

THE HUMANITY OF WILDERNESS PHOTOGRAPHY?

Adrian Franklin

School of Sociology and Social Work, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia

Abstract

This paper begins by considering which humans are enrolled into wilderness through wilderness photography, and which ones are not. While ostensibly attempting to capture wilderness as a primordial space and pure nature, beyond and ideally excluding humanity, these photographs betray the human presence of the photographer as well as that of those whose desire it is to stand in their shoes; to enjoy their exclusive access to an (ideally) empty landscape. The demography of this humanity, the so-called humanitarian professional elite, is interesting. Members of this demographic are tourists in the wilderness, and the construction of wilderness as a type of place and a form of politics has a genealogy which includes leisurely access to, and seeking order for, an empty landscape free from the 'impact' of humans—themselves excepted. Although their concern for nature is heartfelt and born of close association with it, comparisons can be made with other elites whose social identity is framed in part through exclusive access to emptied landscapes. This paper suggests there are problems with the wilderness concept, not least the way it has overshadowed other natures.

What is it you see when you look at wilderness photography? Is it pristine nature that you think you see? Is it an authentic (or proper) ecosystem or ecology that you have in view, or in your mind's eye? Is it an empty landscape that you value when you appreciate wilderness photography? And does 'empty' mean empty of humanity? A land uninhabited by humans, where nature is left alone to be as it should be? Is the content of the photo *real*, an expression of nothing less than the way the world really is? Was the world really like this when the photo was taken? Or is all of this merely the rhetoric of the photo; that which makes the photograph acceptable as a representational space for wilderness? And if this is so, what is being represented and to whom? To whom is it meaningful and acceptable? What *is* the humanity of wilderness? Rather than representing pure nature and empty landscapes, the wilderness photo is full of stories—and most of them are about humans as much as they are about non-humans.

You see, the wilderness photograph relies a great deal on the viewer's belief in wilderness as an idea, and rather less on their reflexive understanding of their relation to it. At the same time as this human-less space interpellates them, that is to say, speaks to or hails them in ways that are already meaningful to them, offering them a sense of belonging or shelter in it, it also requires them to suspend their disbelief. Because of course what they are viewing is not an empty landscape. It is not human-less.

First of all, we suspend our disbelief because a rather important human figure is right there, close enough to touch. Can you see her? No? Well then, can you sense her? No? Well then, can you deduce her? Yes, of course—the photographer is right there, behind you. And did you think she could lug all of that heavy expensive equipment up there, all by herself? And would she have been so reckless to venture up there by herself, even if she could? No, the little expedition behind you consists of what? Two, three, possibly four fit (you have to be fit and active) people? Maybe there is coffee being brewed, maybe I can smell meths; coffee; is that chocolate? What's that? Whisky! Fantastic. Now there's laughter echoing about; now

that currawong on the tree stump begins thinking of a free Tim Tam, his absolute favourite. And he knows, he's tried them all.

Then, how did the photo party get there? Do we really believe they hacked their way through a pristine Tasmanian landscape? Of course not, their four-wheel drive is parked maybe ten or thirty kilometres away. That took the sting out of a lot of the journey. But again, hidden from view (and by hidden I mean *obscured*) is the track or path that leads to the place where the shot was taken. Is that a footprint, a boot print we can see etched into that delicate vegetation, off to the side of the track where it becomes puddle? Actually, come to think of it, there are rather a lot of boot prints and they look recent, too. What is the story of those tracks and track-making? Were some of those Aboriginal tracks? Were they game trails at any time? Or did the photographer break the rules of wilderness and go *off-track*? Would she? If so, what sort of damage was done, how sullied was the wilderness now that the wilful human was unleashed?

Well, maybe I am being too precious with the wilderness idea; maybe good people such as the photographer can't do too much harm after all. It will still be wilderness after they leave, surely? Our appreciation of and desire for wilderness photography is sustainable, isn't it? I mean, it's not like pornography; there are no victims, no lasting damage. Surely?

