

# Ecotherapy Development, Health, Resilience



# Ecopsychology

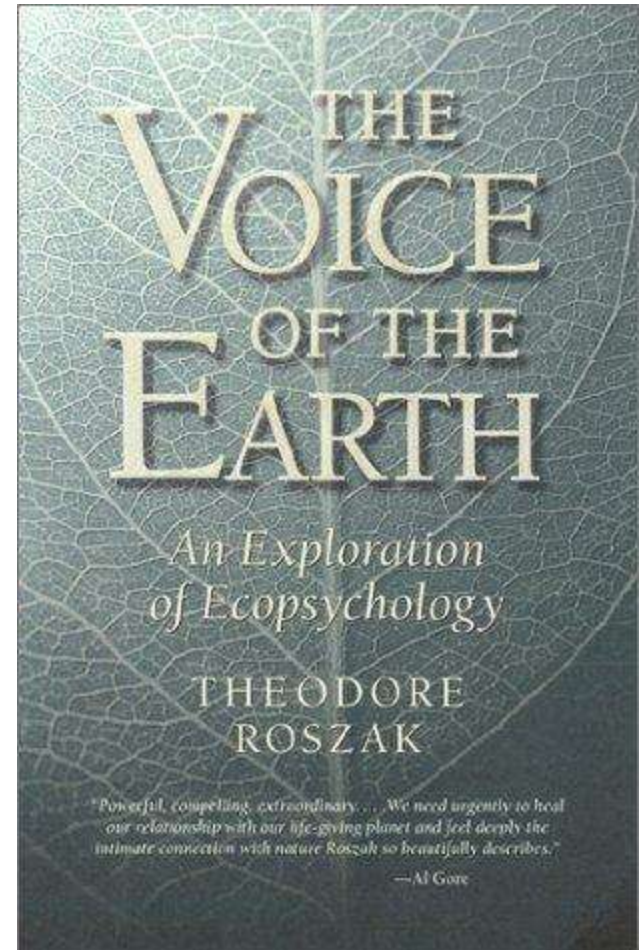
Starting assumption: 'there is a deeply bonded and reciprocal communion between humans and nature. The denial of this bond is a source of suffering for both for the physical environment and for the human psyche, and the realization of the connection between humans and nature is healing for both' (Davis 1998: 5)

# Ecopsychology

A young (sub) discipline – teenage years

Roszak (1992) *Voice of the Earth* key starting point; Roszak et al (1995) *Ecopsychology*

Ecopsychologists subscribe 'to the tenet that humans are integrally connected to nature' (St. John & Macdonald 2007, 48)



# Biophilia

- The Biophilia hypothesis defined by Edward O'Wilson (Wilson 1984) is the innate tendency to focus on life and life like processes, Wilson believed that we were biologically programmed in terms of genetics to seek kinship with the more than human world
- Kellert (1993) proposes that the biophilia hypothesis suggests human identity and personal fulfilment somehow depend on our relationship to nature. The human need for nature is linked not just to the material exploitation of the environment but also to the influence the natural world has on our emotional, cognitive, aesthetic, and even spiritual development.

# Psychoevolutionary theory of stress reduction

- Ulrich (1984) and Verderber (1986) found that the quality and content of the view from a hospital window, had a significant affect on a patient's recovery, the nature content fostered a quicker recovery post surgery





# Attention Restoration Theory (ART)

- Focusing on the process of attention, Kaplan and Kaplan (1995) and Kaplan (1995) have researched the restorative effects of the natural environment resulting in 'Attention Restoration Theory'. They undertook research which explored the psychological effects of being in both wilderness and nearby nature such as parks and woodland.
- Being in natural environments involves a different sort of cognitive functioning indirect attention or what is termed 'soft' fascination (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989). Soft fascination is maintained in an aesthetic and sensory contact with the natural world, by being away from the routines of our day to day life



# Emotional geography

- The field is concerned with the spatiality and temporality of emotions and the way they become attached around and within certain places. A place becomes important because of its emotional associations, emotional geography attempts to understand how emotion both experientially and conceptually is understood in a socio-spatial way rather than as an entirely interiorised subjective mental state (Bondi et al 2007).



