

Edge of the Wild workshops 2015

Joanna Callaghan and Branwen Lorigan

'A creative investigation of our complex and contradictory relationship with nature'

The objective of this workshop is to gain a deeper understanding of the variety, complexity and conflicted nature of our human response to the environment through working creatively with natural materials. Workshop participants will be invited to use local, wild, natural materials and the creative process to investigate their relationships with nature. Starting with a walk, participants will collect natural objects or ideas from the environment outside. We will offer a variety of ways to gather natural materials to use for the art making process without despoiling the locality.

Working creatively with these materials attendees will be enabled to make art objects either individually or collectively that express in some way their relationships with nature.

The workshop will finish with a group reflection and discussion around ideas that have been stimulated by the creative process and the finished art objects.

We all respond differently to nature and each of us has our own individual understanding of what nature means to us, based on our experiences, expectations and capabilities. Our society holds completely conflicting desires in relation to 'nature' - we want to keep it tidy, re-wild it, conserve it, develop it, control it, holiday in it and work it etc all at the same time.

As humans we now have more power to accomplish any of these desires than at any time before; whilst at the same time we have less connection with, and understanding of, nature than we have ever had.

***Joanna Callaghan** is both an artist and woodland manager based in Herefordshire. She organises and runs woodland wildlife educational events for the local community, traditional woodland craft courses and creative art and ecology courses in the woodland for adults and children. Prior to this she worked as an art psychotherapist with children and adults with mental health problems. She has also worked freelance as a researcher and conference chair. Her artwork has been exhibited at Clisset Wood, Herefordshire; The Gateway Arts Centre, Shrewsbury; Hatfield University, Hertfordshire; The Mill Arts Centre, Banbury; The Omega Centre, Rheinbeck, New York, USA; Time Square 'Envision' Film Festival, New York, USA*

***Branwen Lorigan** works with the creative and environmental industry sectors in Brighton & Hove on behalf of the city council to foster and grow collaborative, sustainable and innovative practice. She manages local and European CI and EI projects; and sits on local steering and working groups to ensure the creative and environmental industries have a voice and are connected to current and new initiatives. Prior to this, she worked in arts and education in New Zealand and England: as an art teacher, an art education manager and programmer for national visual arts organisations, the New Zealand Ministry of Education and a network of New Zealand tertiary visual art and design faculties.*

Kim Cavanagh
'Access to Nature'

This workshop will explore the issues around supporting access to nature and its therapeutic powers and offer my 20-year experience of taking a wide range of disadvantaged groups from a variety of cultural backgrounds into nature -- people who have little or no experience of nature at all.

As an example of the potential impact of getting away into neutral, natural territory I will show a 20 minute film I have made -- Fresh Horizons -- which evaluates a residential weekend designed to build positive relationships within foster families. The film offers a glimpse into the kind of atmosphere that can be created and range of creative activity that can be offered that allows people to relax and have fun, move out of their comfort zones, through a bit of chaos, to confront their vulnerability and their power.

The workshop offers the chance to discuss reflection, progression and evaluation. It will cover the joys and challenges involved in supporting people to build their own independent and sustainable relationship with nature and getting out there. Expanding and developing positive experiences will hopefully address the huge polarity of access to nature in modern-day Britain. Helping people to just experience the beauty of a woodland or where their food comes from, as well as the social and emotional effects of sharing a new environment or emotions with important others in their lives can assist people to take more control in the face of the contradictory messages in their lives and perhaps help them choreograph their own future in significant new ways.

Kim Cavanagh established Imayla in 2001 to support access to nature for struggling children, young people and families. A range of projects have since been designed for, for example, young people struggling with or excluded from school, teenage mums, refugees, CAMHS's family therapy projects and survivors of domestic violence (do see Examples of our Work). The Imayla team also train play/youth workers, social workers and teachers in taking groups away. Kim's previous career was in the media and this has inspired her to record people's experience first hand of the impacts these experiences have had on them and present them in an accessible way to inspire confidence in health and social care professionals to take people out of the confines of traditional learning and therapeutic environments.

