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Ecotourism, Animals and Ecocentrism: A Re-examination of the Billfish Debate

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to discuss the topic of who, or what, is deserving of moral consideration in nature as this applies to the emerging discourse on tourism, animals and ethics. The paper focuses primarily on deep green or ecocentric ethics, and more specifically, on how this perspective differs from other theories of environmental ethics—especially animal liberation—when it comes to the treatment of animals used for tourism. The debate on billfishing as ecotourism is resurrected for the purpose of explaining (i) why it is important to understand key differences between ecocentric and animal liberation ethics; and (ii) how both theories could have been used to better inform the billfishing debate that took place over a decade ago. The paper concludes with a call for the continued use of environmental ethics theory in clarifying whether certain human-animal practices should be viewed as ecotourism or not.

Keywords: ecocentrism; ecotourism; animals; environmental ethics; animal liberation; billfishing.

Introduction

Environmental ethics emerged as a new sub-discipline of philosophy over 40 years ago, advancing on the back of work by the early pioneer Aldo Leopold (1970; first published in 1949), and galvanized later by Rachael Carson (1962), Lynn White (1967), and Garrett Hardin (1968). A chief objective of the discipline continues to be recognition of the importance of infusing moral theory into discussions on non-human entities (Desjardins 2013; see also Mehmetoglu, 2009). This has proven problematic because of the difficulty in deciding not only the reasons for preserving nature, but also what in the environment is deserving of moral standing (Ouderkirk 2000; Nash 1989; Humphrey 2000).

Questions surrounding moral value are paramount to the discipline because those entities possessing moral standing are owed certain duties, not unlike the duties that humans have towards each other. By contrast, those entities that fall outside the circle of morality are treated instrumentally, i.e., they have value only in as much as they serve the needs of humans. An early environmental visionary in this area was Rolston (1975, 1981), who argued that nature has intrinsic value alongwith a number of dimensions (e.g., economic, life support, recreational, scientific, aesthetic, life, and so on).

The lack of consensus on what falls inside the circle of morality and what falls outside has spawned many different theoretical perspectives that are organized according to scale as well as their focus on living and non-living entities. Examples of these include biocentrism, ecocentrism, the land ethic, deep ecology, eco-feminism, and animal liberation (see Desjardins 2013). These perspectives cover a range of important topics and related questions, including: Do individual animals have moral standing? Does the environment in general have moral standing? How is the moral standing that humans enjoy the same or different than the moral standing of animals and nature? Is it morally acceptable to kill animals?

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the source of moral value (moral standing) in reference to the emerging discussion on tourism, animals and ethics. In particular, the focus is on ecocentric ethics and, more specifically, on how ecocentrism differs

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from other kinds of environmental ethics, especially animal liberationist theories like animal rights and utilitarianism, when it comes to the treatment of animals used for tourism. The debate on billfishing as ecotourism is resurrected in the latter stages of the paper for the purpose of explaining: (1) why it is important to understand key differences between different environmental ethics theories like ecocentrism and animal liberation; and (2) how these theories could have been used to better inform the billfishing debate. This paper continues the recent trend of examining specific animal ethics theories and their application in a tourism context (Fennell 2012a ; Yudina and Fennell 2013).

Environmental Ethics

Maturity in environmental ethics has come about through the development and refinement of a diverse range of theories that have been organized according to the degree in which they place emphasis on human- and ecologically-centred values. For the purposes of this paper, Curry's (2011) work on light green, mid-green and deep green categories of environmental ethics has been used to illustrate differences in these theoretical perspectives.

Light Green or Shallow Anthropocentric Ethics

The light green or shallow environmental ethic places direct value primarily on humans (Curry 2011). In support of this perspective, Norton (1984) argues that there are two basic forms of anthropocentrism, weak and strong, with weak anthropocentrism being sufficient enough to support an environmental ethic. An example of the weak perspective includes enlightened self-interest (see Payne 2010 in reference to anthropocentrism as human chauvinism), which reflects society's need to maintain a healthy environment simply for the purpose of maximizing human health and comfort (e.g., ecosystem services such as soil generation, water purification and oxygen production, according to Hull et al. 2003) today and for the future. We protect these services and treat them as resources simply because their healthy functioning is in our own best interests.

The ecological humanists, a group that includes social ecologists like Murray Bookchin (1990), fall within this shallow category of environmental ethics because they are unwilling to move beyond a constricted anthropocentric perspective (Humphrey 2000; see also Sessions 1995, and DiZerega 1992, 1995). This point is validated in consideration of the following two statements:

a. the human being is the sole object of value in the natural world;

b. the human being is the object of greatest value in the natural world.

