

THE ROLE OF CONSERVATION FILMS  
WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENTAL DEBATE

by

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## GLOSSARY

**Expository Films:** Expository films address the audience with narration or titles that advance an argument.

**Ecocentrism:** The belief that everything within nature has value by itself that is not dependent on humans.

**Anthropocentrism:** The belief that nature's only value is what it provides to humans.

**Holism:** The belief that ecosystems are more important than individual species.

**Mechanism:** The belief that individuals are more important than ecosystems.

## ABSTRACT

In the environmental debate there is little middle ground. Many environmental issues become highly polarized, with neither side willing to compromise. Conservation films work as a catalyst fueling the fire. They create plot lines based on good and evil without fleshing out the grey area. Two different philosophies exist on the environment. One, ecocentrism, feels that the environment has value by itself. The other, anthropocentrism, believes that the environment's only value is what it provides humans. Conservation films fail to recognize the latter belief. The Endangered Species Act has led to a lot of mistrust of biological information. All of these factors have led to the alienation of user groups and a break down of communication between both sides. The role of conservation films should be to begin the environmental discussion.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1995 William Perry Pendley wrote, “The War on the West is about whether Westerners will have an economy, or property rights, or the ability to engage in economic pursuits that sustained their forefathers and that the nation still requires” (Pendley xviii). This profound statement typifies many beliefs among western people involved in careers dealing with natural resources. They see the environmental movement as an agent to take away their property, jobs and lifestyle. It’s a hostile environment with little to no middle ground. “The battle now raging in the west is often couched as a fight between environmentalists (the “good guys”) and anti-environmentalists (the “bad guys”)....” (Pendley xviii). Conservation filmmakers enter into this polarized conflict making propaganda films directed at an audience of their peers.<sup>1</sup>

To begin with, I need to define the two parties and look at the ideas they believe in. In his book *The Politics of the Environment*, Neil Carter splits people into two parties, ecocentrics (those who believe nature has intrinsic value) and anthropocentrics (those that believe nature has instrumental value).<sup>2</sup> By looking at the fundamental ideas that make up each party’s beliefs, I will apply these philosophies to conservation films to show how each party perceives the information the films’ provide.

Conservation films have used the same model of filmmaking for years with little variation. I think this is what has made them ineffective as an environmental activism tool. I will break down conservation films into their basic units. First, I will look at the

mode of conservation films. These films have used the expository mode for years. Bill Nichols defines the expository mode as, “The Expository text addresses the viewer directly, with titles or voices that advance an argument about the historical world.” (Nichols 34).<sup>3</sup>

I will then look at the various parts that make up a conservation film. The way filmmakers use music, language and imagery can manipulate the viewer in much the same way propaganda films do. Cosmos exemplifies the tactics conservation filmmakers use.<sup>4</sup>

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, called the “pit bull” of environmental activism, demonstrates how many people working in the natural resource community view biologists and other governmental employees. The ESA example will illuminate anthropocentrics’ unwillingness to believe onscreen biologists and other naturalists. Conservation films can be a very important tool in environmental awareness. These films need to be able to target members of the audience that don’t believe exactly the same thing the filmmakers do.<sup>5</sup>

I intend to apply this information to the film I produced, Death of the Fishermen (2006). I will break down the film and analyze how each part was used in the film. The goal of the film is to draw attention to the alienation of user groups by conservation films.



## ANTHROPOCENTRIC VS. ECOCENTRIC

In his book *The Politics of the Environment*, Neil Carter, writes that there exists in human philosophy on the natural world two different areas of thought. From environmentalists' point of view, these two varying parties represent the "good guys" and the "bad guys" in conservation films. One side ("bad guys") is based on humans as the center of the world in which everything that lives and breathes around us is for our use and exploitation. Everything non-human has instrumental value (it's only valuable if it benefits human kind). This philosophy is called anthropocentrism (Carter 15).<sup>6</sup> For example, I was working on a mining documentary in Butte, Montana. I was traveling back to Butte, riding with the owner of OT mining, which owns some of the larger mines in Butte. We crested the pass giving us a view of the forests surrounding the Butte area. The OT mining owner turned to the director and said look at all of these trees. Do you see how much money could be made by cutting them down? For them natural resources are put on this planet for us to consume. This way of thinking represents one side of the environmental argument.

Anthropocentrism views nature in a hierarchical fashion where humans have a clear vantage point from the top. Scully describes this.

