



HUMANS AND OTHER ANIMALS OF WIKO HANNAH MUMBY

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In preparation for writing this report, I read the one by my Ph.D. supervisor, Virpi Lummaa, who was a Fellow here in 2011/12. Visiting her here was my introduction to the Wissenschaftskolleg, when I was a second-year Ph.D. student and she was doing her usual thing: raising tit chicks, walking her huge dogs and her kids and working on a heroic number of projects and manuscripts. On that trip, I tucked the idea of one day applying for a

Fellowship here into the back of my mind, and five years or so later, as a JRF, it was the first place to come to mind (and to the top of my colour-coded application spreadsheet) when I thought of spending time outside of the Cambridge bubble. I remembered the excellent food, the wild boar in the Grunewald, the welcoming staff and that I somehow got lost going from Virpi's flat in Villa Walther to Villa Jaffé. My navigational skills around neighbourhoods have improved little since, although I'm lucky to have found Wiko again, and I now have my gorgeous little dog Hershey (and sometimes dog Freud) to help me get around the world.

A Different Animal

I arrived later on in the Wiko year, something I regret, and I would urge College for Life Sciences Fellows to strongly consider taking up their fellowship in September. As it was, I turned up in February, with the bitter cold weather and the associated cold viruses. Nonetheless, my dog and I have benefitted from a glorious, idyllic spring and summer; sometimes I find it so perfect that I wonder if I have wandered onto a film set and that the blue-sky background will start peeling away to reveal some kind of plywood beneath. Finding my feet and beginning observations was certainly an experience, with the Tuesday Colloquias being particularly eye-opening. But somehow, I found a niche; I came to feel able to participate in seminars and focused on the diversity of life and shining a light on what can sometimes seem like human exceptionalism to the zoologist in me. In turn, I was exposed to, and challenged to answer, questions I had never thought of! How do elephants learn their gender roles? At first this question might seem bizarre, but it actually speaks to one of the fundamental questions in animal behaviour – how much of the behaviour is learned and transferred socially? I had many interesting conversations with other Fellows about my research, topics adjacent to it and many other things besides. I would like to thank Asfa and Isidore in particular for their sympathetic response to my research aims and their engagement with the context and applications of my work.

Where are the Elephants in Berlin?

As Kevin noted when introducing my seminar, I am concerned with studying big animals, those that constitute, from a biodiversity perspective, the minority of the large. We are not

living in the time of megafauna; the quaternary extinction put paid to much of it. Nor a great age of elephants themselves. Like us humans, the living elephant species constitute the extant branches of a bushy evolutionary tree. There have been elephants before, from the straight-tusked elephant, which weighed up to 15 tonnes and lived in this area in the Pleistocene, to the dwarf elephants that inhabited Mediterranean islands and were just one meter high and weighed just 100 kg as adults. There are certainly more than the current extant three ways to be an elephant. In Berlin, the only way to physically be an elephant is in a zoo or a museum collection, possibly also in the sediment. But there are many ways to think about them. My project has become much more than I originally proposed: comparing male sociality in environments with different anthropogenic risk. It developed to include a simulation, within-site temporal variation in social dynamics, investigating the relationship between social and genetic relatedness and establishing a collaboration on forest elephants to test similar questions. Effectively, at least four papers rather than one. Unlike most of the Fellows, who came here to write a book, I had absolutely no such intention. But as I leave, I have an agent, a publisher, a contract and the conviction that I will write something more substantive about humans and elephants than I would ever have considering attempting before. This is just another one of those intangible Wiko gifts: confidence.

All the Elephants in the Room at Once

My workshop on the applications of research on elephant behaviour, life history and ecology to conservation was a high point in my Fellowship. Being able to bring the experts (some of whom I've spent years dreaming of meeting) together in a room and listening to them speak was incredible. I did feel responsible, with most of the representatives of my little subfield present, that they should be safe, and for days before I had nightmares about a sinkhole opening up under the seminar room and swallowing all of the combined expertise. I needn't have worried. Greased by the excellent meals, fairly extended restaurant trips and walks around the neighbourhood (herding elephant people is no easier than cats), we made more progress in two days than we could have in years of e-mail exchanges. I dared to think, for the first time, that my work could mean more than just digging deeper and adding to the piles of primary research at the metaphorical mineshaft and that someone or something might benefit from what we're mining. Perhaps this is that concept of agency that we keep returning to in discussions.

It's not all a Walk in the Park

This isn't to say that the experience constituted highs alone. But what was striking is that people made themselves available, wanted to listen and if they couldn't help, they wanted to help me find someone who could. Our little group learning German was always a refuge and I somehow managed to, as my language teacher Ursula Kohler would say, be existential, despite my very loose grasp of grammar. I apologise to Ursula for being keener to learn names of animals than anything else – *Dachs, Fuchs, Reiher, Schwan, Schmetterling* – that's my world. I was able to make progress on many axes of my career; managing a group, working with policy makers, that paper that keeps bouncing (you'll be happy to know it has now been accepted in *Conservation Biology*), I talked it all through, as I'm sure those who heard it can confirm. Central to this dealing with the more challenging aspects of the *Umwelt* was being a part of the College for Life Sciences. Having Ulrike Pannasch coordinate the College was a stroke of genius; I can't emphasise enough how she manages to balance being helpful, supportive and resourceful with being totally non-invasive. I wish my next institution would have an Ulrike. I also very much appreciated my other colleagues and was so reluctant to let my Co-Fellow Tim go that I had to distract myself by shopping for his gifts (of course animal-themed).

But Sometimes It Is

The actual walks in the park I went on have been unforgettable. From the time Hershey christened the first crocuses of spring, to the very last one, which I am sure to stretch out for as long as possible. I always said that I have my best ideas in the shower, but now I know I have my best ideas walking my dog here. I always thought my work was a rather awkward fit, straddling the interface of behavioural ecology and conservation science. My background is also not typical of a biologist; I'm trained in anthropology and only fell for elephants one day in August 2010 in Samburu. A male called Yeager walked into the research camp and my life and moved some tracking collars around. He was the most spectacular thing I ever saw do anything so mundane. It was only when I reflected that I had no idea how long I had been watching him that I realised that watching him made me forget myself. Potentially, I fell for him so hard that the past eight years have forgotten the human animals I started my research career with. My aim now is to bridge the species divide again, by studying human-wildlife interactions. I initially dismissed the idea of

going beyond elephants and looking into other species, but the presence and appeal of wild boar crystallised in my mind as I walked and has proved hard to shake, so human interactions with other large mammals are on the cards. I've even managed to get myself a faculty job, in which I plan to stop awkwardly straddling interdisciplinary boundaries and begin actually building some bridges, or at least throwing some life vests across. It might seem a small achievement to some of my more seasoned colleagues, but as an early-career researcher, I think Wiko (and the walks around the Grunewald) can be formative as well as transformative. And for me, realising who I am as an animal, as a researcher, has been my main outcome.

Interspecific Encounters

I wanted to list my favourite animal (human and non-human) sightings at Wiko, but I thought it would become tiresome; besides, I think Viktoriya and Ostap had the most memorable encounter with humans early on in the academic year (and the most impressive fox encounters of late). So, I will write just two and touch on the interspecific interactions, or the lack thereof. The first was a lovely bright lunchtime, during which I was lucky to sit outside on the terrace with Kevin. He had been generous and affable as usual, but his real value came in spotting the sparrow hawk that swooped down past the trees and tucked into something just behind the hedge. Effectively, it would have had a lovely view of the lake and, more importantly, was super easy to see for everyone drinking their coffee on the terrace, but only Kevin, and I upon his pointing it out, were able to enjoy the sighting. I felt as though I was in a little zoologist bubble. Later, after the hawk exited stage left, I went behind the hedge to look for feathers or evidence of what it was eating, but there was nothing. I barely would have believed it had ever been there. The second, more domestic sighting was a little mouse that Pascale caught (absolutely humanely) in her apartment. A few of us took a look at it in the enclosure, but to avoid giving it any more stress, Ulrike released it near the deck in Villa Walther. Since then I have on several occasions seen a little brown mouse with a tail like a shoelace run across my path in the garden and, perhaps too sentimentally, I think that it's the same one, that it doesn't want to leave.