolf entered the Netherlands.

On 9 March 2015, a young wolf crossed the border from Germany and roamed the Northern parts of the Netherlands for four days. In search of a new territory and a mate, it walked for 200 km, mostly through meadows and small woods, but also next to roads and highways. The animal immediately made headline news in the national media: 'the wolf is back!' was on front page of most newspapers. Unlike some foreign newspapers suggested<sup>5</sup> the return of the wolf did not cause a panic, but was met with a mixture of fascination, excitement and anxiety. However, when the animal also started passing through commercial zones and occasionally through towns, that did lead to a growing sense of unease among many people. Clearly, the animal did not show the kind of shyness and fear for humans that the expert had predicted. Was this really a wild wolf, or might it be a wolf-dog hybrid? And if indeed the animal had no fear of humans, might that pose a threat to humans after all? Policymakers and politicians started making contingency plans—tagging the animal, scaring it away, releasing it in less populated areas—but before these could be put into practice, the wolf disappeared again. After four days in the Netherlands, the wolf went back to Germany, and disappeared from sight. Experts expect the next wolf visit any time soon.

In this paper I examine the Dutch response to the return of the wolf as a case of resurging wildness. I will show that the different views on whether or not people should welcome the wolf and share living space with them, are deeply intertwined with different notions of environmental identity and views on the human-nature relationship.

### **The Return of the Wolf to the Netherlands**

Years before the actual arrival of the wolf, a moral debate had started in the Netherlands on how modern society should relate to resurging wolves in today's thoroughly humanized Dutch landscape. The debate was triggered by the growing recognition that the return of wolves was a real possibility and not just a fantasy.

Since 2010, there had been occasional wolf sightings in Germany near the German-Dutch border. The first serious reports of a Dutch wolf sighting took place in August 2011, less than 20 km from the German border, along a highway. Several people took pictures

of the animal, and many but not all experts believed that this could indeed have been a genuine wolf. Immediately after this first sighting, many more people reported having seen a wolf, although most experts were highly suspicious about these sightings, and believed people mistook dogs for wild animals.<sup>6</sup> Less than two years later, however, in April 2013, a camera trap<sup>7</sup> captured a wolf at only 10 km from the Dutch border—walking distance that is—proof that indeed the wolf was about to enter Dutch territory.<sup>8</sup> And yet, it came as a surprise when on 4 July 2013 a dead wolf was found in the Noordoostpolder—apparently killed by traffic. It seemed that the wolf had managed to return to the Netherlands, 132 years after the last wolf was shot in 1881.

The discovery caused a lot of upheaval. Most Dutch people did not expect wolves to recolonize one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Moreover, the wolf was found in the Noordoostpolder, a relatively recent land reclamation (1936–1942), a so-called ‘green desert’ of intensive agricultural land, not the first place that springs to mind when thinking of a wild animal in search of suitable living space.

The Dutch debate about the wolf concerns different issues, one of them being safety: some people are afraid that wolves might endanger humans, sheep farmers fear that they might kill livestock. But most concerns have a more general character, and relate to deeply felt convictions about how nature is supposed to look in thoroughly humanized, historic cultural landscapes such as in the Netherlands: some feel that wolves do no longer fit into the densely-populated Dutch landscapes, others welcome the wolf as a symbol of the return of ‘true’ nature after decades of human domestication of nature.

Like most Western Europeans, Dutch people today only know of wolves from fairy tales and Hollywood movies. This perspective influences people’s expectations, fantasies and fears about wolves. Since a debate that is mostly about imaginary wolves, instead of actual animals, can easily go wild, Wolves in the Netherlands, a coalition of Dutch conservation groups<sup>9</sup> had been educating the general public to prepare them for the arrival of wolves for a few years already. Inspired by the apparent success of similar groups in Germany,<sup>10</sup> they educate the general public about wolf behavior, and raise wolf consciousness among livestock keepers by spreading knowledge about practical measures to prevent damage and losses.<sup>11</sup> Yet, when the first wolf finally arrived, it sparked a debate that hardly anyone had anticipated: a highly emotionally charged debate not only about the wolf but also about the role of humans within the Dutch landscape.

The Dutch were used to landscape changes as a result of political decisions to rewild—the many ‘new nature development’ projects had triggered a societal debate about the human-nature relationship. But that debate deepened when wildness resurged spontaneously and invaded human space. ‘Nature itself’ appeared to be challenging standing ideas about ourselves.

### **Rewilding as Controlled Decontrolling of Nature**

It is important to note that most Europeans understand wilderness as ‘pristine and untouched’ nature, and therefore believe that such a thing does not exist anymore in Europe. Wilderness is something that had vanished from the old European continent a long time ago, and can only be found in other parts of world, particularly in ‘New World’: the Amazon rainforest, the Australian outback, and of course, those archetypical North-American wilderness parks such as Yellowstone and Yosemite. Environmental humanities

scholars know that this old notion of wilderness as pristine, and devoid of human influence, is deeply problematic, both because the concept of wilderness itself is a cultural invention, and because historic studies reveal that many supposed wildernesses were not really pristine and untouched altogether (Cronon, 1995; Callicott & Nelson, 1998).

Yet, the concept of *wildness* plays an ever larger role in the European debate on nature protection, and *rewilding* is increasingly popular among European conservationists (Balmford, 2012; Marris, 2011). European rewilding advocates typically do not refer to the traditional notion of wilderness as pristine land, but to an alternative understanding of wildernesses as places where humans have stepped back to make room for natural processes. Old abandoned cultural areas are transformed into ‘new wilderness’ parks where natural processes are allowed to rule the landscape<sup>12</sup> dikes are breached to create wetlands, lost species are actively reintroduced or ‘invited’ to rewild former agricultural land. Rewilding in Europe is sometimes seen as an effort to restore the historic continuity of a landscape by reconnecting it with its earlier, ‘deeper’ history (Drenthen, 2009a, 2013)<sup>13</sup> more often it is presented merely as an attempt to let go of human control. According to rewilding advocate George Monbiot (2013b), rewilding (or ‘the mass restoration of ecosystems’) ‘is about abandoning the Biblical doctrine of dominion which has governed our relationship with the natural world’ and ‘reverse the destruction of the natural world’. According to Monbiot (2013b), rewilding programs in several parts of Europe... are beginning to show how swiftly nature responds when we stop trying to control it.’ Rewilding challenges existing ideas about the nature of the landscape and about the relationship between the landscape and human history, and the identities that built on them: ‘Some people see rewilding as a human retreat from nature; I see it as a re-involvement ... I see rewilding as an enhanced opportunity for people to engage with and delight in the natural world’ (Monbiot, 2013a, p. 11).

One could argue that rewilding is about the creation of new cultural landscapes that reflect our new ideals and ambitions: ‘new wildernesses’ merely reflect our changed ideas and ideals about nature and reflect the postmodern desire for a life less ordered, less tame. Seen from this perspective, landscape conflicts about rewilding—between rewilders who want to return to a wilder state and those who want to protect the cultural heritage landscape—are in essence just another political conflict between different visions about the future of society and its proper relation to the natural world. It may be that the explicit moral ideal behind rewilding is the effort to let go of control, and learn to tolerance for nature following its own course, but in practice it is almost always a case of ‘*controlled* decontrolling of nature’ (Keulartz, 2012, p. 60, my emphasis). In most rewilding projects, humans are still the main agents, *they* decide to no longer want to fully control nature.