My point is that when you look at a rabbit and can see only a pest, or vermin, or a meal, or a commodity, or a laboratory subject, you aren't seeing the rabbit anymore. You are seeing only yourself and the schemes and appetites we bring to the world-seeing, come to think of it like an animal instead of as a moral being with moral vision (Scully 54).<sup>7</sup>

Anthropocentrists see animals not as living breathing creatures, but as products.

Anthropocentrists, like ecocentrists get similar enjoyment from the outdoors. They also see value as it relates to humans. To an anthropocentric, the redwoods of California have value in how much lumber they yield.<sup>8</sup> “This human-centered research increases short term profits and competitiveness and improves industrial output, defense capability, health, and food production” (Borealis 55).<sup>9</sup> To ecocentrists, it seems like a selfish way of thinking. For filmmakers to be successful in reaching the anthropocentric audience, they need to think about these issues and see the world through different eyes.

On the other side, Carter describes an opposing viewpoint (“good guys”), those who believe in ecocentrism. They feel that the parts of the environment have “intrinsic value.” This means that anything in nature has value by itself that do not depend on how humans perceive it.<sup>10</sup> I was out hiking in the Bridger range, near Bozeman, Montana. As I neared the summit of Mount Baldy, two crows came into my view. They were soaring on the updraft created by wind colliding with the mountain range. I sat and watched them until they disappeared. To me, these animals had worth even though I didn’t get any monetary value from watching them. Their importance was their own, not dependent on whether or not I was observing them. Conservation filmmakers strongly believe that nature has intrinsic value.

Ecocentrism gained a political force with the formation of the Deep Ecology Movement. This way of thinking relies on a strong connection with nature that borders on the mythical. “Those who support the deep ecology movement are expected to feel that the life and death of living creatures affect them in such a way that the feeling of

interdependence is connected with their own philosophy of life or religion” (Naess 114).

I think that conservation filmmakers subscribe to this philosophy.<sup>11</sup>

There are two different thoughts that exist within the deep ecology movement. One is the idea that whole ecosystems are important. It looks at the larger picture more than the individual. This point of view is called holism (Carter 19). The other area attributes intrinsic value to individual species. Carter calls this point of view mechanism. These definitions are important when deconstructing conservation films.<sup>12</sup> Holism looks at nature’s interconnectedness. Instead of focusing on individuals and their intrinsic values, holism looks at biospheres and ecosystems. Arne Naess, the father of this movement saw the world as a house of carefully balanced sticks. Each stick has a value to the whole. Removing one stick will make the entire house fall. In order to keep the whole house strong emphasis must be placed on the entire structure. Holism is more concerned with the process than individuals. As long as the natural process of an ecosystem is working it is acceptable to lose certain species.<sup>13</sup> For example, a rare flower exists in a mountain ecosystem. Holists believe that if a flower goes extinct from a landscape without affecting the overall ecosystem that loss is acceptable. Another important argument of holism is that humans and animals both have a right to exist. Holists argue that the human population is too high and needs to be decreased in order to coexist within the natural world. The earth can only carry a certain amount of humans before resources run dry or disease culls a portion of the population. As long as humans don’t negatively impact the natural world they can inhabit Earth.<sup>14</sup>

Expository films such as The Queen of Trees (2005) represent the holistic approach to environmental filmmaking. The basic idea of holism is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The Queen of Trees shows the close relationship between the Sycamore Fig tree and fig wasps in Kenya. The filmmakers point out that the tree needs the tiny wasps in order to pollinate its flowers and produce seeds. The wasps need it for laying their eggs in the fruit. The figs themselves provide food for monkeys and other larger creatures. The main idea of the film is to show the interconnectedness of the ecosystem with humans.<sup>15</sup>

One way this film falls short of raising awareness to people who believe in anthropocentrism is that they don't feel the sense of connectedness. "If the aim is to reach out to a wider human audience to educate and persuade people of the need to raise their ecological consciousness then holistic perspectives might not be doing a good job" (Carter 25).<sup>16</sup> The language the film uses is put in spiritual terms that, although it makes sense to deep ecology believers, it alienates nonbelievers. I showed a film I produced at The North American Wolf conference a few years ago. The goal of the conference was to bring members of the environmental side of the wolf issue together with ranchers from areas surrounding Yellowstone National Park. Only a small amount of ranchers showed up. I was sitting outside one of the seminars when a rancher walked out shaking his head. He looked at another rancher and said, "I can't take it anymore," referring to the language the woman used in her presentation. She said that she had a spiritual connection with wolves which alienated the rancher. To the woman and many

ecocentrics, animals become more than creatures. Ecocentrics see these animals as having feelings and the ability to suffer.