Humphrey (2000) argues that ecological humanists would adopt at least one of these two value positions. Although there are certainly good reasons to protect various elements of nature, it is always the interests of humans that take precedence over the interests of these other entities (living or non-living). The humanist attempt to elevate humans as unique over all other beings is a way of legitimizing our domination over the planet and all of its inhabitants (Biro 2002; Eckersley 1992).

Mid-green or Intermediate Ethics

Mid-green environmental ethics is characterised as non-anthropocentric but not entirely ecocentric (Curry 2011). Value is not just placed on humans, but the extension of value also does not extend so far as to include ecosystems. The focus of the mid-green perspective is, as said by Curry (2011), to be more on animals, and more specifically individual animals. This type of ethics:

> *extends moral considerability to (primarily) animals, which are therefore perceived as possessing independent moral status, and therefore as deserving protection for their own sakes, regardless of whether they matter to human beings (Curry 2011: 72).*

Biocentrism and animal liberation are two main perspectives within this category. Biocentrism adopts the position that (1) all life has inherent value, and (2) this inherent value is held equally amongst all the constituent parts of nature. All living things, therefore, have their own 'good' (Taylor 1986), and one species cannot be viewed as being morally

superior to another (French 1995). The locus of value is therefore placed not on the ecosystems in which these living entities exist, but rather on the entity itself. Moral standing and even rights are extended to individual organisms because these organisms are conscious, feeling and/or purposeful (Hull et al. 2003; see also Carter 2005). Hull and his colleagues continue by suggesting that this would include 'the right to life, freedom, and pain-free existence' (Hull et al. 2003: 3).

Biocentrism can be criticized on the basis of inconsistency (French 1995). On one hand proponents argue for equality across the species, and on the other hand suggest that vital human interests can at times override the interests of non-humans. They 'toss species ranking out the front door of their arguments only to have it sneak around and into the house from the back' (p. 40).

Another main theoretical perspective of the mid-green environmental ethic is animal liberation, supported chiefly by the work of Peter Singer (2009) and Tom Regan (2004). These theories are said to be reductionist or atomistic in the way they defend the interests of individual animals—not species or whole systems. There is thus an unwillingness to sacrifice individual animals for the good of the whole (Regan 2004).

Utilitarians like Singer argue that moral standing or moral consideration is based on the individual, and this position is defended on the basis of equal consideration of interests, speciesism, and pain and suffering. This means that the many marginal interests that humans satisfy in using animals for pleasure or experimentation, should not outweigh the interests that these animals have in avoiding suffering. Any being, human or non-human, made to suffer more should be accorded a higher level of treatment over those suffering less (Fennell 2012c, for more on this theory).

Tom Regan's theory of animal rights extends moral consideration on the basis of the rights that animals have, not unlike the rights that humans enjoy. Animals that are seen to possess inherent value (normal mammals of one year or more in age and even fish, and birds) are said to be subjects-of-a-life based on the capacity for consciousness, intentionally, and sentience, and should never be treated as a means to an end. In linking his theory to justice, Regan contends that we have a direct duty to protect the interests of others, and this includes moral agents (humans) as well as moral patients (animals) (see Fennell 2012a, for an extended discussion of this theory).

Environmentalists have criticized animal liberation because there is no special place for endangered animal species as deserving special treatment because of their status. Instead, the focus rests solely on the good of individual animals. For example, in making a decision on how best to advance with one of two construction projects—one that would harm an endangered species and the other that would harm a non-threatened or endangered species—there is little assistance (Ouderkirk 2000).

Deep Green or Deep Ecocentric Ethics

While the mid-green perspective places more emphasis on the value of individual animals, ecocentric ethics places value on the whole systems. Examples of this perspective include the self-development and self-realization components of deep ecology (Naess 1984; Fox 1989), the Gaia hypothesis (Lovelock 1979), the land ethic (Leopold 1970), and by extension, the ethic of care and responsiveness of ecofeminism (Donovan 1990; Gruen 2010; Fennell and Sheppard 2011; Adams 1993; Yudina and Fennell 2013).

