

Institutionen för didaktik och pedagogisk profession

# Toward an Animal Standpoint in School?

Critical Animal Pedagogy as Sustainability  
Education

av

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AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

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## Abstract

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The overall aim of this thesis is to explore how critical animal pedagogy (CAP) can contribute to environmental and sustainability education (ESE) by addressing, challenging, and transforming current exploitative human-animal relations and their social, ethical, and environmental ramifications. It explores questions critical to subject matter education and contributes to ongoing debates regarding how nonhuman animals and human-animal relations can be introduced and addressed in ESE. It does so by exploring the potential of CAP to address, disturb, and disrupt exploitative human-animal relations and enable a re-consideration of how to live together with other species.

In this feminist activist ethnography, teachers, students, animal rights activists, and scholars together discuss, develop, and introduce CAP in Years 1-3 in two Swedish upper secondary schools. Theoretically, the thesis draws upon critical animal studies and its subfield CAP. More specifically animal-standpoint theory is read with and through feminist affect theory, feminist philosophy, educational philosophy, and poststructuralist theory and pedagogy. Starting from this theoretical framework, the thesis is concerned with the didactical conditions upper secondary education provides for working with CAP and how this context, particularly in ESE teaching, informs and possibly transforms what CAP is and can achieve. It explores the (im)possibility for nonhuman animals to emerge and be responded to as subjects and what human-animal relations are enabled or disabled.

The importance of creating space for taking an animal standpoint in ESE is emphasized and the risks of reproducing speciesism and anthropocentrism if such a standpoint cannot be taken addressed. The thesis acknowledges the potential in engaging with animal rights material, learning more about other species, and asking students to start from the perspective of nonhuman animals. The thesis shows how CAP can contribute to ESE by increasing student engagement and enabling critical reflections through engaging with interspecies sustainability. Insights from the thesis, moreover, questions a sharp division between normative and pluralistic approaches to ESE.