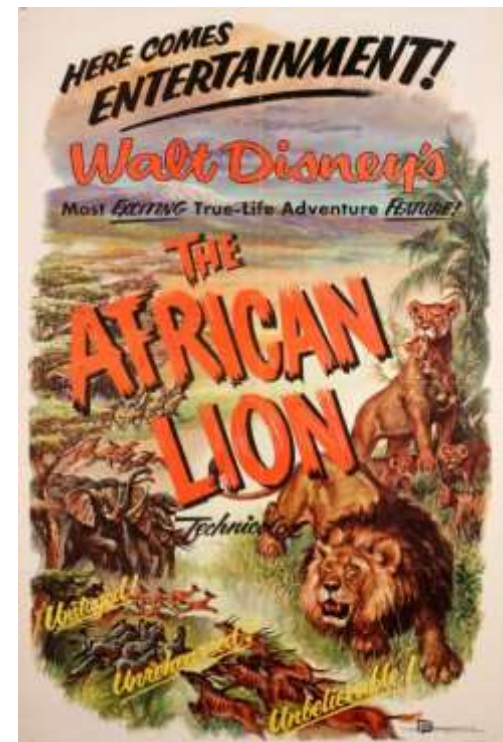




# Ecocinema

A genre of film, or a concept regarding a certain way of viewing film, that attributes ecological significance to all aspects of a film while keeping in mind the medium is a product of cultural influence and uses intellectual as well as emotional aspects to create a cinema that is ecocritical or environmentally conscious.

Ecocinema is a relatively new concept that continues to lack a concrete definition. This is due to the various ways a film can be attributed as ecocinema. Actually, all films can be considered to be a part of ecocinema because there is interpretation to be made about the influence of environmental and ecological aspects on the film's content. The most typical films regarded as ecocinema fall under the natural film and wildlife documentary category, but there are many other prominent forms such as disaster films and even big-budget blockbusters such as *Pacific Rim* (2013). The most important part in an approach toward ecocinema is to acknowledge the promotion or recognition of environmental issues within a film. These can come in different forms such as aesthetic conventions or subtle cues in the dialogue, but they can also be interpreted in any film.



The posters presented here are all examples of ecocinema. They all directly relate to environmental concerns or utilize the natural world as a critical part of their production. *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) is an example of ecocinema because of its plot being driven by environmental concern. *The Silent World* (1956) is a form of ecocinema which analyzes nature in documentary form. There is also footage rendered on adventures and expeditions which is seen in the *True-Life Adventure Series* from Disney throughout the 1950s. *Soylent Green* (1973) uses aspects of environmental science fiction such as overpopulation and dying oceans set in a dystopian society, which make the film exemplary of ecocinema.

# Anthropomorphism

A direct attribution of human qualities or cultural ideologies onto an object or, most commonly referred to from an ecocritical standpoint, an animal.



These images are representations of anthropomorphisms in the media. Tony the Tiger is a well-known mascot for Frosted Flakes, and he is only one of the many animal mascots attached to various brands, not to mention Charlie the Tuna and the Vlastic stork. The image of the lion with its paw over its face is used to represent shame and disappointment in the way humans have treated the wildlife environment. With the tagline “What on Earth are we doing to our planet?” the ad uses the photo of the lion, which very well may be sleepy, strategically to relate a sense of shame to people who see it. The third image is from a poster for *March of the Penguins* (2005). The image is clearly an anthropomorphic representation of the penguins because it is not an entirely truthful view of the parent and child, rather it represents the nurturing, and adorable, love between a mother and her child. The image represents this love and the human eye will commonly relate this image with matriarchal affection.



Anthropomorphism is a commonly used term in regards to ecocinema because many of the films concerned with the field deal with animals and the subjection of humanistic qualities thrust upon them when they are being filmed. This is a construction that comes equally from the editing room as it does from the camera lens capturing the animal/s. It is very common in animated films to have animals as main characters such as *Finding Nemo* (2003) and *A Bug's Life* (1998) which are anthropomorphic in their entirety. Anthropomorphisms are present in nature documentaries as well, which present animals in a way that relates their actions to human actions. They also come in the form of attributing western cultural ideologies to animals such as monogamy and patriarchy. There are many other interpretations of anthropomorphisms, but they most frequently refer to animals behaving like humans. The “human” aspect typically refers to western cultural and social ideologies and the Anglo-Saxon.



Nonhuman animals are referred to, in the most basic sense, keeping in mind that they are different than humans.

Nonhuman animals are represented by all animals outside humans. In the study of ecocinema, nonhuman animals are important to think about in terms of how they are anthropomorphized through film and advertisement. The term directly states the difference between humans and animals, which is important in thinking about the ways animals are represented in films.

Anthropocentric representations of animals are present not only in film, but in many media. Nonhuman animals are largely present in Disney animated features as well as those of Dreamworks Studios. It is present on television in the form of *Meerkat Manor* and such Disney Channel sights known as *Dog with a Blog*.

It is important to think about the representation of nonhuman animals as what they are: different from humans.

## Nonhuman Animals

Any animal other than a humans, used to reference and emphasize the difference between animals and humans in a text, or situation, which deals with humans and animals



The images presented here are meant to be representative of nonhuman animals in different forms of animals. They are seen in a Kodiak bear, a quetzal, a bat, and a koala, as well as an animated crocodile from Disney's *Peter Pan* (1953). I included the crocodile to give an example of nonhuman animals as they are represented in film and other media, which is in contrast to what the term "nonhuman animals" aims to define. The other images are meant to show platonic presentations of each respective animal. The pictures come from encyclopedic sources in order to attain a non-anthropomorphic representation of the animals. Yet, there are visages of a subtle smile to be seen in the images of the koala and the bear which may be an indicator that human eyes look for a form of relation when looking at animals.

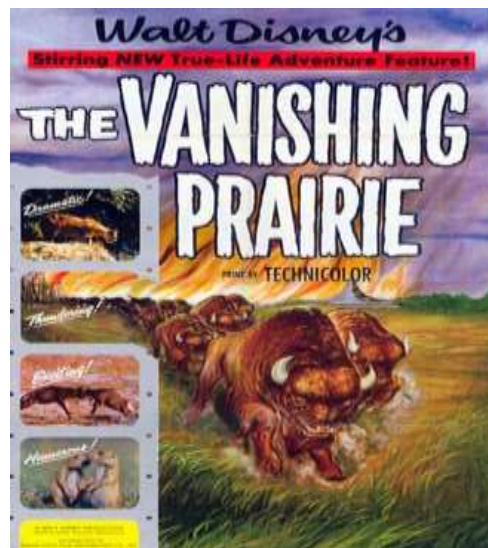


# Speciesist Camera

Similar to anthropomorphism, a concept that refers to the capturing of film through a lens representative of human eyes which project cultural ideologies and a sense of social sameness onto allegedly candid animals featured in wildlife films

The posters presented here are early examples of the speciesist camera. Disney's *True-Life Adventure Series* produced a number of nature films advertised as documentaries which were actually partly manipulated in terms of production, filming, and editing in order to achieve a certain view of the animals. The practice is used to capture a dramatic or enthralling scene of different animals which is used to create an image, a representation, of the animals onscreen. *The Vanishing Prairie* (1954) is exemplary of the speciesist camera even in its poster, labeling lemmings as "humorous", mountain lions as "dramatic", and big horn sheep as "exciting". There are many other examples of the speciesist camera even in contemporary film because there is a seemingly inherent detraction from nonhuman animals' differences from humans when they are on film.

The speciesist camera is a concept brought to life by Jennifer Ladino. The term refers to the non-truth resonating in the camera's lens in regards to the wildlife and nature films. Many of these films are acclaimed as documentaries which further distorts the reality of the natural environment and the behavior of animals. The speciesist camera assigns meaning to animal behavior, it ascribes humanistic qualities relevant in the cultural and ideological sense to animals and the natural environment. The result of the speciesist camera is ultimately negative as it is a process of distortion of reality which detracts from the truth of natural animal behavior. There is a blending of animal behavior and human behavior in wildlife films like *Madagascar* (2005) or *Mighty Joe Young* (1998). A direct result of the speciesist camera is a false understanding between humans and animals, which is interpreted through the representation of nonhuman animals with a mixture of natural animal behavior and an emphasis on qualities emulating human behavior.



# Zoomorphic Realism

A concept that refers to capturing animals, the environment, or wildlife in general on film in the most truthful sense, without any outside influence on its production or interpretation



The first image, pictured above, is a still from the film *Sweetgrass* (2009). It is taken from the opening of the film which leaves the camera to stare at the sheep until the sheep stares back. This representation of the innocent sheep is an important example of zoomorphic realism because there is no apparent outside influence on the sheep as the viewer is able to watch the sheep act as it would naturally, which presents truth to the events on screen. The other image is that of Timothy

Treadwell in front of a brown bear. *Grizzly Man* (2005) uses the documentary-like footage of Timothy Treadwell's summer expeditions to Alaska. The footage captured during those summers is some of the most zoomorphic realistic footage seen in popular wildlife film today.

Zoomorphic realism comes when a nonhuman animal, as well as the surrounding natural environment, is filmed in its most sincere and truthful setting, and Timothy Treadwell's mission was to live among the wild animals, to interact and become part of the wildlife himself, and, in doing so, Treadwell captured the environment with zoomorphic realism.



Zoomorphic realism is a budding concept in the budding field of ecocriticism. Zoomorphic realism is almost what I would consider the opposite of the speciesist camera because it is a concept intent on representing animals in their most true form. There is a necessary emphasis on the term "realism" due to the frequent consideration of anthropocentric qualities in ecocinema. The "zoomorphic" aspect specifically refers to animals in their true form which paves a path for an admonition from any misrepresentation of nonhuman animals. It is important to think about zoomorphic realism when watching any film involving nonhuman animals because of the amount of prominence of anthropomorphism in wildlife films. The One of them most zoomorphic realistic cameras could be that of Timothy Treadwell's. His footage of bears and foxes in Alaska truly captures candid footage of these nonhuman animals in their natural habitat as well as personal human interaction with the wild animals.

# Androcentrism

The practice of assigning the male point of view at the forefront when viewing a subject historically, culturally, socially, etc.



Androcentrism, while not entirely central to ecocinema and ecocriticism, is a concept critically important to the conception of meaning taken from film among other media. Due to historical dominance of males in society, there is an element of androcentrism present in many films. The androcentric qualities of a film come from the upholding of patriarchal ideologies which see the father as the head of the household, the most powerful. An example is that of *The Lion King* (1994) in which the kingdom of lions is ruled by dominant male figures. Androcentrism can also be found in wildlife films which ascribe western ideologies, typically with an androcentric foundation, onto nonhuman animals through anthropomorphism. Many films hold androcentric qualities, but in regards to ecocinema it is important to note that many anthropomorphisms also have androcentric influences.

Androcentrism, as I would like to relate it to ecocinema, is present in many films in their representation of animals. *The Lion King* (1994) is an example of an androcentric society inhabited by nonhuman animals. The majority of the film centers on the hierarchy of African animals which assemble themselves in a kingdom-like society. The conflict between Mufasa and Scar represents the desire to have power, which is something only male animals are able to attain in the film, which further points to the androcentric qualities in *The Lion King* despite it being an animated film meant for children audiences. The image to the right is a still from *Meerkat Manor*, a show that exemplifies androcentric behavior in relation to nonhuman animal family practices. The show is not entirely representative of androcentrism because it aims to present the dynamic of meerkat families, but there remains androcentric qualities in its production and interpretation.



# Citations and Sources

## Page 1 – Ecocinema

### Source

Ingram, David. "The Aesthetics and Ethics of Eco-Film Criticism." *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.

### Other References

Seymour, N. "Ecocinema Theory and Practice." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*. 20.2 (2013): 447-448. Print.

Willoquet-Maricondi, Paula. *Framing the World: Explorations in Ecocriticism and Film*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010. Print.

## Page 2 – Anthropomorphism

### Source

Ladino, Jennifer. "Companion Species in Documentary Film." *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.

### Other References

Crist, Eileen. *Images of Animals: Anthropomorphism and Animal Mind*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999. Print.

Mitchell, Robert W, Nicholas S. Thompson, and H L. Miles. *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes, and Animals*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997. Print.

## Page 3 – Nonhuman Animals

### Source

Ladino, Jennifer. "Companion Species in Documentary Film." *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.

### Other References

Cavaleri, Paola. *The Animal Question: Why Nonhuman Animals Deserve Human Rights*. Oxford England: Oxford University Press, 2001. Print.

Pluhar, Evelyn B. *Beyond Prejudice: The Moral Significance of Human and Nonhuman Animals*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995. Print.

## Page 4 – Speciesist Camera

### Source

Ladino, Jennifer. "Companion Species in Documentary Film." *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.

### Other References

Dunayer, Joan. *Speciesism*. Derwood, Md: Ryce Pub, 2004. Print.\

Zamir, Tzachi. *Ethics and the Beast: A Speciesist Argument for Animal Liberation*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2007. Print.

## Page 5 – Zoomorphic Realism

### Source

Ladino, Jennifer. "Companion Species in Documentary Film." *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.

### Other References

Mitman, Gregg. *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Films*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999. Print.

Whitley, David S. *The Idea of Nature in Disney Animation*. Aldershot: VT, 2008. Print.

## Page 6 – Androcentrism

### Source

Ladino, Jennifer. "Companion Species in Documentary Film." *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.

### Other References

Meriläinen, Susan, Johanna Moisander, and Sinikka Pesonen. "The Masculine Mindset of Environmental Management and Green Marketing." *Business Strategy and the Environment*. 9.3 (2000): 151-162. Print.

Milstein, Tema, and Elizabeth Dickinson. "Gynocentric Greenwashing: the Discursive Gendering of Nature." *Communication, Culture & Critique*. 5.4 (2012): 510-532. Print.