Spontaneous rewilding, in the other hand, changes the nature of this game. As soon as we have to deal with entities in nature that have their own agency, and that behave in ways that we do not like and that we *cannot* control, then it turns out that it is hard to tolerate nature as an independent autonomous force. And nowhere can this problem be felt more clearly than in our confrontations with dangerous carnivores.

### Spontaneous Rewilding as a Challenge

Within environmental philosophy, Val Plumwood wrote the most well-known account of an encounter with a dangerous predator. In her essay ‘Being Prey’ (Plumwood, 1999),

she recounts how she was attacked and almost eaten by a salt water crocodile while on a canoeing trip in Kakadu National Park, Australia. For Plumwood, the realization that she could become prey changed her perspective on our place in nature. We often simply take it for granted that we are on top of the food chain. The realization that one can become prey has deep consequences for how we perceive ourselves.

In her work, Plumwood has argued repeatedly that the moral quality of a society can be judged from its relationship with predators. It is easy to feel love and care for cute, fluffy animals. It is quite another thing to give room to animals that can be inimical to us. To co-exist with predators, we need to tolerate that they can be dangerous to us, which means that we will need to develop an environmental culture that helps us to adapt and reconcile our wishes and aspirations with the needs of these other beings. Since one cannot blame a crocodile for doing what crocodiles do—eating prey—she strongly opposed the idea of killing the crocodile that might have killed her: especially because she invaded *its* habitat. Indeed, many wildlife enthusiasts feel that we must restrain ourselves from attempts to dominate nature in those instances that we visit ‘wildernesses,’ even if that means that we expose ourselves to certain dangers. We desire wilderness as nature beyond our control, and therefore, it would be inappropriate if not nonsensical to enter these domains with the idea to control it.

In many regions of the world people still inhabit regions where humans do not have the upper hand, and are still aware of the fact that their home is also home to dangerous animals. Those who live deep in the forests of North America share living space with wild animals, and seem to be aware that human control over the land cannot be taken for granted—hence the American fascination with the notion of wilderness. As soon as the land is seen as essentially a production landscape, than the tolerance for predatory wildlife rapidly drops (Thorp, 2014).<sup>14</sup> But this experience of wildness at the borders of the human domain no longer plays a role in the daily lives of most Europeans, who live in highly humanized landscapes. Except maybe for a few remote areas in the Alps and Pyrenees, most Europeans are city folk that have grown accustomed to seeing their continent as an essentially *humanized* environment:

not an artificial environment, but rather an environment transformed by and in part the combined outcome of human intentional activity and natural processes. Human intervention prevents the ‘natural succession’ of ecosystems to climax states, instead transforming and maintaining ecosystems in accordance with human interests (which can of course include a concern for the interests of non-human entities). (Barry, 1999, p. 126)

In case other non-human beings inhabit these places as well, it is clear that humans are in control and animals are only allowed in on human terms—usually in the margins or edges of human land. But wild predators that enter the human world will not always play along.

### Three Perspectives on the Wolf

Let's go back again to summer 2013, and the discovery of the first (dead) wolf in the Netherlands. The Dutch debate about the wolf quickly became so charged, so I will argue, because the wolf's arrival challenged existing notions about the nature and identity of the Dutch landscape, the role of humans in it. In the following I will discuss three dominant wolf perspectives, all of which can be seen as mirroring a particular traditional conception of human identity and humans' place in nature. I will argue that each of these perspectives was seriously challenged by the wolf's return

#### 1. *Wolf as An Intruder*

One of the most visible reactions to the arrival of the wolf was disbelief, followed by anxiety and hostility. The initial reaction of disbelief could first be heard when the wolf was found on 4 July 2013, in the midst of summer. Many journalists immediately declared the wolf to be a hoax, a typical slack season phenomenon not to be taken seriously. Only a few years earlier, in the summer of 2005, the Dutch had been under the spell of a black puma that supposedly roamed the Veluwe National Park, in the center of the Netherlands. Investigations that followed produced no single shred of evidence of the presence of large cats: the puma was just a silly-season hoax. But in the case of the wolf, proof followed quickly: DNA-analysis confirmed that the animal was indeed a wolf, and a first examination seemed to confirm that it had been run over by a car. Also, inside its stomach remains of a beaver were found, a species that is flourishing in the Netherlands after reintroductions between 1988 and 2008.<sup>15</sup> And yet, despite the seemingly convincing proof, many still could not believe the news, let alone accept it as a fact. Many argued that the Netherlands is much too small and too densely populated for wolves to settle. Some even made the stronger claim that a proper wolf would never *want to* come to the Netherlands. In other words, there must be something wrong with it.<sup>16</sup>

Already in 2010, when the first wolf sightings nearby in Germany were reported, many people were alarmed. Since many people requested information on the official website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, a reference was included to the Wolves in the Netherlands website. Some conservative politicians wrongly assume that Wolves in the Netherlands is aiming to actively reintroduce wolves, and therefore feared that the government had secretly adopted a similar position. In parliament, the minister was asked if she agreed

that the densely populated Netherlands with its many nature tourists and its many lambs, foals, and calves in the spring in the meadow would be a true land of plenty, where the wolf would like to permanently establish itself and reproduce with pleasure? (Tweede Kamer 2010).

The critics argued that farmers would be forced to keep domestic sheep and cattle inside at night to protect their animals from wolf attacks, resulting in animal welfare problems. They also asked if wolves could be regarded as exotic, invasive animals that could be shot on arrival, or whether EU regulations implied that the Netherlands from now on was considered a suitable habitat for the wolf. The minister responded that as soon as wolves arrived in the Netherlands of their own accord, they would have to be considered native,

and European law would demand that member states actively help these animals survive in their (newly colonized) habitats. This answer confirmed the worries of those who feared that more room for wolves would inevitably mean less valuable productive farmland for humans. In the 2013 debate, a liberal-conservative member of parliament therefore explicitly asked the minister again to restrain from investing any money in facilitating the arrival of the wolf, and demanded that the cabinet make contingency plans that allow for shooting wolves in case they cause problems.<sup>17</sup>

Common in all these responses to the wolf's arrival is the unreflected idea that 'wild' animals like wolves do not belong in present-day cultural landscapes. An influential view in traditional Dutch landscape conservation relies on a particular conception of a cultural landscape as a legible text that testifies of a long human place history (Drenthen, 2009a). Seen from this perspective, the humanization of a landscape implies the establishment of meaning: to dwell means to bestow sense on the world. One of the most vocal spokespersons of this view, writer and landscape activist Willem van Toorn, opposes rewilding projects because they in effect often wipe out the legible traces of human habitation that make the landscape legible and meaningful:

The type of nature that nature-builders aspire *does not have anything to tell* to humans; man is a stranger there, merely a visitor to his own landscape ... That is why these new nature reserves have information pavilions, signposting, treasure hunts along tree species and ponds with half-domesticated otter. (Van Toorn, 1998, p. 66)

Cultural landscapes derive their meaning and value from this (human) history of cultivation, from having been appropriated from (a-historical) nature. The implication of such a view is that cultural landscapes and wild lands are separate realms of reality. In the Russian 1959 novel *Life and Fate* by Vasily Grossman, this old European view is nicely phrased by main character Viktor Pavlovich:

Man never understands that the cities he has built are not an integral part of Nature. If he wants to defend his culture from wolves and snowstorms, if he wants to save it from being strangled by weeds, he must keep his broom, spade and rifle always at hand. If he goes to sleep, if he thinks about something else for a year or two, then everything's lost. The wolves come out of the forest, the thistles spread and everything is buried under dust and snow. Just think how many great capitals have succumbed to dust, snow and couch-grass. (Grossman, 2006, p. 426)

For wolves, this means that as long as they remain in the outside world of wilderness there is no problem, but as soon as they appear in *our* world, they are seen as intruders.<sup>18</sup> They are like dirt: matter out of place (Douglas, 1966).