Well, yes and no. Because now I have to deal with you, the viewer. I have dealt with all the ways in which you suspended your disbelief in order to consume the photograph as wilderness, as a landscape empty of anyone but you. But now we have to deal with the way you have been interpellated by the photograph. The desire for the photograph doesn't end there, with just photography. Do you say to yourself, *it's good that I can see wilderness on paper because that means I don't have to go there and spoil it by my human (spoiling) presence*? Photography *could* after all become virtual presence or dwelling. Are you a member of the Wilderness Abstention Group? No, I don't think you would be, and to my knowledge you can't be. No, if anything, you think *I can't wait to be there myself*. Maybe next weekend, if the weather's good. Or maybe on the next holidays, with your friends. You simply must see those autumn leaves up there one day. Wilderness photography interpellates a humanity of visitors, a flow of pilgrims, those who kneel at the altar of nature. According to Tranter, 'a typical environmentalist tends not to identify with a religious denomination' but 'may believe that nature is sacred in its own right' (1996, p. 77).

Because the truth is, wilderness photography interpellates you as someone who wants to be in the wilderness, to experience true nature, to benefit from the cathedrals of nature. While wilderness environmentalisms argue that such areas are to be protected from humanity, even from visitor impacts, you don't think this applies to you necessarily, but to others. Especially crowds and tourists and other non-believers.

Wilderness photography sets up the desire to be alone in the wilderness, to have it to yourself or your party. More than that, the humanity of wilderness photography is a *specially equipped* humanity. It has such things as specialised cameras and it names photography among lists of other approved leisures. It has specialised knowledge that equips it to know about fauna and flora, ecosystems, plant successions, geomorphology, survival techniques (how to cross raging torrents; how to navigate; bush foods). Maybe some of this humanity has satellite navigation aids. In this sense, wilderness humanity is every bit the equivalent of nineteenth-century romantic humanity who, in order to properly appreciate the natural sublime, must be adequately *prepared*; trained in the skills of imagination, creating the

romantic representation from rocks, crags and mists. And in this sense it also sets the enrolment criteria for the community of wilderness: just as Wordsworth objected to uneducated tour parties from the mills; so wilderness also excludes, perhaps unwittingly, as much as it includes. Griffiths (2001) shows how the emergence of biosciences such as ecology marginalised the cultural and literary dimensions of 'natural history' in the nineteenth century. The role of the natural historian as 'popularisers of nature' has been inherited by environmentalists, who favour biocentric discourses to the detriment of cultural/historical perceptions of humanised landscapes.¹ But the wilderness photograph remains caught between the two discourses: it belongs to (and originates from) the technology of popularised nature, yet it (now) promotes the biocentric model. How can it reconcile this tension? One solution is via exclusivity; through continuing to privilege an exclusive club of insiders. Exclusive clubs have dress codes, but surely not the humanity of wilderness?

Well, it is a well-clothed humanity, ready for wilderness conditions, and therefore an expensively-clothed humanity with expensive sophisticated tents, sleeping bags, packs, boots (as well as all of the gadgets and trinkets—a consumerism that dare not speak its name—under the Paddy Pallin counter). It is an exclusivity marked by technologies of lightness, water repellence and warmth. Sociologists have observed closely how fashions and clothes of distinction allow bush walkers to recognise their own and render outsiders conspicuous. It can work the other way, as anyone overdoing the badges of wilderness may occasionally find in too-hasty a whistlestop in Queenstown, Tasmania. Macnaghten and Urry (1998) cite an ethnographic study of walking in the British Lake District by Chapman (1993). Inattentive walkers may occasionally walk out of the Lake District and into one of the fringe working-class towns; ethnic dissonance results.