<http://www.imayla.com/>

Salma Darling
'BeingNature Dance: Becoming Wildlife'

This is a Dance and mindfulness workshop starting indoors, ending outdoors. We will explore what it is to be an embodied being of this earth, using dance movement and mindfulness. We will awaken our vitality exploring the body structure and movement dynamics with free dance-movement, and fine tune our senses in silence, encountering the environment intimately, with heightened perception.

Acknowledging ourselves as part of nature and moving alone and in connection with others, we unfold familiar and unexpected movements, thoughts and feelings into the field of awareness. How do different elements that make us, feel and move? Simple choreographic guidelines will support us to connect with the landscape and our inner nature, offering chaotic arisings unique possibilities for exploration.

Wild terrain invites attentiveness, responsiveness and diverse movement qualities. With mindful presence in the landscape, we will awaken our creaturely senses and unleash the inner being by exploring polarities of movement and stillness, inner and outer, being and doing, fast and slow, earth and sky. What challenges in our responses to the world might be healed? What new possibilities and visions might be activated?

In paying sustained attention to fully being alive we notice confusing contradictions arising internally and externally. We want to care for the planet but not all our actions align. We want to feel loving and connected but experience separation or switch off from unpleasantness and subtlety, immersing in distractions. Chaos can emerge in tension between opposing contradictory forces of body, mind, heart. As we try to figure things out in our heads the inner critic, judgements and blame can arise.

The powerful combination of mindfulness, movement and nature can catalyse our earthy intelligence and kinder ways of relating; rebalancing mind-limitations and inviting a choreography of body, heart and mind, and inner experience and outer manifestation in the world. Explore the potential resource of mindfulness and movement in nature as contributions to ecopsychology.

Salma Darling is a mindfulness teacher, BeingNature Conscious dance facilitator and Dance Movement Psychotherapist. She has an MA in Art and the Environment that was spent dancing on Cornwall's beaches and has spent extended periods in meditation including 6 months of silent practice and 6 weeks sitting under a tree.

Lucy Ford

'Earth, power, knowledge: Exploring the politics of sustainability'

This workshop will start with an introductory overview of political thought and ideology in the context of sustainability and will then invite participants to work together on some of these questions. With all the combined brainpower in the marquee we are bound to come up with a few workable suggestions on how we might save a carrying capacity for life on Earth.

Politics is about power. It is the dynamic through which we humans choreograph our lives on Earth, our only home. Whether our collective lives are lived in harmony with Earth or in disharmony and chaos comes down to 'the political', which is a dynamic space of contestation, contradiction and polarity.

One of the key paradoxes in the current uneasy relationship many humans have with nature is the paradox that we fundamentally depend on nature and are fundamentally a part of it, and yet act as if we are separate. How do such beliefs become dominant? How are they perpetuated? Why?

One of the fundamental questions we as a species should perhaps be asking is 'How then should we live?' and yet this question is rarely seriously considered. Indeed, dominant ideologies perpetuate the belief that we can carry on 'our' modern, exploitative, unjust and unsustainable lifestyles in perpetuity. How do 'we' change? How do 'we' move towards sustainability, social and ecological justice? What are the impediments to and possibilities for emancipatory changes within planetary boundaries? And how do different ideologies see these?

Lucy Ford teaches World Politics at Oxford Brookes University, focusing on global environmental politics. Before becoming an academic she spent time working in green politics, including in the EU. She is passionate about studying and understanding the relationship between nature and society through the eyes of political thought. On a google odyssey a few years ago she stumbled across ecopsychology and realised that it chimes with her long standing interest of finding out how we can heal the self and the world and what the obstacles to that might be. Since then she has taken to studying more psychology and is interested in finding the synergies between politics and psychology.