A few days after the dead wolf was discovered, some members of a local hunter society made national news with their claim that 'almost certainly the dead animal was deliberately put there as a prank.'<sup>19</sup> Apparently, a few years earlier a dead seal was found beside the road nearby (over 100 km from the sea!). They concluded that the dead wolf was put there most probably by Polish immigrant workers who ran over a wolf in Germany or Poland, and then dropped it beside the road in the middle of a large open polder in the Netherlands. Interestingly, most media immediately accepted the claim, although the only real argument was that they found the story 'hard to believe,' and felt that, if true, they 'would have noticed' the wolf's

presence before. Apparently, many assume that we fully control what happens in our cultural landscapes, and nothing can happen there without us taking notice.<sup>20</sup>

The most disturbing thing about wolves for those who fear their arrival appears to be that the wolves themselves seem to undermine the very distinction between wild and cultivated land that is so important to the defenders of cultural landscapes. Research shows that wolves are not confined to wild places such as old growth forests, but are perfectly able to flourish in cultural landscapes, as long as there is enough prey and there are enough hiding places (IUCN, 2014).<sup>21</sup> By challenging the very difference between wilderness and culture that is so important to the identity of heritage protectionists, wolves present a threat to the kind of environmental identity that relies on the neat separation of both domains.

## 2. *Wolf as an Innocent Victim and Friend*

Those who oppose the wolf's return are heavily emotionally involved, but the same is true for those who welcome it. The last few years have seen a rapid proliferation of publications on the wolf: books, newspaper articles, documentaries, television shows and novels. Wolves are typically portrayed as beautiful, intelligent and highly social animals that command our utmost respect. Most feel that wolves are charismatic animals that deserve our love and care, some even claim to have a deep emotional connection to them. On the Facebook page of Wolves in the Netherlands, one finds many statements of people declaring their love for them.<sup>22</sup> This emotional commitment to wolves is often combined with some hostility towards those who are less enthusiastic.

Many feel that wolves should be defended against hostile attacks by those who hate or fear them; often critics are depicted as ill-informed and afraid without good reason, sometimes the response to critics is outright hostile. As soon as someone only mentions that wolves might cause problems, many self-declared wolf lovers respond as if they are under attack themselves. Apparently, the very fact that someone can have genuine reasons to worry about possible adverse effects of wolves is difficult to accept.

Wolf lovers typically see wolves as intelligent, social, and independent animals, but more importantly they are victims of victims of a hostile human culture that seeks to subdue nature. As a platform that is interested in preventing conflicts between wolves and humans, *Wolves in the Netherlands* also includes the Royal Dutch Hunters Society. On the Facebook page of *Wolves in the Netherlands* one often finds critical remarks of wolf lovers who feel that hunters should not be part of the platform. Two representative quotes:

Very dubious that the Royal Hunters Association is also in it. The members of that club kill animals for fun. They cowardly kill foxes on a massive scale because they consider them as competitors for their pleasure hunt ... just as wolves will the moment that they're back. Very strange and I think they do not belong here!

and:

Royal Hunting Association ?! There is nothing regal in shooting animals for fun! If 'we' humans wouldn't have meddled with nature ... there would be no need to hunt at all. The wolf disappeared from the Netherlands because of human intervention!<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, one frequently encounters statements such as ‘I’d rather have a wolf as a friend than one of these hunters,’ and ‘all these hypocrites want is to get rid of the wolf because they like to kill anything that is as beautiful and pure as wolves.’ Wolves represent authenticity, their pureness, honesty, grace, and innocence—typical elements of a romantic view of nature—are seen as reasons for loving them. Moreover, many wolf lovers stress that wolves and sensitive wolf-loving people alike both are victims of modern civilization that is dominated by an arrogant human chauvinist, overly rational attitude towards nature.

This negative view of civilization is also reflected in a skeptical attitude toward science. In online debates one can often find negative responses regarding collar-tracking and other semi-invasive methods, even when used for wolf protection: ‘scientists insist of robbing the animal of its dignity merely to satisfy their own curiosity.’ The skepticism seems to be directed not merely to the invasive methods. When animal experts performed an autopsy to determine the cause of death and the whereabouts of the dead wolf, many wolf lovers protested: ‘even now that it is dead and killed by humans it is still not left in peace.’ Many wolf lovers criticize the very same scientists on whose specific knowledge about wolves they otherwise often rely.<sup>24</sup>

What is typical for many wolf lovers is their almost systematic neglect of some basic facts about wolves: they *are* predators, it is in their nature not only to eat meat (3 to 4 kg each day),<sup>25</sup> but also to hunt and kill, to stalk their prey, to use their social skills and intelligence to hunt much larger animals than themselves.<sup>26</sup> Yet, it appears that the fact that these animals are predators is considered by many to be just an accidental feature of the animals. The widely acclaimed 2005 movie *Living with Wolves* (Jamie Dutcher and Jim Dutcher, USA, 2005)—about an American couple, Jim and Jamie Dutcher, who single-handedly raised a wolf pack in Idaho—sets out to show that humans and wolves can easily live together in harmony. The documentary is often applauded as a good realistic depiction of wolves, despite the fact that throughout the movie not one hunting scene or wolf kill is seen: the pack is fed with meat, but does not have to hunt itself.<sup>27</sup>

The problem with the perspective of many self-declared wolf lovers is that it ignores any significant ecological understanding of the wolf’s role in the landscape it inhabits. Wolves never live in isolation, they are functioning members of an ecological community, as ‘emplaced’ parts of an ecosystem, and inhabit landscapes that we inhabit too. Having unrestrained feelings of love for wolves as innocent victims of civilization is difficult to reconcile with an acknowledgment of the wolf’s predatory nature.<sup>28</sup>

We can therefore conclude that wolf lovers have a similar problem as wolf haters: both have difficulty acknowledging the place and ecological role of wolves within the landscapes that we also inhabit.

### 3. *Wolf Management*

Both wolf haters and wolf lovers seem to have difficulty acknowledging the wolf in all its relevant features as part of a living landscape. Those who regard the animal as an intruder feel threatened because the wolf challenges the very distinction between culture and nature that forms the basis of this particular outlook on life. Wolf lovers on the other hand seem to base their case on the simple neglect of what is arguably one of the key characteristics of a predator. Both parties seem to be blinded by their particular outlook on nature that is determined by particular ideologies and human desires, rather than by a realistic approach

to the wolf as an actual animal. For this reason, many feel that the most important thing to focus on to help further the debate is to separate fact from fiction, and to fight prejudices and preconceptions about the wolf that are not based on facts. Wolves in the Netherlands and others who want to accommodate the arrival of the wolf firmly believe that it is essential to properly educate the public about what kind of animal wolves really are.<sup>29</sup> Key to this approach is the conviction that we should look at wolves objectively, look at them like any other ‘normal’ animal, seek a sober and balanced, rational and realistic approach.