Chapman describes walking into one of these towns, Cleaton Moor, wearing clothing appropriate for walking in the Lake District; that is, breeches, boots, brightly-coloured socks, orange waterproofs and a rucksack. He had literally walked out of the Lake District and its particular sense of place and of its appropriate spatial practice, namely, leisurely walking, into a place where his clothing would be regarded as fancy dress. Instead of feeling intrepid, as one is permitted to do on descending a modest Lakeland mountain into Ambleside or Keswick, he felt acutely out of place. The Lake District is:

The locus classicus of high-minded and privileged leisure, wealthy, rural and beautiful, a national playground for the healthy and thoughtful, with stone built hotels in parks of rhododendron. West Cumbria and Cleaton Moor particularly, represents a desolate and unregarded landscape of industry declining, industry departed and unemployment (Chapman 1993, pp. 205–6, cited in Macnaghten and Urry 1998, pp. 203–4).

Is the Tasmanian wilderness to the Lake District as Queenstown is to Cleaton Moor? Surely the humanity of Australian wilderness is no such elite? After all, was it not true that at founding moments, in some of the defining campaigns at Pedder and the Franklin River, there was a popular groundswell underpinning its success? And we all remember that the environment has become the political mainstream, or even zeitgeist. A 1997 Day Poll for the *Weekend Australian* found that 79% agreed with the statement: 'Australians are concerned with the environment' (see Patmore 2000, p. 246). Political issues ebb and flow but maybe it takes more than rising political tides to enrol newcomers into the humanity of wilderness. Maybe they are already constituted as a class fraction, and wilderness is an expression of an

already constituted sensibility. Certainly, as Flanagan (1990, p. 204) showed, in urgent moments such as the last-ditch fight to save Lake Pedder in 1972, campaign photography for the United Tasmania Group was socially more inclusive: 'bush walking snap shots jostle with modernist, abstract and romantic images. In contrast by the late 1970s TWS [Tasmanian Wilderness Society] was using only one style of imagery: the high Romantic'. Once the Wilderness Society was more entrenched and the Greens established the photographic appeal for a popular social base for wilderness was modified in favour of a stricter biocentric, need-to-be-there model. Hay (1993, p. 163) claimed that the environment movement was not, as was often claimed, an agenda to preserve wilderness for a social (bushwalking) elite but to 'minimising human presence—so that other species may enjoy their own evolutionary space.'² But minimising involves selection, and making policies that restrict significant penetration of wilderness to anyone other than fit bushwalkers and their necessarily expensive and educated middle-class-referenced clothing really amounts to the same thing.

So who was to be tolerated in the wilderness, or who by default already belonged? Can we get any closer to being able to define the humanity of wilderness?

Actually, the demography of wilderness is not as easy to find as you would think. The bushwalking, Green-voting social profile is in just a bare handful of theses and reports. Patmore described them as humanistic professionals—tertiary-educated, urban, relatively affluent and employed in those parts of the public sector not engaged in the provision of the production infrastructure.³ They are clearly a political and cultural minority, since their values are out of kilter with both the working class and the commercial middle class. Tranter found that those with a tertiary degree are more than twice as likely to join an environmental group, but those with higher degrees dominate memberships. 'An ideal typical environmental group member is a woman who holds a university degree, who is employed in a social and cultural profession, is non-religious, a postmaterialist, [and] politically left-wing' (Tranter 1996, p. 177). A good illustration of wilderness culture emerged from the Denison electorate during the 1992 House of Assembly elections. The Greens polled 46.25% of the primary vote at the Ferntree booth. Ferntree has the highest level of tertiary-educated (34.8%), government-employed residents in community service areas in Tasmania and compares with the working-class district of Elwick, which gave the Greens only 8.47% of their vote, and lower Sandy Bay, which gave the Greens only 16% of their vote.