Matthew Henson

'Spontaneous Process: More-than-human-and-human'

The themes of this gathering are choreography, chaos and contradiction. In this experiential workshop we will explore these themes in relation to the principle of non-duality as a process of being-with. In adopting the principle of non-duality, we will be challenging notions of humanity which are based on the perception of us as somehow separate and superior to the other-than-human world. We will use our bodies to focus on our physical connection to the Earth and through movement we will allow spontaneous processes to emerge. The underlying assumption to this workshop is that what emerges through this being-with process will not only be relevant in terms of our individual human stories, but will also speak of our empathic attunement to the other-than-human and more-than-human

It is the nature of spontaneous process to be spontaneous and we cannot know in advance what will emerge. Time will be given to reflection and sharing of the experience. This will include an exploration of what, if any, links can be made to the themes of choreography, chaos and contradiction.

Matthew Henson is an existential psychotherapist, currently living in Ireland and working at Cork Counselling Centre, a community-based service. He has been interested in ecopsychology for a number of years and is a graduate of Nick Totton's ecopsychology training, Wild Therapy. He is particularly interested in the application of existential-phenomenology within the context of ecopsychology.

Kamalamani

'Making our mark or throwing our weight around?'

How do we respond to the chaos and contradiction in the world around us? Do we face, deny, or avoid the chaos and contradiction within us? What are our 'autopilot' strategies?

In this workshop we shall take time to explore these questions, through movement work, pair work, solo and circle time. We will have the chance to notice in particular not only how we channel both our fallibility and potency as ecopsychologists (whether we're seasoned or newbie practitioners) but our balancing point between the polarities of being and doing, action and reflection, inner and outer work, and attending to self and other, human and other-than-human. I'll introduce the symbolism of the bodhisattva figure Green Tara and her relevance for this work.

Through pair and movement work we'll have space to see our 'working edges' in relationship with others engaging in their world work. Through solo time we'll have the chance to notice what happens to these working edges as they come into contact with the more-than-human and other-than-human species with whom we're sharing this space at Green and Away.

Throughout the time participants shall be invited to listen carefully to what their bodies want to do, how they're responding, having space to notice the polarities and paradoxes within us as we embody, moment by moment, and take action. We'll notice our potency when we are making our mark, and what happens when we're caught in chaos, throwing our weight around, seeing what's calling for our greater care and attention as we work to serve the earth.

Kamalamani is a Bristol-based Embodied-Relational therapist, Wild therapist, supervisor, facilitator, and writer. She's been a practising Buddhist since her early 20s and loves seeing how age-old teachings and practices are relevant to contemporary life. She works where body psychotherapy, ecopsychology and ecodharma meet, drawing upon her experiences of being a development worker in sub-Saharan Africa, a lecturer in International Development at the University of Bristol, her current meditation practice and being a child lost and found in nature. She is part of the Embodied-Relational therapy and Wild therapy training collective and is currently finishing her second book 'Other than Mother: Choosing Childlessness with Life in mind'

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Dave Key
'Let's just go for a walk'

The story of the Roseland Walks for Wellbeing project and the future of ecotherapy by referral in the UK.

The purpose of this session is to inspire and motivate anyone interested in starting a practical ecotherapy project. It is intended to encourage a spirit of adventure, moderated with a commitment to compassionate professional practice.

The NHS is in crisis. Diseases associated with contemporary lifestyles are at epidemic proportions. Diabetes, child and adult obesity, heart disease, cancer, anxiety, depression... the list goes on. At the heart of many of these issues are our increasingly sedentary lifestyles: that's the official line. Unofficially - but obvious to many ecopsychologists and ecotherapists - they are down to us forgetting our natural place: to our becoming alienated from the natural ground of our being.

This is a story of subversion. Of creating a simple, practical and obvious exercise programme for health and wellbeing. And for many that is as far as they want to look. But deeper down this programme is counter-cultural, pushing along the radical edges of psychology, designed to free people from the industrial trance that is destroying our lives.

It's like this: one human being asks another, with good intention and kindness in their heart, "lets just go for a walk." But deep within this simple invitation lies the potential for personal and planetary transformation...

