

**Jim Nollman:
interspecies communication researcher/
musician/author/zoömusicologist**



Jim Nollman and his mandolin conducting research at Johnstone Strait, British Columbia, Canada in 2008. (Photo: David Rothenberg)

Jim writes on the Interspecies view of human/animal relations: It's been said the environmental crisis is a crisis in human perception. Art may be the best tool available to human culture for transforming perception. If these two statements make any sense at all then, clearly, developing a more potent aesthetic dimension to our relations with nature is a crucial task as we prepare our battered world for generations unborn.

Interspecies was chartered as a nonprofit educational organization in 1978, to grant artists some of the same access to wilderness and wild animals that our culture usually reserves only for its

field biologists.

An artist's perception of nature is different than a scientist's. Biologists operate by the logic of perceiving the world objectively, symbolizing their experience as numbers and objects, doing their best to stand outside and separate, peeking in at nature, albeit observantly, sincerely, wholeheartedly.

But to view nature from a perceived outside vantage also voids it of subject; diminishing a sense of personal connectedness, feeling, kinship, obligation, intuition, and other forms of direct relating.

It is the way nature is commonly perceived in our culture. The objective vantage is the worldview overwhelmingly promoted by our educational system, the basis of most environmental policy and legislation, and the grounding of an economic system that denies intrinsic value to the natural world it so skillfully plunders. Our legal system basically categorizes nature as an aspect of property law. This objective vantage is so deeply entrenched within our culture, that many people believe it is the only valid way to perceive our relationship with nature....

To read the rest of this introduction to Jim's work, go to: www.interspecies.com/pages/ic_is.html



Jim Nollman playing guitar with a pod of orcas in The Strait of Georgia, British Columbia, Canada in 1987. (Photo: Betty Didcoct)

Jim writes: The charged border is not the place whales reside but, rather, the desires and notions that both motivate and certify human encounters with them. Mapping the terrain of the interface is exceedingly difficult because of the unfixed manner whales and dolphins swim through our collective imagination. The view here is at once intimate and distant, subjective and objective, behavioral and mythic, hopeful yet tragic. The combination of so many contrary features causes the landscape to glow with a vital but unfocused light that blurs the biological with the cultural. People hold strong opinions about what they think they observe here, often relying on reverie to express even commonplace features of the scenery. Much of what is held up as certainty is actually intuited. What we intuit, we believe earnestly, devising ethics to lay over the natural grid. Some cetacean lovers insist that dreams provide a more cogent picture of this border than scientific data. It is not difficult to understand how this view is validated. With 95% of behavior unwitnessed, 95% is open to speculation. For all these reasons, a multi-disciplinary approach seems the only realistic way to proceed. (excerpt from *The Charged Border*, Henry Holt, 1996)



Jim Nollman with orcas in Johnstone Strait, British Columbia, Canada in 1977. Altogether, these three photos show thirty years of Jim working with the same pod of orcas. (Photo: Peter Thomas)

Books

Dolphin Dreamtime (Bantam)

Spiritual Ecology (Bantam)

Why We Garden (Henry Holt)

The Charged Border: Where Whales and Humans Meet)

The Beluga Cafe (Sierra)

Papers

Nollman, Jim. 1997. Fowl play: creating interspecies music. *Orion* 16 (2): 12-15.

CDs

Orcas Greatest Hits (Interspecies)

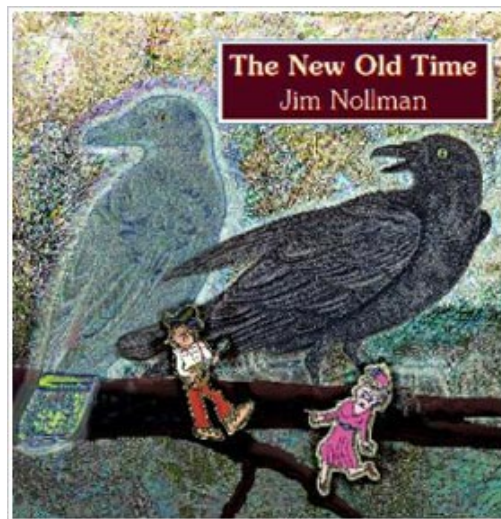
Playing Music with Animals (Smithsonian)

What the Dolphin Said (Beluga)

The New Old Time (Red Newt)

Link to latest CD

http://www.mandolincafe.com/news/publish/mandolins_001411.shtml



Jim Nollman's latest CD release, *The New Old Time*, consists of what he terms deconstructed fiddle tunes. "I operate a small recording studio on San Juan Island, Washington focused on music production, with an emphasis on producing locals, as well as musicians from around the world who wish to add natural sounds to their music. Starting in 2007, I have been slowly producing my own songs, which feature ambient sounds, plus my own mandolin playing." Animal vocalizations are used on tracks such as:

Kitchen Girl/Cluck Old Hen: Two Appalachian fiddle "breakdowns" performed on electric (Godin) mandolin. This recording also makes very unusual use of animal calls as textural accents. Species include cowbirds, doves, fur and bearded seals, and lemurs.

The Rights of Man: Probably Scottish in origin, at least as early as the 18th century, played both in Ireland and New England. It is rumored to have been Thomas Paine's favorite tune. My own version displays hints of Cole Porter's *Begin the Beguine* in the bass, and Thelonious Monk's inspired sense of timing in the piano. The wind-like sound is actually a beluga whale call filtered through a grain sampler.