

Flyktiga möten

Fågelskådning, epistemisk gemenskap och icke-mänsklig karisma

Elin Lundquist

Akademisk avhandling för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i etnologi vid Stockholms universitet som offentlig kommer att försvaras fredagen den 26 oktober 2018 kl. 10.00 i hörsal 11 hus F, Universitetsvägen 10 F.

Abstract

Volatile Encounters. Birdwatching, Epistemic Community and Nonhuman Charisma

This thesis investigates birdwatching and focuses on the knowledges, skills and ideas that are obtained and acknowledged among birdwatchers. The aim is to explore how these ways of relating to birds are constituted. Birdwatching is considered as an epistemic practice, which produce and maintain knowledge. Thus, the human participants of these practices are regarded as members of an epistemic community. The overall theoretical framework is based on a material-semiotic perspective: the epistemic community, is viewed as not only made up of human beings, but of a variety of human and nonhuman actors – birds, technologies and landscapes – which altogether co-produce the practices. To investigate how habitual ways of relating to birds are established, the geographer Jamie Lorimer's theoretical model of non-human charisma is applied to the analysis. The joint ways of relating to and engaging with birds are interpreted in terms of "affective logics" that characterize the epistemic community.

The study is based on a multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork which took place at different birdwatching spots in Sweden; at birdwatching fairs and on websites where birdwatchers discuss and share information about birds. Furthermore the study is based on interviews with birdwatchers. The methodological approach during the fieldwork as well as in analyzing the research material, is to "follow the object", or more precisely to follow how birds are acknowledged in these different settings.

The ways of relating to birds are interpreted as embodied skills and "knowledge by familiarity" with different species and landscapes. One central affective logic is the "joy of recognition" which motivates birdwatchers to learn how to identify birds in the field. The main method for gathering information in order to make claims about the objects of knowledge, i.e. the birds, within the epistemic community is through these embodied skills. The analysis shows that claims, based on these observations, are undergoing a number of validation processes. This creates a certain type of observer that must be prepared to get their claims reviewed. The methods for establishing claims are however challenged when new technologies, such as DNA-techniques and digital tools, are put to use in the identification processes.

The analysis also shows that while all wild birds are potentially interesting as objects of knowledge within the community, not every bird is attended to with the same kind of interest and enthusiasm. Birdwatchers are more devoted to some species of birds, than others, in relation to the spatial and temporal circumstances of the encounters, and in relation to the birdwatcher's previous experiences of similar encounters. A central theme that characterizes the practices is a negotiation of approximating the birds without disturbing them. This is made possible by the use of various technological extensions, such as binoculars and hides. However the analysis also shows that some of the, rather new, digital tools are acknowledged as potentially causing intrusive behavior.

Keywords: *Epistemic community, epistemic practice, nonhuman charisma, birdwatching, ethnography.*

Stockholm 2018

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-159526>

ISBN 978-91-7797-408-6
ISBN 978-91-7797-409-3

**Institutionen för etnologi, religionshistoria och
genusvetenskap**

Stockholms universitet, 106 91 Stockholm



Stockholms
universitet