Many think that in order for something to have intrinsic value it must be sentient, in other words, it must be able to feel or perceive that it is alive. Peter Singer, one of the founders of the animal liberation movement, believes that animals have the ability to suffer.<sup>17</sup> Conservation filmmakers believe in a similar philosophy. They use dramatic language and music to show these animals suffer. In this way, conservation filmmakers alienate the anthropocentric audience.

The intrinsic value argument centers on individual species rather than an entire ecosystem. Within the rubric of conservation films this is definitely true. Usually there is a larger animal (because they are more popular) which the film is trying to save. For example, Mzima: The Haunt of the River Horse (2001) a film about hippopotamuses shows these creatures have value. The film expresses the intrinsic value by showing these creatures' day to day life. The filmmakers draw the audience in with dramatic underwater camera work giving the audience images they haven't seen before. The value is not in what they provide us but in their lives.<sup>18</sup>

The other part of the Deep Ecology movement, mechanism, concentrates on the individual. Conservation films can do the same thing. These films project human characteristics onto the species they feature. An example of this is Tim Liversedge's Roar-Lions of the Kalahari (2003). In this film the main character tries to keep control of his kingdom. He is constantly referred to as the lion king. The struggle he and his pride go through, take on human characteristics.<sup>19</sup> "...the closer identification of the human

self with nature could provide a rationale for nurturing a higher ecological consciousness” (Carter 20). He uses the conventional dramatic plot line to construct the film. You could take the lions out of the film and replace them with humans and the film would still make sense. For anthropocentrists, there is a hierarchy of species. At the top is the human species. The species fall out below them according to size.

Shepard describes it as, “a form of ‘ontogenetic crippling’ that reaches back to the invention of agriculture the crucial point at which human culture achieved a false sense of separation from the natural habitat” (Shepard 21).

Anthropocentrists have difficulty seeing human characteristics in animal behavior. This superiority over animals stems from the point in history where we took control over animals to use for agricultural uses.<sup>20</sup>

One thing that conservation filmmakers share with members of the deep ecology movement is their drive to implement change. Within this struggle the movement has often fallen on its head over its own definitions. Carter describes these definitions.

Attempts to develop an ethical code of conduct based on the existence of intrinsic value in nature have struggled to apply traditional ethical concepts to unfamiliar entities and categories, such as species and ecospheres, and they have fallen back on hierarchies of value which always concede priority to human interests in all critical interspecies conflicts (Carter 17).

The species we don’t know a lot about doesn’t get as much value as the bigger species we do know about.<sup>21</sup> A leopard has more value than a tiny insect. I think this attitude is a flaw in the current model of conservation filmmaking. In the filmmakers’ eagerness to show the value of their subject they neglect to see how much of the world believes differently about the environment and that not everyone believes what the filmmakers do.

“‘The debate’ as represented, assumes that the two factions hold the same basic understandings of the world and that they differ only in their priorities” (Pivnik 56).<sup>22</sup> A phrase I hear a lot of is sacrifice and change. They’re doing harm to the environment they need to change their priorities. This statement is also echoed in conservation film.

## THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) (1973) has created the deepest rift between conservationists and people in the natural resource sector. The ESA was originally enacted to protect species from extinction. Clark explains the ESA.

The major provisions of the ESA set forth eligibility and procedural requirements for listing species as endangered or threatened, provide various protections for listed species, prohibit federal agencies from engaging in actions that would jeopardize listed species or critical habitat, and create the framework for cooperative programs with states (Clark 21).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service makes the decisions on whether a species should be listed and if so how.<sup>23</sup> The list of threatened and endangered species quickly grew creating animosity among many Westerners. To them, the list seemed like a collection of animals that stood in the way of some consumptive process, such as logging or mining. Whenever a user group set out to explore a natural resource, there was an endangered species blocking the way.