The assumption is that if we adopt such a rational approach, it should be possible for a modern rich country such as the Netherlands to change its policies in such a way that humans can coexist with wolves. Solid public communication programs through social media, mass media and public talks can help take away public anxiety and counteract the so-called ‘Little Red Riding Hood syndrome’<sup>30</sup> and educational programs can help specific stakeholder groups such as livestock breeders and shepherds to find pragmatic solutions to problems such as damage to livestock. German and Polish wolf management schemes show that scientific monitoring of wolves and studies into wolf behavior can help us find arrangements that allow for peaceful coexistence.<sup>31</sup>

Wolf managers emphasize the need to recognize the real wolf as an ambivalent being that will have both advantages and disadvantages, and promote a pragmatic, matter-of-factual treatment of damage and feelings of uneasiness. Most wolf experts stress that the wolf is very shy animal that will avoid contact with humans. The chances of seeing one (let alone having a dangerous encounter) are very slim; those who ever encounter a real wild wolf should consider themselves lucky. Many wolf managers stress that wolves can have an important positive value effect on ecosystems as well: enriching species diversity, by changing the grazing patterns of herbivores and reducing their numbers by effectively reducing the amount of available food resources – the so-called *ecology of fear*.<sup>32</sup> Arguably, there is something paradoxical when wolf management stresses that fear for wolves is an essential part of their functioning in an ecosystem, yet at the same time also stresses that humans do not have anything to fear from the wolf. This double standard towards the *role of fear* in the reasoning of wolf management should make us aware of possible limitations in this strategy of normalization. As mentioned earlier, for Val Plumwood (1999) the realization that we can be eaten by an animal provided the basis for an attitude of awe and respect for predators. The normalization strategy of wolf management, on the other hand, goes in the opposite direction. The risk of stressing the normalness of the wolf, is that wolves are turned into ‘manageable objects.’

The approach of Wolves in the Netherlands and others fits perfectly in the Dutch tradition of dealing with issues of public policy and spatial planning. The Netherlands has always had a strong tradition in city design, landscape architecture, and spatial planning, largely due to the fact that the Netherlands is a country below sea level. The Netherlands is to a large degree dependent on rational spatial planning measures that keep the water out and the forces of nature under control. This tradition of controlling nature is deeply ingrained in Dutch public culture.<sup>33</sup> Much in line with this tradition, the Dutch authorities had already begun preparing the country for the wolf’s arrival long before the first wolf arrived. In 2012, the ministry for nature affairs commissioned a ‘fact finding study’ (Groot Bruinderink et al., 2012) and an ‘appreciation survey.’<sup>34</sup> In September 2012 the decision was made to write a ‘wolf management plan’ in close cooperation with relevant stakehold-

er groups, for which several meetings were organized (Groot Bruinderink et al., 2013, also see Trouwborst, 2014, also see Trouwborst, 2014).<sup>35</sup>

During one of these meetings, in November 2013, a series of role-playing games were held with the participants, examining several possible scenarios of wolves returning to the Netherlands. The goal of these role plays was to discuss with all parties involved what should be done as soon as the first wolves finally settled in the Netherlands. How should local authorities act when the first dogs are attacked by wolves? Who should call whom? Which authorities will be responsible for what? Should there be a quick reaction force? How will media attention be dealt with?

One of these role-playing games focused on the question what would happen if wolves formed a ‘pack’ for the first time. To celebrate the birth of wolf puppies, the training actor playing the role of a forest warden who was handing out toast with sprinkles (the traditional treat served to guests on a maternity visit) to visitors. He complained that it was difficult to handle the large numbers of amateur photographers that were overrunning the forest in an effort to get a glimpse of the animals. To provide the animals with a quiet spot, part of the forest was fenced off with barrier tape; an improvised sign warned visitors they should keep their dogs on the leash ‘for their own safety.’

Many of the participants had difficulty believing that this could really happen in a Dutch forest in the foreseeable future, and wondered whether or not this was a realistic case. But if so, should we really decide to fence off the area to give the wolves some quiet? ‘Why don’t we trust the wolf’s judgment? Aren’t we being too paternalistic?’ one participant asked. If a wild animal decides that this place was quite enough to give birth to her pups, why should we know better? Are we really concerned for the wolf, or might it be that we are obsessed to let go of control in our desire to ‘organize’ our relation to nature. Might we be too afraid that the wolf’s sudden arrival might cause a breach in the well-ordered Dutch landscape in which everything, even nature, is neatly placed in a predetermined order? By not trusting the wolf’s judgment, so this participant suggested, we risk denying the wolf’s dignity as a *wild* animal. Wouldn’t this amount to a reduction of the wolf’s wildness, an effort to ‘normalize’ it and making it part of our orderly all-too-human world?

When the first wolf arrived the Netherlands in March 2015, and immediately entered small villages and towns, the public attention quickly focused on the ‘atypical behavior’ of the wolf. Unlike what most wolf experts had predicted, the animal did not appear to be very shy: it walked next to roads, crossed villages by following the paved walk, seemingly unimpressed by cars passing by and people taking pictures. Could we really be sure that there was nothing to fear from wolves? Many people—wolf haters and wolf lovers alike—were convinced that this had to be a dog-wolf hybrid, or an escaped wolf from a private zoo.<sup>36</sup> Some German experts explained the behavior by pointing out that the animal probably grew up on a military training site near Munster, Germany where the young wolf might have been fed by soldiers.<sup>37</sup> Other experts insisted that the wolf displayed normal behavior that seen before in wild wolves in Sweden, and stressed that no dangerous situation had yet occurred. Yet, there seemed to be a wide consensus that a wild wolf would not, and *should* not behave like the new arrival did.

One day after the wolf’s arrival, on 9 March 2015, officials from the province of Groningen gently suggested that the young wolf might well be a so-called ‘problem wolf’—a wolf displaying atypical behavior that is bound to lead to conflicts with humans. They insisted that this did not mean that the animal was no longer welcome, on

the contrary: because they wanted to live together peacefully with wolves, it would be necessary to create a controlled and predictable situation. The plan was to anesthetize and radio collar the animal, so that official could keep a closer eye on it, and then release it in a quiet location nearby where it would have a chance of finding a suitable spot for itself. But before release it should be scared off with noise and plastic bullets to teach the animal to keep its distance from humans. Most experts and the general population seemed to agree with this approach, but some animal activists protested against the plan. On social media, the Facebook page ‘Leave our wolf alone’,<sup>38</sup> got thousands of likes within a few hours.

The wolf is just a few days back in the Netherlands and there are already voices to numb the wolf to conduct DNA, the first farmer has already filed a damage claim and all kinds of thrill seekers are on the road. The wolf is protected and we want also that the animal is left alone so that it can live in peace and can follow his or her own way. Perhaps then even more will follow. We ask the prime minister to take measures to ensure the security of this beautiful animal!

And although the provincial authorities stressed that they did not want to harm the animal, an international online petition was launched against shooting the wolf.<sup>39</sup> One might argue that there is something irrational to the opposition against what appears to be very prudent wolf management approach. And yet, there also seems to be something at stake in our relation to the wolf that cannot simply be made part of a management plan.

