

THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY PRESENTS

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Social Sciences Building Room 107**

Queer Politics for Field Ecologists? Mourning Other Species in Damaged Landscapes

There's something queer about relations between field ecologists and their study organisms, on the frontlines of the sixth mass extinction, as more than human intimates die at alarming rates. What radical politics and transformative potentials can arise from witnessing these transgressive intimacies, even or especially among more-than-human others dying because of human (in)action? I search for signs of resistant 'world making' (Muñoz) in ephemeral moments where scientists were able to speak their grief at extinction and love for their study species—in the field, in a twitter #cuteoff, and in response to earlier versions of this talk. I look to queer politics—ACT UP's street protests during the height of the AIDS crisis in the U.S.—as a model for how ecologists might tap grief and rage as a source for social connection and political action. What was unbearable as individual grief became cathartic public performances of mourning and rage demanding research, antidiscrimination legislation, and above all visibility and an end to homophobic erasure. Through autoethnography of my own queer field encounters with dead and dying salmon, I argue that such public mourning for interspecies relations could bring new fire to environmental activism, replacing affectless terms like 'species loss' and 'biodiversity' with 'death of beloved kin'.