Dave Key BA (Hons), CAT (NZ), MSc (Dist) FCHE

UKMT Summer & Winter Mountain Leader, NZOIA Alpine and Rock Instructor.

David Key is an outdoor educator and ecotherapist based in Cornwall, a small Celtic corner of the British Isles. He works mostly outdoors, taking people into wild places as a catalyst for personal and social change. He teaches and mentors internationally and has researched and published extensively about people's relationships with the rest of nature.

Dave is a fellow of the Centre for Human Ecology, on the editorial board of several international journals, Director of Natural Change Limited and a regular teacher at Schumacher College. He has also taught at the Universities of Edinburgh, Stirling, Strathclyde, Exeter, Plymouth, Bath and Anglia Ruskin. His latest project is 'Ecotherapy Kernow' a by-referral ecotherapy service in Cornwall.

Paul Maiteny

'Divining your Dance in the Ecosystem'

The development of this workshop will emerge from elements of contemplative 'reading of the book of nature' and divining it for personal and collective signs, sharing meanings and indications through creative dialogue, speaking.

We live in a Dance and the Dance Lives through us - one way... or another. The Earth must Dance. As Earth-members, we humans, persons and species - have a Basic Choice to make that will influence what sort of dance it will be - a Dance of rupture or a Dance of Life.

Mystical traditions (here we'll focus on western) have always had this vital choice at their heart. It is pivotal to ecosystemic functioning where humans are members, and to lasting human meaningfulness.

Please feel free to come to this workshop if any of this chimes with you, resonantly, dissonantly or even if not at all.

***Paul Maiteny** 'Two key questions have been with me since childhood in a holocaust survivor household: why are humans so cruel and destructive to each other and other species; and what might be our human role as members of the ecological web? They've informed my working life - in ecological education and management, university-based and independent research in eco-anthropology, organisational behaviour, and private practice in psychotherapy, ecological counselling and spiritual accompaniment. I also teach psychotherapy research methods, education for sustainability (since 1995) and transpersonal ecopsychology on Masters degrees. As species and persons, I see humans as having a hard-to-discern niche and role as members of an ecosystem that seems to be 'seeking' conscious harmony and self-expression. I integrate scientific and mytho-religious ways in hoping to contribute to this.'*

Hilary Prentice **'Indigenous Arising'**

Across the planet indigenous peoples are coming together, speaking out and organising as never before in defence of their lands, their cultures, and their wisdom teachings. These ancient teachings about how to live sustainably on the earth – with reverence, with gratitude, in the profound knowledge that all of life is connected, that we are not separate – are increasingly being offered to the non-indigenous world as essential medicine for our ever more dangerous predicament.

My journey through Ecopsychology has become a deepening recognition that the wisdom we seek is to be found in indigenous teachings and practices, and that the best of our practices, from vision quests and solos to sharing round fires to sitting in ceremony and early morning dream-sharing – we owe to our indigenous teachers. In this workshop we will, I hope; take time to name and honour together where and how we have been touched by ancient wisdom; take time to feel, and to enquire into our experience of ‘indigenous’ self and ‘modern’ self and how they relate; and finally to sit together in a simple brief ceremony for the coming into balance of these two selves, in ourselves and across our world.

Hilary Prentice is an integrative psychotherapist, living and working on Dartmoor for the last 15 years. I have been involved in Ecopsychology since the early 1990s, co-founding the early UK Ecopsychology Network with Tania Dolley, writing, organising, facilitating and speaking. More recently I co-founded 'Inner Transition', the inner dimension of the Transition Movement. Recent journeyings with indigenous wisdom range from travelling to Ecuador last year with the Pachamama Alliance to meet with the indigenous founders (Achuar and also Sarayaku Kichwa) of that now world-wide alliance, to learning from Chief Phil Lane and others, founder of the equally extraordinary Four Worlds International Institute; Tata Alexandra (Wandering Wolf) the Guatemalan Elder and International Spiritual Teacher; last year's World Indigenous Summit; The Sacred Fire Community (drawing on Huichol and Nahuatl wisdom from Mexico); The International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers; Martin Prechtel, Malidoma Some, (West Africa), Arkan Lushwala (Peru/Lakota) and Australian aboriginal elder Bill Neighy.