The conservation and preservation experts, with their emphasis on knowledge and rational thought might be blinded too, maybe not for the ‘real,’ ‘factual’ wolf, but for what the wolf *stands for*. The attempt to manage the wolf case rationally and detached from emotion is criticized for being negligent to or insensitive for the meaning of a wolf as an independent, autonomous and unruly being. Another quote from the ‘Leave our wolf alone’ Facebook page makes exactly that point:

Dear Wolf, quickly go back to a large deep forest somewhere across the border. There clearly is no future for you here, too many thrill seekers with their cameras and wild goose chase stories. I’ll miss you, but above all I want you to be safe and live in freedom. I ask all people who see you to leave you alone, to not make pictures or videos and to not chase you, but to respect you for what you are: a free soul, a Gypsy in transit.<sup>40</sup>

Could it be that the wolf management approach implicitly share the assumption of the wolf haters and wolf lovers that unruly wildness—as that which resists human orderings—does not have a role to play in the Dutch landscape?

### **The Neglect of Wildness**

The Netherlands is known as a country with one of the best organized and most well-ordered spatial planning in the world. Accordingly, each newly arrived species is also being met with planning, contingency plans, stakeholder meetings and legislation. Some believe that the Dutch reaction to the possible arrival of the wolf shows that the Dutch simply have lost the ability

to tolerate disorderly things. In Belgium, for example, a very similar wolf situation exists, but there one finds a much mellower attitude regarding wolves. Whereas the Dutch can only come up with better regulations, protocols and policies to deal with disorder, the Belgians appear to be more laid back towards those self-willed nature phenomena that escape classifications, and display—if you will—an instance of transcendence.<sup>41</sup>

The attempt to regulate the wolf with a management plan might be seen as a forced attempt to ‘normalize’ the wolf, and to impose order on the wildness of nature. Underneath the wolf plan seems to lie a fear that the wolf will not be controllable, that it can destabilize society by causing social conflicts, and can force us to change our lives. Many conservationists, wardens and wildlife managers see themselves as representatives of nature’s interests, but in their attempt to ensure that nature conservation will have public support, they also see it as their task to prevent human-nature conflicts and try to build a good relationship with their human neighbors.

Yet, by trying to avoid human-wildlife conflicts, nature is also robbed of its ability to show its teeth, to seriously confront us with that which lies beyond our control. Wolf management seems ill equipped to recognize this ‘transcendental’ meaning of the wild wolf. Yet, much of our fascination for the wolf rests precisely on this wildness: especially in a well-ordered, overly-ordered landscape as the Dutch one, the wolf represents something other that we fear and long for at the same time: an animal that is truly wild, that resists our all-too-human orderings (Drenthen, 2005). Wolves are symbols of the return of vital nature, and represent that part of the world that lies beyond our control. This also means that fear of wolves is an essential part of our fascination with them. By easing the tension and playing down possible threats, wolf managers risk losing the very element that distinguishes wolves from ‘normal’ animals. As Bill McKibben puts it: In a way, though, it’s almost too bad that news is spreading of their benign image, almost too bad that people are starting to think of them as cuddly. Too bad because it’s not true [...], and too bad because some of their power to shake us from our enchantment comes from their dramatic image. (McKibben, 2000, p. 17)

Wolf management will be useful for making people recognize that the systematic eradication of wolves may have been a mistake, that the return of wolves will have advantages in terms of ecology and even aesthetic experiences of nature, and that at the end of the day it may be just fair to give the wolves more room. But the emphasis on these rational considerations should not blind us from recognizing that one of the most powerful reasons for people to become fascinated by wolves and argue for wolf protection lies in their very wildness. There exist many reasons, why it would be wise to be on our guard not to protect our cultural prejudices against wolves, and adopt a rational and pragmatic approach to wolves. But the attempt to rescue the real animal from the imaginary can blind us from the fact that there are strong symbolic meanings attached to the animal. Some emotionally charged meanings are not based on a lack of understanding, but rather inform us of the significance these animals have for us.

It is hard to maintain that wolves do not—at least in some sense of the word—‘belong’ to this country: they lived here for as long as we know, and their return is inevitable if we do not actively stop them. Educating the general public on the facts about the wolf alone, however, will not suffice. It is the wolf’s wildness that is disquieting and uneasy to some, and fascinating to others. Underneath the managers’ approach to conflicts between wolves and humans is a hidden assumption that the integration of wolves into our society

will be possible without radically altering the deep-felt beliefs about the human-nature relationship. Resurgent wolves confront us with the need to update our ideas about our place in the natural world and urge us to put in perspective how we take for granted human power over nature. They force us to rethink what it means to live in a living wild landscape.

### **Conclusion: Living in a Still Wild World**

In the Dutch wolf case, we have encountered at least three different perspectives on the wolf, all of which reflect not just an image of what the wolf is, but also about how one should deal with the landscape, and what a proper role of humans within nature might look like. The resurgence of the wolf presented all of these perspectives with a challenge, but basically the issue at stake is always the same.

For those who see the wolf as an intruder, the spontaneous resurgence of the wolf means a breach in the comfortable separation between wild lands and cultural landscape. Wolf behavior shows that the clear separation between nature and culture does not exist, which undermines the idea of humans being the sole guardians and stewards of the domesticated world. The wolf confronts us with the fact that, despite all our efforts, the world still contains wildness that cannot be controlled.

For those who regard the wolf as friend and innocent victim of modern society, the possibility of human-wildlife conflicts in itself presents a challenge. Love for wolves cannot be easy; what is more, a too-rosy picture of wolves fails to do justice to their very nature as predators. Recognizing wolves as real animals living in the ecological and social context of our landscapes demands we acknowledge them as predators. As long as we live separate lives, we might try to ignore their presence, but once we share the same landscape, we can no longer do so. It is easy to love beautiful and innocent animals, but sharing spaces with large carnivores will never be easy.

Finally, from the perspective of wolf management, the resurgence of the wolf confronts us with our desire for control, not only control over nature, but also control over nature within us. Of course we play an active role in organizing our relation with the wolf; we need to find an appropriate *habitus* that allows us to live together, and that will require some degree of management and control. But respecting nature's autonomy also implies a willingness to live with wild creatures, not just when they are charismatic and cute, but also when they are a nuisance. Without practicing tolerance—the virtue of enduring those things that are difficult to endure—wildlife management will inevitably incarcerate wildness. Wolves force us to recognize that in our desire for control, we lose sight of the unruly in nature, the unruly that we fear and that fascinates us. They confront us with our limitations and finitude, put at stake the image we have of ourselves, but that at the same time also remind us of our deep and profound fascination for the vitality of nature.

The resurgence of the wolf in cultural landscapes confronts us with the fact that our domestication of nature has only been superficial, that the world is and has always been a much more wild place that we thought it was. Europe's modern welfare states owe much of their success to the degree to which they have provided their citizens with safe and healthy environments and comfortable lives; there can be no doubt that a peaceful coexistence with wildlife in the context of humanized landscapes requires some kind of wildlife management and conflict prevention measures. There are, however, other, opposite trends

and values in modern European society that show that European population today is not merely interested in comfort and security.