Ouderkirk (2000) illustrates that 'ecocentric' refers to the fact that 'in environmental matters the ecosystem must be a central consideration' (p. 24). Ecocentrists assign ecosystems with intrinsic value because they are self-organizing systems that generate benefits for flora and fauna, and we can never separate humans from these systems. Ecocentrism differs from biocentrism in the way the former ascribes intrinsic value to the whole, including those living and non-living parts, while the latter, as above, ascribes intrinsic value only to those living elements of the environment. Eckersley (1992) writes that the world from the ecocentric perspective:

> *Is an intrinsically dynamic, interconnected web of relations in which there are no absolutely discrete entities and no absolute dividing lines between the living and the non-living, the animate and the inanimate, or the human and the non-human (p. 49).*

The consequentialist theorist, Aldo Leopold has had a significant impact on the way we think about ecocentrism. His sketches and observations on the land ethic took shape in the early 1930s (Leopold 1933a, 1933b) and culminated in his landmark work, *A Sand County Almanac*, in 1949 (Leopold 2004). His main maxim, i.e., 'A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise' (Leopold 1970: 262), has been a mainstay for environmentalists since its publication. Leopold extends the boundaries of the moral community to include animals and plants, rocks, water, soil, and everything else that collectively comprises the land (Nelson 2004). As long as the consequences of our actions do not compromise the integrity of the biotic community, i.e., if we act in a way that promotes the good, and not harm, of the biotic community on the whole, these actions are morally praiseworthy (see Callicott, 1989 who proposed Leopold's land ethic as a global code, and Evanoff's (2007) critique of this view).

From a practical standpoint, as long as the ecosystem is respected, there is no limit to the types of activities that might take place in nature. If hunting, trapping, fishing and other consumptive activities are good for the whole system these activities would be deemed morally acceptable. (See Hettinger and Throop 1999, who feel that ecocentrists ought to move away from integrity and stability, to more contemporary features like diversity and complexity.) In this capacity, Rowe (1997) argues that we ought to feel more pain at the devastation of wild ecosystems than over the death of individual organisms. This perspective has been adopted by Loftin (1985) who writes that it makes little sense to doctor sick animals because value should be placed not on individual animals but rather on the entire ecosystem. He argues that those who choose to shelter and aid these animals are biologically illiterate. Time, money and other resources would be better channelled into habitat protection or other measures that would protect the integrity of ecosystems.

Criticisms of Ecocentrism

Ecocentrism has been criticized along two related fronts. The first is the charge of an economic motive, i.e., that anthropocentric values guide ecocentric decision-making, and the second is based on environmental fascism. Both are discussed briefly, below.

For Rowe (1997), ecocentrism often incorporates too much cultural anthropocentrism and individual self-interest. He argues that if we start with individual humans as the locus of value in building concern for the ecosphere and work outwards to family, kin, community, and so on, i.e., working from the inside-out, instead of the outside-in, such will be the kiss of death for humanity and the world in general. Leopold, Rowe contends, is such a proponent of this method, espousing ecological well-being though Darwinian rationalizations, with air, water and other natural elements taking second place to the needs of humans and their immediate family and friends. Rowe argues that:

> *Aldo Leopold has been the influential exponent of ethics-by-extension, rationalized as an expedient for human survival. Unfortunately this approach only strengthens anthropocentrism, making it certain that land, air, water and other organisms will always in the crunch take second place to the welfare of self, family and friends (Rowe 1994: 2).*

Instead, Rowe (1997) favours the use of Feibleman's (1954) model of systems hierarchies, in particular, his 'laws of the levels', whereby the 'mechanism of any level is found at lower levels (in its parts), while the purpose of any level is found at levels above (in the wholes)' (p. 149). For Rowe, this means: 'Earth before organisms. Ecosystems before people. Ecosphere not biosphere. Ecocentrism not biocentrism'.

Lehman (1981) shares this view on Leopold in arguing that:

> *Although Leopold claims for communities of plants and animals a 'right to continued existence', his argument is homocentric, appealing to the human stake in preservation. Basically it is an argument from enlightened self-interest, where the self in question is not an individual human being but humanity – present and future – as a whole (p. 131).*

Brown (1995) argues that ecocentrism may evolve into an ideology of power and control in the same way the anthropocentric ideologies have. This is especially true if individual rights are suppressed in favour of what is good or right for the whole (see Burms 1991, cited in Drenthen 2011, who argues that ecocentrism is an extreme form of anthropocentrism because we ascribe value on the basis of absolutes. 'Value' outside the human perspective, has no meaning). Furthermore, the radical egalitarianism of ecocentrism advocated by deep ecologists and ecofeminists can be just as nihilistic as anthropocentrism, Brown argues, because it manifests itself in the foundation of oppressive ideologies, i.e., that certain oppressive classes, be they capitalist, Marxist, Christian, or male, position themselves to act in the name of all humanity. There is a devaluation of the interests of the weaker classes and a strengthening of the more dominant class(es). Brown continues:

> *By addressing their moral imperative only to the human community, deep ecologists are implicitly recognizing that human beings have a unique place in the cosmos; human beings alone are capable of good and evil. When the deep ecologists ask us to recognize inherent values in nature, they explicitly demand that we refrain from seeing humanity as the sole source and creators of value but they implicitly see humanity as standing alone in possessing the power to recognize value beyond the immediate interests of our species (p. 200).*

The second main criticism of ecocentrism, environmental fascism, corresponds to a deliberate subordination of the well-being of all creatures according to the needs of the broader community (Regan 2004). Individuals may be sacrificed for the greater good of the biotic community, according to Regan (and Brown 1995, above), in maintaining the stability and integrity of the natural world. Regan argues that it is difficult to see how the rights of the individual could find a place in the land ethic scheme. Regan (2004) continues:

> *If, to take an extreme, fanciful but, it is hoped, not unfair example, the situation we faced was either to kill a rare wildflower or a (plentiful) human being, and if the wildflower, as a 'team member,' would contribute more to 'the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community' than the human, then presumably we would not be doing wrong if we killed the human and saved the wildflower. The rights view cannot abide this position, not because the rights view categorically denies that inanimate objects can have rights…but because it denies the propriety of deciding what should be done to individuals who have rights by appeal to aggregative considerations, including, therefore, computations about what will or will not maximally 'contribute to the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community.' Individual rights are not to be outweighed by such considerations (which is not to say that they are never to be outweighed). Environmental fascism and the rights view are like oil and water: they don't mix (p. 362).*

Collections of systems like forests might have inherent value, but Regan (2004) finds it difficult to understand how moral rights are attributed to these collections of trees or ecosystems. These are not individuals and, as such, are not meriting of moral status (see Steverson 1994). The difference between moral standing and intrinsic value is important to the discussion on environmental ethics. O'Neil (2000) writes that non-sentient environmental entities like rocks and trees may have intrinsic value, but they don't have moral standing. Moral standing is extended to those beings that can be benefited or harmed—if something works for or against their interests. A sentient being, like a dog, can have moral standing and intrinsic value. By contrast, a beautiful picture may have intrinsic value if it has a good outside of the pleasure it may bring, but it is inconceivable to argue that it has moral standing in as much as its interests can be benefitted or harmed.

These concerns have prompted animal rights theorists to suggest that ecocentrism is just another form of utilitarianism where decisions are made for the greatest good of the greatest number. Wildlife has value only if society attaches value to it (Garner 2004). Garner calls this type of anthropocentric environmentalism 'eco-imperialism' because wildlife conservation is more about conflict between

competing human interests than about conflict between humans and animals—the light green or shallow anthropocentrism perspective discussed above.

Others argue that species do possess interests that each of their individual members may lack (Johnson 1991). What is good for an individual within the species may or may not be good for the species in general, and vice versa. For example, it is in the interests of a forest ecosystem to have periodic fires, even though fires may not be in the interests of component parts of the ecosystem. Similarly, it may be in the best interests of a population of deer to have predators kill the weaker members of the herd, even though this is not in the best interests of the killed deer. The problem is we can't have it both ways. We give priority to the individual or to the species or ecosystem. It all depends on what we value (Bovenkerk et al. 2003).

Differences also exist in practice. Sagoff (1984) illustrates that environmentalist and conservation organizations have customarily been interested in ecological issues over humanitarian issues. For example, the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society place the principles of ecology and population biology over the principles of individual welfare. The opposite holds true for humanitarian groups. Friends of animal groups and humane societies situate the suffering of animals as their first priority. The differences between ecocentrism (environmentalists) and animal liberation are so marked that Sagoff was forced to conclude that, 'Environmentalists cannot be animal liberationists. Animal liberationists cannot be environmentalists' (p. 42).