Originally, 375 species were targeted as threatened with immediate extinction with an additional 249 requiring extra protection (Pendley 87). In 1973 technology was not as advanced as it is today. Many of the species listed were larger, higher profile species, such as grizzly bears and wolves. As technology advanced, scientists were able to discover more species that needed help. Many of these animals were fish and invertebrates. “In short Westerners are losing jobs not just to owls and grizzly bears, but to snails and flies” (Pendley 89). Loggers, Ranchers, and other natural resource driven



trade workers makes up the group Pendley labels as “Westerners.”<sup>24</sup> The ESA became the “pitbull” of environmental activism in the eyes of Westerners by the way environmental organizations have implemented the ESA. “‘Science’ as used by the Endangered Species Act is a political tool to affect a specific aim” (Pendley 93). Westerners see the ESA as a way for environmental organizations to halt any action they feel is wrong. They feel that the science backing the ESA is false.<sup>25</sup> “But other assessments of the relative success of ESA conclude that the act’s implementation does not reflect legislative aspirations and objectives or the realities of current scientific knowledge” (Clark 40).<sup>26</sup> User groups believe that scientists will find some small animal, that to user groups seems insignificant, to halt what they are doing.

One manipulation of the ESA Westerners feel is not clear is the categories of creatures eligible for listing. “The three taxonomic categories that can be listed under the ESA are species, subspecies and distinct vertebrate populations” (Clark 31). They don’t understand that if there is a healthy population of grey wolves in Alaska then why does the federal government need to reintroduce the grey wolf to Yellowstone National Park? I think that Westerners feel this way because the language used in the ESA leaves room for manipulation and exploitation.<sup>27</sup>

One of the best examples of the federal government’s exploitation of the ESA came in 1987 with the Spotted Owl halting timber harvest in Washington, Oregon and California. The reason this issue was so hostile was a direct result of how environmental groups used the ESA. Environmental organizations were concerned with fragmentation

of old growth forests by the timber harvest. They decided to petition the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to list the Spotted Owl. At first the USFWS denied the petition citing insufficient data. Finally the environmental groups were successful and the Spotted Owl was listed. Once this happened it served as a gateway for other interests to jump on the band wagon and push their respective agendas.<sup>28</sup> “The purpose of the Endangered Species Act has become the stopping of all activities of which environmental extremists disapprove” (Pendley 88). Suddenly the ESA was not about saving species. It became a way for environmental organizations to set aside more old growth forest preserves.

The Spotted Owl serves as an example of how the ESA has created wariness among members of user groups toward scientific data. They perceive scientific studies as information that environmental groups can manipulate to suit their agendas. I think this is why conservation films are so unappealing to members of the natural resource sector. To them, each scientific fact the conservation film presents, represents a hidden agenda. Scientific knowledge to them means misrepresentation and lies.<sup>29</sup>

## THE CONSERVATION FILM MODE AND STRUCTURE

Conservation films generally employ an expository mode of filmmaking. The dominant characteristic of this mode of filmmaking is the projection of objectivity. “The expository mode emphasizes the impression of objectivity and of well-substantiated judgment” (Nichols 35). The facts presented by conservation films seem to members of user groups, like another tactic biologists use to cut off a fisherman from his job or stop loggers from cutting down old growth forest.<sup>30</sup> An example of this is Blue Planet (2002) an eight part series produced by the BBC about the world’s oceans. The narrator, Sir David Attenborough, gives many indisputable facts to the viewer. The imagery backs up the narration. The episode “Deep Trouble” provides a good example of how facts become hard to believe for members of user groups. The episode depicts many different fishing practices and how they impact different fisheries. At the end of the program, the filmmakers show that biologists believe that by protecting areas from fishing the populations will come back.<sup>31</sup> The guise of objectivity is blown because of statements such as this one.

One expository television episode of Carl Sagan’s Cosmos (1978), illustrates many of the pitfalls in which many conservation films fall. The episode, “Heaven and Hell”, looks at different planets in our solar system to shed light on our own planet. Toward the end of the episode the attention shifts to Venus which is an incredibly hot, inhospitable planet. Sagan attributes its state to the greenhouse effect. He then looks back at earth saying that if we keep polluting the planet that we will eventually end up

like Venus. Shots of oil spills, huge piles of trash, and industrial disasters flash across the screen. The music is very dramatic making the viewer feel sympathetic to nature and the planet. The scene begins with images of a sea bird trying to take off with oil soaked feathers. An oil tanker that is ablaze then dominates the scene. The imagery then changes to a huge crane picking up immense piles of compacted garbage. There is then an aerial shot of an industrial disaster. These shots create a lasting image in the mind of an audience. What is really at work though is polarization. The film attacks user groups without giving them a way to defend themselves. It is as if the filmmakers are saying that the user groups' opinions are not important and discussing the issues is a waste of time.<sup>32</sup>

The basic structure of many feature films is a three act structure. There is a protagonist and an antagonist which compete for a common goal. The film introduces the characters to the viewer and sets up why the viewer should care about the person, place or thing. The second act shows the protagonist going through some sort of hardship, however big or small. At the end of the second act there is a climax of conflict where the protagonist almost always comes out on top. The third act sums things up and sometimes gives hints for the future.