We can also see from participation rates in sports and physical activities that bushwalkers represent a very small minority of Australians. An ABS study in 2000 showed that a mere 3.2% of Australians had bushwalked in the previous 12 months, as compared with 11% who had participated in aerobics or fitness and 25.3% who had walked for exercise. Three times as many Australians had played tennis and there were almost 200,000 more runners than bushwalkers (ABS 2000, pp. 3–10). A 2001 study of walking trails in Victoria found that 'remote and self-reliant trails are provided in a diverse range of settings but because these experiences are limited to those with skill, experience, and equipment they can often be overlooked and undervalued' (Parks Victoria 2001, p. 34). The report is peppered with statements calling for greater equity and access to walking trails.

Although these data are illuminating, the most fruitful source of information on the cultural networks of wilderness is contained in stories of the environmental movement itself. These stories begin and end with bushwalking.⁴ They make it reasonably clear that the wilderness aesthetic and movement originated, in its specifically Australian manifestation, from bushwalking, and not the other way around. Ironically then, bushwalking began from a will

to be in the wilderness landscape and from a developing sense that the wilderness was an important and beneficial experience for (some) humans. Once clubs were established in most States it was not long before favourite walks were under threat of logging or development of some kind. And owing to the sorts of people enrolled into these clubs, frequently from the educated governing classes of their State, they were able to lobby government from positions of privilege and establish campaigns. The bushwalking clubs were universally, it seems, a home for the few voices of scientific expertise relating to the value and significance of wilderness—and in the early twentieth century, such voices commanded great respect and authority.

While the outdoors movement had begun much earlier and was spurred by a generalised love affair with colonial-adventurist daring-do, the first bushwalking club of a kind we would recognise today began in 1914. Under the legendary leadership of Myles Dunphy, the small and exclusive all-male Mountain Trails Club in Sydney not only blazed a trail through more and more areas of bush, they shaped the very culture of bushwalking as a way of life. They innovated clothing, footwear (and footwear for their dogs), bush prams for their children, the first packs developed for Australian conditions and the first commercial outfitters, such as Paddy Pallin. They also engaged in ‘place-making’: literally naming new areas, locations and landmarks; making fine maps, and showing how to access more areas of bush and wilderness. The MTS was an exclusive and solidly professional male cult—referring to themselves, for example, as the bush brotherhood (Hutton & Connors 1999, p. 65). Bushwalkers ‘produced nothing to profit Government’ wrote Dunphy, ‘except a kind of sane citizenship in the Australian democracy’ (loc cit).

Bushwalkers were equipped somewhat differently then. Hunting dogs and firearms were not unusual accessories, since bushcraft at that time involved living off the land for the duration of a walk as well as making useful things for that temporary lifestyle. As the bushwalking craze spread across Australia it gathered together a bundle of distinguishing characteristics. Bushwalking clubs were university-focused circles; members were young; they became entwined in preservation politics; they were amateur naturalists; they included both arts and science circles; and they were relatively affluent—although that did not run to car ownership.

One important but relatively obscure reason why wilderness is important in Australia is not because there are no other places of great natural beauty, but because those areas are in private ownership and largely out of bounds. Because Australian land was parcelled up according to an aristocracy model of land ownership, rights of way were not built into landholdings nor created between them or along waterways. Compared to rights of way enjoyed in Britain and Scandinavia, for example, Australia and New Zealand have very little. In order to get out into the country, Australians have to travel very considerable distances to the national parks. And the first national parks were created in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and during the twentieth century, and it was the railways that developed them by building lines into them and scheduling trains for weekend and holiday periods. Ironically, the entire bushwalking enterprise was initially fuelled and underwritten by the railway companies.

In order to create a wilderness aesthetic and a market for a travelling public, the railway companies employed the new advances in photography and before long, the Edwardian city was covered in photographic posters of wondrous and exotic spaces now within reach of the city dweller. There was quite a craze for it. The crowds filling trains from Melbourne and Sydney, wilderness-bound, concentrated minds in Hobart—particularly that of the Director of

the Government Tourist Bureau, who also held responsibilities for the railways. He supported the newly-founded Hobart Walking Club (established in 1929) and also commissioned photographic expeditions into wilderness areas to attract more tourists, hold them longer, and wow them with ever more superlative wilderness country. Victoria became envious and the photographer John Watt Beattie (1859–1930) became famous.