Peter Reason
'Nature writing as Freefall'

Can we write creatively to express our experience of paradox and polarity?

This workshop will introduce the principles of Freefall Writing, or 'writing without a parachute'. Freefall shows how to get the thinking mind to step aside, so that writing becomes a truly vulnerable and open-hearted engagement with the moment.

We will use writing exercises, discussion and readings through the workshop, which is suitable for beginners and experienced writers.

'Taking Freefall writing further'

A follow-up in the Open Space will be offered for those who have joined the first workshop and would like to explore further. Using the same principles of Freefall writing we will work outside to respond to images of choreography, chaos and contradiction that we can find around the camp.

Please bring a notebook and pen or pencil to the workshops, and for the second workshop appropriate clothes for working outdoors

Turner-Vesselage, Barbara. *Writing without a Parachute: The Art of Freefall*. Bristol: Vala, 2013.

Peter Reason is a writer, focusing in particular on nature writing for an ecology in crisis. His award-winning book Spindrift: A wilderness pilgrimage at sea (Vala Publishing Cooperative, 2014) weaves an exploration of the human place in the ecology of the planet into the story of a sailing voyage. Prior to his retirement from academia, he made major contributions to the theory and practice of action research in writing, teaching and research in the field of sustainability. He is Professor Emeritus at the University of Bath and blogs at onthewesternedge.wordpress.com

Chris Robertson
'The Trauma of Alienation and Ecocide'

'Our present system, based on plundering of the Earth's resources, is certainly at an end. It cannot continue. The industrial world on a global scale, as it functions presently, can be considered definitively bankrupt... the larger movement is toward dissolution.' Thomas Berry

'The secret is that only that which can destroy itself is truly alive.' C J Jung

This workshop is an exploration of destructiveness: both how our disowned destructive emotions get projected outwards and how the collective trauma of becoming separated, losing a natural connectedness as a species, leaves us alone and terrifyingly vulnerable. This can trigger a sadistic attack to defend against the threat of perceived destruction.

The short time we have for this workshop may mirror the short time we have as a species to acknowledge our envy and destructiveness and whether reparation is possible.

*Chris Robertson has been a psychotherapist and trainer since 1978. He is a co-founder of Re•Vision (www.re-vision.org.uk), a psychotherapy training centre which has offered ecopsychology courses since 2010. He contributed the chapter "Dangerous Margins" to the ecopsychology anthology *Vital Signs* (Karnac, 2012) and the article 'Wilding Ecopsychology' to *Psychotherapy and Politics International* (Feb 2013). He is on the steering group of the Climate Psychology Alliance.*

Arran Stibbe

'Ecology and the stories we live by'

In this follow-up session to last year's keynote talk, Arran Stibbe will explore how the increasing destruction of the ecosystems that support life is bringing into question some of the fundamental stories that we live by: stories of progress, unending economic growth, consumerism and separation from nature. He will explore how recent developments in linguistics and cognitive science offer tools for questioning the stories we live by, and searching for new ones that work better in the conditions of the world that we face. The workshop will build from last year's session and consider further types of story (including metaphor and erasure), with interaction and practical examples from economics, advertising, Japanese haiku, and nature writing. The aim is to develop awareness of how language shapes our view of the world, enabling more conscious use of language to reshape the world.

Arran Stibbe is a reader in Ecological Linguistics at the University of Gloucestershire, author of 'Ecolinguistics: language, ecology and the stories we live by' (Routledge), 'Animals Erased: discourse, ecology and reconnection with nature' (Wesleyan University Press) and editor of 'The Handbook of Sustainability Literacy' (Green Books). He has a background both in linguistics and human ecology, and teaches a range of courses including ecolinguistics, ethics and language, communication for leadership, discourse analysis and language and identity.