Documentaries are not immune to this three act structure. Nichols describes the similarities between fiction films and documentaries.

Documentaries are fictions with plots, characters, situations, and events like any other. They offer introductory lacks, challenges, or dilemmas; they build heightened tensions, and dramatically rising conflicts, and they terminate with resolution and closure (Nichols 107).<sup>33</sup>

Even the most scientific seemingly mundane documentary has a three act structure. The scientist is studying something to solve a problem. A researcher follows an animal to the

ends of the earth to find out its secrets. Will the researcher be successful? There is a protagonist, in this case, the researcher. The structure or plot draws the viewer into watching the program. Their quest leads them through an interesting journey.<sup>34</sup> When I stood before a panel of network executives waiting to pitch an idea for a film, the reoccurring theme that I kept hearing was, “tell a story.” Story telling is a fundamental part of human communication.

Lastly, the antagonist of the film, the user group, never gets fleshed out. They are always the one doing harm to the environment. Their motives seem shallow and selfish. In a 1898 Texas stockman’s meeting a man stood up and said, ”Resolved, that none of us know or are to know anything about grasses, native or otherwise outside the fact that for the present there are lots of them, the best on record, and we are after getting the most out of them while they last” (Shepard 102). Ideas have changed around ranching, but to many in the environmental world ranchers are the same. To environmentalists, members of the user groups are in the wrong occupation and need to change their lifestyle.<sup>35</sup>

In looking at these two areas of thought I decided that like the conservation debate, conservation based media tends to “preach to the choir” presenting facts to an already sympathetic audience. They use the intrinsic value argument to try to show the audience why these places or things are important to save. People like me watch a film about saving the rainforest. To me it is an important issue. I watch with full attention, agreeing with each statement that calls for the halt of logging. I represent the ecocentric side, who has no repercussions if logging ceases. If I was a member of the logging community, I would feel deep resentment towards the conservation filmmakers and also

to the environmental community. It is no wonder that ecocentrics and anthropocentrics have such a hard time discussing issues. For the human race to make progress towards improving the environment, dialogue must exist between these two parties. Conservation films can be the bridge to achieve this.

## CASE STUDY

This fall I embarked on a journey to create my thesis film. I was interested in commercial salmon fishing because there are so many diverse organizations that depend on salmon. The main character, John Baker, exhibited traits that I wanted to highlight in my film. Although he was a fisherman, he was also very in tuned with his environment. He had also experienced firsthand, how other natural resource related jobs affect salmon populations. Both ecocentrics, and anthropocentrics could relate to him. I knew that I was stepping into a man's life. I was going to be dealing with a profession that a lot of people do not agree with, a profession that many attribute to the decline of salmon. A perfect example of how unpopular this idea is to many in the conservation filmmaking world occurred in Missoula, Montana, where I was pitching my idea to a non-profit organization. I waited while several people stood before the panel, pitching films focusing on how over-fishing has decimated salmon populations. It made me aware of the rift between conservation filmmakers and members of user groups.

In my film, Death of the Fishermen (2006), I wanted to look at how conservation films can reach out to people who believe in anthropocentrism. I think that if conservation films can speak to anthropocentrics, the films will have a greater impact. There are several ways I went about modifying the model of conservation filmmaking.

## Characters

The process began by picking out my protagonist. He had to be someone that both sides would like. He had to possess attributes that both sides could relate with. I found John Baker through my initial research through a non-profit organization that deals with the complex relationships between Native Americans, gill netters, trollers, and environmentalists. After talking with John, I learned that he walked the line that I was trying to explore. His path did not begin with fishing. He worked for many years in a paper mill before making the leap to fishing. After he had fished for salmon for a couple of decades the fishery bottomed out and Oregon was declared a natural disaster area. The federal government paid for John and his wife to do stream surveys where he saw first hand what was going on at the heart of the debate, the spawning grounds. John is a passionate family man. He had witnessed first hand the devastation logging had on the salmon fishery. Many fishermen possess these same qualities.