But while the railway day trippers walked the sanitised walks, it was only the elite few who followed the commissioned photographer deep into the inner wilderness sanctums or who, in the footsteps of the Mountain Trails Club, created new tracks and places to be in. But we know from their records and writings that it was to have such places to themselves, to experience pristine nature and empty landscapes, solitude itself, that they went bushwalking and maintained bushwalking as an elite cult.

Of course, others have pointed out the essential folly of wilderness as a colonial fantasy. These are not pristine natures and ecosystems free to pursue their evolution without interference from humanity. These natures evolved through the omnipresent hand of humanity. Aboriginal fire technology has had a profound effect both on the nature of nature and the sort of natural communities and successions that co-evolved alongside humanity. These are cleared lands, ethnically-cleansed lands, and it is little wonder that Aboriginal people object to the concept of wilderness. They have an alternative natureculture called country. They are just as keen to keep the land in a sustainable state but their natureculture is based on the idea that humanity belongs in nature, and that humanity has a duty to maintain it. For Aboriginal people, wilderness makes no sense at all. But does it really make sense to the rest of us?

Wilderness and the bioscientific language of ecology are coming under intense scrutiny, and not only by those with vested interests to undermine it. Theoretically it is questionable. Donna Haraway would say that wilderness and ecosystem might be acceptable as abstractions, devices to simplify what happens in the world in order to make apprehensions about it. But it is to commit the mistake of misplaced concreteness to then say that these abstractions are the way the world really is—and worse, ought to be⁵. To say, for example, that delicate and fragile ecosystems are to be protected from humans because humans are not natural to them, or that humans will inevitably destroy them, or that they should stay as they are, seems to me to say more than science properly allows. At the very least, wilderness is a questionably conservative concept not only because it wrongly identifies a land beyond humanity, but also because it seems to suggest a rather static, unchanging nature. Evolution is a becoming-something-else; things rarely stay the same for very long. Relationships always lead to new prehensions, new possibilities. Moreover, it is not clear why the humanity of wilderness is a better model of conservation than others; say of country, or countryside.

In his book *The New Nature* Tim Low puts the boot into wilderness. He suggests that wilderness should be abandoned as an idea and concept whose time is past. It was born from the romantic and religious currents in post-frontier America, largely among a growing urban elite for whom nature was a secular temple and Muse. Before wilderness caught on globally in the 1970s those areas lobbied for by Myles Dunphy were christened after the American idea of ‘primitive areas’. Primitive, primal areas suggested a dubious fantasy, of a place prior to humanity; a wilful writing out of history and natural history of an important biological and cultural fact. Naturally these fantasies were provoked by idiotic, thoughtless development programs for the primitive areas but they needed a realist term and an ecological definition. The word ‘wilderness’ was first pronounced for Australia by Paul Smith in 1977, quoting

from the US Wilderness Act. He later told Roger Green ‘the word doesn’t, of itself, mean anything. What’s important is that there are areas of physical inheritance, our natural heritage, which have special features about them and which, if possible should be preserved’ (Low 2002, p. 40). The word proved a robust winner in the economy of social movements and anti-modernism; an appropriate object for postmaterialism. It spawned charismatic leaders and a quasi-religious sub-culture. As Low says, wilderness once a Christian temple became a New Age shrine. But Low points out how wilderness came to stand for nature itself; how saving wilderness came to mean saving wildlife whereas it ‘is not an ecological term’ (Low 2002, p. 41). Indeed, ‘[t]he Wilderness Society first defined it as a large stretch of natural country ‘where one can stand with the senses entirely steeped in nature and free from the distractions of modern technology’ (loc cit). No mention here of ecosystems or species.

Paul Smith’s essay stressed freedom and challenge, not biodiversity. Wilderness like the ‘primitive area’ was invented for people to enjoy. It was grounded in a selfish idea (loc. cit.).