Empirical studies serve to verify the differences that exist between the mid-green animal liberation group and the deep-green ecocentrists. Bovenkerk et al. (2003) investigated whether or not it was morally right to rescue lost or ill seals in the Netherlands, for the purpose of reintroducing these animals back into the wild. The authors discovered that sheltering on a large scale tends to work against the grain of the ecological principles espoused over the last couple of decades, i.e., we should not interfere with laws of nature. However, they also discovered that there are few reasons not to shelter, and even better reasons to favour sheltering based on circumstance, including: (1) the gravity or extent of suffering of the animal; (2) the extent to which humans are responsible for suffering; (3) the level of naturalness of the ecosystem; (4) responsibility the actor felt due to their function, such as a park manager; (5) the cost versus benefit of rescue; (6) consequences for the health of the ecosystem; (7) the intrinsic value of animals from the wild, or the prospect of their wildness; (8) whether it be better to leave efforts in the hands of professionals over those of the public; and (9) the educational function of the shelter (p. 17).

In a study of the values held by environmental management professionals, Hull et al. (2003) found that not one of the interviewees (despite having a rather vocal animal rights contingency as part of the pool of interviewees), argued explicitly in favour of extending rights to individual organisms. By contrast, interviewees were much more likely to embrace principles of ecocentrism in reference to what we should value and why, i.e., it is good or desirable to protect nature, even if these actions didn't directly impact the agent. Even more than this, anthropocentric values dominated peoples' reasoning behind their views on environmental quality. Hull et al. (2003) write that environmental managers often expressed values tied to the importance of income generation by timber and the recreation benefits that people get from natural areas. Furthermore, forestry and wildlife and resource managers, i.e., those that advocate for the wise use of resources in achieving sustainable yields in the vein of the ecocentric mode of thinking, are much more likely to advocate for animal welfare over animal rights (Schmidt 1990).

It is worth noting that some scholars have attempted to find common ground between the ecocentric and animal liberationist perspectives (see for example, Callicott 1980). However, in a subsequent publication, Callicott was forced to concede that there has been 'an increasingly acrimonious divorce between individualistic animal welfare ethics and holistic ecocentric ethics' (Callicott 1988: 163). Despite this divorce, Callicott has attempted to re-marry the two streams into a

biosocial moral theory. While his approach extends the boundaries of the common middle ground, those steadfast proponents of both ends will see little overall unity. More recently, Morris and Thornhill (2006) have attempted unity through the use of Roger Scruton's views on intrinsic value using the concept of piety or *pietas*. Pietas is defined as, 'The disposition to acknowledge the sacredness and untouchability of things, places, people and customs…because you have no right to encroach upon them, and because they are intrinsically worthy of respect' (Scruton 2000: 183–184, as cited in Morris and Thornhill 2006: 370). This takes into consideration not only individual lives, but also biodiversity (species and ecosystems) in general.

Ecocentrism and Tourism

Scholars in tourism studies have utilized ecocentric theory in a number of different ways. Examples include, residents scoring higher on ecocentric scales rejecting plans for the development of second homes (Kaltenborn et al. 2008); the disconnect between pro-environmental attitudes and pro-environmental behaviour amongst ecotourists (Jackson 2007); the contrast between technocentrism and ecocentrism (Acott et al. 1998); and the discussion of ecocentrism as one of three main theoretical perspectives that will help realize a process of the decommodification of tourism through the contribution of non-governmental organizations (Wearing et al. 2005; see also Butcher's 2006 anthropocentric response).

What has not been a focus in tourism until quite recently, however, is the use of ecocentrism (or indeed other environmental ethics theories) as it corresponds to the use of animals in tourism (Fennell 2012b). Any use of an animal for tourism purposes that has an effect on that species and its role within the ecological community is relevant to the discussion on ecocentrism. When tourism practitioners make orang-utans box in front of tourists at a Bangkok zoo (Aljazeera, 2006); use captive black market tigers at Thai temples for tourist pleasure (Dell'Amore 2008); fin endangered shark species (McKie 2009); or continue the practice of hare coursing as a blood sport, even though hares are endangered (Bowcott 2010), there are important and broader whole systems debates that are being ignored.

Not unlike the lack of consideration of how ecocentrism could guide our use of animals in practice, there has been a dearth of academic activity investigating how such theory could inform our understanding of tourism, animals and ethics. Examples of the scant work undertaken to date include Fennell and Nowaczek's (2010) use of biocentric theory to examine how interactions with fish may be described as ecotourism or nature-based tourism according to the type of interaction and the level of consumptiveness; and Shani and Pizam's (2008) contrast of three different ethical approaches as these apply to our use of animals in tourism, including environmental ethics, animal welfare, and animal rights (see also Hughes 2001).

More specifically, Kontogeorgopoulos (2009) used ecocentrism as a central theme in his work on elephant camp tourism in Northern Thailand. Those camps categorized as more ecocentric treat elephants with a higher level of regard, and this sentiment is represented in the preferences and values of tourists who visit these camps. However, even though anthropocentric camps focus more on activities that place emphasis on the recreation and entertainment of tourists, these places also have a role to play in helping elephants. Kontogeorgopoulos argues that tourism is the lesser of many other evils—elephants, aside from tourism, 'possess few legal options for earning a living' (p. 445). Because of diminishing habitat, the expense of caring for animals (presumably in sanctuaries), and the difficulty of reintroducing animals into the wild, working in tourism is viewed as the best option. Kontogeorgopoulos states that:

> *Critics of the use of elephants in tourism should acknowledge the financial utility and value that anthropocentric camps create for elephants, while camp owners should seek ways of improving their products by balancing the preferences of tourists for anthropocentric activities such as elephant riding with the more naturalistic ethos of ecocentric camps, which, it would appear, is not only good for business and beneficial for the welfare of domesticated elephants, but is also more rewarding and educational for visitors…(p. 445).*

Ecocentric theory has also been used comprehensively in the case of Fraser Island, Australia. The death of a nine-year-old boy from a dingo attack provoked re-evaluation of policies on how best to manage tourists and dingoes, especially given the fact that dingo behaviour has changed as tourism numbers continue to escalate (Thompson et al. 2003). Burns et al. (2011) argue that the way forward on Fraser Island is to incorporate an ecocentric ethic in the management of dingoes and non-consumptive wildlife tourism from the perspective of seven main principles (Table 1). The implementation of an ecocentric perspective 'does not place the rights of humans above those of non-humans, but instead argues that non-human species have the same rights to live and prosper as humans' (p. 182).

Table 1. Seven Principles for an Ecocentric Approach to Wildlife Tourism

Principle	Description
Intrinsic value	Wildlife tourism has value in and of itself independent of its usefulness to human activities, including tourism.
Moral obligations	Enabling visitors to become aware of the environmental consequences of their actions can compel them to change their behaviour through a sense of moral obligation.
Moral reasoning	Providing information on environmental ethics facilitates visitors in undertaking ecocentric moral reasoning.
Precautionary principle	If a wildlife tourism action has a suspected risk of causing harm to animals or their habitat, in the absence of scientific consensus that the action is harmful, then the burden of proof that it is not harmful falls on those proposing the action.
Avatar	The interconnectedness of humans and nature requires management of both in a more holistic framework as part of shared ecosystems.
Belonging in nature	An imperative is humans acknowledging that non-humans belong in and with nature and that humans are visitors to the habitat.
Reflective manager	Essentiality of managers being able to self- reflect on how their ethical position is constructed and could potentially change over time.

Source: Burns et al. (2011)

Principle 3, Moral Reasoning, argues for the incorporation of ecocentric theory as a mechanism for better management. Yet true to the ecocentric perspective, at least the Leopoldian view, it is acceptable to kill animals in preserving the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. The question remains whether we can in fact argue for the intrinsic value of dingoes on par with humans—in addition to the assertion that dingoes have the same rights as humans—while at the same time killing them if they have detrimental effects on the human population. If dingoes have the same rights as people, it would be unlawful to kill them under any conditions. Accordingly, discussions on rights and intrinsic value lie at the heart of whether or not dingoes, or indeed other animals caught in the intricate web of human use of the natural world, should live or die.

A related question in this case is that although Fraser Island attracts non-consumptive wildlife tourists (this would include ecotourists of a hard path or deep nature), it is debatable whether such tourists would be willing to visit environments where consumptive methods of management like culling are regularly used to control predator populations. The assumption is that a percentage of ecotourists, however small, might be uncomfortable with the decision to cull dingoes under any conditions. Burns et al. (2011) explain that ecocentrism is a logical alternative to anthropocentric management policies in the case of Fraser Island. However, this alternative exists in the absence of other theoretical perspectives that may be useful in expanding the debate.

Billfishing as Ecotourism: Revisited

The debate between Holland et al. (1998, 2000) and Fennell (2000) on the legitimacy of billfish angling (fishing for marlin and sailfish) as a form of ecotourism has parallels with the preceding discussion on deep green ecocentrism and mid-green environmental ethics. In general, Holland et al. (1998) argued that billfishing qualifies as a form of ecotourism when it is characterized by degrees of

the following six characteristics:

1. It occurs in a unique natural resource: open ocean beyond the horizon and with few if any other boats in view;
2. It attracts outdoor enthusiasts who are like ecotourists in terms of education, household income, and are dedicated to their chosen recreational activity;
3. There is an element of resource responsibility, and this usually takes the form of following a code of ethics or various norms, such as lower bag limits (e.g., one fish limit per person or boat), catch-and-release and tagging fish for scientific or conservation research;
4. There is support for resource conservation, which in the case of billfishing, relates to money from the tourism industry used for conservation purposes and angler membership in conservation organizations;
5. Billfish angling contributes more to the economy than other resource uses like commercial fishing; and
6. The billfishing industry provides employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for local people.

Holland et al. (1998) argue that the catch-and-release style of billfish angling in Costa Rica is morally justifiable as ecotourism (over catching and killing), and can be likened to scuba diving, where the non-consumptive nature of the activity sometimes contributes to occasional mortality. The authors conclude by suggesting that there are some important unanswered questions about the mortality of released fish post-catch as this applies to the consumptive and non-consumptive nature of this activity. However, in terms of release and potential mortality rates, these concerns are perhaps more in line with ensuring that the fishing industry is kept viable in the same manner that Ducks Unlimited continues to preserve habitat for more ducks. This observation gains traction when Holland et al. (1998: 97–98) comment that:

> *In addition to having the private sector infrastructure necessary to attract anglers, there must be a high level of stock abundance to provide for the high quality fishing experience sought by anglers. Billfish angling destinations must compete worldwide; to the extent that abundant fish stocks can be maintained, those regions in close proximity to major angling markets have an advantage.*

Fennell (2000) responded to Holland et al. (1998) by questioning the extent to which billfishing should qualify as a form of ecotourism based on four main factors: intention; animal pain; consumptiveness; and values, behaviour and taxonomy. Billfishing should not be ecotourism based on the intent of the activity, which is to pursue fish as a prime intention with the probable outcome of producing pain and stress. Ecotourism, by contrast, should be more about the avoidance of harm in the process of securing recreational pleasure and satisfaction. Second, and related to the first point, above, is the possibility that fish feel pain (see below) and often die from these encounters. Concern should be raised over the acceptability of a form of ecotourism that promotes this type of human-animal interaction, where the 'occasional mortality' of billfish is acceptable akin to the impacts that scuba diving has on reefs. Third, fishing becomes a consumptive activity if fish are killed despite being released. Finally, the values attached to billfishing appear to be more oriented towards sport. As such, the adventure tourism label appears to be more appropriate for this activity than 'ecotourism'.

In revisiting this debate so many years later, my purpose is to extend the discussion by employing ecocentric theory in the case of Holland et al. (1998), and mid-green animal liberation theory in the case of Fennell (2000). These are perspectives that perhaps should have been used initially by both sides in strengthening their respective positions.

Where Holland et al. (1998, 2000) fell short was in failing to incorporate ecocentric theory in framing their argument beyond a focus on billfishing as industry, product, economy and experience. Leopold's land ethic perspective is one advocated by wildlife ecologists and other environmental practitioners (and theorists) in validating the priority of whole systems over the interests of individual animals. From this perspective, as long

as the ocean environment is not compromised, and as long as billfish stocks are robust enough to accommodate sport fishing, i.e., as long as we act in a way that promotes the good, and not harm, of the marine environment on the whole, actions like fishing are morally praiseworthy. The importance of income generation and other benefits from the use of natural areas is consistent with the views of environmental management professionals, as anthropocentric views tend to dominate decision-making (Hull et al. 2003; Holden 2003). This is the ethics-by-extension platform described by Rowe (1994), whereby natural elements take a back seat to human needs. In these cases, occasional mortality of animals is undoubtedly acceptable as long as the whole system is healthy and as long as human interests are given priority.

In their subsequent response to Fennell (2000), Holland et al. (2000) observe that, 'Whether or not fish feel pain falls under the subject of animal rights and care…we see more of the author's personal values here than research results' (Holland et al. 2000: 347). The authors demonstrate a lack of care in addressing the broader literature. First, the issue of pain in fish and other animals is not just a matter of animal rights, but rather one that is much deeper. Pain, and here we ought to source the literature on sentience, appeals not only to animal rights, but also utilitarianism as well as animal welfare (Arlinghaus et al. 2007; Huntingford et al. 2007). Second, there is a wealth of data pointing to the fact that fish do in fact experience pain (see Fennell and Nowaczek 2010 for a summary of some of this literature). Added to this is the finding that catch-and-release fishing is more consumptive than generally thought. Domeier et al. (2003) found that 26.2% of striped marlin died within five days of release. Injury from catch was a clear predictor of mortality, e.g., all marlin bleeding from the gills ended up dying.

Furthermore, in reference to their point that, 'anglers are interested in the experience of pursuing and catching large billfish rather than necessarily harvesting them' (p. 98), there is no discussion on the issue of whether fishing for pleasure is less morally justifiable than fishing for sustenance (see Balon 2000; Fennell and Nowaczek 2010).

Fennell (2000) fell short due to his support of a Leopoldian ecocentric perspective, where humans 'are part of a larger ecological system, which must be protected and accepted on its own terms' (p. 342). The mid-green ethic would have been more appropriate for Fennell (2000) to apply in this situation given the individualistic nature of animal liberation, i.e., a focus on the value of individuals, not the sacrifice of individuals for the good of the ecological community. In the case of billfishing, the land ethic as representative of the ecocentric or deep green perspective does not adequately protect the interests of individual billfish. Billfish are not trees or ecosystems, but rather sentient beings that can suffer. And we should not let the many marginal human interests (recreational fishing) outweigh the interests that these animals have in not suffering (Singer 2009).

More recently, Fennell (2013) has argued that the divide between consumptive and non-consumptive activities as ecotourism has been fuzzy in the absence of philosophically grounded arguments that otherwise might allow for generative progression. In this regard, Fennell claims that ecotourism practitioners should act according to first principle when it comes to the use of animals for ecotourism purposes. This principle places the well-being of animals over the recreational and commercial interests of humans—interests that are often embedded in the ecocentric ethic, as noted above. Hence, ecotourism practitioners should

> *Reject as ecotourism all practices that are based on or support animal capture and confinement, or other forms of animal use that cause suffering, for human pleasure and entertainment.*
>
> *Embrace as ecotourism interactions that place the interests of animals over the interests of humans. This would include encounters with free-living animals that would have the liberty to engage or terminate interactions independent of human influence (Fennell, In press-b).*

In view of the stress, pain, and consumptive (death of released fish) aspects of billfish angling, the foregoing principle would provide clear guidance over what would pass as the acceptable or unacceptable use of animals drawn into the ecotourism industry. As such, it is clear that there is

room for the presence of a reductionist stance based on the interests of individual animals first over the 'integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community' maxim of Leopold. The question remains whether ecotourism practitioners have the will to eliminate activities that involve the pursuit, capture, injury, stress, or death of animals in satisfying the recreational interests of ecotourists specifically and general tourists more broadly. These issues require further investigation as they relate to (1) different types of ecotourism (hard vs. soft), (2) nature-based tourism as compared to ecotourism, and (3) ecotourism in comparison to other forms of tourism.

Conclusion

This paper used Curry's (2011) categorization of shallow, mid, and deep green ethics in an effort to more fully understand the depth and range of environmental ethics theory. Emphasis was placed on ecocentrism, especially how it compared to mid-green theories of animal liberation. Knowledge of these different theoretical perspectives was deemed essential in efforts to more closely analyze the many vexing issues tied to billfishing as a form of ecotourism. Previous efforts by Holland et al. (1998, 2000) and Fennell (2000) were largely atheoretical in their attempts to support one side of the debate over the other.

Those who support billfishing as a form of ecotourism adopt reasoning that corresponds to the ecocentric perspective, i.e., support for billfishing as ecotourism comes from placing value on whole systems as a first priority. As long as the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community are preserved, actions are deemed morally praiseworthy. By contrast, those who adopt an animal liberationist approach argue that there are not good reasons to sacrifice individual animals for the betterment of the whole—and this includes fishing for recreational purposes. Contrary to the position held by Holland et al. (1998), billfishing would not qualify as a form of ecotourism because it does not protect the interests of animals as a first priority. On this account, any activity that creates stress, pain, or causes death in animals should not be viewed as ecotourism, because ecotourism as a practice ought to defend these individual interests. The land ethic does not support this view.

This research reinforces Sagoff's (1984) contention that environmentalists and animal liberationists are at odds over such questions, and these differences provide an explanation as to why Holland et al. (1998, 2000) and Fennell (2000) struggled to find common ground over their respective interpretations of ecotourism. I conclude by suggesting that: (1) there is no set philosophical or empirical basis from which to suggest that the prefix 'eco' ought to refer specifically to ecocentrism as the guiding environmental ethic for ecotourism, over other theories like animal liberation; and (2) future studies in this area should intersect theory from environmental ethics with ecotourism, more broadly, in efforts to build an industry that focuses not only on nature preservation, but also on the nature of moral standing—on many levels.

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