Conservation filmmakers use biologists to disseminate information about the film's subject. Anthropocentrics distrust this information because scientists can manipulate data to halt natural resource consumption, as in the example of the environmental organizations that used estimated spotted owl numbers to halt timber harvests in Oregon, Washington and California. When the federal government deems populations robust enough to remain off the endangered species list, then biologists revise population numbers. The USFWS soon listed the spotted owl stopping timber harvest.<sup>36</sup> This example shows why John is so important to this film. John's motivations



are similar to other members of user groups. He wants to continue his way of life and keep his job.

Another way John is important to the film, is that he puts the issue of the salmon decline in a human perspective. Near the end of the film he talks about how the communities have changed as a result of the salmon decline. This statement relates to the core belief of anthropocentrism. “An anthropocentric case for environmental protection will therefore be justified instrumentally in terms of the consequences that pollution or resource depletion might have for human interests” (Carter 15). It is crucial to save the salmon population in order to save these coastal communities.

Jim Runkles is another character in the film. Although he works for the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE), I think his information is important to the film. In the film he describes how the Bonneville dam works. He goes into detail on the various measures the ACE has taken to mitigate for the loss of salmon spawning habitat by the creation of the dam. He finishes his speech about the different modifications to the dams turbines by saying that the overall reason for the changes to the turbines is to increase efficiency. I chose to put this in the film to show that his agenda is to make efficient use of the Columbia River.

I decided to put my presence in the film as a way to show the similarities between ecocentrics and anthropocentrics. Although my life doesn't depend on salmon runs or timber harvest, it does depend on the outdoors. I chose to highlight this fact to show the parallels between the two groups. Both parties' occupation deals with nature in some way. By showing this parallel I wanted environmentalists to see a different side of

fishermen. Although they seek to make a profit, their motivations are similar in that they are both passionate about the environment. Their philosophies only differ in how they value nature.

## Imagery

Imagery says a lot about the subject matter of this film. I wanted to use positive imagery not the negative imagery that exists in Cosmos (1978), such as the oil soaked bird or the industrial disasters. I knew that the crux of my story is about the impacts logging has on natal streams. John talks about the devastation he witnessed in the coast range while he was performing stream surveys. It is important for me to use his own pictures to show what he was talking about. I would have created mistrust among the anthropocentric community if I would have used recreated shots. By using his photos it gives his testimony legitimacy.

The most powerful example of this technique is when John describes performing stream surveys. He describes the streams during dry days. Each stream was healthy with good areas of gravel for salmon to lay their eggs. He then describes what happened when the rains came. The images portray swollen streams filled with mud. Trees had toppled over covering prime salmon spawning areas with mud. It's a moment when John implicates logging as a cause for the decline of salmon. I think it carries more weight because they are John's images.

At the end of the film, John talks about if the coast range was healthy there might be hope for bringing back the salmon. He then goes on to say that the condition is the same up and down the coast. I placed the most devastating image of clear cutting after this statement. I wanted the image to come from John. In this way he shows logging community members the damage they're doing to the fishing community.

## CONCLUSION

The last film I produced, To Kill a Wolf (2005), deals with the reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone National Park and how the reintroduction impacts the ranching community. One observation I made while producing the film was the mistrust the ranching community had for biologists and members of the environmental community. The Predator Conservation Alliance had approached a rancher in the Paradise Valley to post volunteers to watch his herd for free. He declined their offer because he didn't trust them. He felt that their intentions weren't to help him, but to monitor his actions. This observation led me to produce Death of the Fishermen (2006). I saw that the mistrust he felt towards the environmental organization was similar to how he felt toward conservation films.

Conservation films have an important place in protecting the environment. They have the power to start discussion. In order to make communication possible, conservation films need to include both ecocentrics and anthropocentrics. The debate involves more than "good guys" and "bad guys." It involves families, communities and lifestyles. It is the conservation filmmaker's role to bring these complex issues to the surface. The human race can begin making progress toward sustainability by understanding why it is so difficult for a fisherman to give up his job or a logger to put down his chainsaw.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>15</sup> The Queen of Trees. Victoria Stone and Mark Deeble. 2005. DVD. PBS, 2006

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<sup>17</sup> Singer, Peter. Animal Liberation. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1975

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