Low’s strongest criticism is levelled at the rhetoric of wilderness, especially its alleged biological realism. He argues that while vast tracts of preserved land saves species, often the most endangered, those most in need are often missed because they live elsewhere. He questions the rhetoric of biodiversity, arguing that the wilderness areas are often relatively poor in biodiversity terms: his backyard and his local creek have more species of reptiles and rainforest species, respectively, than the Tasmanian wilderness Mecca in the south-west where ‘the diversity of mammals, birds, reptiles, frogs, fish and plants is low’ (loc cit). Some of Tasmania’s most endangered plants are native grassland remnants in the midlands, surrounded by sheep paddocks—driven past by all on their way to the proper nature of wilderness.

So Low wonders why we have put all our eggs into one basket, swallowing the rhetoric ‘that nature has to be big and remote and pristine to count’ (p. 42). He suggests that we can learn lessons from those countries that do not have wilderness but who nonetheless have strong conservation records and technologies. The English, for example, have done a lot to preserve the ancient natureculture of hedgerows, once home to wolves. Low is especially scathing of the biological veracity of wilderness in Australia in the face of relationships with Aboriginal peoples and the termination of their land of fire technology.

But to suddenly (in evolutionary terms) set land aside and enshrine it in statutes to leave as is, is not to leave it alone at all. Doing nothing in the complex natural world of nature is a powerful management tool, and massive repercussions follow. To use changes in fire management as an example, Low says that in three major wilderness areas—south-west Tasmania, the Wet Tropics of Queensland and Cape York Peninsula—fire-sensitive plants are now ousting endangered animals (p. 43). Expanding rainforests in the Wet Tropics have now swallowed up half the wet sclerophyll, killing off thousands of ancient eucalypts. Paperbarks have choked the plains on which the golden-shouldered parrots feed; ‘orange-bellied parrots are losing sway to invading rainforest’.

Tasmania’s south-west wilderness has a fire officer, Jon Marsden-Smedley, whose job is not so much to put fires out as to get them going. Burning wilderness is his job—although he for one scorns the very idea of wilderness (loc cit).

So wilderness is a paradox, not merely because it is set aside from humans such that only some humans can consume it appropriately, but because without human management it would be destroyed. Low cites the American wilderness biologist David Cole, who says that management regimes mean that 'all wilderness ecosystems would be artificial constructs to some extent—conscious reconstructions of what humans think is natural' (p. 44). But it is not only what they think is natural. Fashions in nature mean that there is an aesthetic dimension to what is deemed properly natural at any one time. Whatever we say in Tasmania, for example, we are currently in the grip of the rainforest aesthetic. Far more tourist nature sites aim to showcase rainforest than dry sclerophyll. We are also in the grip of an aesthetic for montane natures over the natures of plains. And here photography plays its role in the secret life of wilderness humanity.

Wilderness in Australia and New Zealand is also paradoxical in that by setting it up as the true nature, and less overtly as the prime natural aesthetic, we burden and pressurise it with unnecessary attention and traffic. Although we do not want to open it up to popular visitation, and building roads is anathema (though to my mind elitist and undemocratic and unscientifically supported), we nonetheless place an enormous price on its head by allowing it to stand alone as a place to cherish and a shrine to visit.

I want to finish on a positive note by suggesting that we can at least consider how other countries have managed their natural areas; to see whether wilderness is the only path to take. I take it as given that the Aboriginal notion of country will eventually take a hold in Australia, but then again, the British and Norwegian examples I will use are curiously similar to country.

It seems to me that wilderness only takes on so much meaning for us because we have inadvertently disenfranchised ourselves from access to other natures on private lands through poor land subdivision strategies and statutes that give exclusive access to an over-privileged landowning class. We may ask permission to enter private land, but mostly we don't—and if my experience is anything to go by in trying to access fly-fishing, the landowners often say no anyway. Between the city and the wilderness area are universes of natures of all kinds that are deserving of our conservational support and our attention as nature lovers; as Australians interested in the future of our natures.