# Ecotherapy – Buzzell and Chalquist

- Ecotherapy is an umbrella term for nature-based methods of physical and psychological healing, it represents a new form of psychotherapy that acknowledges the vital role of nature and addresses the human nature relationship.
- Ecotherapists are expanding notions of 'therapy' from the idea of distress as an intrapsychic, biomedical interior experience, to a systemic and holistic understanding that at its heart is about reciprocal interdependence with nature and the healing affects of this.





# Ecotherapy – MIND

- The charity MIND published reports on ecotherapy (MIND, 2007; 2013a), which found that people's mental health significantly improved after activities in nature. The MIND report highlighted a range of definitions of ecotherapy, referring to horticultural development programmes supervised by a therapist or a simple walk in the park; this encompasses differing versions of what ecotherapy might or could be. A recent information booklet published by MIND (2013b) defines ecotherapy:
- '(in its strict sense) is about building a relationship with nature, so that personal wellbeing is considered equally alongside the health of the environment. Sessions usually include some type of formal therapy such as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) or counselling.' (2013b:5)

# Feel better Outside/Inside

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYmQvEZFx\\_8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYmQvEZFx_8)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pbt91HH-eTs&feature=related>

# Attachment to nature

- Spend a little time thinking about your historical relationship with nature.
- What role has it played in your emotional wellbeing?
- How do you currently make connections to the natural world and how important is this for your mental wellbeing?

# Psychotherapeutic Understanding



- Searles (1960) proposed that although essential psychodynamic concepts were contained within Freud's writings he failed, as have subsequent others since, to explicitly acknowledge the significance of the non-human environment in the development of human psychological life. Searles raises the importance in infant development of the relationship with both the mother and what Searles terms the 'non-human environment'.

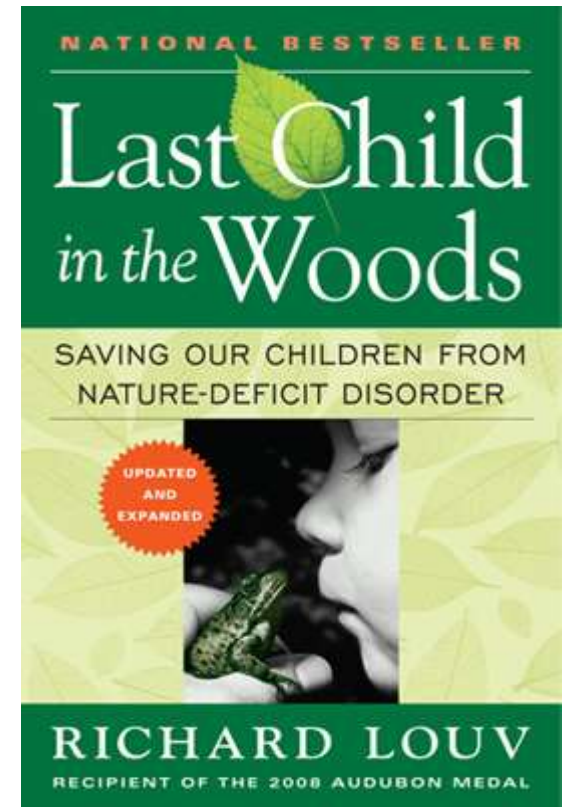


# Children and nature

The ecological self develops alongside the object relational self  
Anita Barrows – ‘the ecopsychology of the child’

We need to expand our notions of ‘object relations’ to encompass the natural world

Relational Psychotherapy including relationships to the natural world





# Resilience

- Nature as a resource
- Contact with nature as a psychological and emotional resource
- Reciprocal interdependence
- Relationship between nature and mental health
- Archetype of Armageddon, resource depletion over population, pollution, scarcity
- Eco-resilience , transition movement, despair and empowerment