Steve Thorp

'Soul Making – new stories, practices and pathways through the wilderness'

In this workshop, Steve will introduce the ideas, principles and practices of Soul Making through a series of meditative reflections and creative conversations. He will also talk about some of the ways in which the Soul Making community is responding to these ideas and how it is developing.

At the heart of the session will be a deep meditative reflection on the 'three dimensions of self' to illustrate the emerging imaginative and ecological perspective at the heart of Soul Making, and how individuals and groups can integrate these in their life, work and practice. There'll be an invitation to consider your own creative responses to the material – including storytelling, poetry, art and therapeutic practice and community building. Soul Making is a new way of integrating ecopsychology, activism and personal change, with healing, art and adult development. It is a process that aims to help people re-find their Ecology of Mind. It is about developing and sustaining connection with self, others and the world in ways that are soulful, integral and deep. It is an imaginative process by which we make ourselves whole in the midst of ecological and social crisis and rapid cultural change. It is about responding creatively – with height depth and breadth - to our lifeworld.

Soul Making emerged out of conversations within the Dark Mountain Project and elsewhere about the limiting assumptions of psychology and culture. At its heart is a new practical integration of three dimensions of 'self' – the social self of relationship; the 'ecological self' – how we are embedded within, and connected to, the 'lifeworld'; and 'original soul' – our acorn, calling and inheritance.

Steve Thorp is an independent integral counsellor, activist and writer, who has worked with individuals and organisations – supporting wellbeing, equality and sustainability – for over 25 years. Steve's work centres around ideas of soul-making, unpsychology and deep wellbeing; building on foundations of imaginative creativity, ecology and psychology. He trained as a psychotherapist at Metanoia Institute and more recently, with the Spiritual Companions Trust. He runs the Soul Makers Gatherings (the next of which is being held at the end of August), and is the author of a number of poetry pamphlets. His new book, 'Soul Manifestos and Pieces of Joy', is a volume of short poetic essays, described as "amazing, extraordinary, powerful, necessary and deeply inspiring" by Dave Hicks (author of 'Educating for Hope in Troubled Times'). He also edits Unpsychology Magazine with writer and activist, C. Allegra Hawksmoor.

Rudy Vandamme Ph. D and Ann Sterckx
'Coming to terms with the urban-nature contradiction'

This workshop will focus on the conflict between being part of an urban digital lifestyle and on the other hand a sensitive longing to be part of wild nature. This existential tension is enacted in all kinds of issues like burnout, the desire to quit jobs, the constraint of a middle class lifestyle, addictions and the desire to retreat into nature.

Urban people construct their human identity around the polarization between the urban, civilized self and the chaotic wild nature outside. Through lifestyle choice, people invest in differentiating as well as in bridging both. But this contradiction leads to restless movement.

As ecopsychologists we interpret that contradiction as a paradox of identity yet to be resolved. We follow in this the theoretical frame of H. Hermans' dialogical self-theory. The wild is not outside but a suppressed part of identity. Moreover the civilized self is constructed as purified from the wild and chaotic. The solution of the human quest to integrate the wild in urban living is to understand the true reasoning of the wild and to see the civilized self as often more chaotic than we assume. Identity construction has its own choreography for resolving contradictions.

By living among wild animals themselves, the presenters were able to discover and develop their wild self in co-existence with their civilized urban self. In the workshop they begin to tell this story. They also explain some principles and methods used in their professional coaching practice to help people cope with the urban-nature paradox. Furthermore, they will demonstrate the constellation method to map inner contradictions. Participants will be able to explore their own relationship with the urban-nature paradox.

Rudy Vandamme and Ann Sterckx are two psychologists translating an ecological worldview into urban lifestyle and professional activity. Currently both are involved as volunteers in Transition initiatives in the city of Ghent. For more than fifteen years, they have been leading a training and development institute to help professionals (teachers, leaders, physicians, etc.) to integrate an ecological lifestyle.

The subject presented is based on their ecopsychological book 'About God and other animals' (published in June).