The British do not have wilderness, but they do have over 126,000 miles of footpaths and rights of way that cut through and between privately-owned lands and State-owned lands. Add these to the tens of thousands of country lanes that link them up, and the little UK becomes Tardis-like. It has a massive surface of natureculture. Millions of walkers access some very stunning and ancient country every weekend (18 million in an average summer) and because there is so much, one hardly notices wear and tear. I did a rough and ready calculation and realised that most walkers were out of sight of other walkers by approximately at least a kilometre. Most rivers are also rights of way, with long-established paths on both sides that may not be privately owned in most places. These rights of way are ancient, but in truth they are only another legal/physical/managerial construct and can be instituted anywhere there is a will to do so. A mammoth task, but worth it. New Zealand has started it, and it is one of the reasons why that nation's freshwater fishing industry booms while ours is by comparison lame.

In Norway a more radical idea persists, *Allemansret* or ‘everyman’s rights’. Although the exact details of the rights are more complex, one may find them summarised on the Internet, usually on web pages intended for visitors and tourists:

The “Everyman’s Rights” gives a lot of freedom—and at the same time the responsibility for protecting the land and environment also when it is someone else’s property.

... You may pass on foot through forests and across farms but not fields and not military areas. You may not pass fences unless there is a gate that is not locked. In forests you may pick flowers (except some protected species and locations), berries, mushrooms and fallen branches. You may not pass gardens, at least not where the house can be seen or when there is a fence (even if it is open). You may not interfere with any economic activity exercised by the owner of the land. You may stay one night in a tent in an inconspicuous place (not garden) if you don’t leave a single trace. You may not use houses, jetties, sheds etc.

You may not, you may absolutely not, make up fire directly on cliffs or move rocks around, specifically not the rocks that have been placed there by an ancient culture, nor hunt, nor steal eggs. These four latter activities seem to be favourites of our good friends the Germans. The main rule is that one can walk, ski or cycle everywhere as long as nothing is harmed and nobody disturbed. Then, there are refinements and exceptions to this, of course.

How close to houses can one dare to come? No definite rule exists, but in Sweden it’s often said that the privacy area around a dwelling is to be understood as at least 200 meters (in Norway 150 meters). This does of course depend on the landscape and other conditions. An alternative wording of the rule is that if you hear or see other people, then you are too close to them.

(<http://www.pinetreedevelopment.net/scandinavia/allemansratt.php>)

Everyone, including tourists, has rights of way over all land apart from military installations and airports. One may roam where one likes and camp where one likes, undisturbed. You may not camp within sight of someone’s home or pick their crops, but otherwise one has freedom to the entire country. New Labour under Blair looked closely at Norway and developed a Right to Roam policy for moorland and mountain areas, opening up most of the northern half of the UK.

Norway is also instructive on areas we would designate as wilderness areas. They do not see humans as a problem for these areas since they are the aboriginal people, a rather late-modernised people who until relatively recently lived a self-sufficient existence herding animals, growing grain and vegetables, and hunting and gathering. Forests across Scandinavia are extensive and in largely good condition; not because massive and expensive campaigns by city dwellers have enshrined them in protective statutes—*for the time being, until further notice*—but because old associations with living on/in them persisted with the move into modern cities. These days modern Norwegians spend as much time as possible in these areas, often based in their *hytta* (huts, but we would say shacks). Indeed, on those occasions when most modern cultures gather in their big cities, the Norwegians flock to the mountains (Hylland Eriksen 1996; 2001). Most people have *hytta*, many have part-shares in a large number of them, and they are everywhere.

