# Towards morally-inclusive coexistence

## Barriers, pedagogy, & opportunities for expansive conservation

**by Esty Yanco, MSc.**

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

under the supervision of Daniel Ramp & Jeannine McManus

University of Technology Sydney
TD School

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# Certificate of Original Authorship

I, Esty Gayle Yanco, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the TD School at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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# List of Papers and Statement of Author Contribution

This thesis is a compilation of two chapters and 5 published/publishable manuscripts. Referencing styles were standardised throughout the thesis in accordance with the referencing style for the journal Conservation Biology.

### Chapter 3 – Published

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|---|---|
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|---|---|
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| Production Note: Signature removed prior to publication. Chris Hasselerharm | Investigation (20%)<br>Formal analysis (15%) |
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# Thesis Abstract

The intrinsic value of wildlife is widely acknowledged by conservationists, but at the same time, conservation interventions often inflict harm on wildlife individuals. One explanation for this incongruity is that the Western mentality of human exceptionalism dampens the moral significance of nonhuman beings, driving a wedge between conservation ethics and practice. The juxtaposition of human exceptionalism and the widespread recognition that wildlife possess intrinsic value creates an unresolved tension around how to, or what it means to, coexist in a way that respects the moral significance of all inhabitants of shared landscapes.

My thesis asks what happens when conservation and, more specifically, coexistence on production landscapes are reframed by moral inclusivity and seeks to uncover whether mutualistic pathways improve the ethical and practical outcomes of coexistence. To answer these questions, I aim to identify barriers to conservation that arise when the moral significance of wildlife is overlooked, to investigate pedagogy for expanding circles of moral consideration, and to explore opportunities for coexistence when the discipline practices moral expansiveness. I begin in chapters 1 & 2, where I detail the Western ethical and normative foundations of conservation and discuss my positionality and case study methodology. I address my research objectives in three parts that together forge a pathway toward morally inclusive coexistence.

In *Part 1: Barriers of human exceptionalism in conservation practice* (chapters 3 & 4), I reveal how normative constructs can lead to poor decision-making and justifications of harm and provide a pathway to improving transparency and ethical decision-making. I then explore how the normative conservation paradigm limits

holistic contextualisation of multispecies landscapes in the coexistence literature and discuss how the adoption of morally inclusive coexistence can encourage a more holistic interrogation of complex coexistence systems. In *Part 2: Pedagogy of moral inclusion* (chapter 5)*,* I substantiate the efficacy of a morally inclusive pedagogical approach and contend that education programs that affirm the value of all living beings may inspire the public to engage in morally inclusive coexistence. Lastly, in *Part 3: Entanglement in practice* (chapters 6 & 7), I present two practical examples of morally inclusive coexistence to demonstrate the viability of this approach and its holistic contribution to conservation goals. Together, my PhD research supports the argument that a holistic, morally inclusive coexistence that reorientates humans as part of nature, rather than separate to it, is critical to supporting the progress of conservation in shared landscapes.