The success of the resurgence of wildlife in Europe can be attributed to a shift in the dominant attitude of Europeans towards nature from hostility to tolerance.<sup>42</sup> This shift in basic attitude can also be seen in the popularity of the notion of rewilding among Europeans today; they increasingly value wild nature exactly for its uncontrollability and unruliness. A justified approach to wildlife conflict prevention should therefore not only focus on wildlife control, but should also stimulate and accommodate tolerance towards environmental discomfort and unease. Europeans seems to have a basic willingness to share spaces with other species in what is still a wild continent. The uneasy truth of the resurging wolves is that we have forgotten what it means to live in a world that remains to be wild. The possible return of wolves in landscapes where they were thought to have gone extinct forever, challenges existing notions about ourselves. We have to relearn *who we are* in a world that is still—to a large degree—uncontrollable and wild.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

### Notes

1. Marcus Hall (2014, p. 17) argues that ‘North Americans may be much more comfortable [with] rewilding [because] [w]ilderness is traditionally an American thing, and many say that “real” wilderness simply doesn’t exist in Europe ... The puzzle however, is that today, Europeans are increasingly joining the Americans in rewilding. Perhaps restorationists on both sides of the Atlantic are simply *naturing*, *re-naturing* or *new naturing*, by bringing back better forms of nature with little regard of how wild it may be.’
2. Within conservation biology, there are intense debates about what kind of species are most important for rewilding. The most common understanding takes rewilding as ‘the scientific argument for restoring big wilderness based on the regulatory roles of large predators’ (Soulé & Noss, 1998, p. 5), although some European restoration biologists (e.g., Vera, 2000) argue that the reintroducing of large herbivores is more important.
3. ‘In Europe, there has been a decline of 17% of the rural population since 1961, ... some parishes of Mediterranean mountain areas have lost more than half of their population in a similar period’ (Navarro & Pereira, 2012, p. 901).
4. The Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) estimates a total decline of agriculture, grasslands and semi-natural habitats until 2030 of more than 30 million hectares and a subsequent increase of forest or bush areas across the EU (Keenleyside & Tucker, 2010).
5. The website of the UK tabloid *Mirror* linked to a video of the wolf passing through the small Dutch village of Kolham (pop. 1500) under the heading ‘Terrifying footage of wolf prowling city streets looking for its next meal, (Corcoran 2015)’ whereas in fact most local inhabitants were mostly surprised and fascinated rather than afraid.
6. George Monbiot (2013a, pp. 49–61) discusses this strange phenomenon of predator sightings, and explains these sightings as a symptom of ‘ecological boredom’ of urbanites who suffer from an overly ordered life and unconsciously long for wild encounters.
7. Camera traps play an ever more important role in detecting animal activity, because they become less and less expensive. A remarkable example took place on Christmas 2012 in the German town of Langburkersdorf. The Schubert family had gotten a camera trap as a Christmas present from their children. They decided to install it in their back garden right away. After two nights of inactivity, the third night the camera caught two wolves visiting the garden (Lange, 2012).

8. In the meantime, June 2014, this individual appears to have entered the Netherlands, according to several credible eye witness accounts.
9. *Wolves in the Netherlands* is a coalition of the Society for Preservation of Nature Monuments in the Netherlands (the largest private conservation organization in the Netherlands), The Dutch Mammal Society, and rewilding organization Ark Nature. See <http://www.wolvenin nederland.nl> (accessed 1 May 2015).
10. The *German Naturschutz Bund* (NABU) started the education project 'Willkommen Wolf' soon after the first wolves had entered Germany from the east in 2000.
11. They also initiate research on wolf-related issues, e.g., closely monitoring sheep killing by dogs, so that by the time wolves finally arrive they will not be held responsible for all sheep kills.
12. See the website of Rewilding Europe: <http://www.rewildingeurope.com> (accessed 1 May 2015).
13. Jozef Keulartz discusses the differences between historic baselines in restoration ecology in America and Europe (Keulartz, *in press*).
14. The opposite problem can also be seen, when eco-friendly urbanites too easily forget that resurging nature in the city may cause problems too, as David Baron (2004) shows in his book about a fatal mountain lion attack in the outskirts of Boulder, Colorado.
15. Later, both findings proved mistaken. A detailed autopsy revealed two bullet holes, and both DNA-analysis of the beaver remains as well as isotope analysis of the wolf remains revealed that the animal had spent its last days alive in Eastern Europe, probably Poland. More about this below.
16. In a similar vein, in Norway some people reported that the wolves that had entered their cultural landscapes had to be hybrids, because a real wolf would never prefer cultural landscapes over wild forests full of prey. Many Norwegians believe that wolves have been secretly introduced in a government/environmentalist conspiracy to rid the rural land of people. Similar suspicions are voiced in France as well (Skogen et al., 2008).
17. The social democrats took the opposite view: 'It goes well with nature in the Netherlands, otherwise the wolf would not have come this way,' according to member of parliament Lutz Jacobi: on the website of Netherlands Broadcasting Organisation NOS. <http://nos.nl/artikel/527942-vvd-wolven-eventueel-afschieten.html> (accessed 1 May 2015).
18. It is telling that many protests against wolves all over the world are directed against wolves that are framed as coming from outside, or abroad: people in the North Cascades in Washington State (USA) protest against Canadian wolves, in Norway and Sweden people protest against Finnish or Russian wolves, et cetera.
19. See News website nu.nl: <http://www.nu.nl/binnenland/3524047/dode-wolf-zeer-vermoedelijk-neergelegd-als-grap.html> (accessed 1 May 2015). It made the front page of many newspapers and was one of the first items on the national news on TV.
20. In January 2014, a similar story was told in the German press. A hunting magazine reported that a policeman had told them that a Polish truck had been confiscated at the Polish-German border, with several wolves and lynxes in the back. The police issued a special message on 27 January, that explicitly denied the claim. This was an urban myth and its most probable source was the fact that in early November 2013, a Polish transporter van was confiscated with 14 stolen ATB bikes in the back of the brand 'Steppenwolf.' See the police news website: <http://polizei-news.com/blog/2014/01/27/bpold-b-die-geschichte-vom-wolfstransporter-alles-nur-wolfsgeheil/> (accessed 1 May 2015).
21. The largest population of eastern German wolves inhabit landscapes consisting of former military training grounds and old open pit mining sites.
22. See: <http://www.facebook.com/WolvenInNederland>. (accessed 1 May 2015).
23. See: <http://www.facebook.com/WolvenInNederland>. Both entries from 20 April 2015.
24. Another quote: from the *Wolves in the Netherlands* Facebook page 'Let's hope that the quacks from various universities and scientists also stay away. And not unnecessarily sedate the animals because they find it necessary to sew a whole radio station on their backs or inside the wolf. I sometimes see that on TV and I think what is the use of knowing what animal are living in our environment. And we can also use our eyes and ears ... I think the quacks should focus on something else: inventing medicines for humans and animals. That will be better' (posted 8 March at 15:10).
25. The average wolf prefers to eat wild animals like deer. German studies show that the diet of the average wolf in Germany consists of less than 1% of domestic animals: see the Website of the German Nature conservation organisation Nabu (Naturschutzbund) <http://www.nabu.de/aktionenundprojekte/wolf/hintergrund/15572.html> (accessed 1 May 2015).

26. Although it seems logical to assume that wolves work together in wolf packs to increase their hunting efficiency, single wolves have been recorded to kill even the largest prey (Mech & Boitani, 2003). Moreover, a recent computational simulation study even suggests that ‘wolf-pack hunting is an emergent collective behavior which does not necessarily rely on the presence of effective communication between the individuals participating in the hunt, and that no hierarchy is needed in the group to achieve the task properly’ (Muro et al., 2011).
27. Robisch (2009, p. 100) is highly critical of the romantic wolf image: ‘While assumptions about the wolf’s ‘killer instinct’ have been used to justify exterminating it, generalizations about its gregariousness (as perpetuated by many post-1980s nature programs) have led to another brand of victimization. Romantic notions of the wolf have created such tragedies as “pet” wolves, hybrid breeding, and the overindulgence of captivity as a means of “education.”’
28. In *Nature Wars*, Wall Street Journal reporter Jim Sterba argues that the contemporary love of nature among urbanites and inhabitants of urban sprawl is based on a too rosy, detached view of nature and tends to forget about potential wildlife conflicts. For Sterba (2012, p. dust jacket) this means that the comeback of wildlife, ‘that should be an animal lover’s dream come true’ will often inevitably ‘turn into a sprawl dweller’s nightmare.’
29. This combination of awareness-raising programs, stakeholder involvement and public education is very much in line with LIFE, the European Union funding program for the environment (Silva et al., 2013).
30. A label that suggests (mistakenly, as I have shown) that only negative attitudes towards wolves are based on an ill-informed emotional response.
31. For a review of wolf management in Poland and Germany, see Reinhardt et al., 2013. For an example of noninvasive sampling study, see Caniglia et al., 2014.
32. A stirring video about wolf reintroduction in Yellowstone National Park, ‘How Wolves Change Rivers’, narrated by George Monbiot, even went viral on the Internet early 2014. See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysa5OBhXz-Q> (accessed 1 May 2015). Several studies (Eisenberg et al., 2013; Kauffman et al., 2010) question this direct relationship between fear of wolves and grazing patterns and stress that the issue is more complex.
33. A well-known Dutch saying holds that ‘God created the world, but the Dutch created The Netherlands.’
34. A survey among a representative group of Dutch citizens (n=601) in early 2012 found that 45% of respondents welcome the wolf, 31% are against the arrival of the wolf, and 23% were neutral. Reasons for welcoming the wolf were that it ‘should be up to nature to decide whether wolves return or not’ and the expectation that wolves would help the natural balance and enrich nature. Opponents pointed out the danger to humans (people are afraid) and sheep, goats and chickens; they also believed that there is too little space in the Netherlands for wolves to live. Remarkably, there are no significant differences between those who live in potential wolf habitat and those who live elsewhere (Intomart, 2012).
35. The discovery of the Noordoostpolder wolf made many local policymakers aware how unprepared they were, and prompted a demand for protocols telling them what to do in case a wolf shows up in their constituency (Mudde, 2013, also see Trouwborst, 2014).
36. One comment on the *Wolves in the Netherlands* Facebook page is illustrative: ‘These are all fairy tales! This is not a wild wolf but an animal escaped from a private zoo. A real wolf would never walk the streets amidst humans’ (posted 9 March 2015 at 16:20).
37. See the website of the German magazine Bild: Werden Wölfe heimlich gefüttert? *Bild* 31 March 2015. Available at <http://www.bild.de/regional/hannover/wolf/werden-sie-heimlich-gefuettert-40364602.bild.html> (accessed 1 May 2015).
38. See <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Laat-onze-wolf-met-rust/1424540084507017> (accessed 1 May 2015).
39. Available at <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/861/441/681/a-lone-wolf-has-shown-up-in-the-netherlands-and-yes-they-want-to-shoot-it/> (accessed 1 May 2015).
40. ‘Leave our wolf alone’ Facebook page: post from 9 March 2015 (accessed 1 May 2015).
41. For a discussion of the role of ‘mental space for transcendence’ in terms of wildness and taboo, see Drenthen, 2009b.
42. Swedish biologist Chapron: ‘The European model shows that people and predators can coexist in the same landscapes,’ he said. ‘I do not mean that it is a peaceful, loving coexistence; there are always problems. But if there is a political will, it is possible to share the landscape with larger predators’ (cited in Conniff, 2014). See also De Groot et al., 2011.

## References

- Balmford, A. (2012). *Wild Hope: On the Front Lines of Conservation Success*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).
- Baron, D. (2004). *The Beast in the Garden. A Modern Parable of Man and Nature*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company).
- Barry, J. (1999). *Rethinking Green Politics. Nature, Virtue and Progress*. (London: Sage).
- Callicott, J. B. & Nelson, M. P. (Eds.). (1998). *The great new wilderness debate*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press).
- Caniglia, R., Fabbri, E., Galaverni, M., Milanese, P., & Randi, E. (2014). Noninvasive sampling and genetic variability, pack structure, and dynamics in an expanding wolf population. *Journal of Mammalogy*, 95, 41–59.
- Chapron, et al. (2014). Recovery of large carnivores in Europe's modern human-dominated landscapes. *Science*, 346, 1517.
- Coleman, A., & Aykroyd, T. (Eds.). (2009) *Conference proceedings: wild Europe and large natural habitat areas*. Prague 2009
- Conniff, R. (2014). Wolves and Bears Stage Comeback in Crowded, Urban Europe. *National Geographic*, December 19, 2014
- Corcoran, L. (2015) Terrifying footage of wolf prowling city streets looking for its next meal, *Mirror*, March 13, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/weird-news/terrifying-footage-wolf-prowling-city-5327412> (accessed 12 November 2015).
- Cronon, W. (1995) The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature, in: William Cronon, (Ed.) *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, pp. 69–90 (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co).
- Deinet, S., Ieronymidou, C., McRae, L., Burfield, I. J., Foppen, R. P., Collen, B., & Böhm, M. (2013). *Wildlife comeback in Europe: The recovery of selected mammal and bird species. Final report to Rewilding Europe by ZSL, BirdLife International and the European Bird Census Council*. (London, UK: ZSL).
- Douglas, M. (1966). *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. (London/New York: Routledge).
- Drenthen, M. (2005). Wildness as critical border concept; Nietzsche and the debate on wilderness restoration. *Environmental Values*, 14, 317–337.
- Drenthen, M. (2009a). Ecological restoration and place attachment; emplacing nonplace? *Environmental Values*, 18, 285–312.
- Drenthen, M. (2009b). Fatal attraction; Wildness in contemporary film. *Environmental Ethics*, 31, 297–315.
- Drenthen, M. (2013) New nature narratives. Landscape hermeneutics and environmental ethics. In F. Clingerman, M. Drenthen, B. Treanor, & D. Utsler (Eds), *Interpreting nature. The emerging field of environmental hermeneutics*, pp. 225–242 (New York, NY: Fordham University Press).
- Eisenberg, C., Trent Seager, S., & Hibbs, D. E. (2013). Wolf, elk, and aspen food web relationships: Context and complexity. *Forest Ecology and Management*, 299, 70–80.
- Groot Bruinderink, G.W.T.A., Jansman, H.A.H., Jacobs, M.H., & Harms, M. (2012) *De komst van de wolf (Canis lupus) in Nederland. Een factfindingstudy* [The Arrival of the Wolf (Canis lupus) in The Netherlands. A Fact Finding Study] (Wageningen, Alterra, Alterra-Rapport 2339). Available at <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/blg-184377.pdf> (accessed 1 May 2015).
- Groot Bruinderink, G. W. T. A., Lammertsma, D. R., Hoon, C., Kruft, A., & Lanter, R.. (2013). *De komst van de wolf in Nederland : verslag van de workshop gehouden op 8 november 2012* [The Arrival of the Wolf (Canis lupus) in The Netherlands. A Report of a Workshop held on November 8, 2012] (Wageningen, Alterra, Alterra-Rapport 2403).
- de Groot, M., Drenthen, M., & de Groot, W. (2011). Public Visions of the Human/Nature Relationship and their Implications for Environmental Ethics. *Environmental Ethics*, 33, 25–44.
- Grossman, V. (2006). *Life and fate*. (Robert Chandler, Trans.). (New York, NY: New York Review Books).
- Hall, M. (2014). Extracting Culture or Injecting Nature? Rewilding in Transatlantic Perspective, in: M. Drenthen & J. Keulartz (Eds). *Old World and New World Perspectives in Environmental Philosophy. Transatlantic Conversations*, pp. 17–35 (Cham: Springer).
- Höchtl, F., Lehringer, S., & Konold, W. (2005). 'Wilderness': what it means when it becomes a reality — a case study from the southwestern Alps. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 70, 85–95.
- Hunziker, M. (1995). The spontaneous reforestation in abandoned agricultural lands: perception and aesthetic assessment by locals and tourists. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 31, 399–410.

- Intomart, G. F. K. (2012). *Appreciatie-onderzoek naar de komst van de wolf : kwalitatief en kwantitatief onderzoek onder de Nederlandse bevolking*. [Appreciation Survey after the Arrival of the Wolf. A Qualitative and Quantitative Survey Among the Dutch Population] Uitgevoerd voor het Ministerie van Economische Zaken, Landbouw en Innovatie (Hilversum: Intomart GFK). Available at <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/blg-184376.pdf> (accessed 1 May 2015).
- IUCN. (2014). *Wolves return to unlikely places*. Available at <http://iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/europe/?14335> (accessed 1 May 2015).
- Kauffman, M. J., Brodie, J. F., & Jules, E. S. (2010). Are wolves saving Yellowstone's aspen? A landscape-level test of a behaviorally mediated trophic cascade. *Ecology*, *91*, 2742–2755.
- Keenleyside, C. & Tucker, G. M. (2010). *Farmland Abandonment in the EU: an Assessment of Trends and Prospects*. Report prepared for WWF. (London: Institute for European Environmental Policy).
- Keulartz, J. (2012). The Emergence of Enlightened Anthropocentrism in Ecological Restoration. *Nature & Culture*, *7*, 48–71.
- Keulartz, J. (in press). Future directions for conservation. *Forthcoming in Environmental values*. Available at <http://www.whpress.co.uk/EV/papers/Keulartz.pdf> (accessed 1 May 2015)
- Klyza, C. M. (2001). *Wilderness comes home: rewilding the northeast*. (Hanover: Middlebury College Press).
- Lange, K. (2012). Wolf tappt in private Fotofalle hinterm Haus. *Sächsische Zeitung*, 29 December. Available at <http://www.sz-online.de/nachrichten/wolf-tappt-in-private-fotofalle-hinterm-haus-2472426.html> (accessed 1 May 2015).
- Marris, E. (2011). *Rambunctious Garden: Saving Nature in a Post-Wild World*. (New York, NY: Bloomsbury).
- McKibben, B. (2000). Human Restoration, in: J. Elder (Eds). *The return of the wolf. Reflections on the future of wolves in the Northeast* (p. 5–21). (Hanover and London: Middlebury College Press)
- Mech, L. D., & Boitani, L. (Eds). (2003). *Wolves: Behavior, Ecology, and Conservation*. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press).
- Monbiot, G. (2013a). *Feral. Searching for Enchantment on the Frontiers of Rewilding*. (London: Allen Lane/Penguin).
- Monbiot, G. (2013b). A Manifesto for Rewilding the World. *The Guardian*, May 28. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/may/27/my-manifesto-rewilding-world> (accessed on 1 May 2015).
- Mudde, L. (2013). Help, de wolf komt! Gemeenten willen handleiding [Help, the Wolf is Coming! Cities Demand a Manual]. *VNG Magazine*, *2013*, 16–19.
- Muro, C., Escobedo, R., Spector, L., & Coppinger, R. P. (2011). Wolf-pack (*Canis lupus*) hunting strategies emerge from simple rules in computational simulations. *Behavioural Processes*, *88*, 192–197.
- Müskens, G. J. D. M., & Broekhuizen, S. (2005). *De steenmarter (Martes foina) in Borgharen: aantal, overlast en schade* [The Stone Marten (*Martes foina*) in Borgharen. Numbers, nuisance and damage]. Report no. 1259. (Wageningen: Alterra).
- Navarro, L. M. & Pereira, H. M. (2012). Rewilding Abandoned Landscapes in Europe. *Ecosystems*, *15*, 900–912.
- Plumwood, V. (1999). Being Prey, in: D. Rothenberg & M. Ulvaeus (Eds.) *The New Earth Reader: The Best of Terra Nova*, pp. 76–91 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press).
- Reinhardt, I., Kluth, G., Nowak, S. and Mysłajek, R. W. (2013). A review of wolf management in Poland and Germany with recommendations for future transboundary collaboration. Available at <https://www.bfn.de/fileadmin/MDB/documents/themen/artenschutz/pdf/Skript356.pdf> (accessed 1 May 2015).
- Robisch, S. K. (2009). *Wolves and the wolf myth in American literature*. (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press).
- Silva, J. P. Toland, J., Hudson, T., Jones, W., Eldridge, J., Thorpe, E., Bacchereti, S., Nottingham, S., Thévignot, C., and Demeter, A. (2013). *Life and human coexistence with large carnivores* (Luxembourg: Publication Office of the European Union). Available at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/publications/lifepublications/lifefocus/documents/carnivores.pdf> (accessed 1 May 2015).
- Skogen, K., Mauz, I., & Krange, O. (2008). Cry Wolf!: Narratives of Wolf Recovery in France and Norway. *Rural Sociology*, *73*, 105–133.
- Soulé, M. & Noss, R. (1998). Rewilding and Biodiversity as Complementary Goals for Continental Conservation. *Wild Earth, Fall, 1998*, 22.
- Sterba, J. (2012). *Nature wars. The incredible story of how wildlife comebacks turned backyards into battlegrounds* (New York, NY: Crown Publishers).
- Thorp, T. (2014). Eating wolves, in: M. Drenthen & J. Keulartz (Eds). *Old World and New World Perspectives in Environmental Philosophy. Transatlantic Conversations*, pp. 175–197 (Cham: Springer).
- van Toorn, W. (1998). *Leesbaar landschap* [Legible Landscape]. (Amsterdam: Querido).

- Trouwborst, A. (2014). Dutch prepare for wolf comeback. *Newsletter of the Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe*. 16 February 2014./ Available at <http://www.lcie.org/Blog/TabId/4630/ArtMID/6987/ArticleID/58/Dutch-prepare-for-wolf-comeback-.aspx> (accessed 1 May 2015).
- Tweede Kamer (2010). Aanhangsel van de Handelingen Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal, Vergaderjaar 2009–2010, Aanhangselnummer 2215. ah-tk-20092010-2215 ISSN 0921-7398's-Gravenhage 2010. Available at <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/ah-tk-20072008-2215.pdf> (accessed 1 May 2015).
- Vera, F. (2000). *Grazing ecology and forest history*. (Oxon: Cabi Publishing).