Like Aborigines and their idea of country, Norwegians believe that humans belong to nature, and everything in Norway conspires to enable everyone to participate in the traditional biannual migrations. Summertime means berry-picking and fishing, the late-summer mushroom harvest, and hunting. Winter is for skiing, hunting, ice-fishing and trips to admire the forests in the brightly-lit snow. The *Nordmarka* is an upland forest area that comes down to the suburbs of Oslo just as Mount Wellington does to Hobart; but it is a peopled wilderness area where most species thrive and, importantly, where most are secure for the future. This is because the *Nordmarka* is owned and loved by the people who visit it, and everyone has access irrespective of their age, class, physique or ability. It is etched in their soul because they live there, because in Ingold's⁶ sense they *dwell* there, not because it is an idea currently in vogue.

Australians also have their shacks, but these are on restricted sites largely in those coastal areas where rights of way *were* protected, after a fashion. But there is no reason why the wilderness idea should not give rise to greater access and bonding in those areas, nor why more areas could be opened up to modest shack construction. However, the main point I wish to make is that the wilderness is not the only natureculture project open to us, even though it represents a fabulous start. If we truly care about our nature then we must establish greater access and multiple points of knowledge and entry. We don't have to walk down the same tracks or watch tracks become crowded. Let's spread out. There is a much richer nature out there for us to care about and see than is currently available, and in places like Tasmania it is a valuable resource. And we can, like our Norwegian and British colleagues, trust nature to more than just a subset of the 'right' people, schooled to appreciate nature in a specific way. The humanity of nature can tell many more stories, and take all kinds of photographs.

References

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2002). *Participation in Sport and Physical Activities*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Chapman, M. (1993). Copeland: Cumbria's best-kept secret. In Macdonald, S. (ed.), *Inside European Identities*. Oxford: Berg.
- Flanagan, R. (1990). 'Return the people's Pedder!' In Pybus, C. & Flanagan, R. (eds) *The Rest of the World is Watching*. Sydney: Pan MacMillan, pp. 194–212.
- Franklin, A. S. (2002). *Nature and Social Theory*. London: Sage.
- Hay, P. (1993). The environment movement and historical scholarship: patterns of interpenetration. *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings* 40(4), pp. 154-64.
- Hutton, D. & Connors, L. (1999). *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*. Oakleigh, VIC: Cambridge University Press
- Hylland Eriksen, T. (2001). *The Tyranny of the Moment*. London: Pluto Press.
- (1996). *Norwegians and Nature*. Article series, Summer 1996. Oslo: Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Low, T. (2002) *The New Nature*. Sydney: Viking.

Macnaghten, P. & Urry, J. (1998). *Contested Natures*. London: Sage.

Parks Victoria (2001). *Draft Victorian Trails Strategy*. Melbourne: Parks Victoria.

Pinetree Development (2005). Scandinavia Files: Allemansret /Allemansrätt (“Everyman’s right”). [WWW site, cited 23/3/05.] Available from Internet:
<<http://www.pinetreedevelopment.net/scandinavia/allemansratt.php>>.

Tranter, B. (1996). *The Social Bases of Environmentalism in Australia*. PhD Thesis. Department of Sociology, University of Tasmania.

Address for correspondence

Professor Adrian Franklin
Reader in Sociology
School of Sociology, Social Work and Tourism
University of Tasmania
Private Bag 17
Hobart TAS 7001
AUSTRALIA
Adrian.Franklin@utas.edu.au

¹ See Smith, N. (2000). *Nature, Native, Nation*. PhD Thesis, La Trobe University, p. 27.

² Cited in Patmore, P. (2000). *Postmaterialism and Party Change*. PhD Thesis, School of Government, University of Tasmania, p. 243.

³ *Ibid*, p. 244.

⁴ See Mulligan, M. & Hill, S. (2001). *Ecological Pioneers*. Oakleigh, VIC: Cambridge University Press; Hutton, D. & Connors, L. (1999). *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*. Oakleigh, VIC: Cambridge University Press; and Head, L. (2000). *Second Nature*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

⁴ See Haraway, D. (2003). *Companion Species Manifesto*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

⁶ Ingold, T. (2000). *The Perception of the Environment—Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge.