

‘Wildlife Tourism: Tourist Expectations, Experiences And Management Implications’

Susanna Curtin

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Abstract

The literature demonstrates that wildlife tourism, which can incorporate anything from insects (dragonflies, butterflies, glow-worms), flowers, mammals and birds, has become a potentially lucrative activity which is attracting attention from tourists and destinations. There are both positive and negative impacts associated with wildlife tourism. It can contribute to the conservation of threatened habitats / species, provide economic benefit to local communities attract new types of tourists to remote and economically peripheral areas, and provide environmental education and psychological benefits to tourists. Less desired outcomes of wildlife tourism imply that as places and their wildlife become more popular, tourist numbers and infrastructure increases and so too do incidences of disturbance which directly impact upon the well-being and sustainability of the focal wildlife populations such as the disruption of daily behaviour including feeding, breeding, and resting. Whether the positives outweigh the benefits has yet to be tried or tested and may well depend upon how the resource and visitors are managed which in turn depends upon understanding the expectations, the behaviour and the experiential benefits sought by tourists.

Given the spectrum of tourist-wildlife opportunities, it follows that wildlife tourists are by no means an homogenous market, there are significant variations in typologies, from the ‘serious’ to the ‘casual’ and from the ‘specialist’ to the ‘generalist’. Therefore planning and management become more difficult as the behaviour and needs of each segment differ enormously. Up until now, the human dimensions of watching wildlife have been rather overlooked in the tourism literature; and particularly the experiential and psychological benefits of wildlife tourism have not been adequately explored or applied to the management and marketing of destinations.

Using a sample of British tourists, the aim of this research was, therefore, to explore the culture of wildlife tourism in order to contribute a better understanding of what it means to enjoy wildlife experiences, the content of what exactly is enjoyed, the process through which people attend to and perceive wildlife and the emotional responses it provokes. Inherent in this thesis is the discussion of the human dimensions of wildlife, namely how wildlife tourists

perceive the natural world, whether they have eco, anthropocentric or anthropomorphic views of the animal kingdom, and whether the application of biophilia, our supposed inherent desire to connect with other, non-human, living things, can be applied to wildlife tourism. In addition the author explored the field skills involved in wildlife watching with regards to identification and photography, what constitutes a memorable experience, and finally the expectations and benefits of travelling on an organised wildlife holiday.

In order to satisfy this aim, an ethnographic approach to data generation was employed in two distinct stages. First in-depth interviews were carried out with British tour operators to investigate the business of wildlife tour operating, to discover who the main operators are, the types of products that they offer, the profile of the clients that they attract as well as the management and delivery of their tours. This showed that the wildlife tourism market can be divided into different typologies, for example, birders, 'listers' and general naturalists.

Secondly, the author joined two tour groups within the general naturalist market, one bird-watching tour to Andalucia to watch the Autumn migration and one whale and bird-watching tour on the Sea of Cortez, Baja California. Whilst on tour, field journals were kept to record the days' events, participants emotional responses to wildlife, and her own observations of tour leading. These journals were coupled with in-depth interviews of tour participants whilst on tour and later in-depth interviews with people who regularly take dedicated wildlife holidays.

This ethnographic study of these dedicated general naturalists reveals a number of important themes which may be of use for future studies such as: how interest in wildlife began, how wildlife watching is part of everyday life not just a holiday activity, the fascination with how wildlife adapts to human / urban environments and the relationship with regular wildlife visitors in their garden. In addition it highlights how wildlife tourism is used as a symbol of self presentation, how it is important to develop skills such as identification of species and photography, and how spontaneity, close proximity to wildlife, high numbers and first sightings all make for memorable experiences. There are a number of profound and psychological benefits which the nature of this study allowed to come to the fore, and that was the wonderment and sense of awe at the beauty and diversity of the natural world, of really feeling alive and in 'flow' when watching wildlife and how being in 'flow' distorts time. Linked to this is the spiritual fulfilment and sustenance provided by nature.

The physical attributes of the wildlife holiday highlight the important role of the tour leader, their knowledge of species and of where to see them as well as the demonstration of

responsible wildlife watching behaviour. Participants voiced their desire for relaxation, for meeting like-minded people and for sharing experiences with others. Finally participants appeared to be aware of potential negative impacts and liked to see responsible tour operating. The thesis ends by discussing the practical implications of these findings for industry and for wider society, and concludes by suggesting areas for future research.

“An honest experience of nature would find that the natural world is an arena of endurance, tragedy and sacrifice as much as joy and uplift. It is about the struggle against the weather, the perils of migration, the ceaseless vigilance against predators, the loss of whole families and the brevity of existence. The natural world is like a theatre, a stage beyond our own, in which the dramas that are an irreducible part of being alive are played out without hatred or envy or hypocrisy. No wonder they tell us so much about ourselves and our own frailties” (Mabey 2006:13).

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Author's Declaration

In the course of collecting data for this thesis 5 journal articles have been accepted for publication and 7 conference papers published in conference proceedings. These are acknowledged where appropriate in the text and are listed in the appendices.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Tour operators and developing destinations have been quick to exploit all forms of wildlife in response to a growing demand for opportunities to interact, photograph and watch charismatic species. The broad term of 'wildlife tourism' is used to describe a wide range of different wildlife-based trips. It is distinct from other nature-based tourism insofar as the main aim is to visit a destination in order to see and gain an understanding of the local fauna and flora without harming the natural environment (Mintel 2006). It can take place in a range of settings from captive situations (i.e. zoos and aquariums), semi-captive (such as wildlife parks and game reserves) to seeing animals in the wild, and it encompasses a variety of interactions from passive observation to feeding and / or touching the focal species.

According to Duffus and Dearden (1990) wildlife tourism can be divided into three dimensions: 'consumptive' which involves the permanent removal of the wildlife from the environment; 'low consumptive' such as viewing species in zoos or aquariums; and 'non-consumptive' which is "human recreational engagement with wildlife wherein the focal organism is not purposefully removed or permanently affected by the engagement" (1990:215). This definition is based upon the concept that 'non-consumptive use' provides an experience rather than a product and that one person's activity does not detract from the next person's experience unless, of course, there is any disturbance.

Contributors to the field highlight the overlapping, or blurring, of other recreational / holiday activities with wildlife tourism. For example, in many studies wildlife tourism is perceived as a sub-set of ecotourism, nature-based tourism, rural tourism (Reynolds and Braithwaite 2001), marine tourism (Garrod and Wilson 2003) or adventure tourism (Millington 2001; Swarbrooke *et al.* 2003)

Whilst distinctions can be drawn between wildlife tourists marked by their choice of specialist holidays (i.e. whale-watching, bird-watching and safaris) it is more difficult to distinguish, or measure, those who partake in wildlife tourism whilst on a more general adventure or relaxation holiday. Motivations vary in intensity from the specialist, or the serious, dedicated 'twitcher', to a tourist interested in animals but satisfied with a relatively superficial interaction with a species (Shackley 1996). In response, Fredline and Faulkner (2001) offer a 'strict definition' as only those visitors who identify themselves as being influenced to visit a destination to see native wildlife and a 'loose definition' which includes all visitors who had *planned* encounters with animals, that is wanted to and did see animals during their visit. It is their former definition that is adopted for the purpose of this thesis and therefore the focus is on tourists whose

primary motivation is to visit a destination in order to see the indigenous, free-ranging fauna and flora.

Most people in the West live in relative isolation from nature and wild animals (with the exception of a small number of domesticated species). Yet the travel press and the general media are frequently punctuated by photographic evidence of a prolific human desire to be close to wild animals. Visitor interaction with wildlife and the natural environment is now an integral part of the modern visitor experience (Page and Dowling, 2002).

It was an American entomologist Edward Wilson (1984) who was the first to make this compulsive yearning to be close to other creatures and to affiliate with them respectable. He believes biophilia is universal in our species, possibly even genetic. Yet in almost every aspect of modern life we are disengaging from nature, rendering it as a play thing; something only for leisure and an object of our gaze (Mabey 2006). Many propose that urbanisation and industrialisation has had a profound affect on our psychological and physical relationship with nature. (Bird 2007; Gossling 2002; Urry 1990; MacCannell 1976). Paradoxically, although urbanisation has further distanced people from nature, “this very dissociation has in part fuelled a resurgent interest in biophilia and a romanticised view of wild animals and their wholesale appropriation into consumer culture” (Wolch *et al.* 1995: 736). Such appropriation fills a social and spiritual void and creates meaningful experiences.

The quest of the wildlife tourism industry to provide new itineraries and experiences for their consumers drives the supply-side and fuels the demand. Destinations with animal species that have tourism potential are keen to embark on this lucrative form of tourism. However, this growing industry has facilitated the intrusion of humans into aquatic and terrestrial environments that have previously been the exclusive preserve of the wildlife (Holden, 2000). The need to understand what experiences are sought by visitors and how best to manage wildlife tourism destinations has never been so great due to the growing number of wildlife attractions and destinations that have proliferated as a result of the increased market potential. This suggests the amalgamation of two strands of research; the psychological and emotional benefits gained by the consumer i.e. experiences and memories, and the management of this experience to satisfy tourist demands whilst protecting wildlife resources at destination or site level.

Until recently the most prevalent method of understanding wildlife tourists has been a motivational research programme (Scott and Thigpen 2003; Hvengaard 2002; Moscardo 2000; Muloin 1998). This typically assesses expectations, goals, desired outcomes, motivations and cognitive judgements about the activity. As a result, focus has been on satisfaction defined by the degree the experience has met expected outcomes, rather

than on the actual nature of the experience itself. Whilst the motivational approach might tell us that people enjoy participating in wildlife tourism for a number of reasons, it does not really explore what it means to enjoy wildlife experiences and the content of what exactly is enjoyed. As Tremblay declares: “there is a well-recognised lack of knowledge regarding the attributes of the wildlife-tourism experience” (2001:164).

Several authors claim that a better appreciation of the wildlife tourists' experience is a major research priority for the sustainable management of wildlife-based attractions (Moscardo and Saltzer 2004; Moscardo *et al.* 2001; Reynolds and Braithwaite 2001). Understanding the relationship between the experiential needs of the consumer and product management is particularly important for wildlife tourism organisations and operators as the sustainability of the resource can be compromised by inappropriate management such as allowing visitors to get too close to the wildlife, damage to the habitat, disturbance, overcrowding and poor interpretation.

This thesis is therefore an important exploratory study into wildlife tourism experiences and the importance of nature to human well-being. It has obvious relevance to environmental conservation on two counts namely the recognition that conserving habitats and wildlife has an intrinsic connection to the future well-being of the human population who must be seen as part of the ecosystem and not separate from it, and secondly it is generally human behaviour which needs to be understood and managed as left to its own devices, nature can manage itself.

1.2 Aim and objectives of the investigation

1.2.1 Overall aim

Using a sample of British tourists, the aim of this research is to explore the culture of wildlife tourism in order to contribute a better understanding of what it means to enjoy wildlife experiences, the content of what exactly is enjoyed, the process through which people attend to and perceive wildlife and the emotional responses it provokes. In turn this understanding can be used to underpin future tourism management strategies.

1.2.2 Objectives

In order to achieve this aim, a number of specific research objectives are proposed namely:

1. to review the current literature concerning the nature of the lived experience, wildlife tourism, human dimensions of wildlife and mankind's modern relationship

with animals and nature. This will provide the context and background for the thesis.

2. to investigate the business of wildlife tour operating; particularly the major players, their clients and their products in order to propose a typology of wildlife tourism and tourists.
3. to understand how wildlife tourists perceive the natural world, i.e. whether they have an eco-centric or anthropocentric view of nature;
4. to discover how wildlife tourists became interested in wildlife and how their love of wildlife and nature translates into their everyday world;
5. to explore the field skills involved in wildlife watching; particularly with regards to identification and photography;
6. to understand what constitutes a memorable wildlife experience in terms of charismatic species and close proximity;
7. to explore what feelings are evoked when watching wildlife;
8. to understand the expectations and benefits of travelling on an organised wildlife holiday; and how the experience is managed.
9. to suggest implications for the management of the wildlife tourism industry.

1.3 Conceptual approach

Given that it is supposedly language and imagination that define us as human and separates us from the animal kingdom, it follows that exploration of these emotions and connectivity to nature be in a qualitative, subjective manner which is grounded in language. The need to understand the more intangible, psychological experiences and benefits of wildlife tourism come at a time when the human race is suddenly aware of the devastation that our technology and progress have reaped upon the environment.

To this end, this research adopts an ethnographic approach to the research question. The philosophy behind qualitative research is that there are multiple realities of an experience for the individual and multiple layers of understanding. However, within these individual experiences, there are commonalities which may be exposed and extrapolated, and then potentially quantified in larger sample populations in later studies. For example, human / wildlife encounters and experiences revealed in this thesis may be applicable to other wildlife tourism market segments and settings experienced whilst on a day trip or

during participation in other animal orientated tourist attractions (see for example Curtin 2006; Curtin and Wilkes 2007).

In qualitative research, researchers may encounter visions that are conceptually new to them and because of its conceptual 'own voice' (*in vivo*), published qualitative research is relatively scarce with respect to visions and experiences of nature (Van den Born *et al.* 2001). Whilst there have been some useful studies in the field of leisure and recreation, human experiences of wildlife tourism have yet to be sufficiently explored. Franklin (2001) and Newsome *et al.* (2002) claim the importance yet scarceness of research in this field which combines anthropology, psychology and aspects of socio-biology.

1.3.1 The construction of theory: inductive versus deductive approaches

Before entering the field, Mason (1996) invites the researcher to consider when and how the construction and development of theory should occur in the research process. In some social science, theory comes first before empirical research; an hypothesis is stated in advance and the data is measured or matched according to the theory. This is associated with deductive reasoning and is more usually related to positivist approaches to data collection.

An alternative is that the theory is developed from or through data generation and analysis. The data is scrutinized and explanations and theories are developed last. This is inductive reasoning and is associated with grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) whereby explanation and theory are fashioned directly from the emergent analysis. This has been questioned and criticised as it assumes that fieldwork can begin in a theoretical vacuum, that the researcher enters the field without carrying the weight of any current literature and theories (O'Reilly 2005).

This thesis, however, adopts a middle ground where theory, data generation and data analysis are developed simultaneously in a dialectical process (Mason 1996). Blaikie (1993) refers to this as retroductive reasoning whilst O'Reilly (2005:178) labels it as 'an iterative-inductive' approach which assumes that there is dynamic relationship between data generation and application of theory. The research model appears like a spiral that demonstrates how analyses and writing up can lead to more research and writing down. Theory, data generation and data analysis are developed simultaneously.

To this end, the research began with a reading of the literature allowing the author a much greater understanding of existing work, of previous methodologies and more importantly where the gaps in knowledge occur; thus supporting the rationale for the study (Wolcott 2001). In this vein, knowledge of existing literature was used purely as a preparation for the fieldwork. As the fieldwork commenced the author began to take an

interest in themes that had not occurred in the review of wildlife tourism literature; themes that had emerged from being on tour and from interviewing participants such as the relationship between wildlife and gardening, biophilia and the development of skills. The literature pertaining to these emergent themes and proposed theories then appears alongside the relevant section in the results and discussion chapter and is used to underpin and develop new concepts. This is customary in the writing up of phenomenological and ethnographic research (Suvantola 2002; DeMares and Krycka 1998).

1.4 Overview of the thesis

After this initial introduction, Chapter 2 provides the context and background of the thesis. In qualitative studies the data takes primacy, hence, as stated above, emergent themes are discussed alongside the relevant literature during the results and discussion chapters. The purpose of the literature review is merely to set the scene. Consequently Chapter 2 satisfies the first objective by helping the reader to consider some key theoretical aspects concerning the nature of the lived experience, wildlife tourism, human dimensions of wildlife and mankind's modern relationship with animals and nature, and current management strategies.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology. The study was conducted in three phases. The first stage satisfies objective 2 which is an investigation into the business of wildlife tour operating. It is based upon a number of in-depth interviews with key tour operators to determine who the major players are, the type of clients that they attract, and the range of available products and itineraries. This research also allows the author to gain entry into the field and to access the study's main participants, i.e. dedicated wildlife tourists.

The second phase takes an emic perspective by adopting participant observation. In this phase the researcher joins two inclusive wildlife tours; one to watch the autumn migration in Andalusia, Southern Spain, and the other to join a whale watch cruise in Baja, California. The first tour lasted one week and the second tour comprised ten days. During this time, the researcher kept two field diaries; one to record her own experiences both as an observer and as a participant, and the other to record events and fellow travellers' reactions to wildlife and behaviour whilst on tour. In addition, this phase also includes in-depth interviews with tour participants and goes somewhat towards achieving objectives 3 to 8.

Finally the third phase comprises a series of in-depth interviews with participants who regularly take dedicated wildlife holidays and is designed to provide answers to objectives 3 to 8. This approach grants a new delineation to the data as, whilst the discussion

follows a similar format, the interviews relate to past experiences as opposed to more immediate ones.

Ethnographic analysis of the combined data looks for commonalities as well as extreme experiences. This enables the author to derive an overall thematic framework which consists of the headings in Chapter 4 which begins with an overview of the supply-side and presents a tourist typology which sets the scene for the remaining results chapters. These encompass the major themes of the thesis, i.e. love of nature, self-development, memorable wildlife experiences, wonderment, contemplation and flow, benefits of organised tours and managing the tourist experience.

Ultimately Chapter 5 satisfies objective 9. It restates the objectives and brings together the main findings. The thesis ends by highlighting the implications of these insights into the wildlife tourism experience for tour operators, as well as the potential importance of nature and wild animals to human happiness and well-being. This is followed by a consideration of the limitations of the study and finally suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2: Review of literature

2.1 Introduction

There is a general consensus in the tourism literature that demand for opportunities to gaze upon and interact with animals whilst on holiday has shown an increase (Intel / WTO 2006; UNEP 2006; Orams 2001; Shackley 1996). Relatively undisturbed natural environments and wild animals in their natural setting are highly sought after. Shackley (1996) correctly predicted that wildlife tourism is not only big business, but that demand would grow dramatically over the following ten years. Indeed, Page and Dowling (2002) highlight the growth in wildlife viewing whilst Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001) claim that it has become the leading foreign exchange earner for several countries. Despite many assertions, Moscardo and Saltzer (2004) caution that a detailed analysis of these claims reveals a lack of sufficient evidence to support them. Instead they warn that it suggests growth in particular wildlife watching activities as opposed to a general augmentation in overall demand.

Nevertheless certain types of large, accessible, charismatic and free-ranging animals have experienced a recent increase in demand for interaction opportunities. For example mountain gorillas (Shackley 1995); whales and dolphins (Hoyt 2001; Orams 1994); West Indian manatees (Shackley 1992); Whale sharks (Davis *et al.*, 1997); Royal albatrosses (Higham 1998); sea turtles (Tisdell and Wilson 2000); stingrays (Lewis and Newsome 2003; Shackley 2001) penguins (Schanzel and McIntosh 2000); plus a multitude of other bird and terrestrial species.

Tourism is a large industry sector with environmental impacts, which although might be considered less than most primary and manufacturing industries, are still substantial (Buckley 2000). Currently tourism is simply one component of an industrialised human society that places an ever larger and deeper footprint on the planet. Many destinations are embracing the growth in nature-based and wildlife tourism demand by evaluating their potential as wildlife tourism destinations believing that this form of tourism will bring less environmental degradation and higher economic gain than the conventional mass tourism models so prevalent in tourism development (Ashley and Elliott 2003; New Scientist 2003).

However, this new wave of tourism is creating much concern amongst environmentalists, ecologists, academics and governing authorities whose job it is to provide a framework for its management. In principle, wildlife tourism can have positive effects on both wildlife species and their habitats through financial contributions (Pennisi *et al.* 2004; Tisdell and Wilson 2002; Walpole and Leader-Williams 2002), non-financial contributions, socio-

economic incentives and education (Higginbottom *et al.* 2001; Orams 1995; Budowski 1976). However, the negative effects of wildlife tourism on individual species or wildlife in general dominate much of the literature. As Gauthier (1993:8) exclaims: “while there are many advantages for humans in the recreational enjoyment of wildlife, I am hard-pressed to conceive of any advantages for the wildlife.”

The consumptive versus non-consumptive dichotomy that is often associated with wildlife tourism is considered by many to be rather misleading. Lemelin (2006:517) advocates that the term non-consumptive has the potential to “erroneously suggest that some tourism activities which do not harvest or remove specimens from their environments have no impact”. Whilst Tremblay (2001:850) reveals that there is “little evidence that non-consumptive wildlife tourism activities involve greater empathy, respect or learning benefits”. There is indeed a great deal of evidence to support this view as the literature on the impacts of wildlife tourism on focal species is abundant and wide-ranging.

Direct impacts on wildlife include disruption of behaviour such as feeding, breeding, mother-offspring interaction; the disruption of predator-prey relationships; and the introduction of disease (Chin *et al.* 2000; Kasmierow *et al.* 2000; Yarmoloy *et al.* 1998; Roe *et al.* 1997; Haysmith and Hunt 1995; Stockwell *et al.* 1991; Freddy *et al.* 1986; Sindiyo and Pertet 1984). Indirect impacts include changed habitats and feeding patterns due to the presence of tourists and the attraction of wildlife to litter or provisioned food (Lewis and Newsome 2003; Orams 2002; Curry *et al.* 2001; Fulton 2001; Chin *et al.* 2000; Shackley 1998). Even the pressures of photography may impact on wildlife, and have been reported to cause a decline in the breeding success of coastal bird species (Higham 1998; Mathieson and Wall 1982).

Biophysical impacts also have the potential to adversely affect the visitor experience. Lewis and Newsome (2003), Chin *et al.* (2000), Davis *et al.* (1997), and Buckley and Pannell (1990) have identified damage to the natural environment as one of the major detractants from the visitor experience. Additional impacts on such experiences include noise (human and mechanical), visual impacts such as infrastructure developments, signs and litter, and overcrowding in terms of group size and overall numbers (Sorice *et al.* 2006; Davis *et al.* 1997). The salient issues identified by stakeholders, conservationists and academics in the literature are consistently related to controlling visitor use and tourist behaviour more so than the management of the wildlife itself. Again, this further asserts the need to understand the wider benefits and sought after experiences exhibited by wildlife tourists.

However, the notion of ‘experience’ marks a notable paradigmatic shift in both tourism academia and the industry. For example marketers no longer sell ‘places’ but ‘experiences’, and this is evident in many of the more upmarket and specialist brochures

which promote an active rather than passive type of holiday. Krippendorf (1984) and Poon (1993) suggest a new tourism consumer has arguably come of age. Krippendorf (1984:74) implies the need for “emotional”, rather than physical recreation, “through activities and experiences which are not possible in everyday life”. This he refers to as “the birth of a new travel culture”. Wildlife tourism fits this description as within its definition, there are active, exploratory, emotional and intellectual components. But, as the literature suggests, this human dimension of wildlife tourism does not occur in isolation. It clearly impacts on the focal species and its habitat and therefore requires a particular form of management which protects the focal species from disturbance yet at the same time satisfies the consumer by providing the sought after tangible, intangible and psychological benefits.

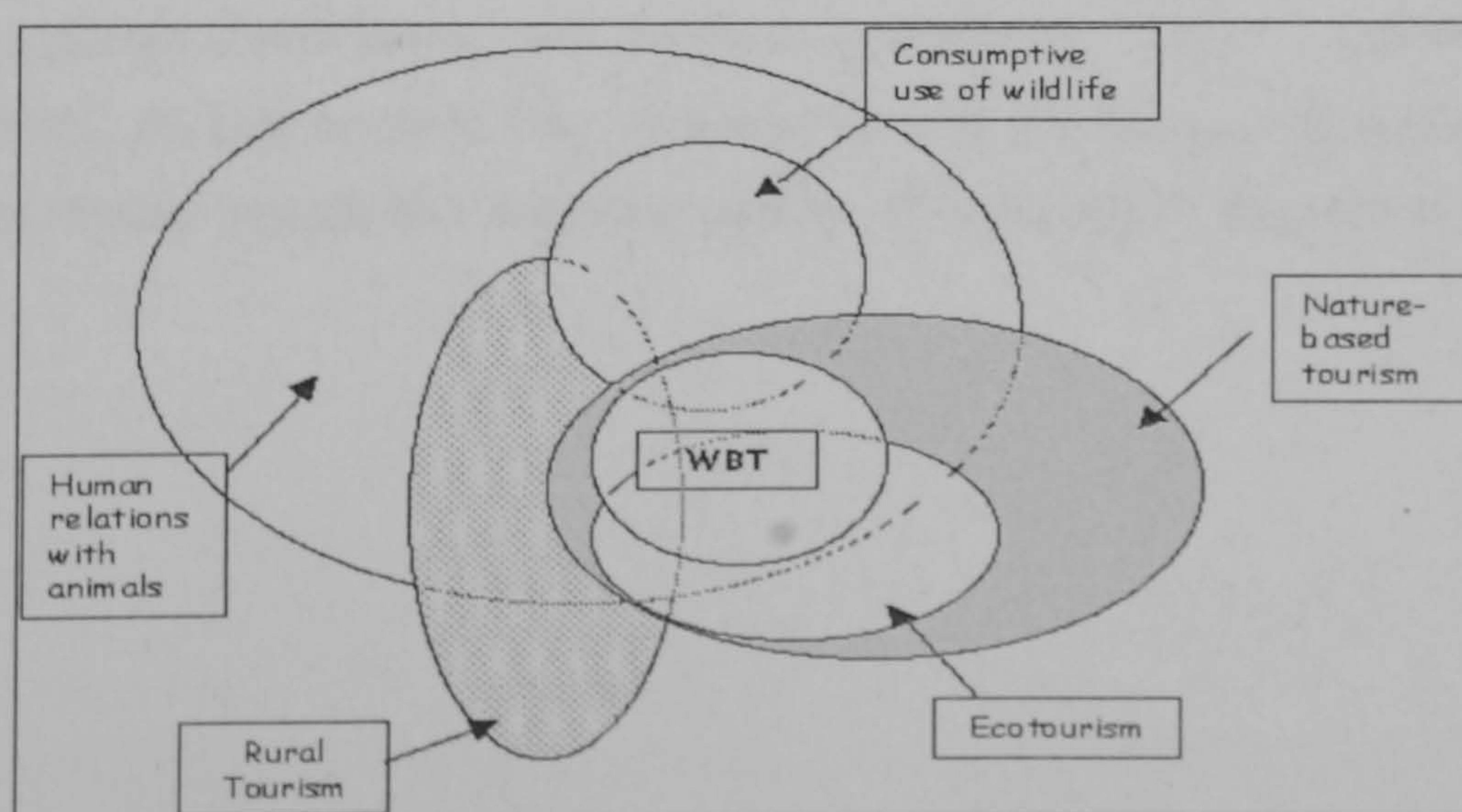
Rather than dwell on the impacts of wildlife tourism, the purpose of this chapter is to satisfy the first objective of the study by outlining the context of the thesis. It sets the scene by explaining and discussing the concept, volume, value and growth of wildlife tourism. Following this, it turns its attention to the literature concerning the nature of the human dimensions of wildlife and mankind’s modern relationship with animals and nature as well as the concept and benefits of the ‘lived’ wildlife experience.

2.2 An overview of wildlife tourism

The viewing of wildlife species in their natural habitats has become an attractive and highly lucrative activity (UNEP 2006), but just how lucrative and important to tourism economies is difficult to ascertain due to the overlap with other related tourism activities.

Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001) were the first to conceptualise and place wildlife tourism within a much broader context. Figure 1 shows their conceptual framework which indicates wildlife tourism’s (WBT) relationship with other important spheres of the tourism product; notably nature-based, eco- and rural tourism, which all sit within the realms of the seemingly natural human desire to see animals in their natural setting.

Figure 1. Wildlife-based tourism (Reynolds and Braithwaite, 2001:32)



Within this framework, Orams (1996) emphasises the spectrum of tourist-wildlife opportunities from captive to non-captive situations and a range of passive viewing to active interaction opportunities, i.e. feeding, touching or taking part in the research of wild animals. There are others who consider wildlife tourism to overlap with adventure tourism (Newsome *et al.* 2005; Swarbrooke *et al.* 2003) which is also supported by the fact that wildlife tourism can take place in remote areas and terrains and can be added value for companies whose marketing message is primarily one of off-beat tourist adventures.

2.2.1 Understanding the characteristics of the wildlife product

Shackley (1996) claims these wildlife experiences may be viewed as 'products' to be developed and marketed, and therefore they become subject to commercial and operational pressures with regards to product development and innovation. Innovation leads to feasibility studies that are designed to consider potential products for a growing market. Studies such as the investigation into the tourism potential for rural communities to benefit from rangeland kangaroos in the Australian outback (Croft 2001), opportunities of tourism and free ranging marine wildlife (Berrow, 2003; Speedie, 2003; Birtles *et al.* 2001; MacLellan 1999) and Visit Scotland's (2003) paper on the potential of British wildlife are typical examples.

These studies are based on a number of favourable factors. Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001:34) divide favourable conditions for successful wildlife tourism into three areas: appeal of particular species (such as rare, exotic, charismatic or flagship), accessible habitats and predictable behaviour which occurs within a relatively small spatial area. Successful wildlife viewing areas often involve a location where some predictable aspects of animal life occurs such as at a watering hole, a heron rookery, a beach where turtles nest, a salmon run for bears (Pennisi *et al.* 2004) or where animals gather in large numbers such as on the shores of Hudson Bay where polar bears gather to await the formation of sea ice in November (Lemelin 2006).

The list of possible destinations and products is endless. Table 1 below outlines the typical products. As can be seen from this brief outline, the range of focal species is wide and does not merely include the 'cute and cuddly', charismatic or flagship species.

Table 1: Spectrum of wildlife tourism: selected examples

<i>Animal group of principal interest</i>	<i>Tourism activity</i>	<i>Example of location</i>
Insects	Butterfly viewing	Baynes Reserve, Berkshire, England
Insects	Glow-worm viewing	Springbrook National Park, Australia
Fish	Snorkel in freshwaters	Bonito, Prata River, Brazil
Fish and invertebrates	Snorkel/scuba dive coral reefs	Ningaloo Reef and Great Barrier Reef, Australia
Fish	Snorkel with whale sharks	Ningaloo Reef, Australia
Fish	Feeding and close interaction with stingrays	Cayman Islands, Maldives, Western Australia
Fish	Underwater viewing/feeding of sharks	Dyer Island, South Africa
Reptiles	Observing Komodo dragons	Komodo Island, Indonesia
Reptiles	Viewing turtle egg laying process	Exmouth and Mon Repos, Australia
Reptiles and birds	Observe pythons and birds	Bharatpur, India
Reptiles	Observe crocodiles via boat tours	Kakadu National Park, Australia
Birds	Independent or organised visits to reserves for birdwatching	UK, India, USA, Europe, Africa, Australia, South America
Birds	Visits to seabird breeding islands	UK, Australia, USA
Birds	Lodges catering for birdwatchers and offering guided tours	Peru, Costa Rica, Australia
Birds and reptiles	Boats trips on wetlands	Kakadu National Park, Australia; Pantanal, Brazil
Birds and mammals	Islands containing rare, endangered and/or rehabilitated populations	Kapiti Island, New Zealand; Rottnest Island, Australia
Birds	Independent travellers and coach tours to see breeding albatross colony	Taiaroa Head, New Zealand
Mammals	Vehicle safari to see large concentrations of mammals	Masai Mara, Kenya; Ngorongoro Crater, Tanzania
Mammals	Tiger viewing from hides or elephant back. Forest lodges.	Chitwan National Park, Nepal, India

Newsome et al (2005)

The above list adds to the complexity of 'managing' products and experiences as each focal species and destination will have unique as well as common management dilemmas.

2.2.2 Tourist characteristics

Given the spectrum of tourist-wildlife opportunities, it follows that wildlife tourists are not an homogenous market, there are significant variations in typologies. In America, for example, Eubanks *et al.* (2004) discovered that there is a wide variety of birding sub-

populations ranging from the 'serious' to the 'casual'. It is dangerous therefore to assume that there is a general, uniform and one dimensional profile of wildlife tourists which can inform the strategies for planners and managers at wildlife destinations (Lemelin and Smale 2006). Tourists can vary in experience and outlook from specialist visitors to relatively undiscovered destinations to the larger numbers of mass tourists influenced by the marketing and promotion of wildlife destinations by tour operators.

Therefore some wildlife tourists are lifelong enthusiasts who choose to visit destinations purely to see the indigenous flora and fauna, whilst others merely partake in wildlife watching opportunities whilst on a typical rest and relaxation or independent holiday. For the former category, i.e. the wildlife enthusiasts, Ballantine and Eagles (1994) contend that there are common psychographic characteristics. They tend to possess an environmental ethic, focus on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivations, are biocentric rather than anthropocentric in orientation, they aim to benefit wildlife and the environment, they strive for first hand experience with the natural environment and they expect an educative and interpretative element (Newsome *et al.* 2005). Equally they have a predictable demographic profile in that they are predominantly aged 35-65, with middle-aged, older or retired people the most common, they are reasonably well-educated with a high proportion having post-secondary education and they are relatively affluent usually within the higher income brackets. Some studies also suggest that there are proportionally slightly more females to males (Lemelin and Smale 2006; Muloin 1998).

The participants chosen for this study fit the more dedicated and 'serious' end of the wildlife tourist spectrum. Looking at and studying birds, mammals, butterflies and flowers is the primary motivation for travel. Stebbins (2007) defines six qualities that distinguish 'serious leisure' from 'casual leisure' pursuits. He suggests that to partake in serious leisure (i.e. to be 'devotees' or 'skilled amateurs' (Stebbins 1992)), there must be evidence of:

1. perseverance in the activity;
2. 'career' or experience development;
3. evidence of knowledge, training and development of skills;
4. durable benefits such as a sense of accomplishment, enhancing social image and facilitating social interaction;
5. a unique 'ethos' or social world and idioculture, and finally,
6. a tendency to identify with the chosen pursuit (social identification).

How much this can be applied to wildlife tourism is yet to be ascertained in the recent literature. Clearly there are aspects of the activity which have resonance to this framework given the intensity of some wildlife watching activities such as birding. Bryan

(1979) also characterises tourists according to their level of specialisation. Known as the leisure specialisation continuum, one end of the spectrum is anchored by specialists the other end by generalists. Specialists are people who have a high degree of knowledge about a particular animal (marine mammals, birds, butterflies, bats etc), own expensive equipment in order to view the species (e.g. telescopes, binoculars, camera, field guides) and devote extensive time to specifically participating in wildlife watching activities. Generalists, on the other hand, are interested in a wide variety of wildlife, have limited knowledge and visit a range of attractions where wildlife viewing is just one activity out of many they participate in (Pennisi *et al.* 2004; Pearce and Wilson 1995).

2.2.3 Volume / value and growth

Whilst the definitions of wildlife tourism in Chapter 1 may appear to be concise, this evident overlapping of wildlife tourism activities and tourist profiles with other forms of nature-based tourism (particularly ecotourism), make accurate measurement highly problematic. Nonetheless, it is widely considered that wildlife tourism has and continues to grow, in terms of the number of tour operators and the number of tourists; although the evidence relates principally to distinct forms of wildlife watching (Higginbottom 2004). There are specific sectors of wildlife tourism which are more easily defined and therefore measured such as whale-watching (Hoyt 2001), tourist submarines (Cater and Cater 2001), bird-watching (Cordell and Herbert 2002; Adams *et al.* 1997), safaris (Akama 1996), and scuba-diving and snorkelling (Shackley 2001; Davis and Tisdell 1996).

In terms of measuring economic importance, the critical questions are how much time is spent directly related to wildlife and what was the initial purpose of the trip, i.e. whether watching wildlife on holiday is merely incidental or opportunistic, or whether it is the primary purpose of travel. Figures regarding its volume and value in the global marketplace are disparate compared to other forms of tourism. However, the WTO (2006) claim that wildlife tourism is a significant global tourism sector which is growing by an estimated average of 10% per annum in terms of tourist trips. A 1991 industry estimate valued the wildlife tourism market to be worth £16 billion which has since risen to an estimated £30 billion (WTO cited Mintel 2006). It is anticipated that demand will grow rapidly over the next decade at least at a rate of 2-3% above the global rate of tourism in general (WTO 2006). These figures, whilst interesting, take on greater meaning when examining individual destinations.

According to Eubanks *et al.* (2004) an estimated 66.1 million (33%) of Americans over the age of 16 participated in bird-watching one or more times in the previous 12 months in 2002, up 12% from the previous census in 1982 (US Forest Service 2001). Roe *et al.* (1997) assert that more general wildlife watching in the US (i.e. not just birds) is growing annually by between 25 and 30% whilst a more recent national survey proposed that 77

million adults, 40% of the adult population, participated in wildlife-related recreation, generating \$100 billion in expenditures (Youth 2000) making it the country's number one outdoor recreational activity (Newsome *et al.* 2005).

Some countries such as the Galapagos and Kenya are synonymous with wildlife holidays. The Galapagos Islands attracts over 60,000 tourists each year and contributes in excess of \$100 million to Ecuador's economy (Charles Darwin Research Centre 2001 cited Higginbottom 2004). Akama and Kieti (2003) contend that wildlife is the basis of Kenya's tourism industry and that the viewing of free-ranging wildlife was worth US\$400 million to the national economy (WTO and UNEP 1992).

Moreover, Fredline and Faulkner (2001) analysed Australia's international visitor market, and claim that 18.4% of visitors were influenced to visit Australia to experience native animals (note that only 0.8% were dedicated wildlife tourists who would not have visited otherwise) whilst 67.5% wanted to see animals during their visit and 71.1% actually did see animals.

Finally, a British perspective is exemplified by Visit Scotland (2003) who assert that between 1997 and 2002, there was a 70% increase in the number of visitors using the services of wildlife guides and that an attitude survey conducted in 2001 revealed that 36% of Scotland's tourists stated that watching wildlife is an activity they undertake whilst on holiday. The market is currently estimated as being worth £57 million, and employing over 2,000 people. The number of wildlife tourism operators in the country is also increasing and is up by 37% over the last ten years (Mintel 2006).

Significantly, there has also been a substantial rise in membership of British conservation organisations such as the RSPB (Europe's largest wildlife charity) and the Wildlife Trusts. RSPB membership has increased from just over 900,000 in 1997 to 1,050,000 in 2007 (Spencer 2007); representing a 16.7% increase. In addition, they also recorded 1.5 million visitors to their nature reserves in 2006. Likewise the Wildlife Trusts have seen memberships grow from 588,958 people in 2005, 657,032 people in 2006 and 720,027 people by 2007 with a 9.5% increase on 2006. This reflects an increased marketing effort from the Trusts as well as an underlying public demand and interest for wildlife related leisure activities. (Rawlin 2007).

2.2.4 Explanation for this growth

According to Hughes (2001) this growth is fuelled by an increasing propensity for travel to be seen as a life-enriching experience involving the outdoors and particularly learning about nature. This stems in part from a changing attitude towards the environment

brought about by the development of environmental education in primary and secondary schools, increasing media coverage of environmental issues and wildlife orientated television programmes (Walpole and Thouless 2005).

Many propose that urbanisation and industrialisation has had a profound and romanticising affect on our psychological and physical relationship with nature. (Gossling 2002; Akama 1996; Kellert and Wilson 1993; Urry 1990; MacCannell 1976). Modern land management and agricultural policies often reflect the differing perspectives of urban versus rural populations. Nicolson (2003:34) argues that “urban civilisations have always regarded the rural with a sense of an unreal longing” which is often far from the harsh realities. Classical literature, for example, paints a foreboding picture of the natural world with wild animals, dangerous landscapes and savage people. However, Akama (1996) and Swarbrooke *et al.* (2003) suggest that these deep-rooted cultural psychologies of nature have recently been challenged by tourism and the promotion of wildlife branding and other new and exciting nature-based products. As we become more in tune with nature, (or more in control of it) our ancient and basic fears are reduced, or at least, turned to a sense of ‘adventure’. This certainly has some resonance with new types of adventure and wildlife tourism for example swimming with marine mega fauna such as Great White Sharks, Whale Sharks and other cetaceans (Orams 2000; Shackley 1998; Davis *et al.* 1997; Orams 1997).

Gossling (2002) further suggests that tourism itself has generated a heightened environmental consciousness and an interest in nature. Tourists from industrialised nations are increasingly driven by the motive of seeing unsullied natural areas and wildlife (Shafer and Inglis 2000). This is offset however with the modern disassociation of place which comes with an increase in mobility and the fact that we are no longer dependent on our local environment to provide us with resources. Buckley (2000b) argues that most of the more affluent members of current generations have lived and worked entirely in cities since their childhood. Natural environments, wild-flowers, and wild animals, he states, “are presented to them via the mass media as products available for consumption by the privileged” (2000:31). This urban, middle-class detachment, Reynolds and Braithwaite maintain is driving the increase in demand for wildlife tourism (2001:32); albeit in a romanticised and sanitised setting (cf Markwell 2001).

2.2.5 The historical context of the zoological gaze

In addition to modernity and urbanisation, there is an historical context to this growing industry. Duffus and Dearden (1990:218) claim that history has influenced the demand for wildlife contact in two major ways, first “through the influence of humans on animal species and their habitats, and second, via a cultural conditioning of perceptions that have taken place over the centuries”. The history of contact, they explain has dramatically

increased the abundance of some (useful) species and led to the extinction, extirpation and increasing rarity of others.

Appleton (1975) suggests that aesthetic pleasure for humans may over long periods of time be genetically controlled. Landscapes, he argues, contain both prospect and refuge. Landscapes that are favourable for human refuge elicit pleasurable feelings and a sense of well-being. Duffus and Dearden (1990) apply the same concept to wildlife. Species can be categorised by eating preferences: either humans would eat the animals or animals would eat humans. In either case a feeling of arousal was the result. Along a continuum, it was either the animals most likely to eat humans or those with the highest value for human food that would elicit the highest response. Even now, either in zoos or in the wild, the species that often provokes the most interest are the predators, for example, lions, tigers and bears (Tremblay, 2002; Woods, 2000; Norberg 1999).

Alongside this evolutionary conditioning and understanding of our environment, many species have been recipients of recent changes in attitude. Such changes are often exemplified in modern debates regarding hunting as a leisure activity, whaling, the harp seal hunt off Newfoundland and the controversy of keeping cetaceans such as dolphins and killer whales in aquariums (Curtin and Wilkes 2007; Hughes, 2001; Orams 2001; Franklin 1999).

Franklin (1999) explains these recent changes by exploring the socio-historical development which underpins modern involvement such as concern for particular species. From the 16th Century, new exploration and discoveries encouraged interest in natural and cultural differences and phenomena. By the 17th Century, a market for exotic animals emerged for private collection as well as macabre public displays in travelling shows where a large number of animals were crammed into a small cage as a curios spectacle (Adler 1989; Anderson 1978). Public delight was based upon “strangeness; grotesqueness; dangerousness and ‘otherworldliness’” (Franklin 1999:65). These travelling menageries “created a liminal zoo into which people stepped from their normative day to day world and were suspended in a half-way space between culture and nature” (Franklin 1999:65).

The major change from travelling menageries to organised zoos was marked by science and education. Colonial discoveries became less the object of wonder and more the content of science. Initially for an elite market and later for the popular market (similarly with wildlife tourism), zoos were about social progress, safe diversions and approved recreation and leisure. Initially they were more like gardens than museums, more artifice than nature. Information was scarcely more than labels on plants and trees.

Franklin argues that the cultural status of animals at that time was first leisure and secondly education. He claims that animals were viewed in a condescending manner evidenced by the particularly infantile interpretation which he argues was similar to the way Europeans of the time viewed others. Until fairly recently in history, it was quite usual for non-Europeans to be represented as equally infantile and animal-like. The zoological gaze, he suggests, is not only social and cultural but also historically specific.

2.2.6 The performance

The concept of 'performance' is also linked to the notion of spectacle and zoological gaze. Tourist satisfaction is very often related to the performance as well as presence of the focal species. For example wild animal performances relate to their behaviour such as hunting, feeding young, nest building and gathering food. By being active participants, animals become agents of the tourist experience. Agency is defined as a "relational achievement involving the creative presence of organic beings in the fabrics of everyday living" (Whatmore 2002:26). For example, nature arguably exerts agency over places; trees, flowers, animals and the topography are active co-constituents of place-making (Cloke and Jones 2001). Similarly focal species, for example, the whales and dolphins of Kaikoura, New Zealand, the big five African safari animals (elephant, lion, rhino, buffalo and leopards) and animal migrations are enrolled by tour operators due to their predictable presence and ability to perform (Cloke and Perkins 2005). Place, wildlife and tourism thus become inter-related and assembled and marketed for the 'commodified' performance. This is certainly true of many of the prominent and popular wildlife destinations.

From a social perspective, it has been claimed that the popularity of these new wildlife tourism venues have, in some instances, desensitised viewers to nature's natural rhythms and instead have customised tourists to the temporary, decontextualised exposure of exotic places and wildlife (Desmond 1999). Hermer (2002) refers to the concept of 'emparkment' which is the process of 'manufacturing an 'ordered natural experience' within protected areas. There are many obvious examples of this such as safari parks, national parks, game reserves, and the Churchill Wildlife Management Area to name only a few. These are contrived tourist spaces.

Cloke and Perkins (2005) affirm that wildlife tourism often represents a mix of the zoo and spectacle experience. An example of this is where food provisioning is used to attract focal species. According to Shackley (1998: 335), this "adds a new dimension to the tourist experience through the creation of zoo-like rather than wilderness experiences". Such examples mark mediated pathways into foreign and exotic animal cultures presenting opportunities for a cross-over from 'our' material world into 'their' natural one. Lemelin (2006) maintains that these manufactured spaces are where wildlife encounters

are 'consumed' and then evidence of visitation is gathered and 'trophitised' by the gathering of digital and photographic collectables which when shared with others reconfirms the social construction of wild spaces and their inhabitants. A further significant influencer in this social construction of nature is the growing number of television programmes dedicated to wildlife. These have an enormous influence on creating consumer demand for wildlife experiences (Walpole and Thouless 2005).

Television documentaries, in particular, have come in for some hard criticism from writers such as Mabey (2003) who see the natural history documentary as a "dominionistic, anthropocentric ransacking of wildlife's innermost secrets, distorting sensational portrayals of life in the wild dominated only by the hunt and kill similar to the scenes of human violence that are in the tabloids" (2003:56). In concentrating on the 'blood, claws and reproduction', it ignores how most creatures spend the majority of their lives, resting, grooming, playing and sleeping. It also has the effect of deadening our imaginations of nature. Instead Mabey (2003) likens the wildlife documentary to displaying the natural world as if it were an '18th century cabinet of curiosities' (Franklin 1999). Moreover the documentary presenter is typified as a messenger between the ecosystem out there and us over here. Current blue-chip documentaries such as Planet Earth avoid any sense that human beings impinge on the natural world or that wild creatures have any impact upon us. Such portrayals deeply affect tourist perceptions of the relationship between animal and human interconnectedness, or lack of it, and they are another example of the commodification of nature.

Tourism as the commodification of places and experiences is therefore an explicit and common theme of the tourism literature. Cities, landscapes, nature, wildlife, history and cultures are merely consumed by tourists in the form of a superficial visit, a collection of photographs and a number of tourist souvenirs. Franklin (2003:229) contends that this provides us with an impression of "shallow, symbolic consumerism" but asks us to consider whether there is more substance to it than this; whether wildlife tourism leaves psychological residues other than mere souvenirs. This requires the investigation into the human dimensions of wildlife experiences and our 'relationship' with the animal kingdom.

2.3 Human dimensions of wildlife

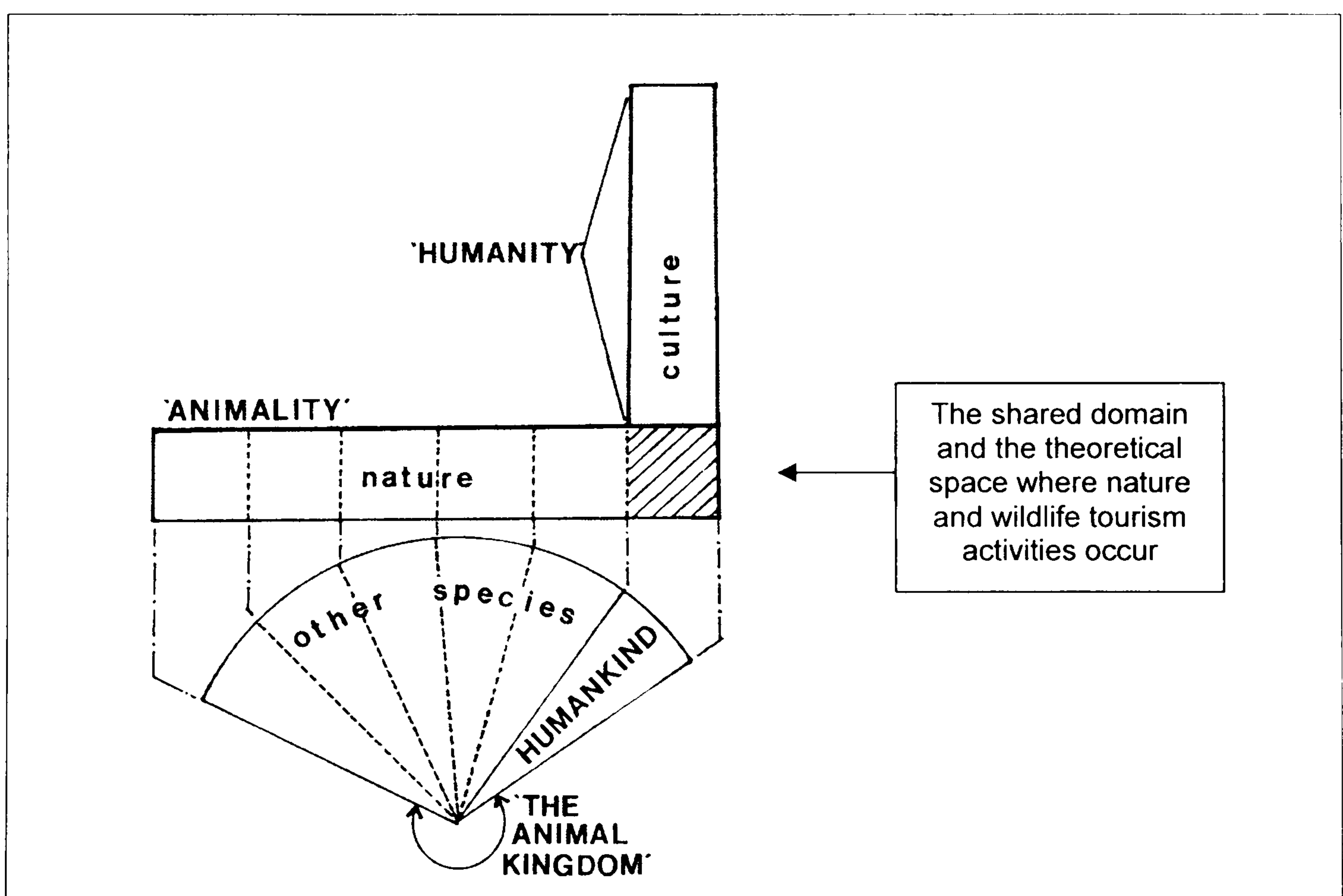
Throughout history man has coexisted with animal populations and has exhibited a number of different relationships with them. As Ingold (1988) explains people have killed and eaten animals, or on rare occasions been killed or eaten by them. We have included animals in our social groups either as domestic pets or captive slaves, and in so doing we have observed animal characteristics and used these as baseline from which to compare

our own human attributes. Therefore, “what it means to be human can never be determined without the animal other” (Emel 1995:708).

2.3.1 The attraction of wild animals

Rolston (1987) suggests that wild animals are a source of fascination because they are more than mere objects. Wild animals are subjects that provide “a window into which we can look and from which someone looks out” (1987:26). This begs us to “consider what exactly is an ‘animal’?” (Ingold 1988). Both Midgely (1988) and Tapper (1988) discuss the contradictions of the terms ‘animal’ and ‘beast’; one benign and inclusive of humanity, the other negative and exclusive. These contradictions, Ingold claims stem from our propensity to switch back and forth between two quite different approaches to animality; “as a domain or kingdom including animal humans and as a state or condition, opposed to humanity” (1988:4) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: The two views of animality



Curtin (2005): Modified from Ingold (1988:4)

Whilst this model has its origins in social anthropology, it is also a usual contribution to the study of wildlife tourism. The shaded area represents shared instincts, behaviours and spaces, and positions nature and animality as an important part of human culture. Wildlife tourism resides in this shaded domain with humankind seeking communion with nature by glimpsing the shared but often secret spaces of the animal kingdom. It also goes some way towards explaining why there is a modern tendency to treat animals in an anthropomorphic way as we share a common domain. Moreover, we share the basic

principles of survival. Mabey (2003) asserts that the overriding relationship we have with nature and wildlife is through our emotions. It is through feelings and imagination that we experience kinship and connectedness; the pain of separation and extinction, the renewal of spring and birth, the plight of raising the next generation, and through all this we make sense of our place in the wider world.

Similarly, Franklin (1999) proposes that animals are uniquely positioned relative to humans in that they are “both like us, but not us” (1999:9). Unlike trees, plants and rocks, they have the capacity to represent the differentiations, characters and dispositions of any given society. Tremblay (2002) also implies the importance of human likeness, “or ranking on a phylogenetic scale placing humans at the top” (2002:168) as a way of explaining deeper attraction towards some types of animals. The human-like characteristics usually refer to the extent to which tourists can empathise with animal behaviour or attributes.

2.3.2 Anthropomorphism and attitudes towards wildlife

Tapper (1988) warns that in this investigation of ‘animal humanity’, there is a danger of assuming either of the polar opinions of a) restricting personhood to human beings or b) to simply transplanting into animal minds the thoughts and feelings we recognise in ourselves, laden as they are with cultural as well as species-specific bias. According to Ingold (1988) cultural anthropologists point out that the idea of man’s control over animality is part and parcel of a more inclusive ideology of human mastery, or appropriation of nature whose roots lie deep in the traditions of Western thought. People of other cultures do not share this view of human superiority. Ingold (1988) contends that the Western cult of conservation suggests that it should be man who determines the conditions of life for animals and that even those technically ‘wild’ shall be ‘managed’. This is exemplified by Africa’s game reserves.

Franklin (1999) convincingly argues that the concept of modernity and post-modernity can be applied to wildlife. In some Western societies post-modern relations with animals are characterised by a stronger emotional and moral content, a greater zoological range of involvement and a demand for regulation and order, whereas modern relationships were defined merely as gaze, spectacle and curiosity of the ‘exotic other’. Zoos, before post-modernisation, tended to convey prisons, sadness, separation and punishment; contravening the current high value placed on freedom. He therefore does not see anthropomorphism in a negative light, rather he suggests that people are increasingly aware of the extent to which they share their life-worlds with members of other species. They are actively exploring possibilities for empathy, mutuality and coexistence.

Understanding people's attitudes towards wildlife is an essential component of the management of wildlife-orientated recreation (Teel *et al.* 2003; Bright *et al.* 2000; Fulton *et al.* 1996). Here it is asserted that one of the most important distinctions is how humans perceive themselves in relation to the natural environment. Many pre-industrialised societies believe(d) their fate was in the hands of nature. The environment provides for society and society must reciprocate. Conversely modern nature conservationists in post-industrial society believe the environment to be fragile and in need of human protection (Manfredo and Dayer 2004). This ideological separation of humans and nature and the view of domination instead of subjugation marks the transition of worldviews from hunter-gatherer society to pastoral society (Ingold 1994).

However, post-industrialisation and post-modernity arguably reflects a step in a different direction. Inglehart and Baker (2000) propose a theory of culture change in modern societies which reflect shifting need states. In industrialised societies the prevailing motivational forces are directed towards satisfying basic human needs such as shelter, security and food. Following economic growth and affluence, satisfying basic needs no longer predominate. Affluent societies place increasing emphasis on quality of life and self-expression and a shift from materialism to post materialism. Teel *et al.* (2003) took these value shifts and found that materialists were more likely to emphasise the use of wildlife whereas those with post-materialist values were more likely to have wildlife protectionist views. This hypothesis supports other studies (Bandara and Tisdell 2003) which show how rural attitudes towards wildlife differ to urban attitudes who tend to be more protectionist. Furthermore Manfredo *et al.* (2003) also show a positive correlation in US citizens between 'materialists' (who hold dominant views over nature) and lower income groups, urbanisation, lower education levels and residential mobility. These findings are particularly interesting when one considers the typical post-materialist market for 'serious' wildlife tourism products, i.e. educated, urbanised and affluent, as it provides a potential insight into their wildlife value orientations as well as their motivational search for new, authentic tourism experiences (i.e. they are more likely to have pro-protectionist wildlife values).

2.3.3 The search and the gaze

The early musings of MacCannell (1976) and Krippendorf (1984) suggest that a tourist experience is rather tragic, somehow vaguely pathetic in character. The tourist according to MacCannell is out-searching the world for the 'real', the 'true' and 'authentic' to compensate for the alienated state of his or her own life caused by industrialisation, urbanisation and materialism. Indeed MacCannell (1973;1976) was the first to introduce the concept of authenticity to tourism studies. However, as Wang (1999) explains, his application of authenticity is derived from a museum-linked notion of authentic (genuine) artefacts and applied to toured objects rather than the tourist experience itself.

Handler and Saxton (1988:243) refer to an authentic experience as one in which individuals feel themselves to be in touch both with the 'real' world and with their 'real' selves". According to Wang (1999:351), certain toured objects, such as nature, are irrelevant to McCannell's sense of authenticity, however "nature is surely one of the major ways of experiencing a 'real' self and a 'real world'. In other words what nature involves is an *existential authenticity* rather than the authenticity of toured objects. The work based on experiencing wilderness confirms this contention (Markwell 2001; Fredrickson and Anderson 1999; Patterson *et al.* 1998). The wilderness, and being close to nature, has a very powerful and moving affect, namely "a great sense of freedom and release from having the opportunity to go out and explore" (Fredrickson and Anderson 1999:30). There is also an element of rediscovering the sights and sounds of nature and a realisation that many people do not experience the 'natural world' in their every day lives: "to see the stars at night"; "to feel the weather shifting before a storm"; and "to experience periods of solitude and self-reflection" (1999:31).

In his study of nature tourists in Borneo, Markwell (2001) concluded that the experience of nature within an organised tour is usually a highly mediated one, yet the predominant theme in tourism brochures implies the opposite, that such experiences will allow the tourist a closer involvement with nature than is usual in their everyday lives. In reality, he suggests, the tourist experience is often marked with physical boundaries that demarcate the wild from the tourist such as boardwalks and viewing platforms (similar in principle to the concept of 'emparkment' (Hermer 2002)). However, when tourists were experiencing places relatively free of mediation provided by the tourist industry, he found evidence of a "greater congruence of mind and body, coupled with a sense of discovery, fantasy, imagination and immense enjoyment" (2001:54).

Similarly, Patterson *et al.* (1998) refers to the concept of 'situated freedom' (1998:425), i.e. "that there is structure in the environment (nature) itself that sets boundaries on what can be perceived or experienced, but that within those boundaries tourists are free to experience the world in highly individual, unique and variable ways." This suggests that the physical attributes of the setting can facilitate or restrain the types of possible experiences; thus the place itself structures the nature of the experience that tourists receive. This implies that the importance of the habitat (place) itself is central to the concept of enjoying wildlife in their natural setting. At times the habitat is purported to be a more moving experience than the wildlife sightings themselves (Markwell 2001; Ryan *et al.* 2000; Fredrickson and Anderson 1999).

The discussion of place and 'placelessness' has a significant contribution to the understanding of these natural tourist spaces and wildlife. Relph (1976) is primarily concerned with the ways we experience, create and trivialise the environments in which

we live and urges researchers to take a phenomenological perspective to understand the deeply felt involvement that we, as humans, have with a place. Phenomenology, he suggests, is a philosophical tradition that takes the phenomena of the lived-world of immediate experience as its starting point and then seeks to clarify these in a rigorous way by observation and description. Part of the lived-world is lived-space, or as Relph refers to it, existential space. Existential space is not merely a passive space waiting to be experienced, but is constantly being created and remade by human activities suggesting an avid emphasis on human agency, which for wildlife tourism, manifests itself as place marketing and product development.

According to Relph, the identity of places is made up of three components: the static physical setting or topography, the activities and the meanings; together these manifest the spirit of place that is “subtle, nebulous and not easily analysed in formal and conceptual terms” (1976:48). Moreover, it is socially, culturally and individually defined and depends on the degree of involvement the consumer has with his/her environment. Relph (1976) refers to, as *insideness* and *outsideness*, i.e. to be ‘inside’ a place is to belong to it and identify with it. From the inside you experience a place, are surrounded by it and become part of it, whereas from the outside you look upon it as a traveller and will therefore impose different constructed meanings upon it. Existential outsideness implies that tourism places are purely for activities (tourism) rather than places of significant centres (i.e. home). Following this line of thinking, it also brings into question how wildlife tourists might view the wildlife they see closer to home. Does it, for example, have a similar appeal to the wildlife they see in tourist spaces, or is too commonplace at home to be deemed worthy and interesting?

Relph (1976) also introduces the concept of authenticity to existential space (existential authenticity); the central tenet being that an inauthentic attitude to place is essentially no sense of place or ‘placelessness’. An example of this might be the modern global village, identikit tourist resorts and featureless shopping malls. An inauthentic attitude to place, he claims “is nowhere more clearly expressed than in tourism (1976:83) where tourism itself becomes more important than the place visited or the objects seen”. Indeed Rasmussen (1964) makes the observation that tourists simply tick off the starred attractions in their guidebooks without really experiencing the place at all thus gazing upon places that other people have decided are worthy of visitation. Could the same be said about wildlife tourism: is wildlife merely a way to differentiate places and products for the operator and simply the ticking off, or listing, of sought after focal species for the consumer? Moreover, what makes particular species worthy of ticking off?

Existential authenticity therefore provides a new theoretical underpinning for the study of wildlife tourist experiences. It denotes a special state of ‘being’ in which one is true to oneself; this acts as a counterbalance to the loss of true self in our public roles in

Western society (Berger 1973). It involves personal or inter-subjective feelings activated by the liminal process of tourist activities. Away from everyday constraints, people feel themselves to be much more authentic and more freely self-expressed than in everyday life. It is not the toured object that is necessarily authentic but the experience itself; however temporal.

On the other hand, constructivists, claim that authenticity or reality is best seen as the results of our interpretation and construction of events and this is to do with our perspective based upon our gender, status, class, upbringing or social conditioning. Authenticity becomes a projection of tourists' own beliefs, expectations, preferences, stereotyped images onto toured objects, places and 'others' (Bruner 1991; Duncan 1978). These are socially constructed and are referred to as 'symbolic authenticity'. For a social construct of wildlife tourism 'others' refers to the animal kingdom where wild animals become symbolic of authentic wilderness, of particular places and Mother Nature herself.

It has long been argued that we detail and mediate our experience of the natural landscape, the primitiveness of the exotic, the drama of history and the idea of paradise as being based on mythological constructions deeply rooted in our own cultural history (Harrison 2003; Markwell 1998; Rojek 1997; Selwyn 1996). For example, in Britain, the notion of nature and countryside is totally constructed. Grassy valleys and hillside, whilst perceived as natural beauty, have nothing natural about them (Ingold 2001). As Franklin (1999:59) notes they are "eroded and wasted, and look beautiful to us only because we are heirs to a Romantic movement that developed an aesthetic taste for bare and rugged hills." A natural landscape might look "messy" but would be infinitely richer in flora and fauna (Ingold 2001) and would appeal to post-modern sensibilities (Franklin 1999).

Finally, the radical exclusion of wild animals from everyday human lives has been claimed to disrupt the development of our cognition, personality and inner life (Kellert and Wilson 1993; Shepherd 1993). Thus, in contemporary society, people want more, not fewer, contacts with animals, but they want these contacts to be with as many different kinds of animals as possible, not just with traditionally 'loveable' varieties (Ingold 2001). According to Franklin (1999:86), this is driven by a genuine curiosity and concern to appreciate animals for who they are, as animals, not as surrogate humans. supporting a post-structuralist sociology that recognises that social relations are not exclusively human relations (Ingold 2001). Reed (1998) suggests that nature is valued for its intrinsic properties. In relating to our natural environment, we do not so much impose our own meanings onto things, as discover the significance for ourselves of the meanings those things already have.

This is exemplified by Frederickson and Anderson (1999) who explain their respondents' sense of awe and wonderment at the natural world: the exhilaration of seeing, or just

hearing, wildlife in its natural setting added to the excitement of being in an unfamiliar territory. There is “an intense and pressing recognition of one’s insignificance and the heightened recognition of the inter-relatedness of all life forms. Above all, a mixture of awe and thrill of being exposed to the sheer powers of nature and a reawakened sensitivity towards the sights and sounds of nature” (1999: 26).

Furthermore, the opportunity to reflect on, analyse and share experiences immediately after an intense nature / wildlife interaction seem to consolidate experiences and transform them into cherished memories (Patterson *et al.* 1998). Social-interaction with like-minded individuals is thus a key theme identified by the literature. Anecdotal evidence suggests that wildlife experiences add value to the lives of visitors long after their on-site activity. It leads to pleasant memories which can be shared with significant others. Taking photographs or cine film is a common way to capture the experience and to facilitate this sharing (Markwell 2001; Ryan *et al.* 2000; Schanzel and McIntosh 2000; Patterson *et al.* 1998).

2.4 Wildlife experiences: the nature of the lived experience

The lived experiences of tourists in the academic literature has up until recently had a small role. Where it has been the object of study, it has been mostly for marketing or management purposes rather than an intrinsic interest in what tourist experiences mean in the life of a tourist (Suvantola, 2002).

Wildlife experiences can be defined as “the mental, spiritual and psychological outcomes” resulting from the wildlife tourism experience (Schanzel and McIntosh, 2000:37), i.e. the ultimate value that people place on such experiences, or as Dilthey (1985:59) describes it, “the emotional reverberence of an experience”. DeMares and Krycka (1998) further claim that wild animal encounters trigger peak experiences and transcendent consciousness; transcendent because the persona of the experiencer is not dominant, almost that the experience, always spontaneous, is so intense that it overrides the normal state of ‘being’. Again, the animal-triggered peak has been largely unstudied despite the fact that wild animals have long been recognised to be among the triggers for peak experience (Fredrickson and Anderson 1999; Laski, 1968).

However, *experience* itself is a complex and profound concept to explore. It appears to exist in a blend of past and presence. Dilthey (1985: 263) claims “that a lived experience is not something perceived or represented; it is not to give to me, but the reality of lived experience is there for me because I have a reflexive awareness of it, because I possess it immediately as belonging to me. Only in thought does it become objective.” Van Manen (1990) concurs that experiences have this temporal structure, they can never be

fully grasped in their immediacy. Instead they gather significance as we reflect on and give memory to them. Moreover, they gain hermeneutic significance as we (reflectively) remember them.

2.4.1 Psychological benefits

The memories of wildlife encounters can then become interesting narratives of 'out of the ordinary' experiences. There have been substantial studies which indicate how tourists benefit from these enriching close encounters (Bulbeck 2005; Cloke and Perkins 2005; Valentine *et al.* 2004; Webb and Drummond 2001; DeMares and Krycka 1998; Muloin 1998). Findings suggest that watching wildlife promotes both cognitive and affective benefits such as an increase in knowledge and awareness, pleasure, curiosity, sense of wonderment, privilege and amazement which together promote a lasting positive mood (Bird 2007).

However, more has been written about the wider emotional and psychological benefits of experiences in nature than watching wildlife *per se*. White and Hendee (2000) proclaim that there is a correlation between wilderness and the development of self, development of community and spiritual development which implies a profound sense of connection to nature, the larger universe, a higher power, a feeling of oneness and a connection to 'other' as opposed to connection to 'self'. These, they assert, are useful wilderness benefit classification schemes.

Spiritual development as a benefit of nature experiences has received relatively little attention (Bulbeck 2005), although there is evidence that there is an increasing recognition of the importance of such 'hard to determine values' in the management of nature-based tourist attractions (Driver *et al.* 1996). Investigation into the spiritual aspects of wildlife tourism is hampered because spiritual experiences are intensely personal and often inexpressible. Moreover the personal meanings of the term 'spirituality' make it operationally difficult to define and therefore investigate (Cloke and Perkins 2005; White and Hendee 2000). Whilst attitudes towards nature and behavioural characteristics are more easy to plot.

In the field of environmental psychology, Kals *et al.* (2007) studied two concepts: 'love of nature' which reflects a romantic affinity and at oneness with nature; and 'interest in nature' which is its cognitive counterpart based upon an avid interest in "the functioning of flora, fauna and the variety of natural phenomena" (2007:182). They conclude that one can have an interest in nature without having an affinity for it. Furthermore, they confirm the emotional affinity toward nature as a possible motivation to want to protect it especially when the nature-based activity incorporates a multi-sensual experience, i.e.

involves all five senses. This suggests that activities such as wildlife watching where there is a high level of interpretation and sensory awareness, i.e. not only a focus on the ocular (Lemelin 2006), but where attention is paid to sound-scapes, smells and touch, will have a greater influence on promoting environmental awareness and protectionary behaviours (also see Orams 1997).

Although emotional affinity toward nature is not a firmly established scientific construct there is a firm bed of literature which discusses the effects of direct encounters with nature and the resulting emotional bonds or cognitive interest in nature and conservation (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). Langeheine and Lehmann (1986) have shown that positive concrete experiences of nature explain willingness and behaviours to protect nature especially when these values are reinforced by family influences. Therefore, benefits derived by tourists can translate into benefits for wildlife as people begin to adopt more pro-environmental behaviours although Sorice *et al.* (2006) and Schanzel and McIntosh (2000) warn that this cannot always be assumed.

In addition to these cognitive and affective benefits, there are a number of physical attributes which have been identified as a key feature of the visitor experience. Duffus (1988) found that Orca whale watchers ranked close observation as the second most important aspect of their whale watch trip (see also Muloin 1998; Pearce and Wilson 1995). Similarly, Schanzel and McIntosh's (2000) research revealed satisfaction stemmed from 'the closer the better' and the most frequently mentioned cause of dissatisfaction was not being able to get close enough.

Moreover, Schanzel and McIntosh (2000) confirm that authenticity, the natural setting, small tour groups, presence of additional wildlife, education, interpretation and conservation, simplicity and lack of commercialisation rank highly important. Conversely inappropriate tourist behaviour (avid photographing), large group sizes, and particularly different motivations of different visitors are cause for concern.

Finally, some studies (Orams 2002; Davis *et al.* 1997; Orams 1997) have indicated that the 'best' experiences involve some type of interaction with wildlife. This is particularly noticeable in the marine wildlife sector where there is a fairly recent shift between gaining enjoyment from merely seeing marine mammals to being in the water with them, swimming alongside them, feeding them, even physically making contact with them (Curtin and Garrod 2008; Curtin 2006). At Ningaloo Reef, this prompts emotional descriptions of the interaction with whale sharks relating to 'peace' and 'calm'; 'grace' and 'beauty' (Davis *et al.* 1997:266). This desire for 'closeness', even physical contact, with wildlife has yet to be fully explained by the literature. It seems to epitomise a soft, romantic, yet typically anthropomorphic view of the animal kingdom.

Nevertheless, the desire for tactile experiences can be seen as a way of making a connection. Touch, both human to human (Modrcin-Talbott *et al.* 2003) and human to animal (Shiloe *et al.* 2003) has profound psychological, physiological and behavioural effects. In reaching out and touching another being, we make contact and affirm bonds with others. Touch is seen to benefit infants and elderly patients and stroking animals is known to have several health benefits. According to Franklin (1999) pet ownership has become prominent in society since the 1960s due to raised awareness of the health and therapeutic benefits of pet keeping.

Research suggests that stroking pets is associated with a better recovery from illness and lower instances of depression (Anderson *et al.* 1992; Garrity *et al.* 1988; Akiyama *et al.* 1986). Further papers explore the use and value of pets in child development particularly in respect of gaining empathy for others, containing aggression and dealing with loss (Rowan and Beck 1994; Levinson 1980). Touch is also a way of exploring and understanding our immediate environment. It follows, therefore, to reach out to safe-orientated animals, or to crave close proximity, may be an instinctive human behaviour.

Finally, despite this desire for close encounters, wildlife tourists can also exhibit cognitive dissonance (Curtin and Wilkes 2007) and concern for the animals they are watching. According to Foxhall *et al.* (1998) cognitive dissonance is a condition reflecting a tendency toward mental unease which occurs when an individual holds two attitudes, ideas or beliefs which are not in harmony with each other.

There is an incredibly fine line between watching wild animals and disturbing them from their daily activities. Some studies have specifically asked tourists about their concerns regarding potential disturbance (Finkler and Higham 2004; Kind-Keppel *et al.* 1999). Visitors often want to encounter wildlife at a close proximity, but acknowledge the potential for adverse impacts on the animal as a consequence. Blewett (1993:1) refers to this as the wildlife 'watcher's paradox'; a conundrum that demands appropriate management strategies.

2.5 Management strategies

Orams (1996) argues that management techniques fall into three main categories. First, physical controls to 'harden' the natural environment, such as barriers, boardwalks, paths, and carefully placed tourist facilities. These influence visitor behaviour and reduce visitor impacts by physically separating visitors from the natural environment or by influencing the spatial distribution of visitors (Orams 1996; Shackley 1996). Second, direct controls such as rules, regulations, permits and charges to prohibit or restrict detrimental human behaviour. (e.g banning certain activities, setting speed limits,

ensuring operators are licensed, closing areas and enforcing controls with fines, forced removal, arrests and prosecutions). Finally, indirect mechanisms are used to seek appropriate behaviour on a voluntary basis via environmental education programmes. These three management techniques can be compressed into 'ecological' and 'human' categories

According to Morrison (1995), the first and fundamental characteristic of wildlife tourism management is to ensure that the tourism activity does not harm the focal species or its habitat. This requires an understanding of the habitat and the focal species. However, as Kazmierow *et al.* (2000:1) contends "quantitative data on wildlife population dynamics and behaviour are vital, but not alone sufficient, for the sound management of wildlife/tourist interactions". Rather it is the human dynamic of wildlife tourism that needs to be incorporated, planned for and managed.

Pearce (1994 cited Young 1999:403) explains that "we are at the beginning of an expanded view of world tourism where the landscape of the human mind is the one which needs the most careful nurturing and management attention". This desire to 'interact' with nature and particularly animals in their natural setting underpins the second characteristic that concerns the management of human behaviour; namely how to manage the growing number of visitors who descend on fragile habitats (Morrison 1995).

In practice, however, these two seemingly distinct aspects of visitor management, ecological and human, overlap considerably. One informs the other and whatever the environmental management and planning framework endorsed by the destination or site, the outcomes will influence the visitor experience. For example visitor impact management whilst having an environmental management agenda, is centred upon three possible visitor-based actions: 1) influencing the amount or type of visitor use; 2) influencing the location of visitor use, and 3) influencing tourist behaviour (Chin *et al.* 2000; Marion and Rogers 1994). Using these three basic actions as a framework, this section will explore these important aspects of wildlife tourism management but first it must consider how the impacts may be determined.

2.5.1 Management philosophies and determining impacts

Given the concerns about the impacts of wildlife tourism on wildlife, management of tourist activities is of critical importance to conservation and sustainability. Yet as stated early on in this review (pg 11) due to the wide range of activities, species and habitats, it is not possible to apply any fixed management formula (Higginbottom *et al.* 2003). Instead management frameworks must be site and species specific. However there are a number of general issues and strategies, or planning frameworks, which can be employed in wildlife tourism destinations.

According to Newsome *et al.* (2005:177) tourism planning frameworks such as the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) and Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) “allow managers to define visitor expectations and attractions, exercise controls over the tourism experience, aid in the definition of acceptable conditions, and set the course of implementation of management actions”. First managers, tour operators and conservationists should have agreed management objectives and have in place indicators and standards that specify when the objectives are achieved. Currently ‘Limits of Acceptable Change’ (LAC) is deemed to be the most useful indicator of a site’s carrying capacity (Herath 2002; McCool and Lime 2001; Pigram and Jenkins 1999). LAC was developed by Stankey *et al.* (1985) as a management process which transfers the focus from the supposed cause (visitor numbers and behaviour) to the desired conditions, i.e. the biophysical state of the resource. It also assumes that a change in nature is the norm and to be expected. The question then becomes how much and what type of change can be tolerated? When the change becomes unacceptable, then managerial action is called for.

An LAC approach assesses the likely impact of an activity on a destination, agreeing in advance what degree of change will be tolerated, it then monitors the activities and impacts on a regular basis, and decides what actions will be taken if these quality standards are violated (Herath 2002). Ahn *et al.* (2002) and Pigram and Jenkins (1999) outline the sequence of steps that help to define a set of desired conditions for any area when change is imminent, as well as the management actions necessary to maintain or restore those conditions.

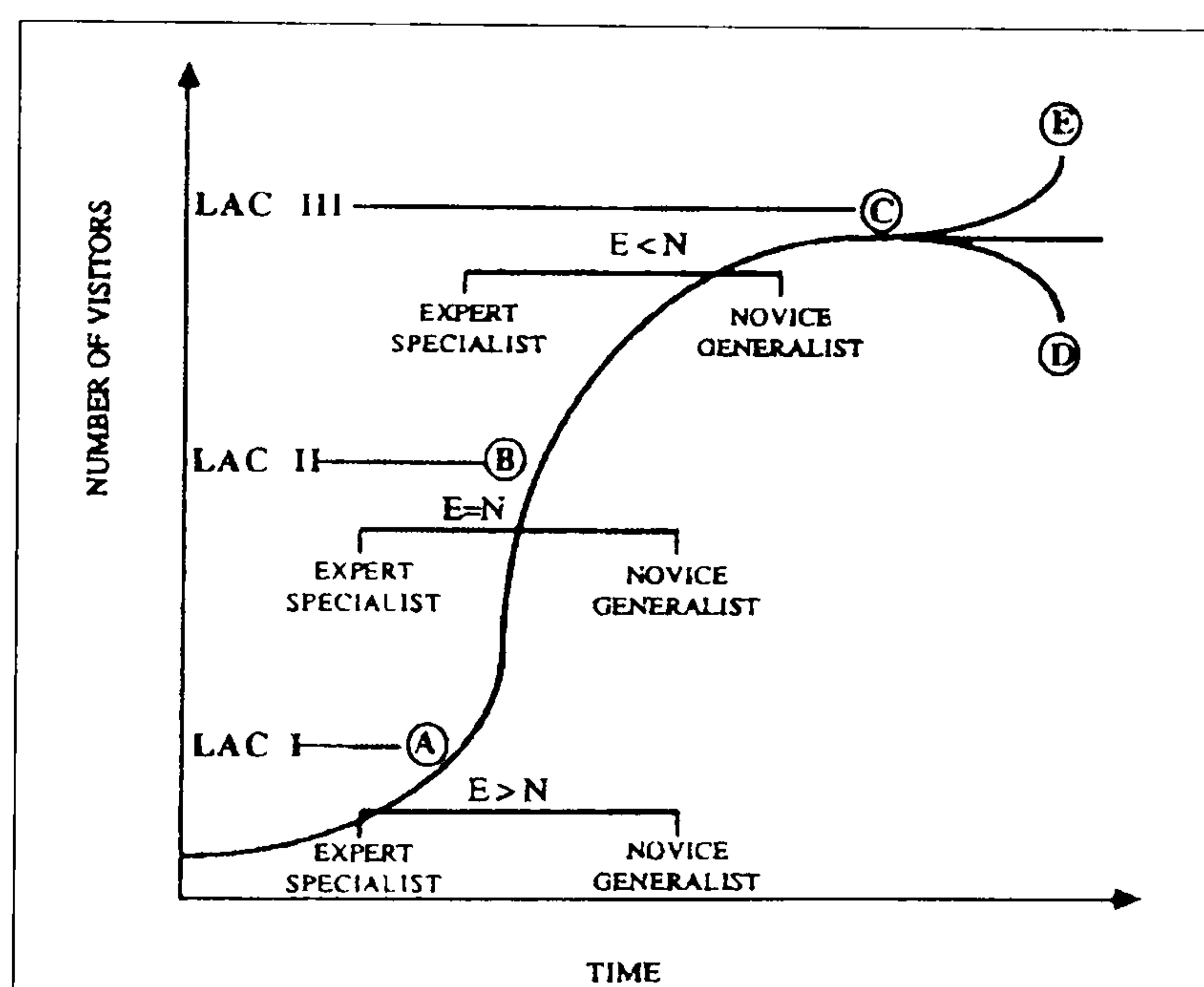
The first stage in the process is to undertake careful site analysis to establish base line data regarding ecological, social and economic conditions. Only from this standpoint can area specific issues and concerns be identified and a better understanding of the recreation environment gained. In consultation with key stakeholders / managers’ acceptable and achievable thresholds are identified and defined by a set of measurable indicators. The inventory data is important for setting realistic and attainable standards (benchmarks) for specifying acceptable conditions, or the limits beyond which change will become unacceptable. Management actions are identified and evaluated in order to achieve the desired outcomes. Finally, these management actions are implemented and closely monitored based upon the desired thresholds.

Common indicators for the impacts of wildlife on tourism include species presence / absence, abundance, diversity, breeding success, behaviour or health or attributes of the habitat (Higginbottom *et al.* 2003). However, it must be noted that although the species selected for monitoring will often be those that are the object of tourism, in some cases adverse impacts may be more pronounced for species that interact with it as competitors,

predators or prey. Moreover, accurate assessment of changes is often costly and difficult, if not impossible, to measure (Vaske *et al.* 2003). In addition to monitoring impacts on the species, tourist behaviour must also be noted in terms of volumes, tourist characteristics and behaviour, group sizes, noise and frequency. This ensures that variations in wildlife variables can be related to any variation in visitor variables (Higginbottom *et al.* 2003).

In a similar principle, Duffus and Dearden (1990) combined variations in visitors (tourist typologies) with Butler's (1980) destination life cycle model to contend that wildlife tourists cannot be considered an homogenous population despite the fact that they are all motivated by the same stimulus (see Figure 3). Instead wildlife tourist typologies present a sequential change in the type of visitors to a site from the first, exploratory specialist visitors to the mass hordes influenced by promotion and marketing. These changes then present potential negative implications for the habitat and focal species.

Figure 3: The relationship of user specialisation and site evolution



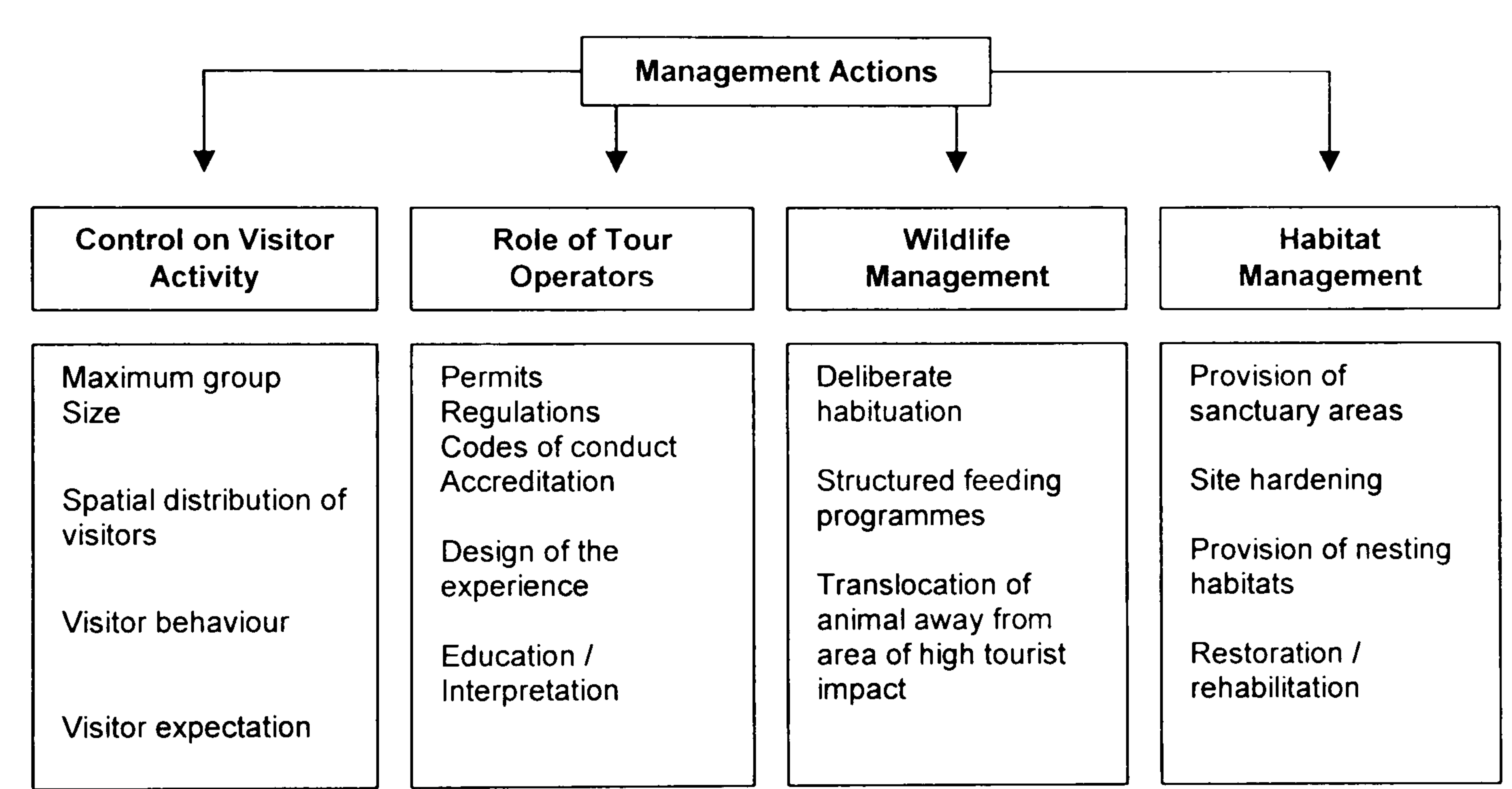
(Source: Duffus and Dearden 1990:223)

Initially a site attracts exploratory, specialist, enthusiasts who require little infrastructure or interpretive facilities. They are knowledgeable and few in number, therefore requiring minimal management. As awareness of the site grows, a less ambitious user will dominate the visitor profile. Their presence requires the development of more facilities, more mediation and increased pressure on the ecosystem. Finally, as a result of marketing, the wildlife attraction moves towards a more generalist market who rely heavily on new infrastructure and who create a heavy burden on the environment. It is at this point, i.e. point C in Figure 3 that is the most likely to cause irreparable damage to the wildlife resource. Higham (1998) applied this 'expert-novice continuum' to tourism at the Northern Royal Albatross Colony in New Zealand. He too concluded that wildlife

tourism attractions evolve over time to the detriment of both the visitor experience and the focal wildlife species. Moreover, novice visitors require extra policing in terms of noise, behaviour and camera flashes; a serious impact given the fragility of some wildlife tourism sites.

Thus having considered and ascertained the impacts of visitation on wildlife populations and sites, Figure 4 provides an overview of the four types of management actions which may be implemented. These include controls on visitor activity, on the role of the tour operator and then the physical management of wildlife and its habitat which combined reveal the ecological and human management techniques referred to earlier in the section.

Figure 4: The management action component of a wildlife tourism management framework



(Source: Newsome *et al.* 2005, derived from Higginbottom *et al.* 2003)

2.5.2 Ecological management

The most useful and often cited method of habitat management is the provision of sanctuary areas and the use of tourist zones. Both restrict visitor access. Spatial zoning is an established land management strategy that aims to integrate tourism into environments by defining areas of land that have differing suitabilities or capacities for visitors. It can be used to totally exclude tourists from primary conservation areas whilst allowing sufficient access to visitors (Holden 2000). UNEP (2006) provide a number of examples of how zoning is used to help manage wildlife tourism. For example, the development of 'No Go Zones' and 'Low Use Zones' help to protect the cheetahs of the Serengeti National Park. Similarly in the Galapagos, tourism is restricted to 54 terrestrial visitor sites that cover less than 1% of the total land area of the National Park and 64

marine visitor sites; this spreads people over a number of sites at any given times and leaves the remainder intact and free from visitation (UNEP 2006). Zoning can also provide a means of allowing habitats to recover after a period of intensive tourist activity or protect wildlife which is breeding, resting and / or feeding.

'Buffer zones' are another method of creating a sufficient physical barrier. These are based on critical approach distances and are frequently adopted by the managers of seabird colonies. The critical approach distance is the distance at which a bird can be approached without causing it to show anti-predator or escape behaviour (Rodgers and Smith 1997). Once flushing distances are proposed, buffer zones can be designed to provide a 'safe' space between birds and bird-watchers.

In addition to zoning, Newsome *et al.* (2005) propose the development of hard areas in popular sites to accommodate visitor centres, specific viewing areas, hides, platforms and boardwalks. These can enhance the visitor experience and the opportunities for viewing whilst providing a distinct barrier between the wildlife and the visitors. In some tourism situations, the tourist is more part of the animals' environment. Here simple measures such as walking rather than using a vehicle (walking safaris) or using various animals themselves in order to view other animals can be sustainable modes operandi; for example using elephants as transport whilst tracking tigers or rhinoceros.

Other common ecological strategies involve the management of wildlife populations particularly with regards to habituation and structured feeding programmes; both are rather controversial. Feeding especially has become a popular means for tour operators to facilitate interaction and close observation with free-ranging wildlife as well as increasing the likelihood of an actual sighting (Orams 2002). In time this leads to the habituation of wild animals who learn that a new food source is readily available. It can also lead animals to habituate to human contact which is not always beneficial to them.

However, it is obvious that tourists benefit greatly from the experience of partaking in feeding programmes as it satisfies inherent nurturing behaviour and allows close contact. It brings people closer to wildlife and, if combined with interpretation and education, has the potential to instil support for conservation (Orams 1997). Moreover, the economic gains coupled with the obvious benefits to tourists may dictate that managers have to provide for and structure the feeding of wildlife (Newsome *et al.* 2005). Examples of wildlife feeding programmes include the dolphins at Tangalooma and Monkey Mia, Australia, the stingrays of the Cayman Islands and fish feeding on the Great Barrier Reef to name only a few. Orams (2002) advocates that if feeding is to take place, then it should be tightly controlled and managed by ensuring that the food is of the correct type and quantity to reduce the risk of dietary deficiencies and that any food receptacles are kept clean and disinfected.

Finally, where endangered species are threatened by tourism or over-visitation, the animal(s) may be trans-located away from areas of high tourist impact. However research for this thesis has been conducted in the spirit espoused by Leopold (1966), namely that it is human behaviour which needs to be understood and managed rather than the wildlife itself; therefore measures which influence the human dimension of wildlife tourism remain the primary focus.

2.5.3 Managing the human element

There are a number of potential measures which can be used to control the human dimension of wildlife watching, the number of people using the site or watching wildlife can be restricted to cause the minimal amount of disturbance as possible. Equally important as visitor numbers is the spatial and temporal distribution of visitors. Tourism activity can be reduced or restricted during sensitive phases of an animal's lifecycle, at breeding sites, haul-sites and at feeding, watering and resting stations. Moreover visitor behaviour can be modified through direct instruction and supervision; particularly aspects such as noise, proximity, disturbance, flushing, feeding, spotlighting and flash photography. Recent studies (Curtin 2006; Lemelin and Smale 2006) have also proposed that tour operators and site managers do not market expectations which are impossible to deliver such as long and close sightings of wildlife.

Tour operators are the agents primarily responsible for bringing tourists in contact with sensitive habitats and wildlife. It is generally agreed that they have a responsibility to manage the tourist experience in a way which minimises disturbance (Curry *et al.* 2001). At the very least long term success and profitability can only be sustained if wildlife populations are left viable and intact despite visitation.

This has led to a number of voluntary guidelines and codes of conduct within the wildlife watching industry as well as licensing and regulations which limit the number of operators and tourists (Newsome *et al.* 2005). One of the obvious pitfalls of voluntary schemes, and indeed statutory requirements and regulations, is that they are very difficult and expensive to police (Lusseau 2003). As previous research has shown adherence to these restrictions is dependent upon human compliance and cannot be guaranteed (Lusseau and Higham 2004; Orams 2004; Scarpaci *et al.* 2004; Lusseau 2003). Where accredited operators are aware of, and understand, the operating restrictions, non-accredited operators and private recreational vessels are seldom aware of agreed codes of conduct and may "impose themselves upon animals in an inappropriate way" (Orams 2004:24). In addition, compliant operators may feel themselves to be at a commercial disadvantage; although whether they are in reality is a moot point which has begun to be challenged (Chin *et al.* 2000).

Whilst codes of conduct tend to be site and species specific, Newsome *et al.* (2005:189) highlight the core aspects of 'wildlife watching etiquette' which can be applied to most types of wildlife watching. These are outlined in Figure 5. Clearly these are easier to enforce in highly regulated and directly managed forms of wildlife tourism such as on organised wildlife tours or in wildlife parks.

Figure 5: Wildlife watching etiquette

1. Adhere to management actions and stay out of sanctuary areas - i.e. keep to marked trails.
2. Avoid areas that are important for wildlife in terms of resting, feeding and parental care.
3. Observe animals from a safe distance.
4. In the case of birds remain well back from nests, roosts and display areas.
5. View wildlife from observation areas.
6. Use binoculars and telescopes for close-up views.
7. Move slowly in the presence of wildlife.
8. Do not block an animal's line of travel or escape route.
9. Do not attempt to make the animal do something (let the animal be itself).
10. Never chase or harass wildlife.
11. Do not use calls or food to attract wildlife
12. Do not feed wild animals.
13. Educate and control children.
14. Leave pets at home.
15. Limit the time you spend watching an animal (use the animal's behaviour as a guide).
16. Respect others who are viewing.
17. Be aware of the cumulative effects of human presence (reduce group size and excessive noise).
18. Avoid animals that behave aggressively.

(Source: Newsome *et al.* 2005:189)

However, the management of the consumer experience, or the 'human dynamic', based upon cognitive, affective and behavioural attributes is often the most challenging aspect of managing wildlife tourism due to the highly varied nature of visitors (Orams 2002; Ritchie 1998). A high range of motivation creates demand for a broad spectrum of activities and gives rise to a broad spectrum of behaviours. Clearly, the behaviour of visitors can dramatically affect the environmental consequences of their visits.

Marion and Rogers (1994) claim that educational approaches can be very effective when destructive behaviour is a product of ignorance or carelessness. Managers have an opportunity to reduce impacts substantially by informing visitors of management concerns and by teaching them about the focal species and about low-impact behaviour through visitor interpretation. Education also has the important role in terms of communicating the reasons behind management actions to visitors, so that visitors are more likely to

support management strategies; especially those that restrict their activities (Chin *et al.* 2000).

Higginbottom (2004) reminds us, however, that conflicts with objectives relating to visitor satisfaction can be a critical and difficult issue when it comes to deciding upon effective management actions. Trade-offs are likely to occur between maintaining low visitor density whilst providing public access; between maintaining low disturbance levels and desired close proximity between wildlife and visitors; and between a sort after natural experience and a highly managed one. However, as previously inferred, there have been occasional studies which indicate that there is notable visitor support for management actions including both educational and regulatory strategies such as controlling visitor numbers, their behaviour and access (Curtin *et al.* 2008; Lewis and Newsome 2003; Chin *et al.* 2000; Davis *et al.* 1997). This again points to the need for a critical understanding of the wildlife tourism experience and tourist expectations as well as a revised study of how wildlife tourism is interpreted by tour leaders; particularly how they can use their expertise, knowledge and experience in promoting appropriate tourist behaviour.

2.6 Conclusions

This chapter demonstrates the theoretical overlap between wildlife tourism and other nature-based tourism activities. It has discussed the spectrum of wildlife opportunities and introduced the significant variations in wildlife tourist typologies from the casual generalist to the serious specialist. The discussion has indicated the economic importance of the sector and suggests that urbanisation, a desire to connect with living things and a search for existential authenticity are the reasons behind the recent growth in demand for wildlife tourism opportunities. In addition it has highlighted the social and historical construction of the animal kingdom and the commodification of wildlife spaces. It outlines what is known already about the psychological benefits of wildlife tourism experiences and that there is a strong desire for relatively close viewing and also more active rather than passive experiences. Finally it introduces the notion of 'Limits of Acceptable Change', indicators and subsequent management actions by exemplifying ways in which wildlife sites, whole destinations and visitors can be managed to reduce or alleviate disturbance and impacts.

Wildlife tourism is essentially a hedonistic activity; the purchase of which is shrouded in imagery, myth, kudos and intangibility, especially given that in many cases, there are no guarantees that the focal species will even be seen. There are few major purchasing decisions which are based on a mere promise, a notion, and a socially constructed image

of what constitutes an interesting or appealing experience such as tracking Jaguar in the Brazilian rainforest, watching humpback whales, or glimpsing tiger in the Indian jungle.

Until recently the most prevalent method of understanding wildlife tourists has been a site-specific motivational research programme (Curtin 2005). This typically assesses expectations, goals, desired outcomes, motivations and cognitive judgements about the activity. As a result, focus has been on satisfaction defined by the degree the experience has met expected outcomes, rather than on the actual nature of the experience itself. There are problems with this approach. Namely, as Arnold and Price (1993) remind us, for first-time users, expectations are often vague or non-existent. Moreover, experiences are dynamic and emergent; they differ from expectations, and the most memorable and satisfying experiences may be the most unexpected (Patterson *et al.* 1998). Whilst the motivational approach might tell us that people enjoy participating in wildlife tourism for a number of reasons, it doesn't really explore what it means to enjoy wildlife experiences, the content of what exactly is enjoyed, the process through which people attend to and perceive wildlife or the emotional responses it provokes (Curtin 2005). The next chapter explains and justifies the adopted qualitative methodology that is used to provide answers to these important questions.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the qualitative research methods adopted for this thesis. Having justified the adoption of this approach, it further explains the theoretical assumptions about the lived experience; the use of ethnographic methods to understand the nature of wildlife tourist experiences, the research design, data generation, analysis, communication of results, trustworthiness, and finally the epistemological reflection of the research process, i.e. the relationship between the researcher and her subject (researcher's biography). In order to set the scene and prepare the reader, it begins by providing a brief overview of the research strategy. The rest of the chapter is then devoted to its justification and the discussion of the finer details.

3.2 Overview of research strategy

Like an artist, choreographer or historian, the researcher must find the most effective way to tell the story and to convince the audience. Mason (1996) implores that qualitative researchers should be reflexive about every decision they take, requiring them to take a very active role, not as followers or even creators of research blueprints but as practitioners who think and act in ways which are situated, contextual and strategic. Similarly Janesick (1998) compares research design to dance choreography. There are no step-by-step rules and affirmations. However qualitative research, like any other, must begin with a question (what are the experiences of wildlife tourists?), which then informs the methods and the design of the study; how best to explore the emergent themes and ultimately communicate the research findings.

3.2.1 Programme of research

The nature of the research questions coupled with an exploration of the culture of wildlife tourism determined the choice of an ethnographic approach. To this end, the author, already a lifelong wildlife enthusiast, immersed herself into her subject area for the entire duration of the research. Unlike grounded theory and / or naturalistic methods of enquiry where fieldwork follows a very loose, open structure (Glaser and Strauss 1967), she entered the field equipped with a broad knowledge of the wildlife tourism literature particularly the gaps in knowledge which have been proffered by other researchers in her field, and some *a priori* research questions to be addressed. This provides a very basic

framework for data generation and thematic analysis yet still allows the spirit of inductive enquiry to prosper. To fulfil the research aim and objectives, the project was divided into three distinct phases (see Table 2 for further details):

Phase 1: Entering the field:

An investigation into the business of wildlife tours. Who are the major players, who are there clients and what products do they offer?

Phase 2: Understanding the phenomenon from the inside:

Being a wildlife tourist: participant observation

Phase 3: The exploration of tourist experiences:

In-depth interviews with regular wildlife tourism consumers.

Table: 2: Programme of research

	Entering the Field	Understanding the phenomenon	Exploring tourist experiences
Phase	1. Understanding the business of wildlife tours.	2. Being a wildlife tourist	3. Conducting qualitative interviews
Objectives	Meets objective 2 in Chapter 1. i.e. to provide an overview of destinations, clients and products.	Meets objectives 3 – 8 in chapter 1. i.e. it allows the author first hand experience of the culture and attributes of wildlife tourism and to further consider the types of experiences to be explored.	Meets objectives 3 – 8 in chapter 1. i.e. the exploration of how nature is perceived, the importance of field skills, the construction of memories / peak experiences and the emotions evoked, expectations and benefits.
Methods and stages	1. Attending the RSPB Bird Fair to introduce research and enter the field. 2. Gathering brochures, quantifying operators. 3. Contacting tour operators and building dialogue and rapport. 4. In-depth interviews with tour operators	1. Accompanied a bird-watching tour to view the autumn migration in Andalusia (8 days). 2. Accompanied a whale-watch expedition which consisted of a 400 mile voyage in the Sea of Cortez, Baja California, Mexico. Focus was on marine mammals and birdlife (10 days).	1. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted whilst on tour with wildlife tourists. 2. Eight in-depth interviews with Dorset Wildlife Trust members who take regular wildlife holidays. 3. Two in-depth interviews with tour leaders.
Timing	August 2003 – October 2003	September 2005 and February 2006	1 & 3: September 2005 and February 2006. 2 & 3: April / May 2006
Transcription & analysis	December 2003 / January 2004	October / November 2005 and March / April 2006	Transcribed 1 & 3: October / November 2005 and March / April 2006 Transcribed 2 & 3: June / July 2006 Final analysis January 2007.

3.3 Research paradigm

Before entering the field, it is important to consider the researcher's positionality and philosophical paradigm. Social science research was originally approached in the same positivist paradigm as natural sciences in that social reality is external to the individual and can be observed to discover law-like generalisations (Denzin and Lincoln 1998) without making value judgements (Campbell and Stanley 1966). This implies that there is a single 'truth' which can be discovered and explained. Thinking this assumption was deeply flawed, Weber (1919) introduced the notion of 'interpretative sociology' founded on the belief that the social world is created and perceived by individuals. Therefore, reality can never be fully comprehended but only interpreted. The interpretivist's ontological position is that reality is socially constructed thus there are multiple realities which leads to multiple layers of understanding.

These opposing paradigmatic views require the social scientist to ask how they see the nature of reality and from then to review the methodological options; namely whether to adopt a quantitative number-based analysis of wildlife tourists and their experiences, or to conduct an exploratory, in-depth, qualitative, understanding of them. According to Crabtree and Miller, qualitative research methods are usually used "for identification, description and explanation-generation; whereas quantitative methods are used most commonly for explanation testing and control" (1992:6). The choice of research style depends purely on the overarching aim and subject matter of the project and its ontology, i.e. the 'nature of its reality' (Ghauri and Gronhaug 2005; Fontana and Frey 1998). The essential methodological question is how can the researcher go about obtaining the desired knowledge and understandings in order to fulfil the objectives of the research?

The principle output of this thesis is to contribute an experiential understanding of the wildlife tourism consumer based upon '*a deeper understanding of the expectations and experiences of British tourists who regularly partake in wildlife holidays*'. The entire notion of 'understanding experiences' points towards the adoption of an interpretivist, qualitative human science research approach to data generation (Jamal and Hollinshead 2001; Van Manen 1990) rather than a positivist, quantitative, data-gathering approach as until we understand the nature of these tourist experiences, we cannot possibly quantify or measure them.

Jamal and Hollinshead (2001:64) contend that there are five important creative dynamics associated with the tourism industry. These are that tourism is an agent of 'seeing'; 'being' and 'experiencing' as well as an agent of cultural invention and knowledge. It is a means by which all sorts of individuals are empowered to re-understand themselves and re-think their heritage. Much of the literature focuses on the tourist gaze and the

surveillance of the tourist industry. However, as Weir (2004) asks, “what puts the notion into our heads that this is a place worthy of gazing upon”? Indeed it is the narrative and the social discourse which delineates the sight. As Dann (1996:21) purports “it is the phase that precedes the gaze”. Jamal and Hollinshead (2001) note the lack of studies based upon the experiential, physical and emotional element of tourism that can only be understood using an interpretative, inductive approach.

Jardine (1998) provides an apt example in his narrative description of bird-watching with old friends. He refers to his deep relationship with place, a tourist experience which reawakens “a hidden ecological memory – as if the place itself has remembered what I have forgotten – that some of my own life is stored up in these trees for safekeeping”. The narrative text is not only reflexive but also highly enlightening. However hard one tried, it would be impossible to develop a survey instrument that would elicit as much depth and significance regarding place and the relationship between man and nature.

3.4 Conceptual approach

The literature supposes that qualitative researchers approach their studies with a certain paradigm or worldview, i.e. a basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guide their inquiries. According to Cresswell (1998) such assumptions are related to two basic principles: first, the nature of reality (ontology), where reality is subjective and multiple, and where the researcher uses quotes and themes in words of participants to provide evidence of differing perspectives, and secondly, to epistemology, an approach that considers the relationship between the researcher and the researched. The latter is a critical point. Modern qualitative research no longer attempts to propose that data is objective; that facts speak for themselves. Instead it acknowledges that data are social constructions that reflect the assumptions and practices of the researchers that produced them (Miller and Fox 1997). Indeed, subjectivity, rather than being a negative property or a methodological taboo, becomes a critical and valid aspect of the qualitative approach. As Schutz (1964:8) purports: “the safeguarding of the subjective point of view is the only but sufficient guarantee that the world of social reality will not be replaced by a fictional non-existing world constructed by the scientific observer”.

3.4.1 Social phenomenology

It follows that by using a subjective, interpretativist approach, a set of philosophical assumptions are made about the nature of the lived experience and social order. These assumptions are mostly derived from Schutz (1970) whose early attempts to bridge the gap between sociology and the more philosophical phenomenology (Husserl 1970). Husserl (1970) argued that human consciousness and understanding actively constitute

the objects of experience. He was particularly interested in the way that ordinary members of society constitute and reconstitute the world of everyday life. Schutz (1970) pursued Husserl's work stressing that social sciences should focus on the way that the life world, or the experiential world, that every person takes for granted, is produced and experienced by its members.

Schutz (1970) noted that the individual (researcher in this case) approaches the life world (the focus of their study) with a stock of knowledge composed of commonsense constructs and categories that are social in origin. These images, theories, ideas, values and attitudes are applied to aspects of experience (wildlife tourism) interpreting them and making them meaningful. Stocks of knowledge therefore become an important resource. Holstein and Gubrium (1998) explain that this existing knowledge of human experience produces a familiar world, one with which members already seem to be acquainted because of the typified manner by which knowledge is articulated. The infinite phenomena of everyday life are subsumed under a more limited umbrella of shared constructs and categories that become broad, general and flexible guidelines for understanding and interpreting experience. These typifications make it possible to account for experience and placing such experiences in a particular realm. However, it is important that these typifications are indeterminate, adaptable and modifiable to avoid the constraints imposed by the traditional positivist paradigm. Stocks of knowledge are always essentially incomplete and open-ended where "meaning requires the interpretive application of a category to the concrete particulars of a situation" (Holstein and Gubrium 1998:139).

Whilst human consciousness typifies, Schutz (1970) argued that language is the essential medium for transmitting typifications and meanings, providing a methodological orientation for a phenomenology of social life concerned with the relation between language use and the objects of experience. Language therefore provides a system of typifications whilst words can be seen as the constitutive building blocks of everyday reality. Accordingly social phenomenology rests on the tenet that social interaction itself not only conveys meaning but constructs it too. This is particularly apparent on a wildlife tour where wildlife experiences are shared and articulated by group members who, in turn, construct their individual perceptions and terminology of their own lived-experiences which are then related to the researcher.

Holstein and Gubrium (1998) explain that the majority of one's experiences confirm and reinforce the notion that individuals who interact with one another do so in a world that is experienced in fundamentally the same way. We assume that others experience the world basically in the way we do and that we can therefore understand one another in our dealings in and with the world. In these dealings we take our own subjectivity for granted overlooking its constitutive character, presuming that we inter-subjectively share the

same reality. Schutz (1970) considers this inter-subjectivity an ongoing accomplishment, a set of understandings that are sustained from moment to moment by social interaction.

Whilst this is perfectly normal behaviour in day-to-day social interactions, such assumptions and personal subjectivity become questionable in social research where the ideal is to step aside from any pre-conceived understandings regarding the research phenomena. There is some debate, however, as to how much a phenomenologist can, or should, set aside their own experiences and interpretations. According to Cresswell (1998), the researcher surrenders all prejudgements thus 'bracketing' his or her experiences. This is to suspend all judgements about what is real and adopt the naturalistic attitude until the judgements are founded on a more certain basis. Husserl (1970) refers to this suspension as 'epoche' (cited Cresswell 1998:52). Epoche relies on intuition, imagination and universal structures to obtain a picture of the experience. Having obtained this picture, and by bracketing one's own experiences or understanding, the phenomenon (wildlife tourism) is understood through the voices of the informants (Field and Morse 1985). Whilst this sounds achievable in theory, it is very difficult in practice for a researcher to bracket their own personal experiences (Cresswell 1998). Maso (2007) implores that the strict bracketing of all presuppositions and prejudices about phenomena must be considered a myth. If interpretivists distance themselves as an enquirer, they cannot engage in an explicit critical evaluation of the social reality they seek to portray. The best they can do is to attempt to refrain from pre-suppositions and prejudices about phenomena which might 'contaminate' their experiences of it. For example, bird-watchers, often referred to as 'twitchers' in Britain frequently have an uncomplimentary caricature based upon them being obsessive and intrusive. The author therefore had to distance herself from these assumptions in order to a) be accepted into the cultural group she is studying and b) understand their experiences.

The same logic can be applied to the use of social science theories. Social science theories can be a useful aid to the research process as they provide an explanation, a prediction, and a generalisation about how the world operates. Theories can be philosophical or substantive (Cresswell 1998). However, Flinders and Mills (1993) ask whether a theoretical lens should frame the study or whether such a theory is too positivist an approach for the spirit of qualitative enquiry. Applying theory in the design stage of qualitative research therefore may be considered contestable. Cresswell (1998) suggests that for a phenomenologist, an *a priori* decision is made that the researcher will examine the meaning of particular experiences for individuals.

Hammersley (2002:67) confirms that central to the way qualitative researchers think about human social action is the idea that "people construct the social world, both through their interpretations of it and through the actions based on those interpretations". Research attempts to understand social belief systems from the 'inside' rather than

judging them from the 'outside'. Thus the researcher starts into the field with only a vague constructivist framework, "albeit a more philosophical perspective than a distinct social science theory" (Cresswell 1998:86). This perspective informs what will be studied and how it will be studied based on the notion that human experience makes sense to those who live it *prior to* all interpretations and theorizing. Therefore it follows that it is unwise to apply critical social science theory to the study of wildlife tourism experience before data collection commences as it is too early to postulate any relevant theory. Instead, relevant social science theories are only applied after data collection and during the analysis and discussion of results.

3.4.2 Ethnography

Social phenomenology (Schutz 1970) aims for a social science that will interpret and explain human action and thought through descriptions of their reality assuming an uncompromising, interpretive enterprise focused on everyday subjective meaning and experience. The goal is to explicate how objects (wildlife) and experience (tourism) are meaningfully constituted and communicated in the world of everyday life. Moreover, researchers search for the essential essence, or the central underlying meaning, of the experience and emphasise the *intentionality of consciousness* where "experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image and meaning"(Cresswell 1998:52).

This implies that a long-term 'relationship' with the subjects is required in order to delve, uncompromisingly, into their everyday life consciousness to a depth which is not revealed in its entirety over the course of in-depth interviewing and observation. Instead it requires close contact over a long period of time to observe human behaviour. Unfortunately researchers are always constrained by circumstances, both temporal and financial. Such a long-term commitment to phenomenology is beyond the abilities of this research. Therefore an alternative, achievable method is considered.

Fetterman (1998) confirms that there is a distinct relationship between the philosophy of phenomenology and ethnography. The former is the theory that underpins the approach. He claims that the "typical model for ethnographic research is based on a phenomenological orientated paradigm"(1998:5), i.e. that the 'lived-world' consists of multiple realities. Being inductive, the research makes few explicit assumptions prior to data collection, allowing ideas and theories to emerge from the data.

Ethnography is "the art and science of describing a group or culture" (Fetterman 1998:1). The description may be of a small tribal group in an exotic place, or simply a class of school children in a middle class suburb. Similarly it can be a group of consumers who share the same interests and purchasing behaviour. It is their patterns of thought and

behaviour that are the focus of the enquiry. In this case, wildlife tourists and their experiences become the culture that the research aims to describe.

There is a familiar process to all ethnographic studies. According to Wolcott (1992), ethnographers start by 'experiencing' (participant observation), then 'enquiring' (interviewing) and then 'examining' (analysis). Initially they enter the field with an open mind. Note that Fetterman (1998) insists this is not the same as 'empty' mind. Before entering the field, the ethnographer begins with a research question, a proposed research design including methods of data collection and analysis and a feel for his or her subject area. So whilst the spirit of the research is inductive, there is still purpose and structure derived from a basic understanding of the subject matter. However, the research design is not cast in stone; instead it evolves over time and is dependent on a certain degree of creativity and serendipity which allows the researcher to explore rich, untapped sources of data.

Combining phenomenology and ethnography is a useful approach for tourism studies. Suvantola (2002) uses this combination to explore tourist's experience of place. Phenomenology is his theoretical underpinning and ethnography is the method of his data collection. Suvantola's work provides an essential blueprint for this research as he successfully combines the two by meeting up with fellow backpackers and interviewing them during their travels. He shares their common experiences and later enquires as to how their travel memories constitute greater meaning in their everyday world. This thesis has similarities only rather than back-packing on a gap year, tourists are driven by their interest in wildlife which represents not only a holiday activity but also forms part of their everyday worlds and everyday 'selves'.

3.5 Phase 1: Understanding the business of wildlife tours

As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) exclaim qualitative research provides a crucial perspective to help scholars understand a particular phenomenon. Essentially, the research is concerned with understanding the 'culture' of wildlife tour operating which, again, confirms the use of ethnography. According to Fetterman (1998), there are four key features of ethnography: collecting data from observations and interviews; using 'thick' description and a naturalistic stance; working with a small number of key informants, and finally the consideration of the *emic* and *etic* distinction. The latter assumes that whilst an *emic* (inside) understanding is the ideal for ethnographic studies, the nature of business to business research means that unless the researcher is a tour operator themselves, the data is collected and interpreted 'from the outside' (i.e. the *etic* perspective). Harris (1976) explains that *etic* meanings stress the ideas of ethnographers themselves; their

theoretical view when they distance themselves from the cultural setting and try to make sense of it.

The first crucial step to this primary research is 'entering the field' (Bogdewic 1992; Jorgensen 1989). In order to gain access to wildlife tourists, it is important to first establish rapport with tour operators and to understand the spectrum of wildlife tourism opportunities. Following an extensive review of current literature, the aim of this initial research is to establish a greater understanding of British wildlife tour operators and to suggest a typology based upon the type of tour, the characteristics of clients and the favoured destinations (Objective 2, page 4).

It is often difficult to infiltrate the business setting. Page and Dowling (2002) and Higginbottom (2004) contend that comparatively little research has been conducted on the business and management issues associated with wildlife tourism. Higgins (2001) further highlights the difficulties of conducting this type of research due to the fact that the majority of these companies are small enterprises run from home with minimal personnel who are often out of the country leading their own tours. This certainly proved to be the case in this research.

Despite such barriers, it was initially important to establish an avenue into the discourse of wildlife tour operating. Therefore, in August 2003 the author attended the annual RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) Bird Fair so that contact with the major wildlife tour operators could be established. The Fair is the most important wildlife annual event attracting a large audience of enthusiasts (i.e. potential wildlife tourists) from all over the UK and the majority of wildlife tour operators. Joining this event allowed the researcher to introduce herself to the key players in the industry, to elicit interest in the research and to gather promotional materials. In addition to visiting the Bird Fair, it was also necessary to review the small advertisements in specialist wildlife / nature magazines and to search the internet to capture the smaller operators who do not exhibit at this event.

Once all the promotional literature had been gathered, it was possible to produce a product spectrum, by systematically reviewing the brochures in respect of several categories; namely: the destinations that are visited, the focal species they include, the emphasis on the number of difference species to be seen, the intensity of the tour (i.e. how much time is spent in the field) and the level of interpretation, and finally, how knowledgeable or expert tourists are likely to be (Curtin and Wilkes 2005).

In addition, several companies from the Bird Fair agreed to be interviewed at their premises. Four interviews were undertaken in October 2003; two (Companies A and B) who specialise in watching all types of wildlife (general naturalist) and two who specialise

in bird-watching (Companies C and D) All four have itineraries in America, Africa and the Middle East, Europe, Asia and Australasia and have been operating for a number of years with a loyal and growing clientele. Company A is a high quality, well established operator, whilst company B is the largest of the wildlife tour operators who appeals to a slightly younger market. One of the bird-watching companies (Company C) has slightly diversified their product to incorporate viewing other species that may be encountered on route to broaden their appeal into new markets. Company D's core product is still specialist birding. These key informants provide an essential insight into the business of wildlife tour operating and whilst it is unwise to generalise from only four accounts, the results presented in Chapter 4.1 provide some interesting elements worthy of discussion.

The interviews took a semi-structured narrative approach. Having already undertaken a literature review and product spectrum analysis of brochures, the interviews were guided by a number of key themes organised into an interview schedule which allowed a narrative response but ensured that the necessary ground was covered (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). Research questions explored product differentiation, product development, perceptions of tourist motivations and expectations; local benefits, potential causes for concern; elements of good or common practice and management principles and policies (see Appendix 1 for a copy of the discussion guide). The overall effect of this method is that interviewees warm to the whole event, and to the interviewer, because they have an experience of being paid attention to and taken seriously through their own, self-styled account. Clearly the resulting narratives are always a product of the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. Fortunately the researcher's avid interest in wildlife allowed her to position herself knowledgeably in the field. However, operators were quick to point out that the researcher had never been on a dedicated wildlife tour herself and therefore would not be in a position to fully grasp the experience she might want to explore with tourists. Total emersion in her topic therefore suggested that she experiences being a wildlife tourist first hand.

3.6 Phase 2: Being a wildlife tourist

Based upon the customary framework for ethnographic research (Fetterman 1998; Wolcott 1992), this phase has two distinct, yet related forms of data collection: participant observation and in-depth interviewing. These take place over the course of twelve months, during two organised field trips (wildlife tours). Two tours were chosen to suit the research agenda which aimed to get a better understanding of the general naturalist market; typical clients of The Travelling Naturalist. They were arranged in accordance with the tour operator who had to first ensure availability and agreement with the tour leaders. The first trip was taken in September 2005 and was predominantly a bird-watching expedition to view the autumn migration over Southern Spain and the Straits of

Gibraltar. It was a two centre tour, staying three nights in El Rocio and four nights in Tarifa. There were nine people in the group, plus the two tour leaders and the author. The second tour took place in February 2006 and was based on a 400 mile voyage in the Sea of Cortez, Baja California, Mexico. The focus was on marine mammals; particularly Californian sea lions, Common and Bottlenose dolphins, plus the Grey, Fin and Humpback Whales who congregate in Baja's waters each winter. This was a slightly smaller group which comprised seven clients, the author and two leaders; one of whom was an American.

The focus of this phase of the research was to capture in-depth insights into what it is to be a wildlife tourist. From personal experience, an in-depth knowledge of the products gained through the interviews with tour operators, and a keen understanding of the literature, several interesting *a priori* themes presented themselves as prompts for the observation of tourists and later as ideas to explore with participants, namely:

- How do wildlife tourists view the natural world? (Kellert and Wilson 1993)
- How did they become interested in wildlife? (Manfredo et al. 2003)
- How does their love of wildlife translate into their everyday behaviour?
- How does wildlife feature in their everyday world?
- How important is identification? (Mabey 2003)
- How important is photography when on tour? (Lemelin 2006)
- What constitutes memorable wildlife experiences (Bulbeck 2005; DeMares and Krycka 1998)
- What feelings are evoked when watching wildlife? (Cloke and Perkins 2005)
- What is hoped for when booking a wildlife tour? (Muloin 1998)
- What are the benefits of travelling on an organised tour?

Unlike the tour operator research, this attempted to take a purely emic approach with the researcher embedding herself as 'one of them' and on the inside of the experience. Phase 1 had enabled the researcher to gain acceptance and to instil interest with several tour operators; one of which (The Travelling Naturalist) offered her the opportunity to join their tours and to experience their unique products from the inside. They also gave her permission to act as a participant observer and to interview their clients whilst on tour. Reassurances had to be given, however, that her presence and the research would not be detrimental to their clients. It was therefore jointly decided by the tour operator and the researcher that, from a business and ethical viewpoint, clients should be informed of the research prior to their trip; this meant that observations were entirely overt and would enable the researcher to openly interview fellow tourists. A letter was devised and sent out via the operator (due to data protection and client confidentiality) advising the tour group of the research and inviting them to take part; ensuring it was entirely their decision to be interviewed whilst on tour and that they were aware that the researcher would be

asking them questions and making observations (for a copy of the letter, please see Appendix 2). However this was a decision that was later revised for the second tour as it caused a number of problems regarding how the author was received on the tour (see section 3.13).

3.6.1 Participant observation

Gilbert (1991) criticises the work in tourism consumer behaviour because it is general in nature or unsubstantiated empirically. However, this research attempts to explore and devise theory in an empirical context using participant observation whereby the researcher goes to the field to investigate consumers' experiences (Penaloza 1994); particularly what consumers think, feel and do rather than what they say they think, feel and do (Bowen 2002).

Jorgensen (1989:13) proposes that participant observation is most appropriate where the following conditions are met:

1. The research problem is concerned with human meanings and interactions viewed from the insider's perspective;
2. The phenomenon of investigation is observable within an everyday life situation or setting;
3. The researcher is able to gain access to an appropriate setting; and,
4. The phenomenon is sufficiently limited in size and location to be studied as a case.

There have been a number of tourism projects which have successfully used participant observation as a research tool; particularly with regards to going on tour and observing aspects of tourist behaviour. For example Tucker (2005) studied two coach tours of New Zealand, Olafsdottir (2005) studied tourists' engagement with nature and wilderness in Iceland, Bowen (2002) studied tourist satisfaction on a fully inclusive tour in Malaysia and Wolcott (1994) observed tourists whilst on a river rafting expedition. To date such observations on tour groups have not been applied to wildlife tourism.

Participant observation has its roots in social and cultural anthropology. The origin of this method is generally attributed to Malinowski (1961) who studied the Trobriand Islanders. It was, however, Lindemann (1924) who was the first to distinguish between 'objective observers' who, through the use of interviewing approached a culture from the 'outside', and 'participant observers', who used observation to research a culture from within. Therefore through participation, the researcher is "able to observe and experience the meanings and interactions of people from the role of an insider" (Jorgensen 1989:21). Furthermore it "enables the researcher to share their experiences by not merely

observing what is happening but also by feeling it” (Gill and Johnson 1997:113); an important and crucial element of the wildlife tourism experience is the feelings that discovering, seeing and sharing the spaces of wildlife evokes.

Delbridge and Kirkpatrick (1994:37) note that participant observation “implies a research strategy of immersion in the research setting, with the objective of sharing in people’s lives while attempting to learn their symbolic world.” The symbolic frame of reference is located within the school of sociology known as symbolic interactionism. In symbolic interactionism the individual derives a sense of identity from interaction and communication with others. Through this process of interaction and communication the individual responds to others and adjust his or her understandings and behaviour as ‘reality’ is negotiated with others. In this instant the participant observer is on a quest to learn and understand the symbolic world of wildlife tourism; appreciate the identity of the individual wildlife tourist and to understand the processes by which the wildlife tourist constantly constructs and reconstructs their identity and reality. Burgess (1984) encapsulates the key advantages of this method: “the value of being a participant observer is that researchers can utilise their observations together with their theoretical insights to make seemingly irrational or paradoxical behaviour comprehensible to those within or beyond the situation that is studied”.

Bogdewic (1992), however, poses that there are a number of dilemmas to be faced when opting to conduct participant observation. First, there are the ethical issues to consider regarding the overt versus covert nature of observation and the predicament that people alter their behaviour if they know that they are being observed. Secondly, there are the practical issues of gaining entry or access to a social situation, thirdly there is ‘front management’ to consider, i.e. the researcher’s presentation of self, and fourthly, one must carefully consider how best, when and where to record the data. Each of these issues is addressed in the following sections.

3.6.1.1 Overt or covert?

Atkinson and Hammersley (1998:111), however, claim that this simple dichotomy of being overt or covert is not always very useful; in reality there are several dimensions of variation such as:

- Whether the researcher is known to be a researcher by all those being studied or only by some or by none.
- How much, and what is known, about the research and by whom

- What sorts of activities are and are not engaged in by the researcher in the field, and how this locates her or him in relation to the various conceptions of category and group membership by participants
- What the orientation of the researcher is; how completely he or she consciously adopts the orientation of insider or outsider.

Punch (2005) explains participant observation differs from direct or non-participant observation in that the role of the researcher changes from detached observer of the situation to both participant in and observer of the situation. The question is how far removed will the researcher be from the behaviour being studied or to what extent will the researcher's presence affect the behaviour of those being studied.

The decision to be overt or covert is therefore not an easy one (Saunders *et al.* 2003) as either approach can affect the dynamics of the research. During the design stages, the researcher contacted two colleagues who had undertaken participant observation on a tour group, Olafsdottir (2005) explained that she had initially adopted a covert approach but had experienced difficulties in being accepted by the group as her behaviour, especially her avid note taking, set her apart from the other group members; this necessitated a revised and more overt approach in her subsequent tour.

However, in this research, the decision to be overt was made initially by the tour operator with whom the researcher was travelling as she needed their permission to access their clients whilst on tour. Due to the nature of their business and their reputation, the company as well as Bournemouth University's Ethics Committee set the ethical agenda which was to consider:

- The privacy of possible and actual participants
- The voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw partially or completely from the process
- The written consent of participants
- The maintenance of the confidentiality of data provided by individuals or identifiable participants and their anonymity
- The effects on participants of the way in which you collect your data
- The behaviour of the researcher.

There has been much discussion of the ethics of research involving human beings and of the need to be able to prove that participants are involved in the research of their own volition. Jorgensen (1989:47) warns that "aside from being dishonest, covert strategies violate the norm of the informed consent because people are unable to agree to participate in the research. Covert strategies therefore fail to respect the rights of human subjects". Moreover, on a practical note, conducting fieldwork is a lot more

straightforward if the researcher's purpose is made public as it means they can frequently take down field notes as events, ideas and conversations naturally unfold without looking suspicious.

With these ethical and practical considerations in mind, the first field trip (to Andalucia) was completely overt with everyone knowing the purpose of the research prior to their departure from the United Kingdom. Unfortunately the tone of the letter which was sent to them via the tour operator, or merely the assumption that they were going to be subjects of research, did not appeal to this particular client group (see section 3.13 on epistemological reflections). This also had the effect of positioning the author outside of the tour group; a situation counter to the whole ethos of participant observation. Therefore, a slightly revised approach was adopted for the second tour to Baja California which, whilst still essentially overt (due to ethics), used a slightly more cunning approach and less transparency prior to the tour as detailed below:

"Neil, the tour leader, announced my presence as a researcher very nicely; making reference to the 'espionage' we had all pledged that we weren't during US custom checks and the fact that I had wrongly ticked the box. It was received well, no strange looks or comments. I didn't push it further but they seemed very keen to help! Looks good! (Travel diary, Baja).

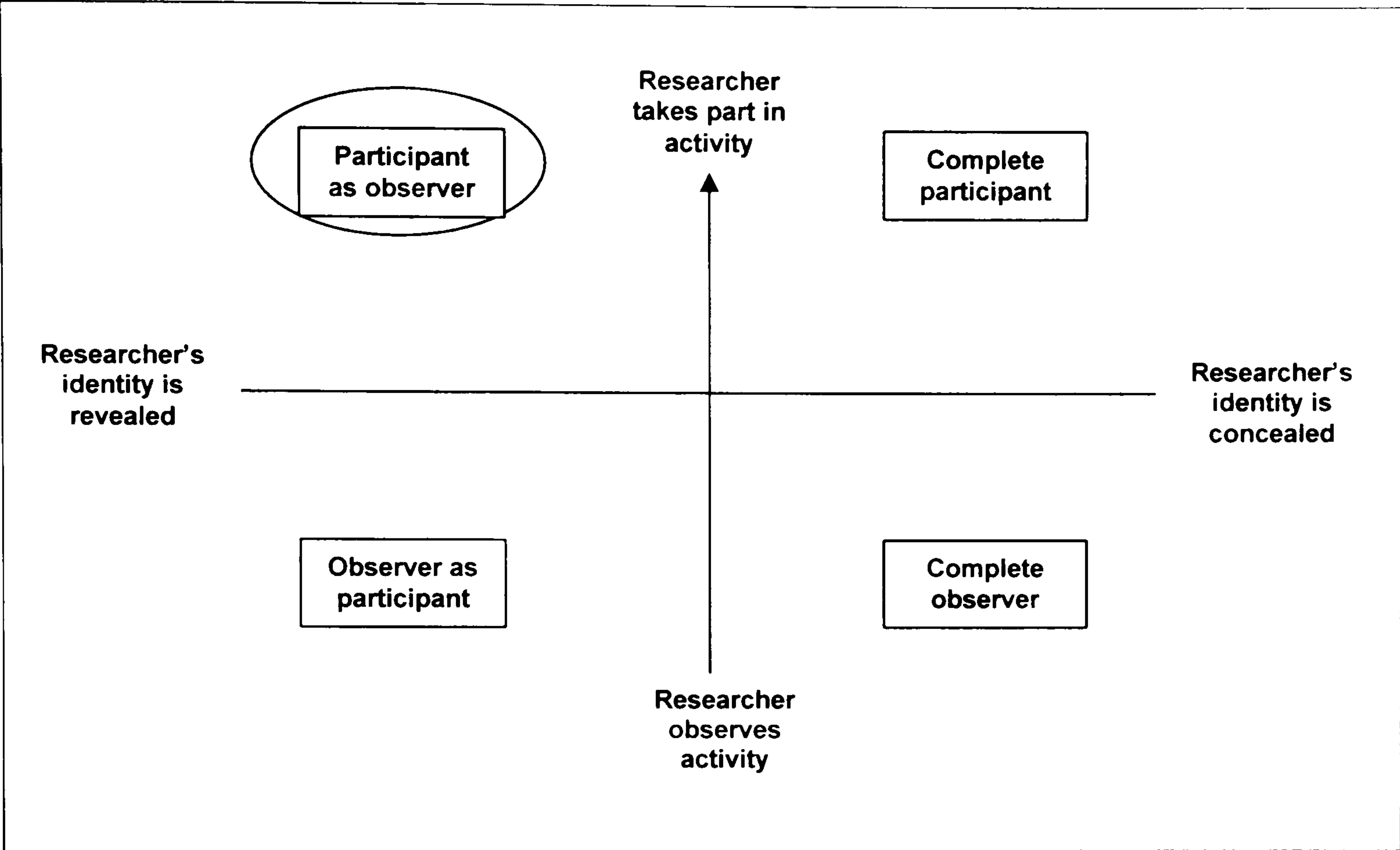
The letters outlining the nature of the research were handed out on the boat after the second day: *"I have decided to hand out my letters informing people of the contents of my research. With hindsight, this is good timing. By now we have had lots of shared experiences and it is obvious that I am liked and am an integral part of the group. Still I feel embarrassed somehow; like I might be imposing. As I gave them a letter I stressed that it did not matter if they didn't want to take part; it was totally up to them and it wouldn't upset me if they chose not to. It was their holiday and I respected that"* (Travel diary, Baja) (see Appendix 3 for the revised letter of introduction to tour members).

This is very similar to the approach adopted by Tucker (2005) who joined two coach tours in New Zealand. Here the operator initially informed her fellow-travellers of her presence as a researcher. During the trip Tucker made the necessary field notes and observations based upon her interaction with tour group and just by experiencing the tour first hand. Towards the end of the trip, she handed out a memo requesting more detailed, formal interviews which she held one afternoon in her hotel room. By that time she was considered 'one of them' and had a very favourable response to her request.

Adler and Adler (1994), Wolcott (1992) and Gold (1958), were the first to propose a continuum of observation. However, Gill and Johnson's (1997) fourfold categorisation of the variant roles of the participant is the most frequently cited. Using their categorisation,

Figure 6 clearly shows how the researcher positioned herself as an overt ‘participant as observer’.

Figure 6: Typology of participant observation research roles



(Gill and Johnson 1997)

Punch (2005) explains that there are multiple roles for the participant observer to perform in order to gain and maintain a comfortable degree of rapport with the people, and these can cause conflict on a personal and group level. Participant observers have to adhere to their scientific standards and tasks as distanced observers, but at the same time must act in a socially and culturally acceptable way in particular situations. Bruyn (1966:14) highlights the following corollary, that “the role of participant observer requires both detachment and personal involvement” and this conflict of roles is difficult to resolve. Having gained physical access to the setting, maintaining social and emotional access can be more problematic. According to Jorgensen (1989) successful entry and maintenance depends on the researcher’s interpersonal skills, creativity and commonsense in order to cope with this challenging dual-purpose engagement.

Spradley (1980) explains that doing ethnographic participant observation involves alternating between the insider and outsider experience, and having both simultaneously. As an insider the researcher experienced some of the same emotions during the course of events on the wildlife tour. But at the same time she also experienced being an outsider who views the tour group and herself as objects of study. This was not the case all the time however; there were some occasions where immersion was complete and others when observation was more detached.

In addition to these changing aspects, explicit awareness levels are increased. In normal existence the complexity of social life requires that one excludes that which is not relevant from conscious awareness to avoid overload (selective perception). The participant observer in contrast seeks to become explicitly aware of things usually blocked out to avoid overload. Increasing awareness does not come easily, for it must overcome years of selective inattention (Spradley 1980). This, coupled with the constant need and desire to record field notes, can also take its toll on the researcher (see section 3.13).

3.6.1.2 Method of record: taking field notes

Most field notes are not written in the field. Instead field notes represent an expanded account of a variety of information obtained in the field during a given observation session and then later composed in depth. The participant observer must be sensitive to what is considered normal and appropriate behaviour whilst in the field. Fortunately, dedicated wildlife tourists often keep their own journals, or at least have pen and paper to hand to record what species they have seen, so this was not always a problem. However, avid note taking is still highly conspicuous and can endanger social access to the group (Bogdewic 1992). Therefore the only thing the researcher is able to take is jottings on a discrete notebook: these are key phrases and key words that capture some aspect of the observation and which will serve as memory triggers. Nevertheless it is imperative to capture verbatim comments wherever possible as the actual words that participants use are important. At the end of the observation period, expanded notes are compiled from memory which is why it is imperative that notes are written as immediately after observation as possible (Spradley 1980). Bowen (2002:11) recognises that there is a process of “registering, interpreting and recording observations so that observations are a continuous process of evaluation”.

To this end, Burgess (1984:167) proposes that field notes should consist of three elements: ‘substantive field notes’ (observations related to subject – i.e. what happened on tour), ‘methodological field notes’ (observations relating to the author’s position as researcher and how it affected the research process) and ‘analytical memos’ (points to further explore and explain). As Bowen (2002) had successfully used Burgess’s approach to data collection during his observations of a tour group in Malaysia, it was decided to adopt a similar framework for capturing observations on the wildlife tours. This enables reflexivity in the research. Whilst the focus of the research is on the tourist, the writing and presence of the researcher is acknowledged (Wallendorf and Brucks 1993). As Bowen (2002:11) explains the researcher constantly negotiates a thin line between “passivity and impassivity, reaction and pro-action”.

In addition to fieldnotes, Spradley (1980) recommends that observers also keep a fieldwork journal. Like a diary, this journal contains a record of experiences, ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs and problems that arise during fieldwork. "A journal represents the personal side of fieldwork; it includes reactions to informants and the feelings you sense from others (Spradley 1980:71). This journal is a vital aspect of the research as it informs the reflective elements of this ethnographic study and supports revised observation methods as approaches are tried and tested. Finally, in addition to the author's field notes and journal, still photography also formed part of the documentary evidence. It did not interfere with the observation and prompted later memories. Of course, photography is a perfectly normal tourist occurrence as was the collection of tourism documents such as guides, brochures and maps (Bowen 2002).

This participant observation and the emersion of the researcher into the field enabled sufficient orientation of the culture from which to undertake a series of in-depth interviews with wildlife tourists.

3.7 Phase 3: Conducting qualitative interviews

Ten semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out with participants during both tours in September 2005 and February 2006 and a further eight interviews were undertaken during April and May 2006 with people who regularly take dedicated wildlife holidays. Qualitative interviewing is both an academic and a practical tool for enabling us to share the world of others (Carson *et al.* 2001). To elicit in-depth answers about culture, meanings and processes, a researcher chooses the degree to which he or she directs the conversational agenda with the over-riding philosophy that the researcher should avoid dominating the interviewees by imposing their world onto that of their participants (Flick *et al.* 2004; Rubins and Rubins 1995).

There are many forms and styles of conducting interviews which can vary from a totally unstructured to a semi-structured approach. With an unstructured format the researcher suggests the subject for discussion but has few specific questions in mind whereas researchers who want more specific information tend to use a semi-structured format. In both cases, the content of the interview, as well as the flow and choice of topics, changes to match what the individual knows and feels (Holstein and Gubrium 1997). In this way, researchers listen to each answer and determine the next question based on what was said and the interview, like an ordinary conversation, is invented anew each time it occurs (Rubins and Rubins 1995). Appendix 4 details the semi-structured interview guide which simply ensured similar topics were posed to each respondent. Due to the evolving, dynamic nature of qualitative interviewing, the interview guide could not be piloted in a conventional, positivist way. However the author did experiment with interviewing

techniques and refresh her interviewing skills before entering the field. The results of this exercise culminated in two publications using participants who had swum with dolphins whilst on holiday (Curtin and Wilkes 2007; Curtin 2006).

Qualitative interviewing requires astute listening skills to hear the meanings, interpretations and understandings that give shape to the worlds of the interviewees. To get beyond ordinary listening and hear meanings, the researcher must focus the discussion to obtain more depth and detail. The depth, detail and richness sought via this interview technique is what Geertz (1973) refers to as *thick description*. Thick description is rooted in the interviewees' first-hand experience and forms the material that researchers gather, synthesise and analyse. Eliciting thick description does not occur naturally; instead it has to be designed into the semi-structured interview guide and can be more difficult to elicit than first thought (Elliott 2005). Depth means getting thoughtful answers based upon considerable examples and evidence (Rubins and Rubins 1995). Usually this requires a more creative approach than the typical question and answer format.

Hollway and Jefferson (2000) illustrate the dangers of traditional semi-structured qualitative interviews whereby the discussion, or the agenda, is wholly led by the interviewer in a typical question and answer approach. They advise that qualitative researchers take a step back and consider the depth and quality of taking a more narrative approach given that "narrative is the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful" (Polkinghorne 1988:1).

There is a basic assumption in much social science research that if the words used are the same, and if they are communicated in the same way, they will mean the same thing and will be responded to in the same manner. On this premise a great deal hangs in the balance. According to Hollway and Jefferson (2000) abstract and closed questions delimit a horizon of thought. If you do not frame a participant's agenda in these formless terms, they will talk about specific experiences and therefore "tell it like it is" (2000:10). All structured interviews and most aspects of semi-structured interviews come under the question and answer type, where the interviewer sets the agenda and remains in control of what information is produced. In this respect the interviewer is imposing on the information in three ways "by selecting the theme and topics; by ordering the questions in importance and by wording the questions in his or her own language" Bauer (1996: 2). This has a tendency to suppress participant's stories. By trying hard (as most participants do) to comply with the interviewer's agenda, participants are not able to convey their own relevant experiences; thus generating useful knowledge and understanding.

Participants' stories tend to have conventional structures which are arranged to provide coherence; they generally have a beginning, a middle and an end and a life of their own. The particular story told, the manner and the detail of its telling, the points emphasised, the morals drawn, all represent choices made by the story teller. Such choices are revealing, often more so than the teller suspects. In order to uncover such rich data, Hollway and Jefferson (2000) suggest that the researcher can narratise topics, that is to turn questions about given topics into story-telling invitations. Allowing participants this freedom to express themselves using their own narrative shifts the researcher's responsibility to that of a good listener and the interviewee as a story-teller rather than participant (Mishler 1986). Indeed, learning to use this approach takes some practice in the field, yet through careful design, the researcher made sure that she gave her participants story telling opportunities, such as "tell me about your most memorable encounter with wildlife" or "tell me how your interest in wildlife first began" (see appendix 4).

This approach must not be confused with a totally unstructured method (Elliott 2005). Having undertaken a review of existing literature and some exploratory research, the study is guided by a number of key themes which are difficult to ignore. These themes are organised into an interview schedule which still allows a narrative response but ensures that the necessary ground (or stories) is covered. Quite often the participant can guide the order of these themes.

In building this relationship Rubins and Rubins (1995) advocate that participants should be viewed as 'conversational partners' (1995:10) rather than mere objects of research. The term suggests a congenial and cooperative experience as both interviewer and interviewee work together to achieve the shared goal of understanding. They further emphasise that "conversational partnerships are two-way streets" (1995:119) with the interviewee responding to you and you responding to the interviewee. In this manner the interviewer also participates and shares.

Furthermore, Rubins and Rubins (1995:37) suggest that by being more open, researchers "are not asking someone to tell them what they won't share themselves". In addition, "you become aware of what you are asking others to reveal". This is exemplified when the researcher asked her participants to reveal why seeing wildlife in its natural habitat produced such an enjoyable experience. Everyone had difficulty in answering this. However, by pondering the subject together, as you would in a normal conversation, the author realised that there are aspects of this encounter which are indescribable and beyond words; that our words are not sufficient to explain the profanity of eye to eye contact with other species (Bulbeck 2005:xix).

Therefore, in qualitative interviewing the researcher is not neutral, distant or emotionally uninvolved. Instead the researcher's empathy, sensitivity, humour and sincerity are important tools. The research asks for a lot of openness from the interviewees and one cannot obtain such openness by being closed and impersonal themselves (Rubins and Rubins 1995). Holstein and Gubrium (1997:147) refer to this two-way approach as the 'active interview' and are clearly firm believers in its validity as a method to elicit thick description. By establishing a "climate for mutual disclosure" it allows the interview to move beyond the mere words and sentences exchanged in the interview process. Clearly the quality and validity of the interview process depends wholly on who we choose to articulate their experiences.

3.8 Sampling

Punch assures us that sampling is as important in qualitative research as it is in quantitative; "we cannot study everyone everywhere, doing everything" (2005:187). Sampling decisions are required not only about which people to interview or which events to observe, but also about settings and processes. In quantitative research the basic concept is probability sampling which is intended to be truly random and statistically representative; thereby allowing a degree of confidence when inferring generalisations from the results (Patton 1990), i.e. that they are representative of some larger population. Qualitative research, however, uses a non-probability sampling approach. The purpose is not to establish a representative sample but to identify those people who provide the necessary knowledge and understanding to the research topic. This is often called 'purposive sampling' (Punch 2005; Wengraff 2001; Patton 1990). At no point should the qualitative researcher generalise her findings; data simply provides insight, understanding and theories which are grounded in the data and can be measured and tested later if necessary by larger surveys of the population (Merkens 2004).

Nevertheless, there should be a transparent logic in the qualitative sampling strategy (Wengraff 2001; Patton 1990). Patton (1990) proposes sixteen categories of purposive sampling methods from 'extreme or deviant' cases, 'maximum variation' cases, 'confirming' cases, 'typical' cases, 'politically important cases' to opportunistic and snowball sampling. The main point that Kuzel (1992) makes is that sampling is an evolving process. Guba and Lincoln (1989) propose that the process of framing and reframing the research question, choosing information rich cases, gathering data, data analysis and theory construction occur concurrently. This is the flexible nature of theory development and data generation which is inherent in qualitative enquiry. Just as in the interview process, techniques and questions evolve throughout the life of the project and dictate the sample accordingly. Initially settings and informants are chosen for being information-rich ((Wengraf 2001). The first undertaking for this research was to enter the

field and to understand the British wildlife tourism market in order to select a particular segment for closer scrutiny.

To this end, Curtin and Wilkes (2004) propose that the wildlife holiday sector can be segmented into several categories of tourist dependent upon their interest in specific species, their knowledge and the intensity of the tour (see Figures 10 and 11, chapter 4.1). These are: 'bird tours', 'safari holidays', 'expeditions', 'predominantly birds plus' and the 'general naturalist'. Unfortunately, to fully understand each segment of this tourist spectrum is beyond the scope of this research, therefore it was decided as the general naturalist is the most accessible segment and represents one of the fastest growing, that it would be prudent to use this group as the sampling frame.

As Curtin and Wilkes (2004) explain the 'general naturalist' product spectrum covers both ends of the specialist - generalist continuum and ranges from very expensive, high quality, intensive tours which contain detailed and *active* interpretation and knowledge transfer to affordable holidays designed for *passive* wildlife-watching, with some interpretation / knowledge transfer, relaxation and general interest / sightseeing. The over-riding aim in all cases is to see birds, mammals, plants, butterflies and cetaceans. Using the combination of field trips and in-depth interviews whereby participants were interested in a number of different focal species enabled this broad species (product) spectrum to be covered as well as gaining a considerable and broad insight into the over-riding human/wildlife experience for the general naturalist market. With this in mind information-rich participants were sourced from two avenues:

3.8.1 'On tour' with wildlife tourists

As previously explained, two tours were chosen which allowed the researcher access to specific tourist types based upon the focal species being marketed as a key feature of the holiday. The experience of being together 'on tour' and sharing wildlife experiences allowed, for the most part, sound relationships to be formed and commonalities from which to commence interviewing. This enabled the research to capture the wildlife experience as it unravels and while it is fresh in the minds of the participants.

Although the author conducted as many interviews as possible (eleven) during the tours unforeseeable constraints such as the logistics of finding sufficient time and quiet space to conduct interviews as well as the reticence of some tour members to be interviewed on the first tour meant that these had to be supplemented by further interviews on the author's return.

During conversations with the wildlife tourists encountered during the tours, it became apparent that nearly the entire tour group belonged to their local wildlife trust. The

Travelling Naturalist later confirmed that Wildlife Trust members represent a good proportion of their target market which is why most operators advertise in the Trusts' quarterly magazine. The researcher is herself a member of Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT); therefore it seemed prudent to ask permission to contact DWT members who regularly take wildlife holidays.

3.8.2 From the members list of Dorset Wildlife Trust

To this end, the Chief Executive elicited help from his local group chairmen to gather names and addresses of willing participants who met the required criteria, i.e. that they had been on a wildlife holiday within the last twelve months. These were then contacted by phone and interviewed at their homes. This represents a snowball', 'opportunistic' and 'convenience' sampling method (Patton 1990). 'Snowball', as the study gathers size and pace with participants pointing the researcher in the direction of equally rich cases; 'opportunistic' as it allowed the research to take advantage of unexpected and emerging situations; and 'convenience' as the participants were within the researcher's geographical reach.

This method also allowed for 'post-experience' recollections in the knowledge that *experience* itself is a complex and profound concept to explore. It appears to exist in "a blend of past and presence" (Dilthey (1985: 263). Only in thought does it become objective. Van Manen (1990) concurs that experiences have a temporal structure, they can never be fully grasped in their immediacy. Instead they gather significance as we reflect on and give memory to them. Moreover, they gain hermeneutic significance as we (reflectively) remember them; therefore this may add a new dimension.

However contemplating this approach means confronting the fact that data is gathered based upon travel memories; something that research indicates are the result of creative processes (Terdiman 1993; Melion and Kuchler 1991; Connerton 1994). Indeed it is only possible to access what they remembered and this would be reliant on carefully designed prompts based essentially on first hand experience. As with any method, there are of course disadvantages. Marshall and Rossman (1999:123) caution that narrative interviews may suffer from "selective recall, a focus on subsets of experience, filling in memory gaps through inference and reinterpretation of the past." In addition Crites (1986:168) warns against the "illusion of causality"; the assumption that the narrator's story sequencing has accurate cause and effect linkages. Despite these drawbacks, interviews are an essential component of this research as the complexities of wildlife experiences are such that they can only be unveiled by giving the participants freedom to relate their stories and memories.

In reality, the interviews conducted with the Dorset Wildlife Trust sample (post-tour) were not very different to those conducted whilst on tour. The narrative accounts of wildlife tourism experiences appear to be universal irrespective of when the experience took place. It seems that wildlife experiences are so memorable that even the participants who were interviewed on tour referred to past tours and to past experiences as they were further evidence of the joys of wildlife watching. Therefore validity prevails as it is the wildlife which takes precedence and primacy over the time and place. Moreover, there is some benefit to this 'historical' perspective as it sheds light on the meaning of the wildlife experience; how their experiences are integrated into their everyday lives and how they spurred them on to plan their next wildlife trip.

Research on tourist recollections is fairly thin. Most research is undertaken on-site or immediately after the consumption of an activity or the visitation of a place (Ryan *et al.* 2000; Schanzel and McIntosh 2000; Higham 1998). Asking tourists about their recollections provides a new and interesting dimension. Through the process of memory we align our memories to correspond with the dreams that preceded the experiences and set the prior expectations. As Suvantola (2002:248) explains "the memories of our experiences do not represent only our experiences, but also our prior dreams of those experiences.

Finally, the set of interviews also include two tour leaders. Tour leading is an integral part of the wildlife experience and the importance of tour guides must not be underestimated. To date there has been no published research regarding the role of wildlife tour leaders, so these interviews provided an exploratory insight into a) their own love and experience of wildlife and b) the vagaries of managing the tourist experience. They elicit both an emic and etic perspective as both participants and leaders, and may well provide a future sampling frame for further post-doctorate research.

3.8.3 Selecting participants

Rubins and Rubins (1995) confirm the importance of choosing participants with care. "Although almost anyone can become a participant, not everyone makes a good one" (Spradley 1979:45). Participants must be knowledgeable about the culture being studied; should be willing to talk openly and should represent the range of points of view. In this research differences are based upon their particular wildlife interest, age and gender. Rubins and Rubins (1995) provide a useful analogy whereby if the research arena was a theatre, you would try to locate interviewees with different vantage points to ensure the scope of the experience is adequately covered. In order to achieve this, decisions had to be made about who to pursue for interview.

Ideally participants should be “trustworthy, observant, reflective, articulate and a good storyteller” (Johnson 1990:30). Quite often this depends on good luck. Some participants were more passionate about their interest than others and were therefore more expressive. Of course it also depends on ‘the performance’ of the researcher on the day. Moreover, with snowball sampling, one cannot always guarantee that participants meet Johnson’s requirements; only that they are information-rich. Therefore, it became important to value each interview for its own merits and work on rapport-building to empower participants to articulate their thoughts in a meaningful way. In most instances participants were highly articulate as they came from a higher social income group and were often in professional occupations.

3.8.4 Sample size

Unlike quantitative research where the sample-size is pre-determined (Patton 1990), Lincoln and Guba (1985:202) suggest that the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations. The sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from new cases. This is known as reaching saturation (Glaser and Straus 1967). As Rubins and Rubins (1995:73) propose, “you interview until you gain confidence that you are learning little that is new from subsequent interviews”. From then on, the researcher must make the decision to either conclude from her findings, to test emerging themes on a different segment, or choose interviews to extend the results into new settings (Rubins and Rubins 1995). In this case the sample size was determined by the former. Further testing of emergent themes and extending the results into the mass wildlife tourism market is proposed for post-doctoral research projects.

Whilst participant names have been changed in order to fulfil the promise of anonymity, Table 3 provides some basic information regarding the participants.

Table 3: Participant profiles				
Name	Source	Gender	Age	Occupation
Mark	Tour 1: Andalucia	Male	Mid 30s	Tour leader
Ian	Tour 1: Andalucia	Male	Mid 50s	Software engineer
Simon	Tour 1: Andalucia	Male	Mid 30s	Accountant
Peter	Tour 1: Andalucia	Male	Early 70s	Retired accountant
Rebecca	Tour 1: Andalucia	Female	Late 50s	Educational welfare officer
Dawn	Tour 2: Baja, California	Female	Mid 40s	NHS worker
Sophie	Tour 2: Baja, California	Female	Early 60s	Retired headmistress
Marie	Tour 2: Baja, California	Female	Late 50s	Retired
Tanya	Tour 2: Baja, California	Female	Late 40s	Nursing administrator
Michelle	Tour 2: Baja, California	Female	Mid 60s	Retired headmistress
Joe	Tour 2: Baja, California	Male	Mid 60s	Marine biologist
Linda	Dorset Wildlife Trust	Female	Late 50s	Retired
Carol	Dorset Wildlife Trust	Female	Early 60s	Retired
Michael	Dorset Wildlife Trust	Male	Early 60s	Retired farmer
Penny	Dorset Wildlife Trust	Female	Late 60s	Retired
Matthew	Dorset Wildlife Trust	Male	Early 60s	Administrator
David	Dorset Wildlife Trust	Male	Early 50s	Tour leader
James	Dorset Wildlife Trust	Male	Early 50s	Vicar
Edward	Dorset Wildlife Trust	Male	Mid 60s	Geologist
Diane	Dorset Wildlife Trust	Female	Early 50s	Administrator

3.9 Research ethics

Carson *et al.* (2001) explain that it is important to get participants’ agreement to participate and to recognise their rights as research participants. Needless to say, getting a participant’s consent to take part is vital to doing research. Apart from being a prerequisite to access, it is important in context of research ethics to acquire an informed consent. Interviews should not, they claim, be achieved through secret recordings of discussions or the use of confidential conversations as research data. “The researcher and participant should be agreed that a research meeting will be used for research purposes and the participant should understand and explicitly agree to this” (2001)175).

Wengraf (2001:184) propose that the legalities and ethics in qualitative research are complex and controversial. At the very minimum, he suggests “ensuring and assuring anonymity and confidentiality” in the dissemination and publication of the results. The researcher must attempt to keep ownership of the tapes, the transcripts and complete control of any interpretation. There is an important distinction between anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity is a question of degree. It can be satisfied by changing names, places, age and occupations (Wengraf 2001) so that the participant would be

unrecognisable to anyone who might know them. Confidentiality is a much stronger requirement, since it indicates that confidential material will not be used in any form. Much of the literature on qualitative research originates from health and social studies which can cover extremely sensitive arenas.

Fortunately for this research project, the subject of enquiry is not considered particularly sensitive, therefore there was no material that was highly confidential. However, one or two wildlife tour operators did share confidential thoughts and information and, of course, assurance had to be given that these would only remain with the researcher and would inform her thinking rather than be openly conveyed and published. Rubins and Rubins (1995) suggest that being ethical and gaining a reputation for being professional encourages people to be more open with the researcher. In this instance participants often knew one another and would often exchange viewpoints about the research. Therefore treating them with respect and dignity was paramount as word would soon enter the field causing a distance and a potential barrier.

To this end, the researcher ensured that the purpose of the research, the type of questions she would ask, anonymity and the dissemination of results were explained to each of her participants. In line with university policy, she received written consent regarding their participation. For a copy of the consent form, please refer to Appendix 5.

3.10 Ethnographic analysis

With data generation in progress, the researcher turned her attention to analysis. Qualitative analysis is the process of organising, categorising and reducing data into themes and patterns (Brewer 2000). As Fetterman (1998:92) explains, ethnographic analysis is not a distinct stage of the research, "it begins from the moment a researcher selects a field of study and ends with the last word in the ethnographic report". Neither is it a simple process, it involves many levels of analysis from the simple decisions between taking a logical path or following an enticing one to making sense of complex information and in this case deep philosophical concepts. It is iterative as it builds upon ideas that emerge during the fieldwork where after each period of observation, or each interview, the author reflected upon what she had been told or what she had seen and began to organise findings into patterns and potential themes which might add to the next round of data. In this way the analysis of data feeds into the process of research design which assists the typical funnel structure of ethnography where the research questions and answers gain greater clarity (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983).

This reflective analysis is a test of the ethnographer's ability to think critically, to process information meaningfully and usefully and to refine ideas (Fetterman 1998). It demands

self-conscious and systematic thinking (Schatzman and Strauss 1973) and relies heavily on selective perception whereby the researcher selects and isolates pieces of information from all the data generated in the field (Fetterman 1998). Most analyses of qualitative data begin with the identification of key themes and patterns (Coffey and Atkinson 1996). Some of these themes are entirely new and emerge from the data, others appear as broad themes which frame the discussion guide. For example, there were a number of areas identified from personal experience of wildlife watching and from knowledge of the literature. These included questions to do with favourite species, the most memorable experiences, sharing experiences with significant others, getting close to wildlife, and perceptions of impacts. Strauss (1987:33) would call these *in vitro* codes, i.e. codes that are constructed from the material whereas the codes which emerge from the data reflect the voice of the participants and are termed *in vivo* codes. The awareness of these themes enabled the author to devise a very simple and initial thematic framework (or codebook) to enable reflexive analysis and contemplation during the fieldwork, so that as the research progressed the analytical codes could be devised and refined as per the guidelines laid out in the literature ((Lincoln and Guba 1985; Miles and Huberman 1984; and Patton 1990).

Interviews with the operators and the tourists were transcribed, so too were the copious field notes made whilst on tour. This was an unexpectedly lengthy process which took place after each phase of the research, or as immediately after the interviews as possible. The journals written whilst on tour were transcribed immediately on return as the tour operator was very keen to read them as they provided genuine insight into their clients and what it is like to experience their tours. Transcribing after each phase allowed the author to 'reconvene' with her research and to adapt and prepare for the next stage.

Once data collection was complete the transcripts were read and re-read bringing the author closer to her data with every reading. The process of analysis involved several key stages proposed by Fielding (1993): re-reading the data; building comparing and contrasting categories, searching for relationships and grouping categories together, and finally recognising and describing patterns, themes and typologies which appear as first and second order concepts (Denzin 1997). Three levels of analysis were then undertaken in a fashion proposed by Spradley (1979) who organised his data into 'main categories', 'codes' and 'sub-codes' and where a code is determined by a word or a phrase which is used to represent a phenomenon identified by the researcher.

The first stage of the analysis therefore began by ordering this data into the main categories using a colour coding system. For example illustrations in the transcripts with regards to 'love of nature' were highlighted green. Seven main categories occur and these are represented by the seven main headings of the results chapters, i.e. 'wildlife tourism typologies' 'love of nature', 'self-development', 'memorable experiences',

'wonderment and contemplation', 'benefits of organised tours' and 'managing the experience'. An eighth category was also highlighted and this pertained to the author's 'positionality' or biographical experiences during the research process; particularly during the participant observation.

The second level of analysis concerned the emerging ideas, patterns and idiosyncrasies in the category of text. For example, under the category 'wonderment and contemplation', the code 'time to stand and stare' became a common theme amongst participants. Then on deeper readings and interpretation, a sub-category emerged to do with what happens to time when you watch wildlife. Does it speed up because one is totally engaged and 'in flow' enjoying oneself or does it appear to stop due to the intense concentration of the moment?

Of course this approach to coding appears straightforward in principle but as Mason (1996) warns, difficulties can arise when codes overlap. This was overcome by also marking the text in the colour of the overlapping theme and annotating the transcript accordingly as well as ensuring that the codes were as distinct and as discreet as possible. Once the categories, codes and sub-codes are identified, the ethnographer can begin the qualitative description and discussion and can use the participant's voices (extracts) to support her case (Brewer 2000).

Whilst there are a number of useful computer-aided analysis programmes on the market, the author chose not to use technology to analyse her data for two reasons: first, she believes it to go against the spirit of qualitative research and second, it is also only really useful for larger datasets and therefore was inappropriate for this smaller scale study. Moreover, Mason (1996) warns that it can obscure the researcher from the whole (context) and that the depth of meaning may get lost in the technical interpretation of the code and therefore it is easy to miss the logic and essence of what is said and experienced.

3.11 Writing up

Wolcott (2001) and Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) insist that 'writing-up' should not be seen as a purely technical matter to be addressed only in the final stages but as an ongoing commitment to the ethnography. Indeed, this research has involved a lot of writing from the initial proposal to the copious field notes and journals produced on tour, interview transcripts, conference papers, presentations, interim reports for the tour operator and finally articles that have been published in peer reviewed journals. Self reflection and reflexivity have preceded each juncture.

3.11.1 Reflexivity and voice

The reflexive ethnographer does not simply report or describe 'facts' or 'truths' but actively constructs interpretations of her experiences in the field and then questions how these interpretations came about (Van Maanen 1988). Reflexivity creates statements that provide insights on the workings of a social phenomenon as well as insights into how that knowledge was formed (Hertz 1997; Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). Reflexivity is therefore ubiquitous; it permeates every aspect of the research process challenging the ethnographer to be more aware of the ideology and culture of those who are studied as well as those to whom the research is translated and communicated (Spradley 1980). One of the most critical questions in qualitative research concerns authorial voice (Wolcott 2001).

Charmaz and Mitchell (1997:193) highlight that scholarly writers have "long been admonished to work silently on the sidelines, to keep their voices out of the reports that they produce, to be seen but not heard". Wolcott (2001:21) maintains that third person reporting "reflects a belief that impersonal language intensifies an author's stronghold on objective truth". It gives the reader the false impression that facts speak for themselves, and that there is definitive knowledge and understanding rather than the "messy melange of fragmented meanings and shifting contexts that the researcher may encounter in the phenomenal world" (Charmaz and Mitchell 1997:193). Therefore there is some merit in audible authorship particularly in qualitative research where the author as researcher is an intrinsic and not faceless part of the process.

Furthermore, the use of participant observation makes it very problematic to leave out the author's voice entirely as field journals which constitute an equal part of the data comprise first person observations, narrative and reflection. The dilemma, therefore, was how to successfully integrate the two forms of data: one in the voice of the author and the other representing the voice of the participants. Eventually a compromise was made whereby extracts from the author's travel diaries and field notes appear in the first person and are used to provide supporting evidence for interpretations of the participants' accounts; thereby allowing the author's voice and experiences to be juxtaposed with that of her participants. In addition, the following section on epistemology and positionality are also appropriately delivered in the first person perspective as they represent the author's biography. Other than this, the thesis is written in the third person.

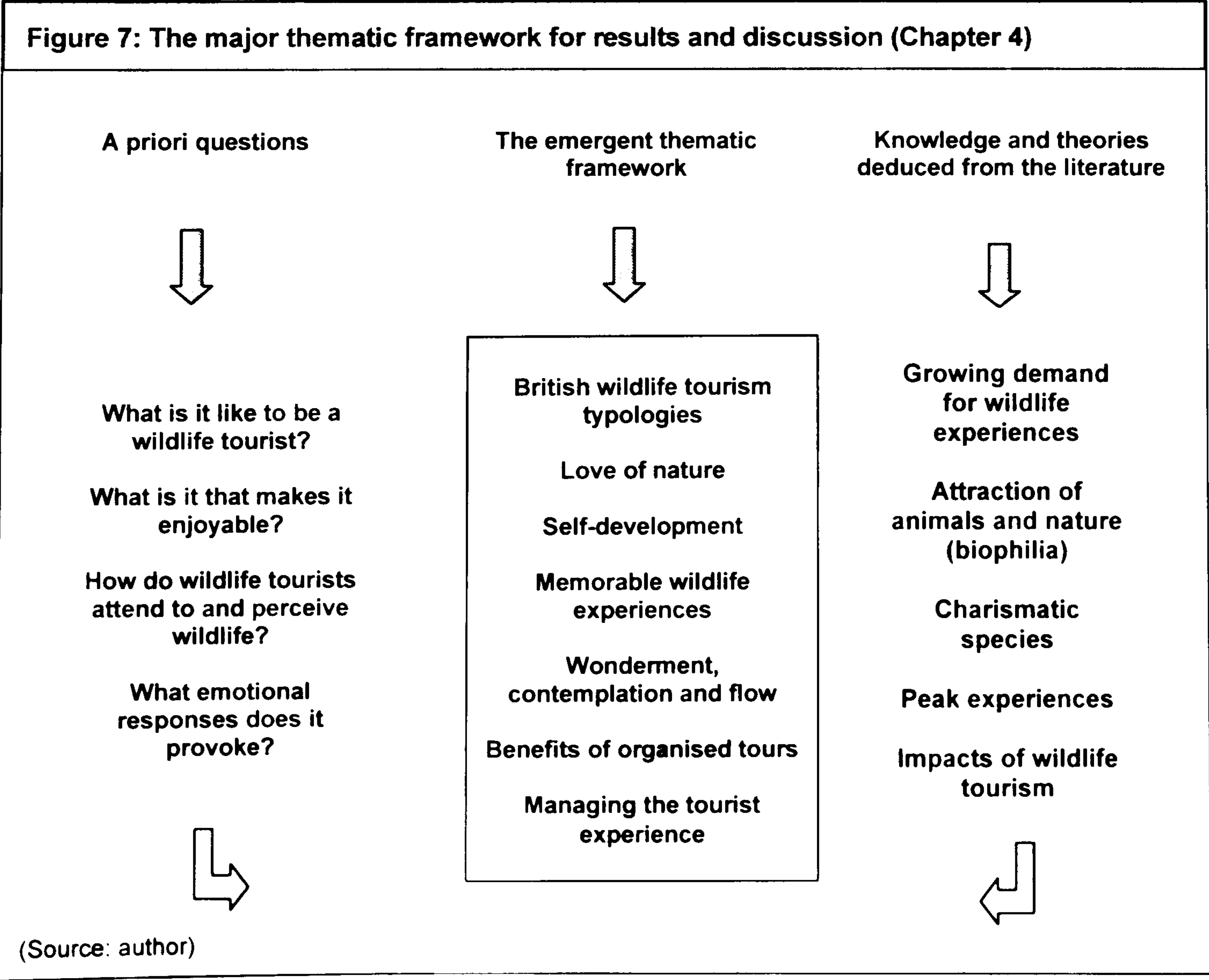
However, the author's voice remains embedded in the results and discussion. As situated actors, researchers bring their own histories to each interview and period of observation (Manning 1967). The author draws upon her own experiences to make sense of what she is told and what she observes. Hertz (1997) confirms that this approach can help validate a participant's experience especially where the subject of

study is familiar to the researcher as it was in this case. Therefore the author should be visible but the most prominent voice should always be that of the participants (Fetterman 1998).

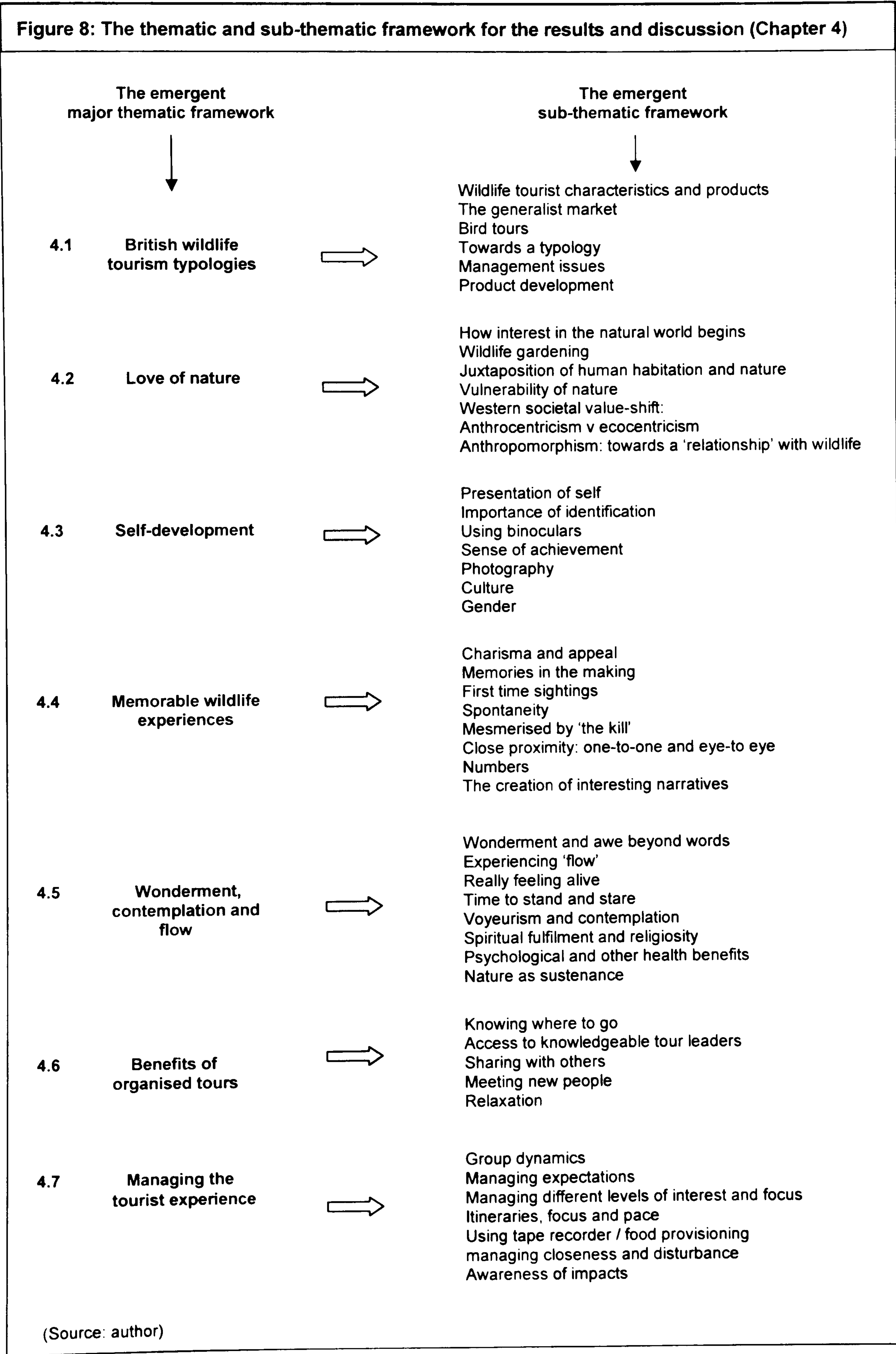
3.11.2 The ordering of data

Coffey and Atkinson (1996:108) suggest that writing up qualitative research is not “simply a matter of classifying, categorising, coding and collating data into forms of speech or regularities of action”. It’s about the “the representation or reconstruction of social phenomena”. In the writing up process the ethnographer creates accounts of the social world and the social actors that have been observed and interviewed.

One of the hardest tasks is the re-ordering of data and participant observations into a linear arrangement as the tourist experience does not unfold in such a neat and organised way (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). As section 3.10 explains, the analysis of participants’ transcripts, the author’s travel diaries and the contextual literature has enabled the production of a major thematic framework which comprises the major themes (or categories) as section headings of the results and discussion chapters (see Figure 7 below). Under each heading which appears in ‘the emergent thematic framework’, sub-themes have been identified and these sub-themes are displayed in an introductory diagram at the beginning of each section to help the reader follow the emergent issues and theories; these themes then become subheadings in the text.



To help signpost the reader, Figure 8 displays the major emergent thematic framework and the resultant sub-themes which appear as sub-headings in the corresponding results chapters.



Many authors encourage the use of diagrams to illustrate qualitative ideas, frameworks and theories and to help signpost the reader (Wolcott 2001; Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Miles and Huberman 1994). Whilst this may appear a rather positivist and structured approach for pure qualitative research, its purpose is to enable a logical and progressive delivery of the findings and does not interfere with the spirit of qualitative analysis based upon the voice of the study's participants. The major themes are organised in a logical, progressive order from understanding the market place, the inherent love of nature, personal benefits and experiences of watching wildlife, and finally to how the wildlife experience is managed.

3.11.3 Levels of translation and use of 'thick' description

Having organised the concepts, the next step is to consider the translation. Spradley (1980) explains that translation discovers the meanings in one culture (wildlife tourism) and communicates them to another culture (the audience) who is often unfamiliar with the cultural scene. He advises ethnographic writers to use the six different levels of translation which move the understanding from the general to the particular. The following bullet points illustrate these levels and show how the author has used them to develop her discussion:

Level one: '*universal statements*', e.g. 'time is a precious commodity and despite having devices which are meant to save us time, we never seem to have enough time to ourselves' (section 4.5).

Level two: '*cross-cultural descriptive statements*', e.g. 'unlike hard-core birding holidays where the focus and the challenge for the guides is to enable clients to 'tick-off' as many different birds as possible, the general naturalist market are motivated by the desire to learn about the birds and animals they are seeing and to be able to identify them' (section 4.3).

Level three: '*general statements about a society or cultural group*', e.g. 'wildlife tourists view their gardens as an extension of their interest in wildlife' (section 4.2).

Level four: '*general statements about a specific cultural scene*', e.g. 'wildlife tourists carry their binoculars with them everywhere they go to signify what type of tourists they are' (section 4.3)

Level five: '*specific statements about a cultural domain*', e.g. 'identification of species can be very important for the wildlife tourist' (section 4.3).

Level six: *'specific incident statements'*, e.g. 'one minute I was communing with nature but the minute I saw another bus I felt that it was a touristy place and a touristy thing and suddenly it didn't have the same feeling like when you saw the people come out of the bus and they didn't quite look like wildlife people. They weren't dressed like wildlife people and it sort of debased it....'(section 4.3)

These levels are like building bricks. They begin by building universal foundations and then by incorporating layers of specific detail which subsequently enhances the readers' understanding and knowledge of the culture in question.

Fetterman (1998:111) argues that ethnographic writing like this requires "an eye for detail, an ability to express the detail in its proper context and the language skills to weave meaning and theory into a textured fabric". The final product is a reconstruction of a social phenomenon that is revealed over months of observation and interviews. This requires the use of what Geertz (1973:20) refers to as 'thick' description which interprets and portrays the participants' experiences, incorporates the context, the cultural meaning and the ethnographer's analysis. It aims to bring the research to life allowing the reader, through the writer, to converse with and observe for themselves those who have been studied. Verbatim quotations are an intrinsic part of ethnography as they are a permanent record of a person's thoughts and feelings as well as providing factual data. They are used extensively in the results and discussion section to illustrate participant's experiences, so too are the verbatim journal extracts from the author's diaries.

Long verbatim quotations help convey a sense of immediacy to the reader and can provide them with sufficient data to determine whether the ethnographer's interpretations and conclusions are warranted (Fetterman 1998). They also ensure that quotations are not taken out of context and fashioned to fit the theme that is under discussion. According to Geertz (1973) and Fetterman (1998:124), thick description and verbatim quotes have "tremendous face validity".

3.12 Trustworthiness and transparency

Janesick (1998) argues that a good deal of the discourse in qualitative research is heavily influenced by underlying psychometric views of the world. "The prevailing myths about aggregating numbers, and more tragically aggregating individuals into sets of numbers have moved us away from our understanding of lived experience" (1998:47) and away from social reality.

If tourism is an individual matter chosen as part of the invention of self, measuring that invention is profoundly difficult especially given a world in which one's very notion of self

is in a constant state of change. Indeed such attempts at measurement would be detrimental to the understanding of the tourist experience as attempts to understand its meaning would become reductionist (Goodale and Godbey 1996) rather than a true representation of the complex multiple realities of a tourist experience. For example a researcher might ask a participant if they are happy when psychologists increasingly believe that people can be simultaneously happy and sad (Csizszentmihalyi 1990). Fixed categories of descriptors for emotions are also prevalent in experiential research when in reality each emotion is unique, never to be replicated. It is axiomatic, therefore, that the most important values, emotions and experiences are the most difficult to measure as happiness, well-being, wonderment, awe, beauty and peace are resistant to simple measurement. To demand 'proof' that is absolute and indisputable therefore is "ignorant of post-modern reality" (Goodale and Godbey 1996:101).

According to Jamal and Hollinshead (2001) interpretive studies focus on experience and meaning and these cannot be judged on positivist criteria of 'truth', 'validity' and 'reliability' because the philosophical, naturalistic, assumptions are so different from the positivist paradigm. The naturalistic approach encompasses multiple constructed realities that can only be studied holistically; "knower and known are interactive and inseparable" (2001:76). The inquiry is value-laden and prediction and control is unlikely, nonetheless understanding of a phenomenon is achieved. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that in the positivist paradigm there is a single, tangible and fragmentable reality which can be predicted and controlled. Knower and known are independent of each other; hence the inquiry is seen to be value-free. Jamal and Hollinshead (2001) demand that qualitative research is not judged on the same basis, that terms like validity and confirmability are merely legacies of positivism and should therefore be rejected.

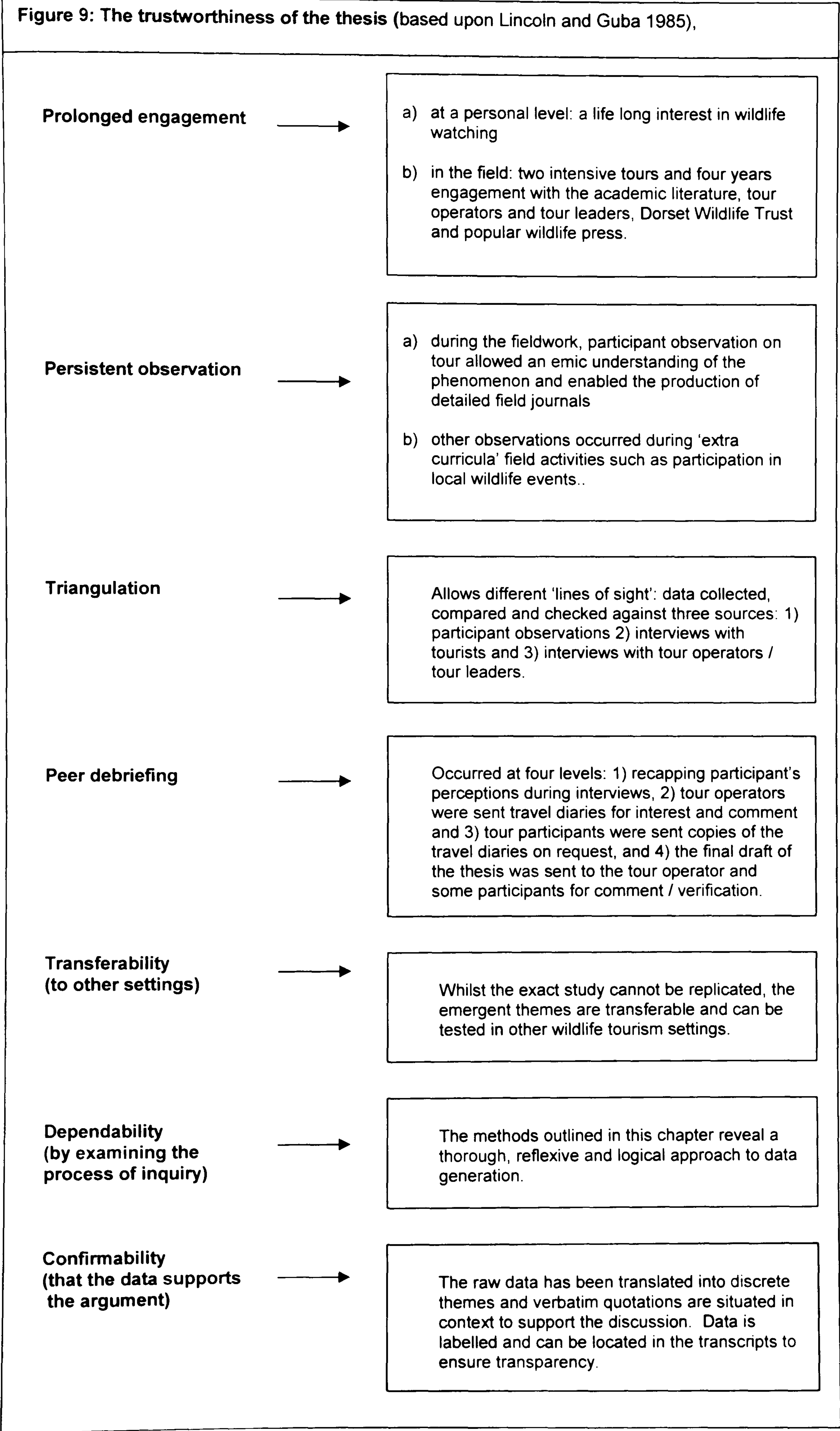
Therefore Lincoln and Guba (1985) provide a number of useful techniques in qualitative research which do go some way towards meeting trustworthiness criteria. These include:

- Prolonged engagement
- Persistent observation
- Triangulation
- Peer debriefing
- Transferability (to other settings)
- Dependability (by examining the process of inquiry)
- Confirmability (that the data supports the argument)

Jamal and Hollinshead further suggest that the objectives of the inquiry are accomplished: "do the multiple points of view, narratives and emotions described in the text offer the reader an in-depth, substantive understanding of the topic" and "does the writer demonstrate an ethos of self-reflexive attention" (2001:76).

There is also a need to be highly transparent. A phenomenologically powerful description of the lived experience, according to Van Manen (1990:122) has a certain transparency of its own. This transparency is “a function of the appropriateness of the themes identified in the analysis and a function of the thoughtfulness mustered by the writer in creating exemplary descriptions and being sensitive to the evocative tone of language in which the descriptions are captured.” Moreover, Cresswell (1998) proposes that the researcher clearly distinguishes between the emic perspective (i.e. the views of the informants) and the etic perspective (his or her own personal views). Finally Geertz (1973:16) suggests that the cogency of the explication should be measured “not against a body of un-interpreted data, radically thinned descriptions, but against the power of the scientific imagination to bring us in touch with strangers.”

Beginning with the criteria of trustworthiness proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), Figure 9 explains how this thesis meets their requirements. The author asserts that the objectives of the enquiry have been fulfilled and that the narrative of the thesis provides the reader with genuine insight and understanding of the wildlife tourism experience. Reflexivity is apparent not only via the inclusion of the author's field diaries but also via the transparent analysis and translation of the data. Thick descriptions and verbatim quotations allow the reader to engage with the cultural complexities of the tourist experience and the emotions, philosophies and perceptions of the study's participants.



3.13 Author's biography: epistemological reflections of the research, problems and limitations

My avid interest in wildlife began from an early age and from childhood influences; particularly having grandparents who were both knowledgeable and appreciative of the countryside. During my own travels, I have always taken an interest in the local fauna and flora and marvelled at the abundance and biodiversity in our midst. Furthermore I notice that encounters with animals, insects and plants feature quite heavily in people's narrative of place and of tourist experiences which is why I eventually proposed to undertake this research.

Having a knowledge and interest in wildlife tourism allowed me to access the field with ease. Alongside my interest in nature is an awareness of the business of tourism, particularly product development, consumer behaviour and marketing borne out of previous studies, time spent in the workplace and the research with tourism enterprises and markets undertaken whilst at the Tourism Research Group at Exeter University. This knowledge and experience allowed me to infiltrate the business setting and to converse with wildlife tour operators. Interest, empathy and affinity with their modes operandi allowed relationships to be built ultimately resulting in access to their clients who are the primary focus of my study.

Nevertheless, from the beginning, I had to market my own thesis and convince operators that my research is worthy. I did this by emphasising the potential symbiotic relationship between my study and the tour operators: i.e. allowing me into their world might provide them with insight into their markets and into the behaviour, attitudes and perceptions of their clients. This trust and mutual respect took time and patience to develop but culminated in the Travelling Naturalist offering me the chance to join their tours on the premise that without fully participating myself, how could I possibly fully appreciate the vagaries of the wildlife tourism culture? Thus begun phase 2 and 3 of the research each with their own problems and issues to be met and overcome.

3.13.1 The demands of participant observation

Whilst previous research contracts had provided me with experience of doing qualitative research including observation, total immersion and overt participant observation were new experiences and proved to be a steep learning curve for me. Punch (2005:183) explains that "prolonged immersion in the life of a group" is a demanding form of data collection; clearly not suited to everyone (Delbridge and Kirkpatrick 1994). Much of it relies on the building of relationships with others. It requires a certain amount of personal flexibility and discipline as often you must suppress your own personality in order to be

'all things to all people'. In reality several tourism researchers have found the task problematic. Bowen (2002:11) anticipated that joining a tour group would entail a heavy physical and psychological toll added to by the imperative to record data. Eventually, he exclaims that "the burden was heavier than expected with one day of research and recording rolling into the next day". The emotional and physical toll was totally unexpected as these two excerpts from my diary articulate:

"I am feeling extremely tired. Wildlife watching is a fairly intensive business even more so when you have a mission such as this. Moreover, I am spending a lot of time in the company of people with whom I have very little in common apart from a love of wildlife. I have found dinner times particularly hard work; unable to totally relax into them" (Travel diary, Andalucia).

"When we had drunk the last drops of beer, it was time for bed. I showered and once again picked up my diary, eventually putting it to rest at 1.00am. I notice that when you do observation projects, there is an acceptable amount of information to note at the beginning, but as the trip intensifies and draws towards a close, relationships are closer and there is more to be drawn from conversations. The amount you write and the amount of information you try and hold in your mind also intensifies and you have to spend more time scribing" (Travel diary, Baja).

3.13.2 Researcher v participants: being accepted into the group

As well as this, I became very aware of my own presence in the group. Fetterman (1998) asserts that the personality, approach and countenance of the researcher are key research instruments in participant observation. Since researchers are acknowledged as active participants in the research process, it was essential to contemplate my presentation of 'self', and particularly my relationship with the group being studied. This was brought to the forefront right from the beginning of the first tour:

"It's our first evening meal together and I am feeling self-conscious and concerned that I haven't given an announcement regarding my research but it doesn't feel as though it is the right time or place. I also feel that I need time to establish myself as part of the group first. Sue and Tony have asked about my research but no-one else has mentioned it. It all feels rather odd – how am I supposed to behave?" (Travel diary, Andalucia).

But without realising it, my writing to the first tour participants beforehand had already set me apart from them; 'they were tourists, I was a researcher'. I was therefore considered an outsider from the start before I had even left home. Having positioned myself thus, it was impossible to join the group as 'one of them'. This meant that I had to work very hard at being welcomed and accepted and my novice approach at being a wildlife tourist

did not help matters as my actions and behaviour were often outside the norm and helped to reaffirm my 'difference'. This extract reveals a low point where I reflect on my positionality and flounder for explanations and remedies:

"Definitely feeling way outside the group today – I am the only one to leave my binoculars in the bus when we stop for a coffee. I feel very silly as a flock of stork fly overhead and I am the only one not looking at them through binoculars. I still don't feel that I have bonded with the group. I appear to drift in and out..... but then I suppose I would be outside the group anyway due to a) my age, b) my general tendency in all walks of life to naturally position myself on the edge of social groups and c) the fact that I am doing 'research'" (Travel diary, Andalucia).

After only four days in the field, the gulf between the observed and the observer widened to crisis point:

"There are indeed strange dynamics today. Something is afoot – they are bonding closer together whilst I'm moving (being pushed??) further away. Dinner was OK but rather strained – two of the chaps insisted I sat next to them (sweet – with hindsight I think that they felt rather sorry for me!). After dinner Jamie and Mark confirmed my worst suspicions – all is not well. The pre-trip letter was not well received. From what I can gather there is an assumption that every time I talk to them it is to glean information not because I have any interest in them as individuals. They feel exposed" (Travel diary, Andalucia).

Jorgensen (1989) warns that the potential for misunderstanding and inaccurate observation increases when the researcher remains aloof and distanced physically and socially from the subject of study. Human beings are social creatures; we belong in groups where there is safety in numbers. Our behaviour is therefore heavily influenced by the need to be liked and to belong. It follows then that not being 'liked' or accepted makes one feel uncomfortable in the social setting and this too can affect our behaviour and our perceptions of events. One particularly difficult day is illustrated below:

"I notice I am not being included in conversations today. I wish I had chosen a less involved method like questionnaires now!! I suddenly feel very lonely and claustrophobic. This isn't very pleasant, I have nowhere to hide; there is no retreat." (Travel diary, Andalucia).

This day was to be a turning point as I had to find the resolve to carry on regardless. I decided to talk to the tour leaders, one of whom was the director of the Travelling Naturalist. I was particularly concerned that events on this tour might dissuade him from continuing the programme of research. However both leaders were most sympathetic as this extract reveals:

“They too had felt the tensions of the day and had sussed out that something was wrong with the group evidenced by a little clique of women whispering behind the minibus!! They were both adamant that it was not my approach per se. I didn’t appear to them to be overly intrusive in my research or behaviour. Instead I was an asset to the group and someone who could bring people together. But it was obviously the introductory letter and not to be upset; we could make it better next time. They were fairly used to ironing out problems and that you can never please everyone however hard you try. Jolly nice of them really. I feel rather relieved and certainly more positive. It hasn’t been a waste of time at all. In actual fact the dynamics of the method are interesting in themselves. Moreover, I have already revealed some interesting themes and have gained some fantastic insights into wildlife tourism. Plus what a thrill to see so many new things and to traipse around the hotel grounds at night moth hunting with experts – sheer joy!” (Travel diary, Andalucia).

Qualitative research is often trial and error where new ideas are built on the foundations of previous interviews and/or experiences. This was no exception, I had learned a lot in Andalucia and this had facilitated a new, revised approach to the second tour to Baja California where:

“I feel this group is so much easier than in Andalucia. Certainly much friendlier and more approachable. I’ll never know how much the business-type letter was the cause of their dislike in Andalucia or whether I simply wasn’t a kindred spirit. Perhaps it is this new softly, softly, approach which is working much better” (Travel diary, Andalucia).

In addition my previous experience in Andalucia had meant that I was now far more adept at writing field notes and at instigating research-orientated conversations alongside general ‘chit-chat’. Being on a boat and having my own cabin meant I did have some privacy and retreat if and when I needed to but we all got on so well that I did not feel the need to withdraw. Overall both trips were equally fruitful in terms of data but the Baja tour was a lot more enjoyable.

3.13.3 Difficulties with conducting interviews whilst on tour

It was my initial intention to conduct all my interviews whilst on tour and it didn’t occur to me that not everyone would participate. I entered the field with the basic presumption that most people like to talk about themselves; they enjoy the social ability of a long discussion and are pleased that someone is interested in them (Rubins and Rubins 1995). Therefore the notion of being able to conduct in-depth interviews whilst on tour did not at first seem unreasonable. Unfortunately, this was not always the case. Wildlife tourists can be particularly protective of their time; especially as tours tend to be very

intensive. With hindsight, and after the first field trip to Andalucia, it is clear that for this target market (professional groups), a major part of the holiday experience is being able to unwind and not be governed by times, appointments or perceived market research. As these three extracts from my diary illustrate, finding time on tour was surprisingly difficult:

"I am now beginning to worry about my interviews; how and when am I going to conduct them? We are spatially confined on the boat and it is very noisy. I have asked several people if they are willing to be interviewed and all have agreed. Neil, the tour leader, reminds me that "it'll be the point of no return soon" so, yes, I had better get on with it. We are due to anchor in Magdalena Bay. Perhaps over the next two days there will be much quieter opportunities, depending on the generator and the wind" (Travel diary, Baja).

In Magdalena Bay:

"It is still very difficult to find a good time, we seem to be busy for much of it and there is always something going on or to watch. It is also difficult to use the tape recorder as the boat engines and the wind are very noisy; even in my cabin. Also whilst I recognise now the importance of biding my time until I have been totally accepted by the group, I have a growing sense of running out of time" (Travel diary, Baja).

Now we have an hour's grace in the afternoon sunshine, I do not feel able or willing to intrude on people's enjoyment of the fresh air, sunshine and sea. Especially as they too are keeping journals and are reflecting on the week's and particularly today's events: it feels so very intrusive (Travel diary, Baja).

Harrison (2003:5) also discovered that talking to tourists can be difficult. In her anthropological study of what it is to be a tourist, she explains that tourists "are rarely willing to give up more than fifteen seconds and are reluctant to be distracted from their holiday pursuits and activities". Whilst there are many studies of wildlife tourist experiences, these tend to be of a quantitative nature. Even in-depth studies have relied on fairly swift face-to-face methods usually undertaken on site.

3.13.4 Obtaining rich information from participants

Experiencing intensive wildlife tours for myself allowed a much greater insight when it came to the interviewing process. Shared experiences on tour provided common ground and allowed a depth of understanding that was used to underpin the line of enquiry. Moreover the conversational and narrative approach to interviewing espoused by Rubins and Rubins (1995) worked very well as it generates a feeling of sharing and debating ideas rather than the typical, and often sterile, question and answer session. Participants

were certainly more willing to talk in depth when they realised how much I was familiar with and sympathetic to their world (Rubins and Rubins 1995; Holstein and Gubrium 1997; Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Marshall and Rossman 1999).

However some interviews were still better than others. Quality depends on a number of things: a) the personality of the participant; some people are avid talkers and others give measured responses to questions despite copious prompts, b) the setting; leisurely interviews tend to be more fruitful than those undertaken in difficult locations or constrained by time, and c) my own 'mood' or countenance at the time; sometimes we are more enthusiastic, passionate and lively. I had to learn to accept that not every interview would provide new and greater depth of insight.

Finally recording the interviews was sometimes problematic due to engine noise, windy conditions, bird-song and other unexpected interruptions. It would have been prudent to think more carefully about where the interviews would be conducted; ideally inside a hotel room, but of course, this was not always possible. This was obviously not a problem with the interviews conducted once back in Dorset.

3.13.5 Limitations

With hindsight I may have chosen to organise the research slightly differently. For example, I might have simply joined the tours as a tourist first and foremost, as opposed to a researcher. This being so, I would relax the need to interview or question people and simply keep detailed journals as per conversations, special moments, peak experiences and tourists' recollections of past sightings and trips which are all common talking points whilst on tour. I may then have interviewed participants once they had returned home or conduct in-depth interviews with people from the company's client list. This would have been a more simple approach and avoided some of the problems regarding being accepted in the group, participation in the interview process and difficulties with recording.

Nevertheless, my interviews coupled with the observations in the field generated more than sufficient data to fulfil my research objectives and have clearly produced some interesting themes for discussion. If I had had the time and budget, I would have liked to experience different product groups such as 'safari' or 'bird listing tours' as well as perhaps those run by a different company. However, this is proposed for post-doctoral studies as I intend to continue to work in this field of tourism; certainly to take the subject beyond the scope of this thesis.

3.14 Introduction to results chapter

This detailed chapter has explained both the methodology and the approach to data generation, analysis and translation. The next chapter discusses the results beginning with the first phase of the research regarding the business of wildlife tourism. This discusses wildlife tourist typologies and gives an overview of the general naturalist segment on which the remainder of the thesis is based. The results and discussion chapter then moves through the major themes of the thesis, i.e. love of nature, self-development, memorable wildlife experiences, wonderment, contemplation and flow, benefits of organised tours and managing the tourist experience.

4.0 Results

The following results chapters are derived from the major thematic and sub-thematic framework outlined on Page 69 and 70 (Figures 7 and 8). The analysis of the transcripts and the observations were ordered into major themes which are represented by the main chapter headings for 4.1 to 4.7. Under each of these themes (main headings) a number of sub-themes emerge which are represented in the text as the subheadings for each chapter. In order to help the reader to follow the emergent issues and theories, an introductory diagram is placed at the beginning of each chapter from section 4.2 onwards. First the results chapters begin by providing a discussion of phase 1 of the research which explores British wildlife tourism typologies.

4.1 British wildlife tourism typologies

4.1.1 Introduction

The rationale for this phase of the research was to establish a greater understanding of British wildlife tour operators and to suggest a typology based upon the type of tour, the characteristics of clients and the favoured destinations. In order to achieve this, the author immersed herself into the culture of wildlife tour operating to make sense of, and interpret, the wildlife tourism phenomena based upon first hand information gleaned from industry players and their promotional material.

In order to access this phenomena, the author attended the annual RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) Bird Fair which is an annual event held in August where contact with a number of tour operators was established. The Fair is the most important wildlife event attracting a large audience of enthusiasts (i.e. potential wildlife tourists) from all over the United Kingdom and the majority of wildlife tour operators. Joining this event allowed the author to introduce herself to the key players in the industry, to illicit interest in the research and to gather promotional materials. However, it was also necessary to review the small advertisements in specialist wildlife / nature magazines and to search the internet to capture the smaller operators, based in the United Kingdom, who do not exhibit at this event.

Once all the promotional literature had been gathered, it was possible to produce a product spectrum, by systematically reviewing the brochures in respect of several categories; namely: the destinations visited, the focal species included, the emphasis on the number of different species to be seen, the intensity of the tour (i.e. how much time is spent in the field) and the level of interpretation, and how knowledgeable or expert tourists are likely to be (Duffus and Dearden 1990).

To further support and describe the product spectrum several companies from the Bird Fair agreed to be interviewed at their premises. Eventually four interviews were undertaken; two (Companies A and B) who specialise in watching all types of wildlife (general naturalist) and two who specialise in bird-watching (Companies C and D). All four have itineraries in America, Africa and the Middle East, Europe, Asia and Australasia and have been operating for a number of years with a loyal and growing clientele. Company A is a high quality, well-established operator, whilst company B is the largest of the wildlife tour operators who appeals to a slightly younger market. One of the bird-watching companies (Company C) has slightly diversified their product to incorporate viewing other species that may be encountered on route to broaden their appeal into new markets. Company D's core product is still specialist birding. These key informants provided an essential insight into the business of wildlife tour operating and, whilst it is unwise to generalise from only four accounts, the results not only provide some interesting elements worthy of discussion but also considerable insight into the different types of experience that are delivered.

Having already undertaken a literature review and product spectrum analysis of brochures, the interviews were guided by a number of key themes organised into an interview schedule which allowed a narrative response but ensured that the necessary ground was covered (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). Research questions explored product differentiation, product development, perceptions of tourist motivations and expectations; local benefits, potential causes for concern; elements of good or common practice and management principles and policies.

4.1.2 Wildlife tourist characteristics and products

As in previous studies of nature-based tourists (Page and Dowling 2002; Ballantine and Eagles 1994; Duffus and Dearden 1990), British wildlife tourists tend to be older, affluent and well-educated with reasonable amounts of disposable time. According to operators, clients are predominantly retired professionals, aged 55 plus. In addition, there are a small proportion of working couples in the 30 – 55 age range and a small number of teenage / child enthusiasts who accompany parents. The rest is made up of a relatively high proportion of singles, widows and widowers with high disposable incomes with women slightly outnumbering men (Curtin and Wilkes 2005; WTO 2002). One or two operators have also entered into the family market selling, *“quality wildlife experiences for all the family”*. As one might expect, demographic profiles of clients vary according to the product, quality and price of the operator; so wildlife tourists cannot be considered an homogenous population, even though they are primarily motivated by the same stimulus of wildlife watching.

The United Kingdom has approximately 45¹ small enterprises (mostly comprising less than 5 employees) that offer wildlife tours. These enterprises provide a wide array of overseas and domestic wildlife tourism products to the British consumer which range from glossy, all-encompassing packages designed for the general wildlife enthusiast to the more adventurous, specific and niche market products designed for the avid '*twitcher*' or expert; usually most interested in birds (Table 4). In addition, there are expedition providers who offer active / involved study tours (Table 5) and mainstream operators (Table 6) who offer wildlife-watching as part of an overall trip.

In order to ascertain an indication of the number of passengers carried on an outbound wildlife tour, the Air Transport Operators Licence (ATOL) website was used to identify the number of passengers carried in 2003. ATOL is a protection scheme for flights and air holidays managed by the British Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Most firms who sell air travel are required by law to hold an ATOL licence which protects the consumer from being stranded overseas in the event of their tour operator going out of business. Each tour operator is assigned an ATOL Licence number which is printed in their brochures. This number can then be used to investigate how many passengers they take overseas in any one year.

However, there are anomalies and complications with this method of estimating volumes. It is impossible to gauge the total number of people taking outbound wildlife tours for several reasons. First, a number of operators do not have their own ATOL licences instead they trade under umbrella organisations, making it difficult to separate passenger numbers. Second, according to one of the prominent general nature operators (Company B), approximately 20% of their clients make their own flight arrangements as do foreign clients. Similarly wildlife holidays in the UK (domestic travel) also require clients to make their own travel arrangements. Moreover, the number of people they organise trips for is not in the public domain (these are marked 'domestic travel' in Table 4).

¹ The reader is asked to note that the British wildlife sector is dynamic; there are new enterprises joining the market all the time, especially for domestic holidays. Therefore this list is only indicative and not conclusive at the time of going to press.

Table 4: UK Wildlife operators			
No.	Company	Type	No. of people carried overseas
1.	Aardvark Safaris	Safari	184
2.	Arctic Experience Pole to Pole Wildlife Encounters Discover the World Discover the Living Planet	General naturalist	11,000
3.	Avian Adventures	Birds	418
4.	Birdfinders	Birds	230
5.	Bird Holidays	Birds	250
6.	Birdquest Also Divequest Easybird Ocean Adventures Wild Images	Birds	1,000
7.	Birdseekers Bookings with Strand Travel incl.	Birds	300
8.	Birdwatching Breaks	Birds	162
9.	Cambrian Bird Holidays	Predominantly Birds +	Domestic travel
10.	Celtic Bird Holidays	Predominantly Birds +	76
11.	Classic Journeys	General naturalist	144
12.	Fatbirders Anytime Tours	Birds	Agent
13.	Focus on Birds	Birds	Domestic travel
14.	Footprint Adventures	General naturalist	Not known
15.	Galapagos Adventure Tours	General naturalist	293
16.	Geodyssey	General naturalist	265
17.	Great Glen Wildlife	General naturalist	Domestic travel
18.	Greentours Natural History Holidays Bookings with Strand Travel incl.	General naturalist	Shared ATOL licence
19.	Guideliner Wildlife Cruises	General naturalist	Domestic
20.	Gullivers Natural History Holidays	General naturalist	335
21.	Heatherlea	General naturalist	Domestic + bookings with Travelling Naturalist
22.	Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays	General naturalist	202
23.	Ibisbill Tours Regent Holidays Ltd	Birds	Not known
24.	Island Adventures Bookings with Strand Travel	Predominantly Birds +	Shared ATOL licence
25.	Island Holidays	General naturalist	182
26.	Limosa Holidays	General naturalist	550

Table 4: UK Wildlife operators (cont.)			
No.	Company	Type	No. of people carried overseas
27.	Naturetrek	General naturalist	2200
28.	New Horizons	Birds	265
29.	North Kent Birding	Birds	Domestic travel
30.	North West Birds	Birds	Domestic travel
31.	Ornitholidays	Predominantly Birds +	520
32.	Peregrine Holidays	General naturalist	760
33.	Reef & Rainforest Tours	General naturalist	340
34.	Safari Consultants Ltd	Safari	598
35.	Sarus Bird Tours Bookings with Strand Travel incl:	Birds	Shared ATOL licence
36.	Speyside Wildlife	General naturalist	300
37.	Sunbird	Birds	328
38.	Toucan Tours Bookings with Strand Travel incl:	Birds	Shared ATOL licence
39.	The Travelling Naturalist	General naturalist	640
40.	Tribes Travel	General naturalist	535
41.	Wilderness Tours	General naturalist	Not known
42.	Wildlife Worldwide	General naturalist	1,397
43.	Wild Oceans / Wildwings Bookings with Strand Travel incl:	General naturalist	Shared ATOL licence
44.	Worldwide Journeys & Expeditions part of The Ultimate Travel Company	General naturalist	Not known
Note 1	Some tour leaders organise their own trips via their individual web sites. E.g. 'Come bird-watching with'		
Note 2	Bed and breakfast owners who reside in areas with abundant and viewable fauna incorporate wildlife tours to diversify their product.		

(Source: Author)

Table 5: Educative / active expeditions			
No.	Non-profit making organisations	Type	No. of people carried overseas
1.	Aigas Field Centre Expeditions	Expeditions	Domestic travel
2.	Field Studies Council UK + Overseas	Study tours	230
3.	Wildlife Trusts	Study tours	Domestic travel
4.	Biosphere Expeditions	Expeditions	Not known

(Source: Author)

Table 6: Shift towards mainstream market		
No.	Mainstream operators who offer wildlife itineraries / trips	Type
1.	Bales	Mainstream
2.	Cox and Kings	Mainstream
3.	Exodus	Adventure
4.	Explore Worldwide	Adventure
5.	Guerba Expeditions	Adventure
6.	Hayes and Jarvis	Mainstream
7.	Kuoni	Mainstream
8.	The Ulitmate Travel Company	Mainstream
9.	Titan Tours (All Canada)	Mainstream
10.	Travelpack	Mainstream

(Source: Author)

Tour operators organise between 6 and 145 itineraries a year for an average group size of 12, the maximum number for this type of tour (Chin *et al.* 2000) in order to ensure that “everyone in the group has sightings” (Company C). However, group size range from between 5 and 14 members.

Clearly it is a very small travel sector when compared to mass operators with many operators sending fewer than 1000 clients on trips in the last year (WTO 2002:14). However, Table 6 indicates some mass tour operators have been quick to respond to the market demand for wildlife experiences as many mainstream tourists take wildlife tours or day trips whilst on a typical rest and relaxation holiday; greatly enlarging the potential market (Page and Dowling 2002; WTO 2002; Wight 1997; Lindberg 1991). Naturally there is scepticism by the specialist operators regarding the ability, the quality and the consequences of the encroachment by the mass-market operators on their products. For some, especially the larger ‘general naturalist’ market, they are perceived as a threat, as their economies of scale mean they offer competitive prices unlike their smaller counterparts many of whom run tours from residential premises. The small wildlife tour operators have developed a solid network, knowing each other on both a personal and professional basis. They observe each other’s product development in order to formulate their own branding or product positioning strategies, although highly competitive, companies cooperate on itineraries, share tours and sometimes tour leaders, and often discuss travel safety directives from the Foreign Office.

Since 1987 there has been steady growth from when about 15 small companies catered for only a few hundred people. Peregrine and Ornitholidays are the oldest operators beginning their tours in the 1960s. The former has stayed as a purely bird-watching facility, the latter has branched into the more 'general naturalist' wildlife market, thus highlighting the significant divide in the sector.

4.1.3 'The general naturalist'

The *general naturalist* market is characterised by clients who have a general interest in nature, neither experts nor specialists. They are primarily vacationers, who enjoy combining a love of wildlife with a holiday experience. It is important to note the distinction between general naturalists (who have a general interest in natural history and are interested in most species) rather than the general population at large.

This group is predominantly categorised as tourists who wish to "*explore interesting places, see wildlife in general, stay in decent accommodation and have a nice holiday*" (Company A); namely holidays which are based on "*interest, ease and comfort*" (Company B). This means clients who demand good quality accommodation (3 star minimum); comfortable travel arrangements and a highly organised, safe, contrived and sanitised nature experience, similar to the 'ecotourists on tours' (Kusler 1991) and the 'smooth ecotourist' (Mowforth 1993).

This sector also has resonance with the 'new tourist' in terms of their environmental awareness and thirst for environmental knowledge (Poon 1993) being motivated by a desire for self-fulfilment and learning, and, to some degree, seeking new challenging experiences far removed from the experiences of mass travel. However, it must be stressed that they are not an homogenous group. Within the market there are novices looking for a different type of holiday, those who are very knowledgeable about ecology and others who are following a life-long interest whilst in a relaxed and informal setting. Wildlife tourists cannot be considered a single population despite the fact that they are all motivated by the same stimulus (Wight 2001; Duffus and Dearden 1990)

Within this *general naturalist* market, there is a tendency for product diversification, based upon product development (i.e. new and exciting itineraries); demographics and motivations, particularly life stage; price; level of activity required (e.g. hard/soft/adventure); level of required interpretation; number of species seen and the level of formality / informality. For example, some operators attract a younger, more active clientele, with cheap alternatives and basic accommodation and transport. Anecdotal evidence suggests that whilst they are affordable, they are not the quality experience desired by the older, more affluent or knowledgeable market. Such client

demands are met by companies who offer tailor made, luxury wildlife experiences. Some operators will organise long itineraries with early starts and moderate treks, whilst others have more time for relaxation and less arduous wildlife watching.

Overall a *general naturalist* is equally interested in the heritage and culture of a destination as well as its wildlife. Tour operators provide visits to places of historic and cultural interest in the vicinity of any tour. The use of local guides ensures that an understanding of the 'place' is conveyed, with history, stories, anecdotes and visits to 'interesting' historical or cultural sites. By and large, the trip is totally organised, but clients may opt out of activities and field trips, giving a *"relaxed, unhurried and informal holiday"* (Company A).

For the *general naturalist*, the appeal of particular species tends to be related to beauty, drama and interesting behaviour (Tremblay 2002; Woods 2000; Shackley 1996; Hammit *et al.* 1993; Barstow 1986). For those in the industry there is *"an indefinable 'wow' factor based upon either the species or its unusual behaviour, and an 'ah' factor which seems to be inborn and a subconscious reaction to animals who are sweet and engaging and who display 'family' behaviour in one form or another"* (Company A). The pace of the generalist tour allows time for clients to indulge in watching animal behaviour. Some waiting occurs, depending on the object of the 'wait'. The driving force in this segment is to *"experience' the habitat rather than see all or particular species that reside in it"* (Company A), confirming literature in which the habitat is often purported to be as significant as the wildlife sightings themselves, i.e. the emotion evoked by witnessing unspoilt nature in its entirety (Markwell 2001; Ryan *et al.* 2000; Fredrickson and Anderson 1999).

For the generalist market, education is 'incidental' and not the prime objective which is to have a good holiday and to see some wildlife. Operators in this sector perceive themselves as being in *"the holiday business"* (Company A) and this informs their delivery and product development. However there is an expectation that the wildlife can be identified and named, and that some interpretation will occur. If too much information is supplied, *"there may be a tendency towards boredom"* (Company B).

Finally, sharing experiences and common interests with like-minded people is an important motive for the general wildlife tourist. *"Part of the experience is the interesting people clients get to know"* (Company A). Meeting with similar people underpins the tendency towards a high return rate (as much as 70% in some cases is repeat business). This supports the contention that social-interaction is a key theme as identified by the WTO (2002), Markwell (2001), Schanzel and McIntosh (2000), Ryan *et al.* (2000), and Patterson *et al.* (1998).

4.1.4 Bird tours

Having scrutinised the generalist market, we now turn our attention to the more narrow focus of the '*British birder*' market. While the image of the monolithic bird-watcher still persists, it is clear from this research that the bird-watching market is also far from homogenous. UK bird-watching operators recognise that birders are not all alike and have developed and promoted their tours accordingly. Most of the research into birders as tourists originates from America. Here several categories of birders have been identified such as 'elite' or hard core' birders who maintain life-long lists (Scott *et al.* 1999); 'novices', 'intermediaries' and 'specialists' (Martin 1997); 'casual' and 'serious' (Cole and Scott 1999) and finally 'casual'; 'interested'; 'active' and 'skilled' (Scott and Thigpen 2003).

The British birding market ranges from hard core and elite (Scott *et al.* 1999), to novice and casual (Cole and Scott 1999; Martin 1997) with many tours falling in between. Itineraries vary from hard to soft bird-watching within a single company's portfolio. Cole and Scott (1999) found that 'casual' bird watchers gave almost equal weight to sites that afforded opportunities to observe birds and offered a variety of other wildlife and native plants and were more likely than serious bird-watchers to ascribe importance to sites that provided other activities such as visiting historic sites and shopping.

Serious bird-watchers valued sites that provided opportunities to observe birds more than those with a variety of other wildlife and native plants. Whilst this appears to be a clear dichotomy, some operators explained that "*most bird-watchers are equally keen on other forms of wildlife*" (Company C) and that clients had switched from going on tours which are "*hard work*", "*dawn until dusk*" to those with a far more "*relaxed and enjoyable feel*" (Company C). Even stoic bird tour operators are beginning to embrace more general interest tours within their brochures so as to retain customers who require a different focus (these are referred to in Figure 10 as *Predominantly Birds +*).

In terms of infrastructure requirements, the needs of the birder groups vary considerably. Unlike casual bird-watchers, the hard-core, elite birders are driven by the location of various species. This market is commonly referred to by operators as '*listers*'. For them birds are more interesting if they are rare and endemic. For each trip they will produce a list of species that they hope to see. As a result "*they are happy to camp, bivvy, or make use of any available accommodation that is in the close vicinity of the species sought*" (Company D). Quite often in order to catch a sighting, groups must lie in wait to catch their opportunity. "*Trip satisfaction is totally dependent on the sighting, therefore tour leaders go out of their way to ensure this is realised, and sometimes this involves questionable practices such as using tape recordings and food provisioning*" (Company A).

“The ‘listers’ will expect to wait for hours to catch a glimpse of the desired species” (Company C). Tour leaders for this group are often presented with a wish list from their clients. Given that *“wildlife is illusive and a sighting does not come with a guarantee”* (Company D), this market puts considerable pressure on the tour leaders. ‘Listers’ are described by the general naturalist operators as *“natural-history stamp collectors”* (Company A). *“They never visit a place twice, the motivation to be able to tick off another particular species is intense, and therefore time spent at a location is perceived as a once in a lifetime opportunity to be able to fulfil their wish list”* (Company A)

Whilst bird operators differentiate their products by their itineraries, price and degree of focus or relaxation, it is still a highly competitive market. Even though the *Predominantly Birds* + operators attempt not to be ‘list’ orientated, clients tend to compare the number of birds they see with previous experiences and other operators who visit the same place and therefore the *‘list of species ‘seen’* promoted via customer newsletters and trip reports become a measure of success and an important marketing tool. *“The number of species seen shows that the company know what they are looking for and they know how to find it”* (Company C).

It appears, that for the ‘softer’ emerging markets, a degree of flexibility is essential for successful tours. This can be problematic for operators for whilst bird tours are more specific with Itineraries ranging from *“very very easy to very physically demanding”* (Company C), the general naturalist market *“can be the hardest to please”* (Company C) as group dynamics are less assured with very keen wildlife watchers alongside more casual wildlife enthusiasts who are also seek some rest and relaxation.

4.1.5 Towards a typology

Based upon the above analysis, the British wildlife travel market can be divided into six broad product categories: Expeditions, Bird Tours, General Naturalist; Domestic Tours; Safaris and finally Adventure/Exploration. However, a certain amount of blurring exists between and within each sector with considerable movement by clients from one operator to another and from one special interest to another. This means that the typical generalist – specialist continuum proposed by Duffus and Dearden (1990) or the expert – novice continuum (Higham 1998) is too simplistic a model for this market. The product and tourist spectrum comprises a number of continuums; each ranging from knowledge and activity intensive, to passive activity, relaxation and general interest (Figure 10).



Figure 10: Wildlife product / tourist spectrum

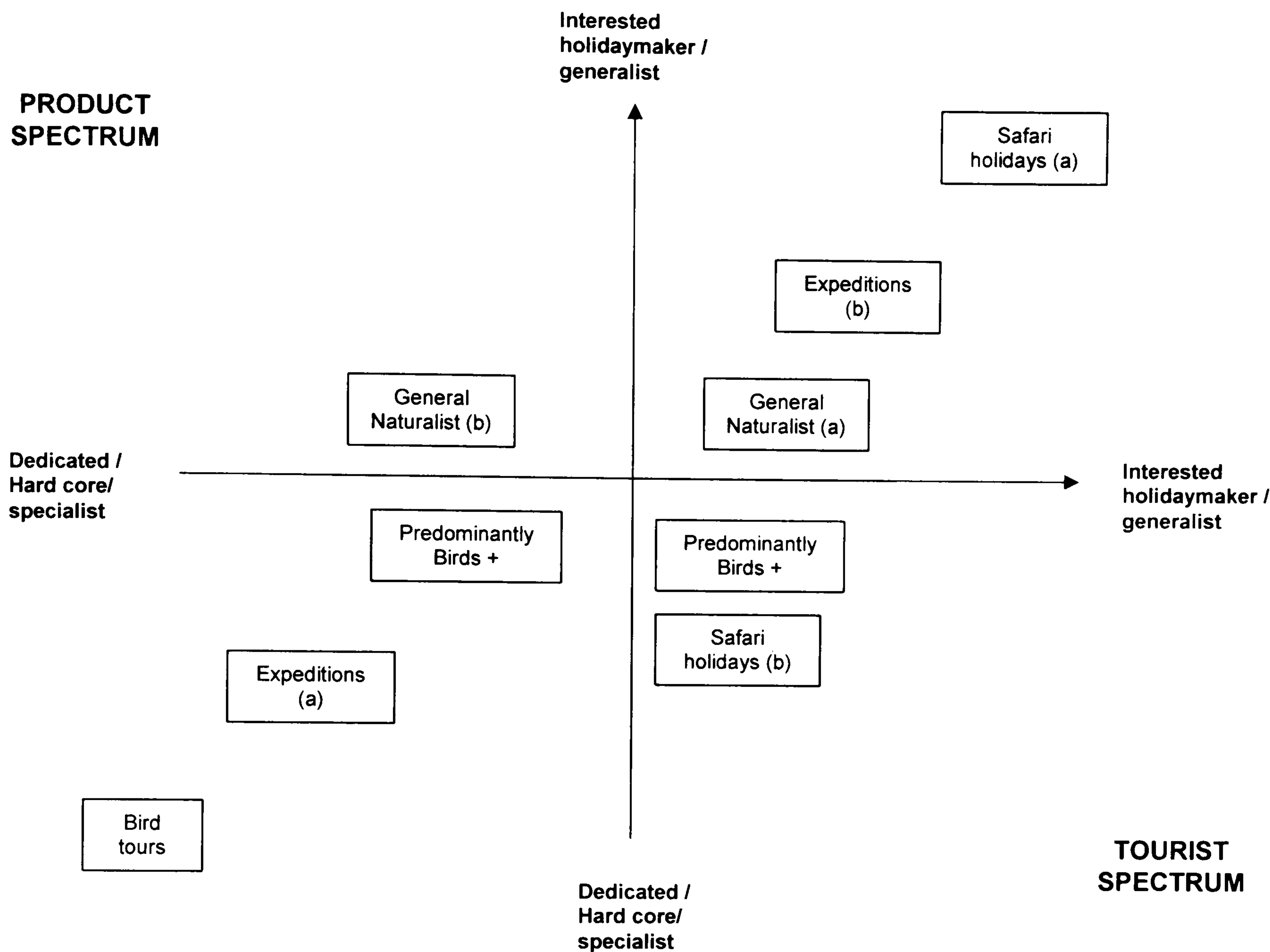
Typology	Characteristics	Preferred Locations
Expeditions	<p>To be actively involved in research and conservation projects or to just learn about conservation issues and species (study tours)</p> <p>←→</p> <p>Ranges from wildlife conservation volunteering – “an adventure with a purpose” working alongside scientists and researchers to study tours on general wildlife, photography, ornithology, botany, painting, ecology and archaeology, i.e. “bringing environmental understanding to all”.</p>	UK or overseas: Europe, Asia, Africa, Australasia, The Americas
Dedicated Bird tours and Predominantly Birds +	<p>Main focus of tours is on bird-watching and photography</p> <p>←→</p> <p>On a continuum from being highly focused and intensive, early starts, hard trekking and long waits to see a list of birds to more relaxed and leisurely bird-watching tours which stop to look at scenery and places of interest on route, i.e. (Bird tours +)</p>	Any migratory routes and normal bird habitats such as Europe and the Middle East, Africa, Asia, North America, Central America and the Caribbean, South America, Antarctica and Australasia,
General naturalist	<p>To see birds, mammals, plants, butterflies, cetaceans + culture, history and archaeology</p> <p>←→</p> <p>Product continuum ranges from very expensive, high quality, intensive tours which contain detailed and active interpretation and knowledge transfer to affordable holidays designed for wildlife-watching, with some interpretation / knowledge transfer, relaxation and general interest / sightseeing.</p>	Any outstanding wildlife habitat in South and Central America, Canada, USA, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Australasia, North Africa & Middle East, The Arctic, Europe
Domestic tours	<p>Can be similar to the ‘general naturalist’. Most operators in the ‘generalist category also organise and promote tours in the UK.</p> <p>←→</p> <p>Or they can be highly specific, focused and intensive (also incorporates the day visitor market)</p>	Alderney, Fair Isle, Shetland, South Coast, Hampshire, The New Forest, Orkney, Scottish Highlands, The Hebrides, Isles of Scilly, Norfolk, Ireland and Aran Islands
Safaris	<p>To see the popular African game reserves</p> <p>←→</p> <p>Ranges from mass market tours based around seeing the big 5: elephant, lion, rhino, buffalo and leopards in the popular game reserves (usually combined with a beach holiday) to more specialist and individual itineraries in the lesser known and visited game parks to include wildebeest migrations, mountain gorillas, black rhino and birds.</p>	Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Rwanda, Namibia and South Africa
Adventure / Exploration	<p>Wildlife, an added dimension of the adventure / experience and not the prima facia. But depends on the type of tour. Usually wildlife is used in the marketing along with spectacular scenery, indigenous people, cultures and architecture.</p> <p>“Discovery, wildlife and adventure” (Exodus 2004/5)</p>	Worldwide

(Source: Author)

The tourist / product spectrum covers a variety of domestic and outbound tourist opportunities from highly specialised expeditions where participants can be actively involved in wildlife and conservation projects, to watching birds, or wildlife in general, and finally, to merely watching wildlife as part of a standard adventure holiday. Within these product categories are continua with an active, highly involved tourist at one end and a passive tourist in pursuit of a relaxing holiday based on a specific interest in nature and wildlife at the other.

In an ideal situation, we would be able to plot each product category along the tourist experience continuum, but this becomes highly problematic due to the complexity of the market (Figure 11). With the exception of hard core / dedicated bird tours, the other categories are more fluid. For example, safari holidays sit predominantly in the interested holidaymaker category, however some operators offer more specialist and dedicated safari experiences. Equally, expeditions and study tours can be very specialised and species specific or they can provide tours of a more general nature; likewise the general naturalist market. To compound the situation even further, some company portfolios offer itineraries to suit both dedicated hard core enthusiasts as well as the casual, less active, wildlife holiday seekers. This makes the products categories very difficult to place.

Figure 11: The complexities of the wildlife tourist / product spectrum



(Source: Author)

4.1.6 Management issues

The various products and wildlife experiences are creating concern amongst environmentalists, ecologists, academics and the governing authorities whose job it is to provide a framework for their management. As previously highlighted, wildlife tourism can have positive effects on both wildlife species and their habitats through financial contributions, non-financial contributions, socio-economic incentives and education (Tisdell and Wilson 2002; Higginbottom *et al.* 2001; Orams 1995; Budowski 1976). However, the negative effects of wildlife tourism on individual species or wildlife in general dominate much of the literature. As Gauthier (1993:8) exclaims: “while there are many advantages for humans in the recreational enjoyment of wildlife, I am hard-pressed to conceive of any advantages for the wildlife.”

Direct impacts on wildlife include disruption of behaviour such as feeding, breeding, mother-offspring interaction; poaching; killing; hunting; the disruption of predator-prey relationships; and the introduction of disease (Chin *et al.* 2000). Indirect impacts include changed habitats and feeding patterns due to the presence of tourists and the attraction of wildlife to litter or provisioned food (Orams 2002). The pressures of photography may impact on wildlife, and have caused an alleged decline in the breeding success of coastal bird species (Higham 1998; Mathieson and Wall 1982).

Activities involving close contact between tourists and wildlife, such as swimming with marine mammals, were generally scorned by the specialist wildlife operators, being associated with mainstream operators. On specialist tours, clients get as close to the specimen as the leader allows them to go for conservation purposes. *“Advances in optical technology have, to some extent, removed this need for ‘closeness”* (Company A), whereas the mainstream tourist is generally not so well-equipped. Another way to see species is to use tape recordings to draw them into view. This is general practice for bird listing tours as *“there are certain species such as crakes and cisticolas who inhabit reed beds and marshes, which you would not see unless you used recordings”* (Company C). This attracts a species to come closer than it would normally and quite often outside of its ‘normal’ territory. The impacts of this are difficult to quantify. *“It would very much depend on how many tours use a particular site and how frequently it occurs”* (Company D). Many National Parks are banning the use of tape recordings, a standard ‘modus operandi’ for listing companies.

Operator attitudes towards feeding wildlife as an attraction are less clear-cut. Operators find it difficult to distinguish between moral and commercial value. Feeding wildlife happens in many different ways and locations in the UK as well as overseas. Examples include the Red Kite feeding station in Wales, the Red Squirrels on Brownsea Island, Dorset and the common practice of attracting sharks, big fish and pelagic birds by throwing food over the side of the boat. Despite concerns, these practices guarantee sightings and provide the opportunity for destinations and operators to offer new products and experiences.

4.1.7 Product development

For both types of operator, continued success in the market place is highly dependent on product development especially given the high rate of repeat business. Consequently, new wildlife destinations are regularly sought to avoid stagnation. The development cycle of wildlife tourism is no different from other forms of tourism (Holden 2000) in that this market merely becomes the trailblazers opening up new areas to the hordes (Shackley 1996; Burns and Holden 1995). *“There are destinations, such as Lesbos, which have*

become spoilt, over used and over-populated by visitors who descend upon the island to look at migratory birds. Then it is time to locate to another Greek island with similar potential – and so it ultimately goes on... (Company A). As one operator reported: *“never say never”* (Company B).

Product development is a continuous process. *“Every year we drop half dozen tours and add new ones in”* (Company B). This reiterates the contention that whilst tour operators are key manipulators of the tourist origin-destination flow, they show little loyalty to specific destinations (Ioannides 1998). The reason for this lack of loyalty is that *“we have to offer something new to attract new clients and retain existing ones”*. *“It also helps to keep your image fresh to drop failing tours”* (Company B).

It is also clear that the wildlife market has changed considerably: *“The new traveller and the new market arrived, as with so many examples of conspicuous consumption in the late 1980s – money, sophistication and media. Long overland, adventurous expeditions with a certain degree of hardship and reverence have been misplaced by the desire to travel in comfortable surroundings”* (Company B). This ultimately means bathing under hot running water, walking only moderate distances and being generally sheltered and cosseted from the harsh realities of nature travel (Markwell 2001). WTO (2002:37) research into the British ecotourism market found that 74% of ecotourists required high levels of hygiene and security, and 58% expected ‘high quality accommodation with excellent facilities’.

These high expectations have important connotations for product development, trip planning and wildlife destinations: *“In my experience, clients have become more difficult and it becomes harder to develop new products. We need to offer middle-aged people all the creature comforts. The minimum we book is a two or three star accommodation. In remote corners this can be difficult. Our clients are generally not prepared for camping or appalling accommodation. India, Madagascar, Ethiopia and South America cause problems in this regard. But this is where the best wildlife can be seen”* (Company B). Such comments further demonstrate the gradual transition from a specialist niche to a potentially larger, mass market appeal.

In both specialist and generalist markets, the importance of good leaders and interpretation cannot be overstated. The role and quality of tour leaders in providing the educational element of the holiday is a principal selling point. As the WTO (2002:62) state *“it (interpretation) is one of the significant non-price areas of competition between eco/nature-based tour operators”*. It also differentiates highly specialised wildlife operators from mass-market operators who are exploiting the market. The quality of the guide, as well as the overall trip, is a prominent talking point amongst clients, and ‘word of

mouth' is the most powerful marketing channel (see also WTO 2002). The search for excellent leaders as well as destinations is paramount to success.

Finally, there is a genuine concern from some operators that their market, whilst showing considerable growth in the short term, may not be sustainable in the longer term. Future generations of retired, professional and semi-professional people may not, it seems, have the disposable income of the current retired population. Soaring property prices, unreliable pensions schemes and expensive health care may indicate a less certain future for retirement.

4.1.8 Conclusion

These findings have attempted to categorise the UK wildlife tourism market. Results depict an evolving tourism sector which has shown considerable growth and product development over the last decade based upon a growing interest in the environment, a more active holiday market and advances in technology which has facilitated not only cheaper travel, but also the marketing of specialist tourist guides and destinations over the Internet.

Tourist expectations have increased in terms of the degree of comfort required and the desire for relaxation as well as activity and education. This has marked a gradual shift from a highly specialised market offering intensive physical activity and high involvement in a particular species (usually birds) to a more general market that is looking for an interesting, but pleasant and relaxing holiday based around a general interest in nature and the environment. Nevertheless, both markets co-exist resulting in a complex product and tourist spectrum ranging from knowledge and activity intensive, to passive activity, relaxation and general interest. Neither market is inclusive. Instead there is a degree of movement between one and the other which has led to operators offering a wider range of products to suit the hard-core expert and the novice enthusiast. In all cases, there is a tendency to appeal to a minority, dedicated, but lucrative market.

Whilst there is still a gulf between a specialist wildlife holiday and a mass market product, mainstream operators have been quick to respond to a noticeable demand to see wildlife in its natural habitat by using wildlife images to denote novel experiences and particular places. This has resulted in a gradual blurring between tourists whose main reason for taking the trip is to watch wildlife and tourists who watch wildlife as part of a wider holiday experience. However, the remaining chapters of this thesis are predominantly concerned with the former, i.e. those whose primary holiday focus is watching wildlife; particularly what it means to be a wildlife tourist, what constitutes peak or memorable wildlife experiences and why they are attracted to joining an organised tour. Some aspects of

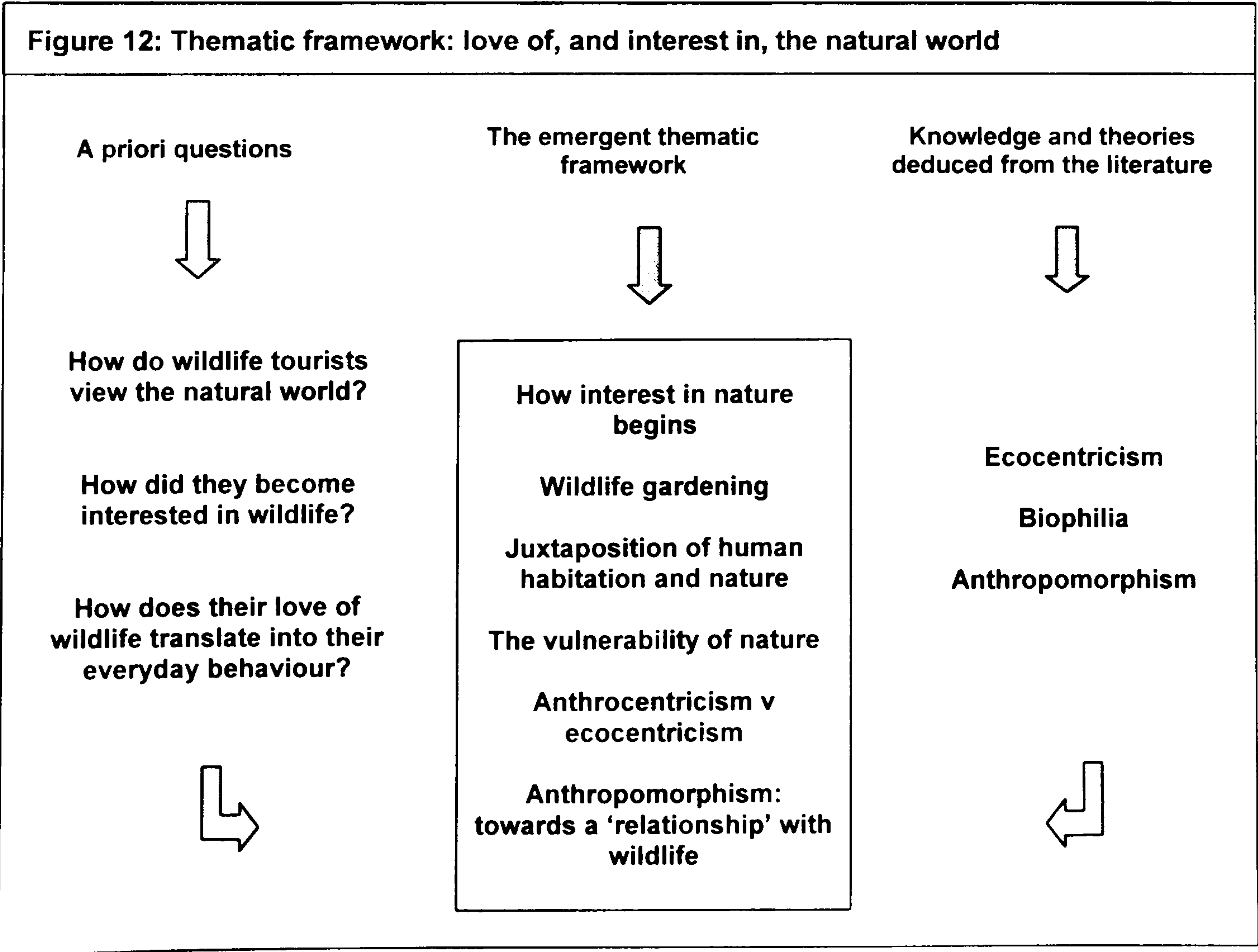
this section will later be revisited from the tourist perspective in section 4.7. However, the next section describes and discusses the respondents' underlying characteristics and attitudes towards nature and wildlife.

4.2 Love of nature

4.2.1 Introduction

Being interested in the natural world is a pre-requisite for being interested in its inhabitants as nature is the backdrop for non-captive wildlife watching. This section focuses on the results and discussion of several important elements of wildlife tourism: namely, how participants became interested in nature, how their love of nature translates into their everyday world and how tourists view their relationship with the natural world, i.e. whether they hold anthropocentric, ecocentric or anthropomorphic views.

The literature raises some important related philosophical views, particularly the concept of biophilia (Wilson 1984) and ecocentrism (O’Riordan 1981), the relationship between humans and animals (Ingold 1988) and how we view their world (anthropomorphism) (Dereuter and Donnelly 2002; Beardsworth and Bryman 2001; Franklin 1999). Figure 12 depicts the themes that emerge from the data which are discussed in further detail in the light of the knowledge and questions raised by the theories deduced from the literature.



(Source: author)

4.2.2 How interest in the natural world begins

Discussions with participants suggest there are four ways that their love of nature began with points one and two being the most often cited:

1. Via parents and grandparents;
2. Growing up in a rural environment;
3. Via their partner and his or her interest: *it happened when I met my partner who has had a lifetime interest in wildlife. He grew up in the country* (Diane, DWT).
4. Following a surprise and memorable wildlife encounter: *"I got a lovely view of a Black-throated Diver and I borrowed a pair of binoculars. We had an amazing view looking down on it. After that I bought a pair of binoculars and always took them with me"* (Linda, DWT).

Family influences are by far the most prevalent instigation of love and awareness of the natural world, closely followed by the influence of friends and teachers, and the environment in which they grew up in. For those whose formative years were spent in the countryside, love of the countryside is deeply ingrained (DeRuiter and Donnelly 2002). Whilst jobs and prosperity may have demanded a life in more built-up environments, the desire for nature-based leisure is inherent as illustrated by Tanya:

"It is a continuation of always of having been a nature and country person being born in the countryside, I have always hated towns and cities and even when I was at university I just couldn't wait to get out at weekends. I've always been like that. "First of all we just developed outdoor holidays like hiking: we were both into hiking. We explored Britain and then we started to go further a field and be a lot more adventurous just to see the nature there" (Tanya, Baja).

These results indicate that for many participants, interest in nature and wildlife tended to begin in early childhood where role models, usually parents or grandparents but occasionally teachers and friends, introduced them to the natural world. Family members in particular contributed to wildlife value development in important ways namely in family activities, knowledge transfer, love of the outdoors, and being interested and introduced to gardening or tending land.

In several cases, it went beyond immediate generations and back in participants' lineage to distant family members as Carol, Mark and Dawn explain:

"I think it must go back generations because my grandfather was a farmer and also my great grand parents in Yorkshire. I think that it has come from that" (Carol, DWT).

“I’ve always been interested in wildlife. My father has always been interested in birds and his father before him” (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).

“Oh goodness it began when I was a child I should think. I mean we used to do quite a lot of things. When I was with my grandfather who died when I was four I was out in the garden with him admiring a hedgehog, I can remember doing that so, yes. Always. My father was very interested in wildlife too and he used to encourage us and we used to go out into the fields with my brother and look at newts and tadpoles and all sorts of stuff, yes” (Dawn, Baja).

Clearly, the notion of passing on experiences and knowledge to future generations is inherent in these participants who often mention the desire and the joy of teaching their own children and grandchildren about wildlife and continuing the family tradition. This included buying them nature books, binoculars or other ‘technical equipment’ to consolidate the seeds of interest they had sewn.

“Well we always have family holidays where we take them out and do things. And for the grandchildren we bought them a rather nice microscope which we are teaching them to use properly. I’ve collected a few things from this holiday (snake skin and pine nut) and we take these back” (Rebecca, Andalucia).

“There is also a sense of passing it on to children and grandchildren: it’s actually such fun to show things and share it all with children” (Penny, DWT).

These findings are not totally surprising and support other studies which show how wildlife values are passed down through family members (DeRuiter and Donnelly 2002; Chawla 1999). This socialisation process is well-documented by research into value-orientations. Results typically suggest that parents are the most significant source for value transmission (Grusec and Kuczynski 1997; Glass *et al.* 1986) which is equally apparent for nature and wildlife and that values laid down in an individual’s childhood tend to remain constant (Solomon *et al.* 2002) whereas societal value-shifts and cultural changes happen over a long period of time (Manfredo *et al.* 2003).

The fact that the interest is manifest through family generations, begs questions of nature versus nurture. However, it is way beyond the scope of this research to determine whether the love of the outdoors and all it offers is genetically predisposed or learned, however, during evening discussions on tour, the conversation turned towards travel histories where the author noted on two occasion participants revealed their *“at-one-ness with the places that their forefathers had resided” (Travel diary, Baja)*. This fascinating notion of genetic landscapes has some resonance with biophilia and aspects of

environmental psychology and therefore it is a subject which may deserve further research.

4.2.3 Wildlife gardening

The relationship between these dedicated wildlife tourists and gardening is much more assured and again derived from a family history as knowledge of plants and gardens is passed down:

“My mother was a terrific gardener and she spent her time in the garden” (Penny, DWT).

My love of plants came from my mother and father. The family was more interested in gardening and in living in the countryside without a specific big strong awareness of one thing. It (nature) was all around me (Edward, DWT).

There is a distinct over-lap in gardening and wildlife tourism market segments. Participants view their gardens as an extension of their interest in wildlife. They appreciate that these green spaces are important corridors for wildlife, especially given the gradual encroachment of development into once thriving wildlife habitats and the proliferation of house-building currently present in the United Kingdom.

Moreover, as participants become more experienced and knowledgeable, it quite often follows that their interest in the natural world broadens. For example, they will begin to look at habitats and particularly the plants that attract or support focal species. This allows them to understand what species they are likely to see given certain habitats or vegetation:

“I am also interested in the relationships between things, how things interact with each other. If you watch a bird which plants do they like and where will you find them?” (Sophie, Baja).

It follows then that interest in wildlife gardening is a seemingly natural progression with participants favouring particular wildlife friendly planting schemes that attract the larva and other insect life which in turn attracts the birds or passing mammals. Some of the planting schemes would appear rather eccentric to non-wildlife enthusiasts as is apparent in descriptions of gardens:

“It is entirely, or almost entirely designed to attract the wildlife in.....How many other gardens do you go to in suburbia where somebody has actually planted brambles and allows stinging nettles and lets the thistles and the ragwort seed. Ragwort will blow all

over the estate, well of course I don't tell anybody about it (laughing). They tend not to like it" (Matthew, DWT).

Having designed a space where wildlife is welcome, it became very clear but somewhat surprising, that seeing things in their own garden was just as thrilling, and sometimes even more significant than seeing wildlife on tour. In part this thrill is due to the nature of the encounter, in that they themselves have been successful in creating an environment which attracts wildlife, and the caring and nurturing emotions it provokes. There is a tenable sense of responsibility and relationship with these regular garden visitors and this is what makes it so important to their everyday world:

"It's very encouraging to see things in your garden. Just as much as when you are on tour. It's important that it is around you. To know that it is there" (Carol, DWT).

"It is quite a different feeling feeding birds in the garden because you see them every day. The pet robin that comes around when you are digging and takes some worms or takes food from the bird table is quite different. It's a relationship. And I don't think that in this case familiarity breeds contempt" (Peter, Andalucia).

"You get quite a possessive feeling about the regulars who visit your own little patch; it's more of a relationship, you see them coming and going" (Michelle, Baja).

"I've dug a pond in the garden so I could have newts and frogs and they breed every year which is nice and it is lovely to hear the frogs calling; calling for their mates and I've got underwater lights in the pond so I can watch all the little things that happen in the pond. It is very interesting actually, its more interesting than watching television because there are more than just the newts, there's all the other insects there too" (Dawn, Baja).

There was also an interesting association with life-stage especially for women whose children had left home and whose careers or jobs had become part-time instead of full-time as their financial prosperity had improved. Time becomes available to re-engage their interest. This fulfils an emotional need to tend to other living things and provides a means for relaxation:

"It may be a sort of caring element and this is actually quite interesting because I think that I've cared more about nature since my boys have grown up. When they are little, your focus is on them. I certainly care more about the birds in the garden than I ever did when the boys were growing up. Somehow you just get up and look around and see what needs your attention and normally if you have young children and you are working, you don't have time in the morning to think about anything else. Whereas now the fact that I don't start work until 9.30am, the early morning is a very precious time. All your life

it has been a very busy time. Get them to school, do this and that. Now it feels like I've got lots of time; this lovely time. I fill up the bird feeders, do the water in the bird bath and then I have an extra cup of tea and just watch them. That's what I mean. This is when nature can help you to sit down and then I'll readjust my mind and think about the day ahead and nature helps you to do that" (Rebecca, Andalucia).

This had great resonance with other female participants who enjoy a quiet time watching the birds in the garden, and indeed the authors' own experience. It highlights life-stage and gender issues, and the protectionist value orientations women have towards wildlife (Kellert and Berry 1987). The essentialist view suggests that women are closer to nature than men. The biological aspects of women's lives with monthly cycles and the ability to reproduce are cited as reasons for this affinity (Henderson 1996). If women are closer to nature, they are also assumed to be its care-givers. Conversely women may be closer to nature simply because they have been socialised that way (Ortner 1974). Nevertheless it is recognised that many women find the value of shedding socially assigned roles and finding self in experiences with nature (Yerkes and Miranda 1985). As yet, work on gender and wildlife tourism is very limited and rather inconclusive particularly as 'caring for wildlife' is not a uniquely female characteristic as escape from the everyday, caring, wonderment, awe and relief at how wildlife adapts is readily apparent across the whole sample.

4.2.4 Juxtaposition of human habitation and nature

Linked to the themes of wildlife gardens and caring for nature is the fascination that participants express with the relationship between human habitation and industrial development and wildlife. There are three elements to this theme:

1. How wildlife adapts to a changing or built environment:

"I like the surroundings – I am much more interested in the whole package. I love looking at the architecture and then how the wildlife uses the architecture – A bit like all those birds we saw in the village – I find that fascinating – that relationship between us and the wildlife" (Rebecca, Andalucia).

"I think it is actually very interesting because they are adapting to environments in which they have found themselves (Matthew, DWT).

2. The reassurance that they are adapting:

"I just find it nice that it (wildlife) is just managing to cope with all the cars and things that we have got nowadays and how they are adjusting to living with us. I do think that it's good that they are managing to cope with everything that is happening around them" (Dawn, Baja).

"I can watch wildlife anywhere and in some cases it is really interesting to see how it thrives in the most inhospitable places" (Sophie, Baja).

3. and the pure joy at seeing nature amidst urban or industrial 'greyness':

"We used to live up in Yorkshire and we saw a kingfisher right in the middle of town, along the river, so you can come across it unexpectedly. It's quite good, it kind of makes your day - oh - that's a kingfisher; what's it doing in the middle of Wakefield - mucky old Wakefield" (Michael, DWT).

"I actually sometimes quite like watching wildlife at industrial sites because its sort of unusual and you know the wildlife exists even though the industry is there and we've seen this when we went up to Shetland and we saw the otters near to the oil refinery. And yes you're thinking it is special to see wildlife so close to human activity" (Rebecca, Andalucia).

As environmental science and media communications progress, western tourists are bombarded with messages regarding man's destruction of the planet: particularly global warming, destruction of habitats and species on the brink of extinction. Inherent in these messages are the irreversible loss, lasting damage and environmental crisis. Bentrupperbaumer (1998) suggests that the existence of wildlife for tourists and residents alike represents the 'miner's canary' of the ecosystem; a barometer of life itself (Knopf 1987) and reassurance of a viable and functioning natural environment despite the destruction that man causes. Whilst industrial and urban settings are not in keeping with traditional and romantic views of nature and wildlife, the emotional significance of seeing wildlife here is somewhat heightened by the wonderment and reassurance it arouses.

4.2.5 Vulnerability of nature

The notion of vulnerability and nature is a concern for these dedicated wildlife tourists who have witnessed a decline in numbers and abundance of certain species:

"I've seen a noticeable difference since when I was lad with the wildlife. Oh I mean as a lad I spent most of my time in Kent and Sussex and there were always loads of butterflies about and things like Corncrake and you don't see Corncrake around now do you? All of that has gone in my lifetime" (Michael, DWT).

In their effort to support conservation, all participants belonged to either their local Wildlife Trust and/or the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and many also support conservation agencies such as the WWF, WCDS or the IFAW. In addition, some were active members who regularly participated in fund-raising and conservation project events and others who belonged to their local bird club, taking part in bird counts and recoding data.

Whilst wildlife tourism is often referred to as non-consumptive (Reynolds and Braithwaite 2002), there is clearly an impact, albeit potentially a lesser one than for other forms of tourism or development, not least the carbon emission of aircraft travel. This can be a difficult conundrum (see also section 4.7). On the one hand there is a strong desire to visit remote, wilderness and bio diverse destinations before they no longer exist, on the other, there is an avid concern for the environment and particularly global warming:

"We wanted to see these places before they go altogether. So we have experienced the polar regions, the desert, the mountains - so it's the habitat really which determines where we go so that we see different environments not just different places. But I've got to the point now where I feel that we have seen three different rainforests, we don't need to see another and with global warming we have to think about this a bit more" (Sophie, Baja).

"I suppose there's the whole carbon dioxide thing. There is the trip to the airport and then particularly when you are in the airplane. You hope that perhaps any damage done by that is slightly offset by the fact, you may be enhancing the animal's status in the countries to which you go in some way...as well as supporting the local economy. But I would have thought that the biggest impact is getting on the aeroplane" (Matthew, DWT).

However, during a later discussion with the owner of the company with whom the author conducted her fieldwork, it became apparent that such environmental concerns were not necessarily supported by willingness to pay to offset these carbon emissions (McMillan 2007; Mintel 2006). Specialised wildlife tours are a relatively expensive form of travel, yet when a small nominal fee is suggested towards an environmental organisation, clients are reticent about paying the extra £10, £30 or £50 proposed depending on the length of the flight. Why this is so has yet to be verified. It might be that clients do not trust how the extra money will be used or it may reflect a general unwillingness to pay the cost of externalities. Nevertheless, this represents another example of conflicting attitudes

towards the environment and is an apposite point to discuss utilitarian views of the natural world.

4.2.6 Western societal value-shift: anthropocentrism v ecocentrism

Throughout our human history, nature has provided the raw material and inspiration for human existence. Indeed, nature sustains this existence from our basic needs of air, water and food to the materials on which we fashion our way of life. According to Wearing and Neil (1999) these utilitarian views of nature and the impetus for economic development has lead to environmental devastation which can no longer be ignored “as it is a grim harvest to reap” (1999:10). They claim the only remedy for our environmental predicament, which since their publication has intensified, is to challenge current values of the human-nature relationship.

Godfrey-Smith (1980) identified two primary ways in which these human-nature values can be assessed: with nature either having an ‘instrumental value’ which leads to a valued end product, or an ‘intrinsic value’ which is value that exists in its own right and for its own sake. The former is often associated with an *anthropocentric* view of the world where nature is viewed predominantly as a set of resources which humanity is free to employ for its own distinct ends. Whereas the latter is the basis for an *ecocentric* view which asserts that non-human entities are of equal value with humankind.

The roots of anthropocentrism go back a long way. It has been a deep and persistently rooted assumption of the dominant Western philosophical, social and political traditions since the time of the Greeks and is also present in the Judaeo-Christian tradition which sets man apart from and above the physical natural world; thus transforming nature into a mere object for our use.

Godfrey-Smith (1980:56) divides instrumental justification for the existence of nature into four categories. Figure 13 adapts these to apply to wildlife tourism where it becomes clear that there is resonance at three levels: the ‘aesthetic and spiritual’ fulfilment that arises from seeing wildlife, where bio-diversity can be marvelled at; the ‘scientific’ joys associated with identification and knowledge; and finally the ‘athletic’ which provides opportunity for travel, tourism, adventure and even hunting. This instrumental justification tends to be very tourism-centric. It is used often by destinations intent on preserving wildlife due to the economic benefit it affords in the knowledge that certain species are worth more alive than dead (Orams 2001a; Tisdell and Wilson 2001).

Figure 13: Instrumental justification for the existence of wildlife	
1. The aesthetic / spiritual	where wildlife is valued for providing spiritual revival and aesthetic delight
2. The biological diversity	where wildlife is valued for its stockpile of genetic diversity
3. The scientific	where wildlife is valued for scientific enquiry and
4. The athletic	where wildlife is valued for tourism and recreation.
Source: (Godfrey-Smith 1980)	

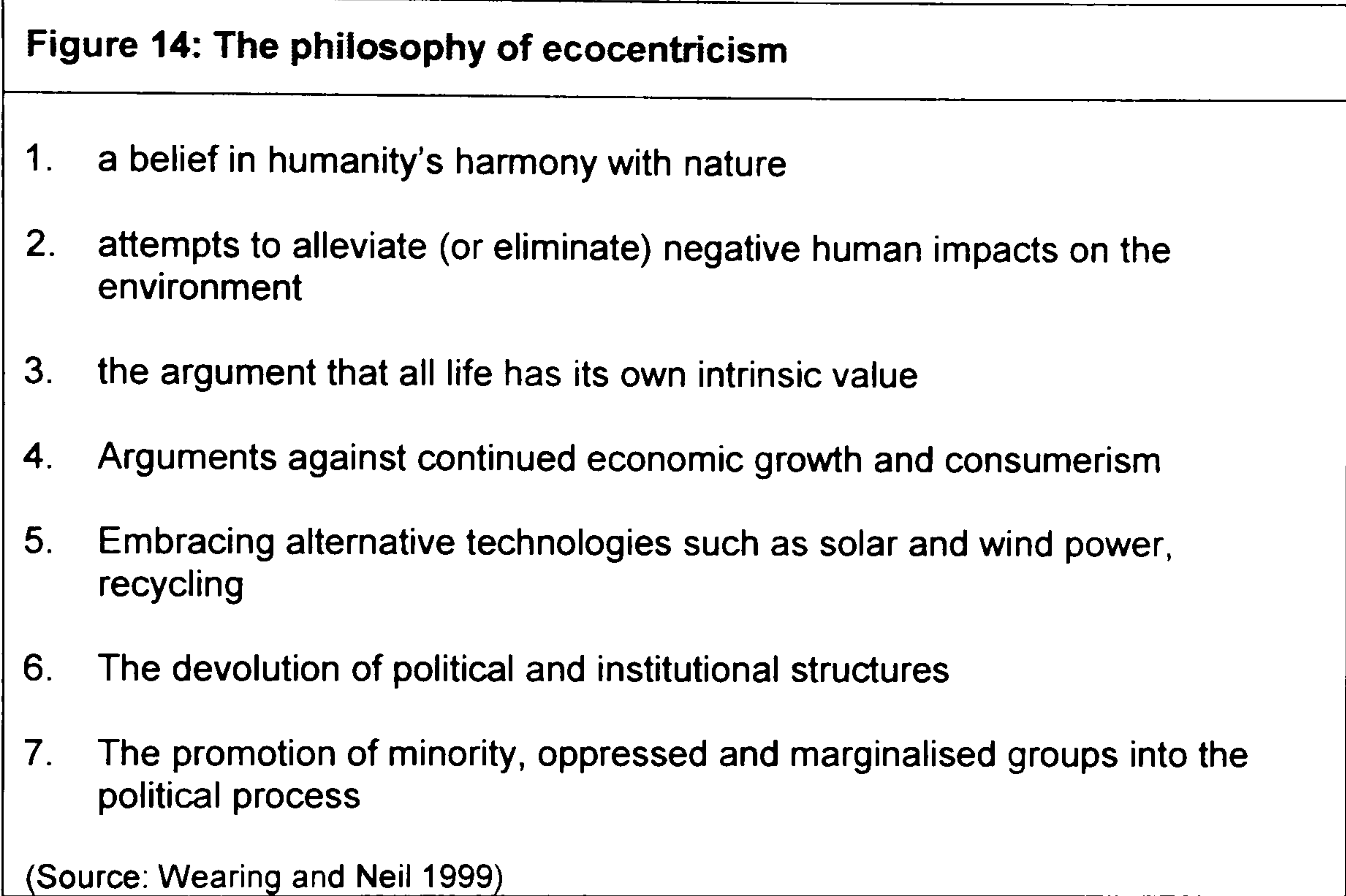
According to Wolch *et al.* (1995), contemporary urban theory is predominantly anthropocentric. The ideals of urbanisation were based upon a notion of progress rooted in the conquest of nature by culture; thus transforming ‘empty’ land through a process called development to produce improved land. Development therefore involves a thorough denaturalisation of the environment; improved land reflecting utilitarian market values and purely human interests. Paradoxically, although urbanisation has further distanced people from nature, “this very dissociation has in part fuelled a resurgent interest in nature and a romanticised view of wild animals and their wholesale appropriation into consumer culture” (Wolch *et al.* 1995:736). Such appropriation of nature and wildlife creates meaningful experiences and fills a spiritual void:

“I love the fact the coastland and the cliff tops are untamed. I mean a lot of inland Britain is a bit sanitized....its all demarked and all a bit ordered.... man likes to tame nature. Whereas the seaside is very wild and untamed and it does what it wants. I mean the cliffs are irregular in shape and you never know whether the waves are going to be a flat little pond or really rough, angry and dangerous. It is just so free and the birds there tend to have a wilder feel to them somehow in that limitless expanse” (James, DWT).

“It is the attraction of the wild, non-manmade type of things. We have definitely done a lot in the mountains and the polar regions We have walked, cycled, canoed, and have been in places which are very out of the way.... it is the lack of other people, I have to say, and an environment which is totally remote” (Linda, DWT).

“Being in a middle of a city, I don’t feel any of the sense of achievement, look at this fantastic building that people have built or aren’t we clever human beings because we can do these sorts of things. These sort of achievements are nothing compared to seeing, I don’t know, a painted reed frog that I saw in Botswana or the mighty Mecko that I found in Laos over Christmas” (Tanya, Baja).

These findings are evidence of an ecocentric philosophy (Figure 14) which has emerged in the social and political arena (O Riordan 1981). It is characterised by “a belief in the wonderment of nature” (Holden 2000:167) and is at odds with the dominant worldview on development which assumes an unlimited supply of natural resources and a pioneering consumerism. Instead ecocentricism affirms the intrinsic interconnectedness of all things with the world as a “shared web of life” (Wearing and Neil 1999:12). The major element of this philosophical shift is the recognition that wildlife has a right to exist in its own right regardless of the benefits that humankind can derive from it.



There are two well-known expressions of ecocentricism, one is the Gaia hypothesis (Lovelock 1988), which asserts that the earth is a living organism where its species and their environment are coupled together evolving as a single system. As humans we are simply a part of this living whole but have a disproportionate effect on its lifecycle. This view, whilst not articulated quite in these terms by participants, is exemplified by responses relating to the inspiration derived from watching wildlife:

“Just the absolute wonder of it, the beauty of it, that’s about all you can say, you know, it’s just there and it seems so fundamental to everything, you know, we are part of it and we are living in amongst it. It is difficult to see how we could function without everything around us” (Joe, Baja).

“It’s part of the ecology cycle, it’s part of us, we are part of the system and the fact that they are there is such a joy to see; that they are still there and they are in the Bible so it is part of our ancestral history, it’s part of your history, it’s part of the human being’s history;

not just my history but everybody's history and they are unchanging, well comparatively, I suppose they are" (Dawn, Baja).

The second stream of ecocentric philosophy is 'deep ecology', which proposes a more extreme world view whereby the human being, through the self, is intrinsically connected to all life. No absolute boundaries exist between humanity and nature (thus a single ontology), there is no point at which 'I the individual' or self ends and other life-forms begin so that nature becomes an extension of ourselves (Matthews 1993). On top of the basic ecocentric principles, 'deep ecologists' favour low-scale technology, recognise the subjective such as feelings and ethics, favour local communities and localised decision making and recognise that the earth has limited resources.

The following account captures this well: *"we are part of that cycle. I know we muck things up but on the whole, we are part of it. The same as, you know I was saying earlier about even one bird matters I think to me there is no excuse for killing anything. Even pests, we might think they are pests but they are not necessarily pests as far as ecology is concerned because we need them to fill in that gap. Each one of these things has a place the same as we have a place. We are each important and we are each individuals in our own right, we are each of us important and have value; there is nobody else like us; nobody at all and I think that is marvellous. You think of all the billions of people in the world and there is only one of you. And we are special; we have all got something to contribute" (Dawn, Baja).*

When it comes to the shifts in wildlife value orientations, Inglehart and Baker (2000) propose that 'post-materialist' values have arisen from the presence of economic and physical security during one's formative years (usually the case for the participants in this sample), whilst Manfredo *et al.* (2003) furthered this hypothesis by concluding that wildlife-protectionist values were also more likely in people with higher levels of education and income. Gossling (2002), Wolch *et al.* (1995) and Urry (1990) have asserted that the value-shift is to do with urbanisation and the fact that modern life requires no intimate relationship with nature for food, shelter or work. It is certainly worthy of note that urban attitudes to wildlife can be more protectionist than rural attitudes (Bandara and Tisdell 2003; Manfredo *et al.* 2003) partly to do with a romanticised view of nature from afar. In contrast, rural populations may be more utilitarian in their values; a notion described by a lifelong ecologist who leads tours of his own:

"You find people who live in the countryside who are strikingly ignorant of the wildlife around them and blasé about it. I am anti-hunting and all that kind of thing but there are lots of people who are quite happy to shoot or chase anything that they see around them. It is not something I admire frankly, whereas quite often people who live in towns would

be much keener to protect the things but then I suppose it is dangerous to generalise really” (David, tour leader, Natural History Tours).

Alongside urbanisation, the growth in nature-based and wildlife tourism points towards a desire to reconnect with the natural world and appears to validate the ‘Biophilia Hypothesis’ which asserts the existence of a biologically based, inherent human need to affiliate with life and lifelike processes (Kellert and Wilson 1993). Over the thousands of years during which humans lived intimately in nature, interacting with and learning from the diversity of life, we developed a deep genetically-based emotional need to experience and associate with the rest of the living world in a time when our survival and well-being depended upon how effectively we coped and learned from nature.

If Kellert and Wilson (1993:26) are correct “human identity and personal fulfilment somehow depend on our relationship to nature”. Nature and wild animals have been shown to have a positive effect on our general well-being:

“I like to have nature around me. My daughter works for the BBC and has just finished making a gruelling programme on women in prisons and when I watched it, their environment was dreadful. There was not a living thing around them. Even their exercise courtyard was just grey concrete. No greenery, no plants anyway. I simply couldn’t survive under those conditions” (Sophie, Baja)

“One can certainly add to people’s quality of life by enhancing the wildlife.” (referring to suburban and rural locations) (Matthew, DWT).

According to Kellert and Wilson (1993) there are a number of ways we relate to the natural world. These attributes (Figure 15) are a useful tool for analysing the multiple complexities of the human-wildlife tourism interaction particularly the naturalistic, aesthetic, humanistic and occasionally dominionistic categories. The only criticism of this model is the lack of spiritualist orientation given the intense and profound search for meaning and the quest to fill the emptiness of the self with the ‘other’ exhibited by this research and also that of Bulbeck (2005).

Figure 15: The Biophilia Hypothesis

Utilitarian:	practical and material exploitation
Naturalistic:	satisfaction from direct experience of or contact with nature
Ecologistic:	scientific/systematic study of structure of nature
Aesthetic:	physical appeal and beauty of nature
Symbolic:	use of nature for metaphorical expression
Humanistic:	strong affection, emotional attachment 'love' of nature
Moralistic:	ethical concern for nature
Domionistic:	mastery, physical control, dominance of nature
Negativistic:	fear aversion, alienation from nature
(Kellert and Wilson 1993)	

There are of course counter-arguments against biophilia. Franklin (1999:53) criticises the thesis as “fanciful and empirically flawed” and suggests that human sentiments to animals have altered in response to economic and cultural change. Bulbeck (2005:126) maintains that “one-third of the US population is indifferent to animals which challenges claims about universal needs and desires in relation to animals and nature”. Clearly there are questions which are beyond the scope of this research such as what proportion of the British population would describe themselves as having an avid need or interest in nature-based leisure, how does this interest manifest itself and at what stage in one’s life-cycle does the need to reconnect become apparent. Nevertheless, during the period of the study, the author noted many occasions when people (i.e. not just her sample) described, in everyday conversations, memorable or enjoyable encounters with wildlife, either at home or during their holidays. People, from all walks of life, expressed interest or fed the birds in their garden, and kept an eye out for interesting views of birds and mammals. This was also noticed by Ian:

“It’s funny, but people are often a bit scathing when they find out you are a bird watcher and call you a ‘twitcher’ or something but then they would come up and say, oh I saw this in my garden, do you know what it is? So you find that people are actually interested in birds. All sorts of people, it seems, are interested in birds” (Andalucia).

4.2.7 Anthropomorphism: towards a ‘relationship’ with wildlife

The existence of wildlife is clearly important to us. Throughout history man has co-existed with animal and bird populations and has exhibited a number of different

relationships with them. As Ingold (1988) explains we eat them, or on rare occasions we are eaten by them. We include animals in our social groups as domestic pets, and in so doing we observe animal characteristics and use these as a baseline from which to compare our own human attributes. Therefore, “what it means to be human can never be determined without the animal other” (Emel 1995:708).

Berger (1980:2) claims that when we gaze upon animals, we hold a mirror up to ourselves. As animals cannot reveal their thoughts to us, we impose our own interpretations of their world. Therefore, we tend to understand animals in terms of our own human experience, language and emotions. Amante-Helweg (1996) discusses this tendency of tourists to interpret and experience the interaction with dolphins by relating their behaviours and attributes to those of humans. This is commonly referred to as anthropomorphism.

Anthropomorphism is very apparent in captive wildlife situations (Curtin and Wilkes 2007; Curtin 2006) and in more general (mass) wildlife tourism markets (Tremblay 2001; Woods 2000). This is hardly surprising given that animal life is socially constructed through the ownership of pets, from numerous young children's stories such as Beatrix Potter, *Wind in the Willows* and *Tales of the Riverbank* to more popular films such as *The Lion King*, *Free Willy* and *Watership Down* to name just a few. From these representations, we learn to empathise with the creatures around us. Whilst these knowledgeable and experienced wildlife tourists would not describe themselves as being anthropomorphic, as this contradicts their level of knowledge, their scientific approach or their belief in the intrinsic nature and value of wildlife, they nonetheless showed a tendency towards it especially in the case of wildlife which occurs in their gardens.

For some, mostly women, there was talk of ‘a relationship’. Again this is linked to ecocentricism where it is assumed that animals and humans are connected, not only by shared spaces but also by sharing the basic aspects of life: food, shelter, reproduction, and caring for their young. The notion of relationship had two themes: one of communication with garden birds; and the other when wildlife on tour makes eye contact with you:

“I do think that you can relate to animals., I don’t know if you have heard about the horse and dog whisperers but how they sort of communicate at their level and I have found that with most animals, you can sort of talk to them at their level and the tone of your voice makes a difference and different animals relate differently” (Dawn, Baja).

“It’s almost in fact relating to a person but a different sort of relationship. I mean I will talk to them, I will talk to the robin when it comes and I say ‘morning, what are you doing now’

and things like that and chat to them. Anything, I will sort of chatter to them and they get used to your voice I think” (Dawn, Baja).

“I do it as well with the wildlife in my garden because I know that even if its only a robin at the end of the garden – we have a holly tree - I somehow have to relate to it. I have to say hello to it as I pass it in the mornings because it is that relationship that I like and I’m not as keen on things that don’t relate to me. In a sense I should notice the birds that Tony (husband) likes – he likes big flocks of birds, but actually it has to relate to me before I can be interested in some ways. I don’t mean friendly to me, but a relationship of a sort. Just a sort of look at you and a sense that you are in their world and part of it” (Rebecca, Andalucia).

There is considerable debate as to the pros and cons of anthropomorphism. It is not a true account of what it is to be animal. Popular representations of animals misrepresent their true characteristics and modern-day plights. Equally, it does provoke empathy and empathy with our fellow creatures is arguably a good human attribute. During the autumn migration in Andalucia, one of the highlights was watching and waiting for the raptors to sense that the conditions were right for their passage across the Straits to Africa. Migration can be a risky business more so for raptors whose size demands a lot of energy. On the 6th day, the author noted in her diary:

‘There is something remotely disturbing about the raptors not being able to cross the Straits of Gibraltar and being blown back by the strong winds. They seem such formidable creatures, yet their size is of no benefit and seems to make them more susceptible to the elements’ (Travel diary, Andalucia).

Rebecca also remarks that she feels “very sad for them” and there is ample discussion in the group as to their plight.

Moreover, without an empathetic view, humankind is not so predisposed to protecting animals, as David deliberates: *“I don’t generally like the idea of portraying animals as having all the anthropomorphic feelings. But I’d rather people were interested than not interested. From a conservation viewpoint, the more people who are interested the more successfully we can protect things” (David, tour leader, Natural History Tours).*

As Vining (2003:92) contends “interpreting nature or parts of nature as human-like may permit at least some parts of nature to be included in an extended circle of moral responsibility.” In a similar vein Kahn (1999) refers to anthropomorphism as ‘isomorphic reasoning’ and proposes that it may be a cognitive mechanism by which we develop an ecocentric approach to the natural world which brings the argument back to a natural inclination towards biophilia.

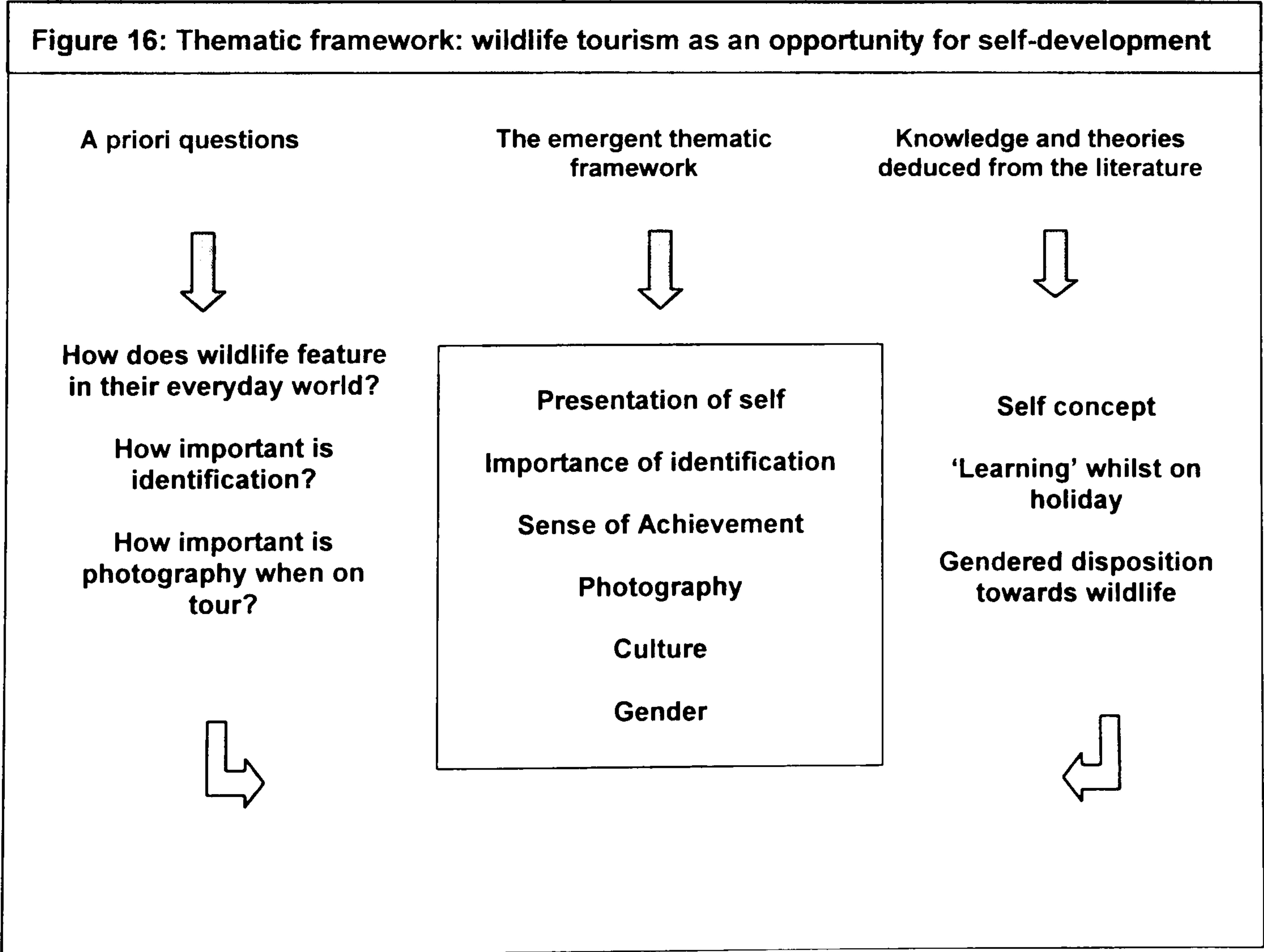
4.2.8 Conclusion

This section has explained the underlying characteristics and attitudes towards nature and wildlife which are represented in this study. It has concluded that wildlife-values are often laid down in childhood and are influenced by significant others and place of residence. Participants tend to err more towards ecocentricism than other studies into eco / wildlife tourist populations have shown (Ryan et al.2000; Higham 1998), and love of nature and wildlife is very much part of the tourists' every day world rather than an activity that they just do when they are on holiday. It infiltrates their gardening habits, their related hobbies and associated conservation work. In addition, their selection of wildlife tours represent a type of career ladder, not only in terms of destinations visited but also in the development of their knowledge and skills as the next section goes on to explain.

4.3 Self-development

4.3.1 Introduction

The tourism literature frequently alludes to a more active holiday market (Mintel 2006; Ryan 2002; Poon 1993). Whilst this type of wildlife tourism might not necessarily be physically demanding, there are a number of challenges and mental activities which make up a vital part of the tourist experience beyond merely seeing interesting flora and fauna. As previously highlighted, being interested in wildlife transcends the mere holiday experience. Instead it becomes a way of life and a way of looking out for interesting sightings, so much so, that it often begins to denote who they are so the boundary between ‘holiday-self and actual-self’ becomes blurred. This is due partly to the required intellectual capital and skills that are enhanced through watching wildlife such as being able to identify species, or at least how and where to look them up, photography and for some, even compiling databases, or doing presentations for their local Wildlife Trust or bird group. Figure 16 sets out the emergent thematic framework and the corresponding or relevant theoretical standpoints deduced from the literature.



(Source: Author)

4.3.2 Presentation of self

The notion of self-concept and choice of tourism products has not been adequately applied to tourism studies; least of all to wildlife tourism. In consumer psychology, the question of how consumers perceive themselves is considered fundamental to understanding purchase and consumption behaviours and stems from the belief that consumers choose products that are consistent with their perceptions of themselves and reject those which are incongruous with them (Sirgy 1982). For Allport (1955:36) people are not prisoners of unconscious drives. Instead the self “is an identifiable organisation within each individual and accounts for the unity of personality, higher motives and continuity of personal memories”. According to Ryan (2002) it is easy to see the relationship between holidays and the discovery and development of self.

There are a number of issues to do with the ‘self’ which have been highlighted by this research. As the previous section indicated, interest in wildlife is not just for when participants are on tour, it is part of their everyday world, of who and what they are as Edward (DWT) says: *“one thing I’ve noticed is that wildlife becomes a way of life. You know you live it all the time”*. Thus it encroaches on not only their choice of holiday but also their daily behaviour:

“I look for birds on my way to work and always have a pair of binoculars in my car. Well I don’t think I go bird-watching any more, I am bird-watching all the time” (Ian, Andalucia).

“We’ve always got our binoculars” (Carol, DWT).

“I think it (wildlife) is important and you can find it almost wherever you are if you really look and look around” (Penny, DWT).

It has been stated that tourism may be used by individuals to help construct their own identity (Holden 2005; Ryan 2002). Wildlife tourists are keen to set themselves apart from other tourists; their choice of holiday reflecting their self-image. This is exemplified by a participant who explains her disappointment at seeing another tourist bus very early in the morning when the group were tracking Iberian Lynx:

“One minute I was communing with nature but the minute I saw another bus I felt that it was a touristy place and a touristy thing and suddenly it didn’t have the same feeling like when you saw the people come out of the bus and they didn’t quite look like wildlife people. They weren’t dressed like wildlife people and it sort of debased it....” (Rebecca, Andalucia).

"I was totally in that sort of world and absorbed by the experience and suddenly its ah.. and the people get out. And it meant that it was just a tourist experience and it was a tourist bus" (Rebecca, Andalucia).

The presentation of self is also apparent in the dress code with wildlife tourists tending to choose low impact colours and comfortable outdoor styles suitable for trekking and being out of doors. In addition they are adorned with various pieces of equipment such as binoculars, telescopes and cameras with the more dedicated of participants carrying the most expensive or sought after brands of optics, usually Leica, Swarovski or Zeiss. Moreover their countenance suggests well-educated, interested and serious individuals whose behaviour as a group out in the field tends to be quiet with voices kept low or non-existent in the vicinity of wildlife, or even in the expectation of seeing it. This contrasts widely with the noisy, colourful group of more stereotypical tourists who emerged from the tour bus to also watch Iberian Lynx in the National Park.

During the course of the research, it became apparent that this focus, dedication and study of wildlife often stemmed from the participants' professional selves even if they were retired. With time on their hands at home, they have volunteered for managerial or technical roles at their local bird club or wildlife trust and, even on tour they would have guide books to study, would take photographs of different species they had seen for their databases, and would adopt a professional approach to spotting, identification and photography. Whilst this was particularly noticeable amongst the male participants, it was not solely a male attribute.

"We have more time now that we are retired but also in a way we want to become more professional at it" (Linda, DWT).

This is verified by the tour leaders who explained that: *"it is quite common especially for retired people who were quite technically minded; tends to be the man, but not always, who then gets very involved in computers and they really enjoy having databases and then they can do photographs and so on..." (David, tour leader, Natural History Tours).*

Participants were not asked directly about their occupation, or previous occupation, however most volunteered it in the context of what it is that makes them want to take an interest in wildlife and specifically learn more about it:

"Well my job was an industrial biologist working with the environment. Basically the effect of hot water discharge from power stations. When I look at wildlife, about 80% of my interest is in the scientific, the rest is just mainly trying to work out what they are doing, why they are doing it and just basically to see how things exist" (Joe, Baja).

“Professionally I am a scientist and I think if you have got the sort of mind that wants to learn about things” (Edward, DWT).

This marriage of personal interest and presentation of professional or intellectual self has resonance with the literature pertaining to a need for achievement (Ross 1991) and the fourfold categories of motivation proposed by Beard and Ragheb (1983:225); particularly the *intellectual* component such as learning, exploring, and discovering, and the *competence-mastery* component which involves the extent to which individuals engage in leisure activities in order to achieve, master, challenge and compete. Ryan (2002) suggests that these motivations can be regarded as continua between a high or low level need. The intellectual needs can be primary drives (a high need) or triggered by a specific event or environment (a low need). Clearly this is an assumption that varies from person to person and market to market and is, in part, reflected by the need to gain knowledge.

4.3.3 Importance of identification

The relationship between ‘having a nice holiday’ and ‘gaining knowledge’ is an interesting facet of this general naturalist market. Unlike hard-core birding holidays where the focus and the challenge for the leaders is to enable clients to ‘tick-off’ as many different birds as possible, this market is motivated by the desire to learn about the birds and animals they are seeing and to be able to identify them. However, there are a range of responses with regards to the importance of identification which varies according to the type of trip, for example whether the focus is mainly birds or a combination of birds, animals and plants as the following excerpt from the author’s travel diary explains:

‘There is a noticeable difference between the two tour groups: In Andalucia, identification is extremely important, yet strangely here (Baja California) it is less so for the majority. The enjoyment is in the whole experience of the marine environment. That said, they are interested to know what type of whales, dolphins or birds they are watching but these aren’t ‘tickers’ or ‘listers’. Whilst in Andalucia, even though it wasn’t hard core birding, people were keeping lists and ticking species off: notebooks were always at the ready’ (Travel diary, Baja)

Overall, the importance of identification can be divided into three categories:

a) Those for whom identification is a must:

“Oh its very important. That’s the whole point on trips like that is to know what it is that you are looking at” (Linda, DWT).

“We would read what we can about the country we are coming to and what we think we might see. It’s important that the leaders are knowledgeable and that they can share it with us so that we learn new things so that if we saw them again we could hopefully begin to identify them” (Marie, Baja).

According to the leaders, these *“tend to be a quite disciplined”* sub-set (David, Natural History Tours), very apparent by the technique that the more dedicated participants used to identify, recognise and remember new birds. It is worth reiterating that whilst on tour the activity can be intense in that it literally is one new thing to see after another; particularly in certain habitats, for example on lakes where there can be up to twenty different types of birds; many of which may be first sightings:

“I again notice the great care in which Ian identifies species – he spends a lot of time looking at one thing in detail before moving to the next; methodical and measured. It occurs to me that to be good at this I would need to adopt Ian’s approach, but this seems almost like work; definitely the acquisition of a skill” (Travel diary, Andalucia).

There are other less arduous techniques:

“I’m going to take home with me today two species or something that I will try and remember and learn how to recognise. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t, but with all the fritillary butterflies on the continent, I don’t think I’ve got a hope really (Diane, DWT).

This leads to the next category:

- b) Those who want to be able to identify and learn but find it a challenge to remember; something which good tour leaders understand:**

“I think identification is quite important (hesitating). I know I take great pleasure in spotting it and knowing that it is around you. It’s not too important for me to put a name to something because I’m not very good at remembering names. So I don’t always remember it for the next time. But I suppose it’s important to me at the time to know what it is I am looking at” (Carol, DWT).

“I don’t think the knowledge lasts very long, to be honest with you; it’s a fairly temporary thing as first and foremost they are on holiday” (David, tour leader, Natural History Tours).

“I’d like to know more but I just think, like with birds, I get glossy-eyed; all these little brown jobs and I was trying to get Neil to explain the difference between a Caspian Tern

and a Royal Tern and he said look at the beak - look at the beak. I can do it with pictures in a book but in real action, like out there I just can't do it. Like warblers and Darwin's Finches in the Galapagos, for God's sake even the guide had to admit that he couldn't tell them apart and I don't think that it is important. I like all the big sea birds and then the humming bird type of thing but then there's a large group in the middle about which I don't really care: gnatcatchers and all those things" (Tanya, Baja).

Whereas animals are relatively easy to identify and remember, birds, moths, butterflies and plants can be more problematic due to the large numbers of varieties and species. Many can be difficult to distinguish or tell apart from others; these are referred to as *little brown jobs* and *"when it comes to little brown jobs I move on I'm afraid (Penny, DWT)."*

- c) **Finally, there is a substantial group who are very motivated by seeing new things, but less concerned about naming them.**

"I mean we all love to work out what things are – we are used to categorising and pigeon-holing things – but it's quite fun when you actually get out of that – you can say to someone – you don't have to know exactly what species it is but just enjoy this or just enjoy that" (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).

Tanya and Michelle explained that leaders could be heavily criticised if they didn't or couldn't provide names for obscure things and there was a discussion about how sad the need for identification is. *"Can't we just enjoy it for what it is without having to name it" (Michelle, Baja).* John (the on-board tour guide) considered this to be a *'Western World phenomenon: that nothing had any meaning unless it could be given a name' (Travel diary, Baja).*

This is a notion that Joe, Tanya and Sophie agreed with:

"Oh yes, I take a great interest in all sorts of things - virtually every aspect of the environment but then I can't name any butterflies or flowers and I'm not very good on birds, but yes I like watching them all" (Joe, Baja).

It is also more than just learning the name of the species, but also as Joe points out, it is interesting to know *"why it is there and how it interacts with its environment" (Baja).*

"I like to know what family things belong to" (Sophie, Baja).

The historian, Maria Benjamin once described natural history as "ideologically loaded housekeeping" and its pre-occupation with naming and ordering as "taxonomising the world's bounty into a pattern of strict hierarchy" (1996:34). Mabey (2005:148) does not

share this view stating: “It seems to me that naming any living thing is a gesture of respect towards its individuality, its distinction from the generalised (green) blur. I want to put a name to things; it seems to be a basic human reaction, the first step in beginning a relationship: ‘what’s your name?’” (2005:148). Such obsessive pre-occupation with identification can be better understood from this humanistic viewpoint.

4.3.4 Using binoculars

The first step to identifying something is seeing it clearly often from a distance. It is interesting to behold people who are not accustomed to using binoculars. Even for experienced watchers, fixing something in the view can be quite a challenge as the author soon found out:

‘Dawn, Joe, Sophie and myself lag behind the others. In our tardiness we spot a Red Cardinal and soon after a Costa’s hummingbird which zooms past our ears more like a humming bee than a bird. It isn’t until it characteristically hovers alongside a flowering tree that we realise what it is. I desperately try to fix my binoculars on it, but fail miserably in the excitement’ (Travel diary, Baja).

This was not an uncommon problem particularly in marine environments where there are no points on which to fix a view:

‘Marie and I joked about how hopeless we were at getting our binoculars on the event. It’s definitely more difficult where whales are concerned as there are no clear markers on the horizon. In our excitement, the time between seeing the whale with the naked eye and aligning our binoculars is too long, by which time the moment has gone and all that remains are the elegant flukes disappearing silently into the deep blue’ (Travel diary, Baja).

Wildlife can be equally illusive on land and as the tours can be very intensive, sightings are easily missed if one is not careful and attentive:

‘That morning Dawn saw a lizard. I missed it. Joe saw a mouse, I missed it, and Sophie saw a deer, I missed that too. I confided this incompetence with Marie who noted on these trips that the more pushy or experienced people tended to stay close to the guide and even if being assertive is not in your nature, you do better on these trips if you are’ (Travel diary, Baja).

However, due to the shared goal, it is surprising how helpful the tour group are. Part of the joy is sharing knowledge, expertise and experiences and generally members are quick to help someone spot wildlife particularly if they were highly enthusiastic:

'We make our way inland...Our first sighting is a Jack Rabbit, a much larger rabbit than ours with an upright posture and lovely honey coloured transparent ears. He blends with the background perfectly. One of the party has trouble depicting him and it was lovely to see how the others help her patiently to pick him out from the scrubland behind' (Travel diary, Baja).

It is possible to be perfectly competent with binoculars at home, yet find it difficult when on tour; partly because it takes time to become accustomed to the type of habitat and where and how to look for fauna and flora. This is why local leaders are such a blessing and are highly sought after by tour operators:

'After twenty years on the Don Jose cruising these waters, Luis knew quite a bit about the whales and could spot them long before Tanya and I could. He laughed incessantly as we missed this breach, that tail or that blow; our inexperienced eyes unable to keep pace with his' (Travel diary, Baja).

Nevertheless, by the end of the tours, spotting skills for the novice or less skilled improved due to the intensity and the number of hours spent attached to binoculars.

4.3.5 Sense of achievement

There is a perceptible sense of achievement to being a wildlife tourist manifesting itself in three different ways: being the first of a group to spot something, finding, tracking and identifying a creature on your own accord, and having the patience to watch the wildlife, study it and thus understand more about its behaviour. These outcomes provide great satisfaction for the participants both at home and whilst on tour.

As a relatively novice bird-watcher and dedicated wildlife tourist, the author noted how pleasing it felt to her to be the first of the group to spot something new. It helps to secure a stronger position in the group and as Penny explains, after being somewhat ignored by the dedicated bird-watchers in Madagascar, she gained great kudos after she had spotted a highly sought after and illusive bird. Thereafter she felt a more accepted part of the tour group. This boost of self-esteem appeared to represent a fairly universal feeling:

"They call me hawk eye....I usually manage to spot something and that does give me pleasure because I am the one who has discovered it (Carol, DWT)".

"It can be enhanced by being the one to spot it. That makes me feel wonderful: I was the first one that found it" (Diane, DWT).

"Because the whole thing when you have retired...there is a mental thing as well (laughing) there is, that you are out wanting to see birds and you have to hear them quite often first and it is quite difficult. But when things aren't easily achieved it means something to be able to spot and identify them" (Linda, DWT).

Equally, spotting something but wrongly identifying it, or spotting something that is very common can be a source of embarrassment as there is a tendency to feel rather ignorant. Female participants were particularly susceptible to being embarrassed at such times especially when they went on dedicated bird-watching tours and where they found experienced male birders could be rather intimidating. It is difficult to know how gender-specific this is as there is a possibility that female participants may be more comfortable disclosing these feelings, whereas male participants may be more hesitant in talking about feelings of pride or embarrassment with a female researcher. However, very early on in Andalucia the author noted in her travel diary:

'I had been watching carefully and the less confident, mostly women in this group, were far more hesitant to 'shout' when they saw something of interest. Is this down to confidence or being unsure of its identification, or perhaps just having a quiet voice? On getting out of the bus, Rebecca remarked to me very privately that "bird-watching tours can be a very male dominated thing. When females point out something of interest, it wasn't taken as much notice of as when a man spoke out" (Travel diary, Andalucia). And there was certainly evidence of that in the post tour interviews:

"I've got to be confident before I'll say. Unless, it is something that we had been looking for and then I'll say: "what was that?" No. No. My knowledge is not that great. I might give Ken (partner) a nudge and whisper 'what's that?" (Diane, DWT).

Nevertheless, whoever spots the wildlife and, however the knowledge is gained, there is a strong sense of achievement when new birds can be identified:

'Luis drew us closer to the mangroves where we pulled up alongside a flock of waders and seabirds for some easy and very enjoyable bird-watching. I felt very pleased with myself as I could name all but one of them; I had obviously learned something' (Travel diary, Baja).

A sense of accomplishment is also experienced when participants are travelling independently or are on home soil and can track something themselves and identify it;

finding the site, then the habitat and then the bird. The relationship between non-consumptive wildlife tourism and hunting has been mentioned several times in the literature (Tremblay 2001; Duffus and Dearden 1990) and is further reinforced here. Essentially the skills are very similar, except for the fact that a tourist may point a camera rather than a gun, yet the excitement and anticipation it evokes is very akin:

"Sometimes it's a bit like hunting you know, you sort of creep around trying to find something and you find it and it's like whoaaa – I've achieved something. I mean it sounds absurd but that's how I feel. Even if I have seen it before or I've not seen one for a while" (Ian, Andalucia).

"Some things are going to be difficult to see. A quail for example, I'm pretty patient with things like that...so you sit it out and....pow... 'that's another tick for my sheet – I've seen one of those at last!" (Simon, Andalucia).

"Of course it is quite a thrill when you see something for the first time and if you found it yourself, of course it is even better. I discovered this bird or whatever, butterfly" (Peter, Andalucia).

"It can be a greater sense of achievement when you have discovered it (the wildlife) for yourself doing the research, finding out about the area and where is the best place to be - you do get more out of it than if you are just in the minibus and just following their itinerary - well I think so anyway. Because I am not too interested in sort of long lists - I'm not interested in ticking birds off. I get a lot more out of doing the research myself and seeing where something might be" (Linda, DWT).

All participants experience satisfaction and a sense of achievement when they discover something new about their favourite creatures. As Ian alluded to above, and what had surprised the author, was that even fairly common birds or British species seen on the continent instilled equal charm and wonderment as rarer and indigenous species. On further probing, it is being in the moment and just watching, even familiar species, to get a deeper understanding of them and their behaviour. Once again it is a quest beyond mere identification:

"It's just to see how it behaves actually to see how it reacts to other things around it and also if you watch it moving for a bit or if it suddenly goes into a courtship display (one of the birds) it is amazing what you can see and how it reacts with other creatures around it. I mean just here watching that barn owl. I mean a barn owl sitting is beautiful when you see it just flying silently along, probably just below the edge of the hedge there hunting, it's amazing, you understand them much more I think and you know why and how" (Penny, DWT).

4.3.6 Photography

Photography may enhance this understanding and sense of achievement as it can be an intrinsic part of the wildlife watching experience (Cloke and Perkins 2005; Higginbottom 2004). The relationship between tourism and photography is well-documented for being the tangible evidence that tourists can bring back from their experience. As Sontag (1977:9) declares “it seems positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along as photographs offer indisputable evidence that the trip was made, that the program was carried out and that fun was had”. Therefore, “to be a tourist is to be, almost by necessity, a photographer” (Markwell 1997:131).

However, the type and focus of photography differs considerably on a wildlife trip in comparison to other forms of tourism. Whilst on tour, the author noted that very few photographs were taken of the group; perhaps only one or two were taken towards the end of the trip to remind them of the new people they had met and shared their experiences with. Alternatively the majority of photographs were taken of the focal species, with occasional shots of the landscape (as per a normal holiday experience). Instead, there are four reasons for the avid interest and relationship between wildlife tourism and photography. Photographs are used:

1. As a record of identification:

“I am not always sure what it is and then I photograph it and look it up when I get home. Sometimes it’s just to relive the moment I suppose” (Diane, DWT).

2. As a way to consolidate memories:

“I like to photograph plants and record them in that way. Because that is what it’s about isn’t it; recording the experience. It’s about catching that moment in time as they say” (Edward, DWT).

“Because you have got a record of them then, not just say of the whales, but the actual setting and the beauty of the place they are in” (Marie, Baja).

“It is so I am just reminding my memory because like when you did your diary, you don’t remember everything and some of the things that we see are so wonderful, when the whales jump out and that sort of thing, I want to relive it. It will feel like I am back there again. I can relive the experience, I especially wanted to film this because I just thought I might never be able to do anything like it again. You know so the only way I can sort of keep the memory alive is to have it on film” (Dawn, Baja).

3. Purely for the challenge and satisfaction

"I've had a reasonable camera since my 21st birthday and I like photography, it's also so I'll always take a reasonable record of what I have seen. I like the challenge of trying to take good photograph; there's certainly a challenge element to it. Although I regard myself as a lucky striker photographer, I rely on quick reactions and luck (Michelle, Baja).

"So I think photography with me is linked because it is a challenge" (Edward, DWT).

4. As a way to develop a 'professional self' and do talks at local Wildlife Trust meetings

"We do photographs although this has become more important than it has previously because people ask us to give talks, so in a way.. I am now chairman of the West Dorset Trust and it is helpful so we are probably taking more now and doing it more seriously because of a very specific reason. But on the other hand you don't want to spend all your time taking photographs as they can get in the way (Linda, DWT).

However, this desire to record everything is not an homogenous trait. Observations suggest that novice participants tended to take more photographs than the experienced trippers who were more selective and concentrated more effort on photographing focal species. Moreover, being a wildlife tourist can be a cumbersome existence as one is armed with binoculars, camera, telescope, map, notebook and books to aid identification, there is often not enough time amidst the paraphernalia to organise all the optical equipment before the moment is gone. Moreover, some spectacles are best appreciated in their entirety and not mediated by a camera lens:

"I am not very good at it and I think there are so many other people who are that there is very little point in me trying to take shots. There are pictures in books, postcards and lots of other ways to see images. Also when we were in Tobago we saw about 60 different birds all in one day, it was amazing. They put some food out and the birds just came from everywhere. But there were these Americans who I am sure did not see any of them with the naked eye there was always a camera lens in the way and I remember thinking how sad" (Sophie, Baja).

'Photography can be an encumbrance especially with whale watching: Once again I desperately try to capture the moment on film. It is futile. Later I questioned why I let it spoil the moment and vowed I wouldn't take my camera on the panga next time. I am beginning to appreciate, as several others have, that you are best to enjoy it and soak up the spectacle as it is over before you know it' (Travel diary, Baja).

This characteristic perhaps represents a slight difference in market experiences between mass market whale watching and dedicated wildlife tours. Cloke and Perkins (2005:915) noted in Kaikoura that the “encounter with the whale is predominantly performed with a camera glued to the face and experienced through a viewfinder, lens or digital screen for fear of missing ‘the shot’ by which the whole entire performance will be remembered. We witnessed few people who were savouring the moment unencumbered by the responsibility of getting the photograph”. Photography can exclude as much as it includes, i.e. what is worth seeing and what is worth not seeing (Macnaghten and Urry 1998). At best photographs offer “mediated reconstructions of portions of the visible environment” (Chalfen 1987:98). Nonetheless photography, often with sophisticated lenses and equipment, forms a substantial part of the culture of dedicated wildlife tours.

4.3.7 Culture

After two days in the field, it became highly apparent that dedicated wildlife tourism has a culture and identity of its own, and, as an ethnographer, the author must be quick to watch and adopt similar behaviour in order for the research to be successful. There are certain unwritten rules and codes to do with dress, behaviour and equipment which have to be acquired in order to be accepted, especially, it was felt, in the bird-watching group. According to Holden (2005:137), “a common interpretation of culture is something that a nation, class or group of people might possess that differentiates them from others”. Culture can also be viewed as being about the whole way of life of a particular group which has distinctive signifying systems, involving all forms of social activity, including artistic and intellectual activities (Smith 2003).

This rendition of culture is particularly useful here as wildlife tourism encompasses artistic (photography), intellectual (identification and knowledge) and social (wine and conversation over dinner) components (Smith 2003). With regards to signifiers, the author learned her first lesson during the opening evening:

‘Binoculars are carried at all times even to the evening dinner: I see now that they are signifiers; they indicate what type of tourists we are and the notion that we are always on the look out for interesting sightings. I can’t think of any other type of holiday where binoculars are taken to dinner!.....However, a few days later a barn owl flew past the dining room window to everyone’s delight, then I was glad my binoculars were to hand.’.....‘Later in the tour, I was to leave my binoculars in the bus whilst we stopped for a coffee. I felt very stupid and suddenly very alienated from the group especially as a flock of black stork went overhead and I was the only one who did not get a good view’ (Travel diary, Andalusia).

Whilst it is unwise to generalise from only two field trips, the whale-watching trip to Baja California had a rather less intensive feel, perhaps evidence of a sub-wildlife tourism culture and the notion that wildlife tourists are not homogenous. However, participants again carried binoculars and cameras at all times and did not see themselves as ordinary tourists. Instead they came with a travel history and travel career that was evidenced usually by stories shared over dinner, not in a pretentious way, of where they had been and what they had seen with other tour operators or independently.

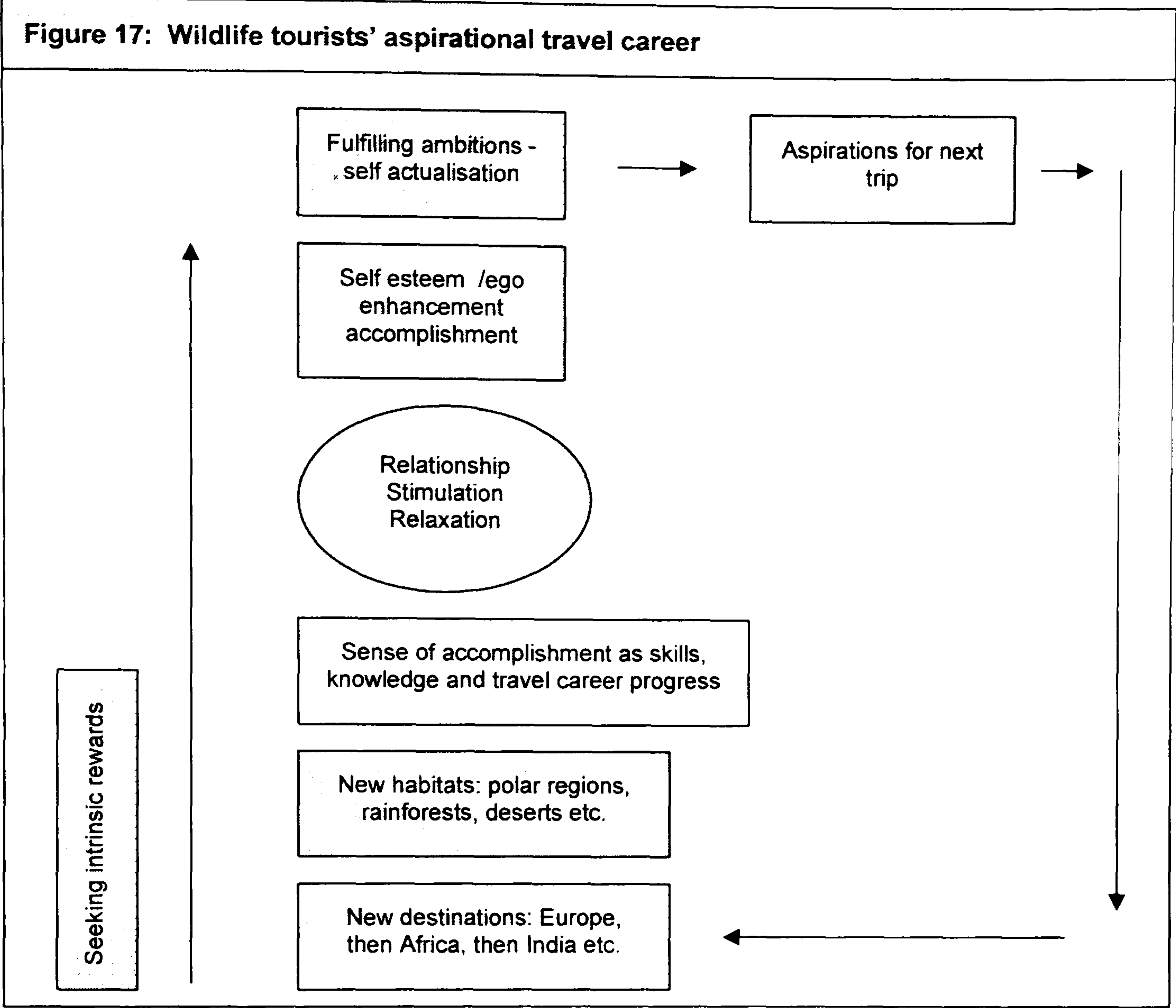
The Leisure Motivation Scale formulated by Ragheb and Beard (1983) includes a *social component* which has two basic needs. That is a need for friendship and a need for the esteem of others. This implies that social interaction is a source of pleasure in its own right (see section 4.6) but that it is also important in deriving a sense of self. Ryan (2002:37) asserts that “we know who we are not solely in terms of a sense of personal integrity but in comparison with others, and in the way in which others regard us (or as we perceive and value that evaluation)”. Crompton (1979) notes the importance of holidays as ego and status enhancing experiences. For tourists who seek a sense of ego and status, the sense of ‘I’ becomes both social and geographical. The social interaction occurs within a place and the attributes of place subscribe connotation to the sense of self (Ryan 2002). Therefore within the culture of wildlife tourism participants are not only who they are but also where they have been; thus the exhibition of travel narratives and exchanges.

The Travel Career Ladder advocated by Pearce (1988), and again derived from the earlier work of Maslow, is another often-used model to explain the intrinsic motivation of tourist populations. It proposes the existence of a travel career where tourists develop varying motivations of relaxation; stimulation; relationship; self-esteem / self-development and fulfilment. Pearce argues that a travel career is both consciously determined and purposeful in intent. The ‘career’ model is dynamic; it changes with age, life-stage, past experiences of tourism and the influence of other people. Holden (2005) suggests that whilst the travel career ladder is open to criticism (see Ryan 1997; 2002), it is possible to adapt the construct to a variety of tourism settings. Figure 17 shows how it can be modified to represent a simplistic career of a wildlife tourist.

There was evidence that participants developed a very loose travel career plan based on certain species they would like to see, habitats and destinations:

“Well I’ve already sort of got my idea as to what my destination is going to be. I’m thinking of Morocco to see the birds going back in spring and probably Finland, or somewhere very far north in mid-summer so that I can see the midnight sun and see the birds up there. I sort have got this plan to do quite a bit of Europe and then perhaps

when I retire and if I can afford it, then I'll do my exotics and go to Ecuador and places like that.” (Ian, Andalucia).



(Source: Author)

Each trip added to the tourist's sense of accomplishment and deep satisfaction of what they had seen as well as giving them a certain authority and 'presence' during the social interactions on tour. As participants on tour become more experienced and sophisticated wildlife tourists / watchers then they become opinion leaders and can heavily influence their peers' future travel decisions.

Whilst there are some studies to do with leisure motivations (Wearing and Wearing 1996; Ryan 1995; Hirschman 1984), there have, to date, been no studies with regard to the gender differences that take place within the culture of wildlife tourism. Unlike in Andalucia there were more women than men on the whale-watch tour in Baja, California, and with them came a slightly different perspective; less to do with identification and tick lists, and more to do with the intrinsic enjoyment of seeing a number of different cetaceans and birds and of learning more about the people and landscape of Mexico.

4.3.8 Gender

Studies by Zinn and Pierce (2002) and Miller and McGee (2000) found that females expressed more love of animals and nature while men were more likely to support consumptive wildlife activities to control wildlife, there has been very little research undertaken on gender and non-consumptive wildlife tourism and this study is too limited to make generalisations. However, there were noticeable gender issues especially in Andalucia where the main focus was bird-watching. Women appeared to have a more holistic interest in nature whereas the men in the group tended to be more bird focused as vociferated by Rebecca:

"I think that men sometimes become much more focused so, although, they are saying they are not doing tick lists, they are. They really are doing tick lists. So I think they do tick lists and they seek different things" (Andalucia).

Whilst the group dynamic was different with more women than men, conversations with fellow travellers in Mexico also appeared to support the idea that the highly dedicated bird market (or 'twitchers') was male dominated. Sophie, Michelle and Tanya, who were fairly avid birders themselves, warned the author that:

"You have to be very careful about bird tours and make sure that they are not too bird orientated as they attract fanatics" (Sophie). And "men are the worst!" (Tanya). "Yes", agreed Michelle; "they are definitely on the autistic spectrum!"

Michelle explained that quite often tour leaders guide for a number of different operators whose clients have different wants and you have to ensure that they know you like to stop for lunch: *"that lunch is actually quite important"*, and that *"you don't want to wait in a bush in order to tick off the last thing" (Sophie, Baja).*

When participants had booked previous tours, there had been occasions where they had realised that the focus was birds rather than a more general focus on all forms of wildlife. Women participants can find this intensity and the single focus a little tiresome:

"This has been one of my problems all along. I am interested in practically anything to do with the countryside or habitat, and with this particular trip it was mainly birds" (Penny, DWT). In describing the same tour Penny remembers *"there were quite a few ladies that hadn't really any knowledge of birds. It tended to be their husbands more".*

This gendered and holistic interest is also apparent in the different ways that wildlife is looked at with women tending to spend a longer time absorbed in the subject of interest:

Ken will see something, he will record it and then he will move on. Whereas I tend to stop and look at it and try and get a good photograph of it and if it's a butterfly and its flown off, I'll sometimes stand there in the hope that it will come back so that I can see it again. Whereas once he has seen it and recorded it. He's off onto the next thing.....I mean I like to know that I have seen it but I suppose I am less interested in recording it on a database as actually finding it in the first place. He's the one often who does the identification" (Diane, DWT).

It was with interest that the author realised that the element of listing and recording can be as much about a love of numbers as a love of wildlife. It was very noticeable that counts and recording were very much part of the wildlife tour, particularly for male participants. The gender issues are worthy of greater research partly because there is some resonance with other behavioural studies that suggest "the gap between humans and other animals is narrower for women, who are configured as closer to nature and less needful of asserting their masculinity with mastery and rifle" (Bulbeck 2005:159). While this rather separates the traditional and ancient masculinity associated with hunting and the femininity associated with gathering and nurturing young, perhaps it is not surprising that women may have a different attitude towards wildlife.

4.3.9 Conclusion

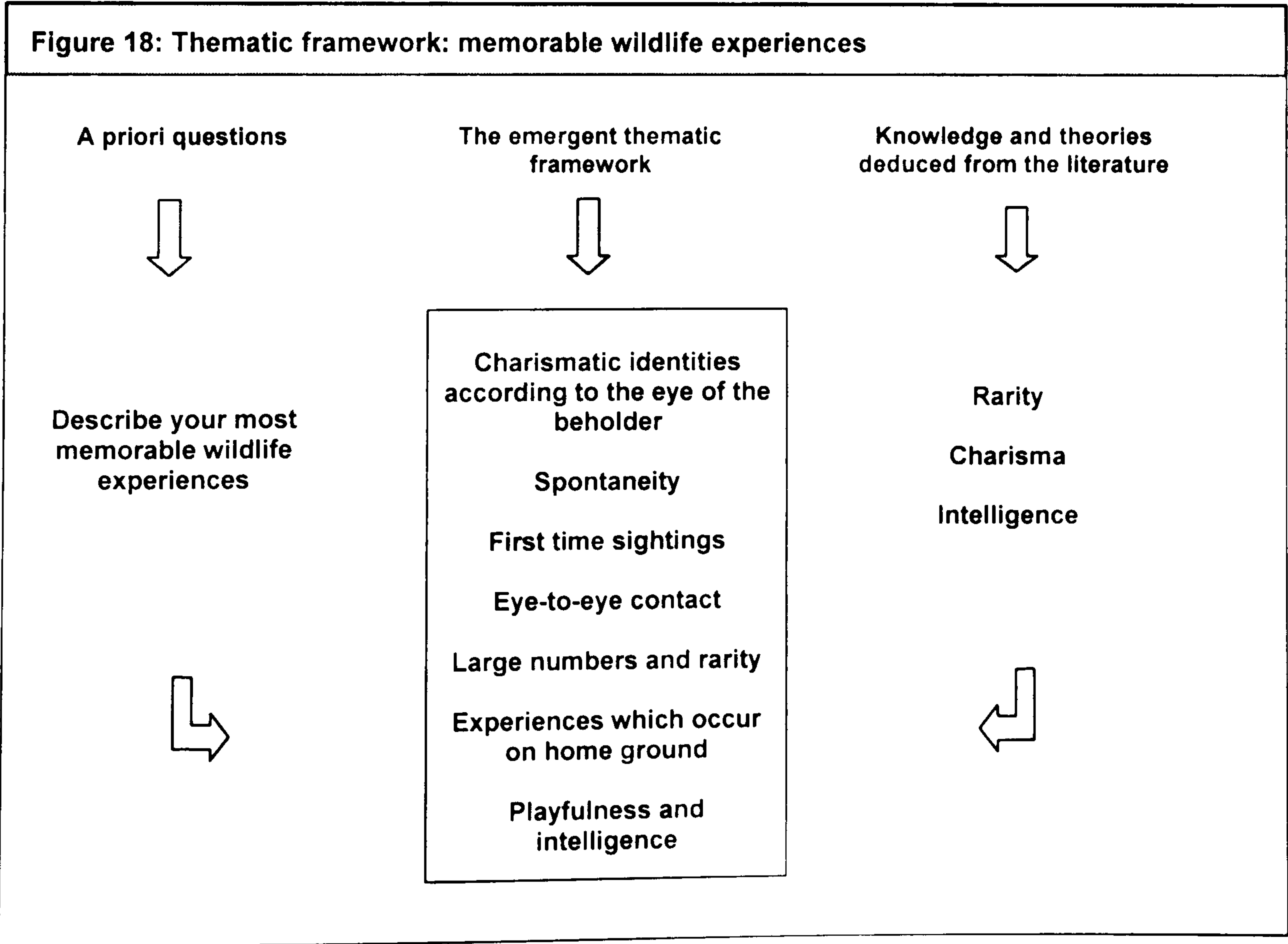
This section asserts that there is a projection of self-image in the behaviour of wildlife tourists. They set themselves outside of the norm with regards to tourism using their optical equipment as signifiers and symbols of their extended selves. Clearly for this segment interest in wildlife goes beyond merely the tour and into the everyday. Being able to identify species is important for most people, although not everyone is concerned with being able to assign a name to wildlife; some can just enjoy it for its intrinsic beauty and interest at the time. Nonetheless, identification is aided by photography which is also associated with capturing moments and reliving them. All this constitutes a distinct culture connected to dedicated wildlife tours which manifests itself in terms of dress, behaviour, intellectual skills and travel career. There are also some noticeable gender differences but these are difficult to ascertain within a relatively small sample. Having looked at the aspects of self development, the next section charts participants' most memorable wildlife experiences.

4.4 Memorable wildlife experiences

4.4.1 Introduction

Asking participants to recall their most memorable wildlife encounters provided some interesting and some rather unusual results. When asked to describe memorable wildlife experiences, participants gave a wide range of responses which depended upon a number of key factors such as the charisma of the species, the level of surprise, seeing something for the first-time, the degree of close proximity and species congregated in large numbers (see Figure 18). One of the most surprising results, given the participants' wide ranging travel careers, is that unforgettable wildlife experiences are not necessarily made up of the exotic. Highlights can include relatively common British birds or rarer endemic birds and animals which visit participants' gardens. Moreover, seeing something in a new place or getting a better view of it also constructs memorable experiences.

This section reveals and discusses the attributes of memorable wildlife encounters, beginning with the notion of the charismatic and appealing species which are the subjects of participants' memories.



(Source: Author)

4.4.2 Charisma and appeal

Several authors (Tremblay 2002; Woods 2000; Shackley 1996; Hammit *et al.* 1993; Barstow 1986) have researched the appeal that particular species have with wildlife tourist populations, and some animals are more attractive and memorable than others. Tremblay (2002), for example, purports that “some physical attributes seem to make some categories of animals more likely to be of interest than others”; particularly size, associated visibility and aesthetic appeal (2002:166). Large mammals are generally preferred to small mammals and large birds to small birds (Kellert 1989). Moreover, “there are several species which hold some sort of charisma with humans similar to the qualities associated with pets – i.e. pandas, koalas, baby orang-utans and raccoons can be considered cute” (Tremblay 2002:167). Charisma, he suggests, is a highly complex concept, but is connected with an animal's approachability, its tendency to relate to humans and its playfulness.

Conversely, negative appeal is associated with unappealing aesthetics and behaviour such as scavenging or perceived dangerousness. There are also historical or mythical connotations that can affect attitudes such as the notion of ‘The Big Bad Wolf’ (Emel 1995). Woods' (2000) study reveals that the least favourite animals are those that are “least like humans, are wild, unpredictable, dangerous and are not safe-human orientated” (2000:33). Nevertheless, Duffus and Dearden (1990) claim that whilst some species are not aesthetically pleasing, they nonetheless have the ability to stimulate interest and excitement. Swarbrooke *et al.* (2003), Tremblay (2002) and Norberg (1999) maintain that sightings of potentially dangerous animals such as wolves, lions, tigers or white sharks provide opportunities for adventure and life-long memories.

However, this study is based upon dedicated wildlife tourists rather than mass market visitors and, for them, charisma is less easily defined. Most species are appealing in some way and participants generally share a desire to see as many endemic species as possible including insects, reptiles and various types flora. For this market segment, beauty is in the eye of the beholder and favourite species are not always what one might expect. For example, despite their physical resemblance to humans and the commonly held belief that this is a basis for preference (Peterson and Goodall 1993; Plous 1993), primates are not often depicted as favourites; neither are the often-quoted and highly mass-marketed ‘Big 5’ of the African plains (lion, rhinoceros, elephant, leopard and buffalo). Such a myopic and narrow attitude to wildlife and its habitat is not represented in this dedicated market that clearly have a much broader interest and focus. Favourites include birds, large mammals and of course, cetaceans which consistently provoke strong emotions and memorable moments as these typical responses show:

"Whales and dolphins have a definite appeal no doubt about it. I think it is the thought of intelligent interaction partly. For instance whales like playing. And we have seen humpbacked whales, clearly just playing around the kayaks and dolphins are the same" (Linda, DWT).

"Whales are so different from any other creature, they are not something you can see everyday and they live in a totally different environment to us and yet their size, their grace and intelligence and the way they look after their young is wonderful" (Dawn, Baja).

"Whales and dolphins are favourites really just because there is something....there is something quite magical about the fact that we have those kinds of creatures roaming the seas" (Tanya, Baja).

"There is a mystery surrounding them.... You see them just very quickly and then they just disappear and you think to yourself where? What do they do then?" (Matthew, DWT).

The vastness of their habitat and the spontaneous fleeting glimpses of these charismatic creatures underpin these notions of mystery and magic. The best known writing about 'mystery' is in the field of environmental psychology and visual landscape preference. A landscape is said to have mystery if it is partially hidden or obscured (Kaplan and Kaplan (1989). Mystery includes the possibility that what is hidden may be at least partially glimpsed or revealed but there may also be a sense that what is hidden should not be completely exposed (Schroeder 1996). Wildlife which has a sense of mystery about it is undoubtedly charismatic as it provokes imagination and contemplation.

Other favourite mammals include bears, otters, foxes, badgers, deer, elephants and big cats. There are key behavioural attributes such as intelligence, playfulness and nurturing their young which render these animals charismatic as Rebecca explains:

"Otters are so wonderful, it's the way they look at you or react to you. They are really special, they are so playful, they love life and they do play. With otters it's their playfulness, whilst foxes, I think it is their intelligence, they are looking at you and they are thinking about you, watching you as they walk along. They're incredible – you can see them planning where they are going to go – I love that" (Rebecca, Andalucia).

Sought after species are dependent on the eye of the beholder and their knowledge or special interest in a particular category of wildlife as the following extract from the authors' travel diary implies:

'I noticed that Mark, the tour leader in Andalucia, became particularly excited by the sight of a Mediterranean skipper, a grey non-descript little butterfly; certainly not one for the mass market. And that Joe (Baja) explained to me how some of the most seemingly mundane animals are fascinating. For example, he said "cone jellies...I mean the way the light shines and the reflections through it.. I could watch that anytime".

Deciding upon charismatic birds, however, is slightly more predictable and tends to be decided by their colour and behaviour. Many were mentioned including, owls, kingfishers, Chaffinches, Blue-tits, Wrens, Coal-tits, Goldfinches, tame garden Blackbirds, Spoonbills, Bearded-tits, humming birds, Ospreys and other smaller raptors, herons and eagles (note the number of endemic British species noted as favourites). Behavioural characteristics too engender fascination as animal / bird behaviour represents 'the other' as well as a reflection of ourselves:

"Birds of prey are always more appealing aren't they? They seem to have a sense of power, and are more exciting, the way they soar" (Ian, Andalucia).

"I like the little quiet birds, the little Dunnocks who are frightened to mix with the other birds who fly up to the hanging feeders. They will wait underneath for something to drop. Well I quite like that sort of character and behaviour". "I am a bit like that too I suppose (laughing)" (Peter, Andalucia).

Participants, despite being well travelled, appeared to give as much, and sometimes more, credence to endemic British charismatic species found much closer to home: *"I just love watching Gannets and watching all species of ducks but that is also because I have a duck pond at home and that kind of developed by the fact that we were so intrigued."* (Tanya, Baja).

As these examples illustrate, species can become even more favoured and 'special' if they make their presence felt in the participants' home surroundings: *"if I get something which is fairly uncommon in the garden, that is a great source of delight. Say if I have a Lesser Whitethroat or a Goldcrest. They are not rare birds but it is uncommon to find one in your garden" (Peter, Andalucia)*

Peter's delight at seeing more uncommon species also demonstrates the typical appeal of rarity. Shackley (1996) was the first to espouse that rarity made animals more appealing, exemplified by:

"The Barn Owl is a lovely bird to watch, the grace and the colour of it and the way it hunts. You have to be somewhere at the right time and it is really quite rare and difficult

to see. *I think memorable moments are particularly associated with these more rare things*" (Penny, DWT).

"Well a really memorable moment for me was the Wryneck because I've never seen a wryneck in Spain before and it was a particularly good view. So many of these birds which I show a great interest are the ones that you rarely ever see" (Peter, Andalucia).

"An animal that had a real wow factor was when I was in the outback up in the Atherton Table lands in Australia. We were out in the afternoon and early evening with a local guide and there was a Platypus just by my feet: that was incredible...that was just tremendous" (Michelle, Baja).

There is a subtle difference between animals which are hardly ever seen such as the Duck-billed Platypus, species that are rarely spotted such as the Wryneck and other species which are simply secretive and elusive such as the Barn Owl. The over-riding message is that seeing things which are not seen very often render the experience more memorable and special and is dependent upon the eye of the beholder and the individual appeal and behaviour of various species. For some members of this market this appeal is not solely focused on fauna; seeing rare plants can be equally or more exciting than seeing rare birds or animals.

Whilst the notion of charismatic flora is not described in the wildlife tourism literature, the general naturalist market also takes an interest in the habitat's vegetation and is equally open to the possibility of charismatic flowers based upon appearance and behaviour. Diane (DWT) describes *"the Burnt-tip Orchid in the Pyrenees (laughing) and the Vanilla Orchid that we saw even further up the mountain which is a little, almost a black.....it looks a bit like a pyramid"* whilst Edward (DWT) enthuses about *"a special rare clover called Hares Foot Clover which grows alongside motorways"* and *"the amazing plants you get in desert conditions"*. Therefore, plants and flowers may also have agency and presence and can certainly be deemed charismatic. Lilies, roses, daisies, snowdrops, daffodils, pansies to name only a few are British favourites which are culturally and aesthetically symbolic.

Having appraised the charismatic appeal of certain fauna and flora, the logical progression is to enquire about the participants' most memorable wildlife encounters given the possibility that the more charismatic the animal, the more likely it is to figure in a memorable encounter. First, it is important to consider how experiences are transformed from the moment to the memory.

4.4.3 Memories in the making

The author's own participation on tour allowed her to experience memorable wildlife moments and also to reflect on the process of embedding experiences into memories. She concluded that experiences which come in close succession, as they tend to on a wildlife tour, “are almost too much to take in”. Instead they gather significance as time lapses after they have been truly absorbed and reflected upon. ‘Wildlife moments’ can vary in duration from lasting only a matter of seconds, in the form of a fleeting glimpse, to long undisturbed views of wildlife going about their daily business. Strangely, at the time the importance and significance of what is being witnessed is somehow lost in the excitement of the event; it is only later that the true significance of what has been seen becomes ‘hardwired’, exemplified by the following extract:

‘Michelle was the first to spot a Blue Whale and I felt extremely excited as I desperately crossed to starboard to get it in view. This elation, however, was temporarily tainted by disappointment at the realisation that you only get to see such a small portion of the whale and that it is really difficult to gauge its size and significance. Nonetheless I could see that it is a Blue as there is a large, solid greyish hulk on the ocean surface and a small fin. We all watched in awe as it dived silently lifting its flukes as it did so and leaving its fluke-print on the surface of the water. Then it was gone. In all my experience of watching cetaceans I had never before noticed this beautiful, silent, phenomenon. Fluke prints are the flat, glossy circles on the water's surface resulting from rising columns of water pushed up by the up-stroking whale or dolphin's tail. Now the Blue Whale left its ghostly footprints behind and I watched in awe as these lovely magic circles slid past the boat. I had seen and had been in the presence of a Blue whale. It was hard to believe. It was only later on in my cabin that it occurred to me how privileged I had been’. (Travel diary, Baja)

For some, particularly well-travelled participants such as Tanya (Baja), memorable wildlife narratives flowed from one special moment to the next. As Cloke and Perkins (2005) assert being in amongst wildlife offers a kaleidoscopic rather than a focused gaze. With such a wealth of memorable images, it became impossible for them to state the most memorable:

“In the Galapagos one night; the first night that we were on the boat there was...I just went on the bridge deck because the others had gone to bed and it was such a lovely warm evening and I just like looking at the stars and all of a sudden there were some great big splashes in the darkness just by the boat and there were Swallow-tailed Gulls that fish at night time and they were fishing for squid just round the boat and you could see them in the moonlight and they were so ghostly, ethereal and majestic that is a moment that I remember” (Tanya, Baja).

"Then there were the birds at night in British Columbia and being in a little rowing boat in the middle of this little shallow inlet and being surrounded by Grizzly Bears eating fish all around you - again it's fabulous. And the Gannet colony...shall I carry on - the Gannet colony in Newfoundland" (Tanya, Baja).

"And the Painted Reed Frog.... Which is a tiny little thing about an inch long and it changes colour depending on how it is sitting on a reed, it is spotty and it can change its spots so that it can be green or it can be purple, oh it's fabulous and at night they sound just like bell frogs, they are just fantastic like somebody ringing bicycle bells - it's just such a fantastic noise and you can't imagine how that little thing can make that sort of noise" (Tanya, Baja).

Participants consistently explained that it is not always easy to pick out the 'best' events because almost everything you see is astonishing and relevant in its own right. Sometimes, as Michelle (Baja) explains: *"it is very difficult to pinpoint the most memorable because it isn't what you might expect. For example that little humming bird being so close this morning is every bit as thrilling as the whale under the boat yesterday. Each special moment and encounter combines to make a generally enjoyable and memorable wildlife trip. Nonetheless there are certain characteristics which help determine a memorable moment.*

4.4.4 First time sightings

First time sightings are always memorable because of the novelty of the experience and the fact that the wildlife, which has previously only been seen in books or on television, suddenly takes a more real form and context: *"there is always an element of thrill when you see something for the first time" (Michelle, Baja).* For the author and for her co-travellers, the Baja California tour was full of first-time sightings. Each day is made up of seeing so many new things that it is possible to become blasé except for when charismatic or well-known species appear such as: *"my first frigate bird soars overhead - a very special moment,"* and *"my first hummingbird - so tiny, I thought it was a bee" (Travel diary, Baja).*

"I would say that pretty much every bird that's unusual I can probably remember where I first saw it - I don't remember so much the emotion of it just that I saw one of those when I was in Greece or wherever" (Ian, Andalucia).

These moments particularly stand out if they are accompanied by a sense of achievement:

"Of course it is quite a thrill when you see something for the first time and if you found it yourself, it is even better" (Peter, Andalucia). This sense of achievement is also mirrored by Linda (DWT):

"Seeing Albatross in flight from a boat just within a few feet of the coast of New Zealand South Island. Fantastic. It was one of the best experiences ever really. It was absolutely fabulous. Hundreds of them and six species and new to me because I had not done any southern hemisphere sea watch before (David, tour leader, Natural History Tours)".

And once again, significant recollections of wildlife were often experienced much closer to home:

"It was probably the first time I really saw kingfishers. Having found where they were nesting.....that was extraordinary because they are amazingly beautiful birds but watching them fishing and then taking it into their nest. You see them and then they dive out so quickly" (Penny, DWT).

"I was staying in Humberside and it was very quiet and lovely because it was all snowed off. It was wild and very beautiful there and I was walking through the middle of this lovely place and communing with nature thinking, as you do, that this is all wonderful and then I saw this weasel. I had never seen a weasel close to and it was only about as far as five feet away from me and he had a pigeon which was twice as big as he was and he was eating it. Every so often he would look up to check that there was nothing around threatening him and I was right beside him but he didn't notice me. I was just standing there like a tree looking at him and it was fascinating, I thought how many people have watched a weasel eat his dinner" (Dawn, Baja).

4.4.5 Spontaneity

Inherent in these latter extracts is the notion of 'the unexpected'. Rolston (1987) notes the spontaneity of wildlife, the possibility of surprise and appreciation for the moment and the idea that people are likely to highlight and remember the surprises of a trip. Coe (1985) also contemplates wildlife viewing from a more experiential perspective and notes the importance of drama and surprise. The surprise can stem from the fact that sightings of wildlife cannot usually be guaranteed. Therefore, the anticipation of potentially seeing something is almost as exciting as seeing it. For the generalist market, there are no prior expectations and therefore non-sightings do not always provoke disappointment. Besides where there is disappointment at not seeing a species the first time it can make it all the more special when at last it is encountered.

It was clear from the author's own experiences on tour and from her participant interviews that this element of surprise and spontaneity created the most exciting and memorable moments as these excerpts suggest:

"I hate to say it but unfortunately when you look for something really hard and you find it – it's great but in some ways it's less fun than just finding something which is purely unexpected" (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).

"When you see something that you don't expect it gives you that little tick. These things are probably more memorable because it is the element of surprise and luck" (Michael, DWT).

Surprise can be caused by two elements, a) either seeing wildlife where you would not expect to see them:

"We found some nesting Snow Buntings which were not supposed to be there. That was just so surprising" (Linda, DWT).

"We saw three storks going over our house the other day and we looked and looked at them, were they egrets, were they herons or Gannets? And then we realised what they were (Sophie, Baja).

And b) seeing things when you least expect to:

"In the Shetlands we went out in a boat to specifically see otters. But the one in Ireland was just pure chance. We were having an ice cream by the side of the river and I said to Tony that there was a rat going along the riverbank. Then the rat went into a sort of large drainage pipe and the rat must have disturbed the otter and the otter then came out. That was just pure chance. That was totally memorable. When it just happens. That's what you remember. Because it is so unexpected." (Rebecca, Andalucia).

The desire for spontaneity and authenticity is also reflected in the participants' general dislike of using tape recordings to flush out birds which is common practice on bird-watching tours. Bird calls are used to encourage birds to come out of hiding. There is some debate as to whether this is an acceptable modes operandi due to the disturbance and disruption to normal behaviour that it causes (Peters 2007; Curry *et al.* 2001) However, for most participants, it lacks spontaneity and is *"artificial, as the bird didn't come out on its own volition"* (Ian, Andalucia). *"It's a much more fulfilling experience when something comes to you naturally"* (Peter, Andalucia).

Finally, akin to the surprise element, there is something equally memorable about the excitement and anticipation of what you *might* see:

"I went to badger watch on the Isle of Wight. That was fantastic, you sort of get into the mood with them because you wait and wait for them to come out and you are so excited because you think you could do something that might frighten them away and there is such a lot of anticipation - a bit like we had with the whales really (Dawn, Baja)".

This anticipation of seeing something new is best exemplified by the author's travel journal as she describes the feelings of the tour group whilst tracking Lynx in Andalucia:

'As I join the group by the minibus, everyone is shivering with the cold and with the excitement of our forthcoming adventure. I ponder the often quoted relationship between wildlife tourism, adventure tourism and even hunting; the emotions they provoke being inextricably similar. Our journey takes us through the empty sandy streets of El Rocio before heading out to the Coto Donana National Park in our attempt to catch a glimpse of one of Europe's most endangered and elusive mammals - the Iberian Lynx. We are finally allowed to get out of our vehicle and we scour the sandy paths looking for signs of lynx. Two sets of tracks are spotted on the right hand side of the verge – probably the closest we will come today. They are very fresh and they represent a mother and her cub that have passed silently and unnoticed between the tourist buses. Just seeing these small imprints on the sand and feeling their nearby presence is deeply satisfying for everyone despite the illusiveness of the real thing. Focal species cannot be summoned to order; somehow this makes wildlife all the more special. Wildlife tourist satisfaction, it seems then, is not entirely dependent on actual sightings but the anticipation of what might be" (Travel diary, Andalucia). (See also Muloin (1998) and Montag et al. (2005)).

4.4.6 Mesmerised by 'the kill'

Linked to the notion of 'what might be' is the anticipation and excitement of witnessing the drama of survival which is played out in the wild. Montag et al. (2005) explain how wolf watchers who watch the taking of a Grizzly Bear cub noted a sad feeling for the death of an animal, but how the event made for an interesting and memorable experience. Indeed these scripts also reveal how kills or conflicts are depicted as memorable wildlife experiences:

"I watch as a skua harasses a Caspian Tern until it eventually drops its catch. Watching the tale of cat and mouse in nature in the raw is exciting; it makes you feel like holding your breath" (Travel diary, Baja).

"In the Antarctic there were these Leopard Seals who were quite cruel and calculating to watch. There were lots of penguins; hundreds of them, and this Leopard Seal would cruise up and down the shore line then every twenty minutes or so he would grab a poor penguin. And the way they kill them is awful. They smash them onto the surface of the sea until they explode and then they eat the remains and disappear again cruising the shoreline until the next one. It was quite upsetting to watch but at the same time fascinating too" (Sophie, Baja).

"I was with a group of friends in Kenya and there was a group of jackals and one of them put out for spring hare and we thought oops hard luck spring hare, but it just accelerated to about 60 miles an hour and suddenly it was way over there and the jackal was left wondering what happened. It's the sort of thing that you can't legislate for; neither were a particular spectacular animal or anything like that" (Michelle, Baja).

"We had a Sparrow hawk in our garden. I saw him on the terrace with a bird in its talons and there was the sort of brutality of it all. It was on the patio actually down on the ground with a chaffinch in its claws and that was nature in the raw and I still find that exciting even though of course it was horrible as well" (James, DWT).

4.4.7 Close proximity: one-to-one and eye-to-eye

Being close to such events can enhance the experience. The idea of close proximity to the wildlife has been identified as a key feature of the wildlife visitor experience. Duffus (1988) found that Orca whale watchers ranked close observation as the second most important aspect of their whale watch trip (see also Muloin 1998; Pearce and Wilson 1995). Similarly, Schanzel and McIntosh (2000) reveals that satisfaction stems from 'the closer the better' and the most frequently mentioned cause of dissatisfaction was not being able to get close enough. As Bulbeck (2005:101) discovered "closeness can be everything".

Whilst these studies were based upon mass market clientele rather than dedicated wildlife tourists, closeness appears equally attractive to this market. There are two possible reasons for this: one is the proliferation of wildlife documentaries which can be a mixed blessing for the wildlife tourism industry. On the one hand they generate demand, but on the other hand, close-up views of wildlife that they contain can lead to initial disappointment on tour. The other reason for desiring close encounters is human fascination for the animal other which renders close proximity a desired and highly memorable occurrence and this is one of the reasons why destinations such as the Galapagos Islands and the Falkland Islands are so appealing as they are places in the

world where the birds and animals, are not only uniquely special but are also approachable.

“Despite being on the tourist trail, the Galapagos is an amazing experience because the wildlife there is not affected, at the moment, by the number of people there. Because when you go down the track you’ve got your nesting Booby Birds in front of you or your sea lion which comes to say hello to you, or your iguana just laying there sunning itself and you have to step around it” (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).

“It was in the Falklands and we had seen all these penguins and yet one of the most memorable things was the South American Snipe which you can get very close to” (Linda, DWT).

Close proximity to wildlife never fails to excite on several counts first, *“because you get a better view” (Ian, Andalucia)* second, because *“it is just much more intimate. It’s more like an encounter then. It is quite remarkable when they come that close to you”. “It is almost like you are meeting them rather than just watching them. We are sharing their space and we are looking at each other and wondering (Dawn, Baja).*

And third, closeness allows for a totally unmediated view.

“One of my best wildlife moments since we lived here was a couple of summers ago. I went and sat out on the back lawn with a beer and while I was sitting there, a badger snuffled into the garden and he didn’t see me..... it was the closest I have ever been to a badger in the wild and it was just magical” (James, DWT).

James’ account is an example of a ‘one-to-one’ experience. This is the ultimate wildlife encounter espoused by programmes such as the BBC’s ‘Wild’ with free diver Tanya Streeter. Here there is no-one present but the respondent and the wildlife subject locked together in the most memorable of moments as Mark (Andalucia) exemplifies by his *“one-to-one view of a Serval in Africa; a moment a tour leader very rarely gets to enjoy”* and Joe (Baja) illustrates by his recollection of *“the magic of swimming alongside a turtle on the Great Barrier Reef”*. Clearly the one-to-one is most enjoyable when the focal animal is human-safe orientated. Lone incidents with a shark or a Grizzly Bear is a different category of experience; one which represents adventure and danger (Swarbrooke *et al.* 2003).

Whilst on tour, the author pondered the notion of “at-one-ment” liaisons (Ackerman 2003:917): *‘For me, getting up close is quite important; I like to share its space; be part of its existence.....I like to see its detail and its movements. It was a wonderful feeling to see the storks flying low overhead – definitely a special moment. With my bins, I was*

almost up there with them. The wonderful thing about binoculars is that they shut everything and everybody else out of the picture which is essentially what I like – just me and it” (Travel diary, Andalucia).

During such encounters, the most profound emotion, for many participants, is evoked when there is eye-to-eye contact. According to DeMares and Krycka (1998) one finds connection with another being when one sees oneself reflected in the other being's eyes. In this instant there is a notion of interaction as opposed to mere passive viewing:

“In the Falklands a Short-eared Owl spent two or three minutes just looking at us rather than us just looking at him which makes it more memorable. There is always something special about interaction with the wildlife rather than just you looking at it” (Linda, DWT).

“What I like and what I feel gives me a buzz is when they actually, in some way, communicate with me and it’s a bit like the Little Owl. I mean I got more fun when that Little Owl just turned and was watching us than seeing whatever it was... 30 or so Griffin Vultures” (Rebecca, Andalucia).

I can remember the first time I ever saw a Sparrow hawk in the garden. The thing I remembered the most was its eye. This staring eye....Its looking at me and I’m looking at him and we obviously know that we are not the same species that is looking at each other” (James, DWT).

“The things that I have felt have made an impression on me are things that have joined my world. I remember there was a Barn Owl. Tony and I were on our way home and this thing really came at us and then swooped up and you could really see it, a wonderful face and then you noticed it was a barn owl and it was absolutely superb. It didn’t threaten us or anything but it had obviously seen us and just wanted to check us out” (Rebecca, Andalucia).

“You often see whales and things like that when you are kayaking. Once there were two dolphins at the bow and that is quite something and I think that is interaction with the dolphins because they clearly are swimming around you and having a look at you, and that’s brilliant” (Linda, DWT).

Interaction with marine mammals is undoubtedly a memorable experience for many types of tourist (Curtin 2006; Cloke and Perkins 2005; Orams 1997b). The human-dolphin attraction and the desire for closeness and face to face interaction with marine mammals has instigated a growth in ‘swim-with’ tourist activities (Curtin and Garrod 2007; Curtin 2006). More often these are aimed at the mass market rather than small dedicated tour groups. However, due to popular request in Baja there was an opportunity to swim with

Californian Sea Lions which four of the tour group, including the author, participated in. The following is an extract from her travel journal which details elements of a close encounter:

'As I entered the water, I feel unexpectedly nervous. Sea lions are large and have teeth. It is with caution that I approach the area where they are. I am in the water for some time before one, then two, seals approach me. Their speed is astonishing. One minute they cannot be seen the next they are swimming around you in a figure of eight or coming straight at you to peer through your mask. I gain confidence but not enough to reach out to them. If I am honest I don't really want to touch them, just to share their space and marvel at them. One hangs in front of me, perfectly suspended in the water, looking at me cautiously in the eye; his nose almost pressed against my mask. This one-to-one and eye-to-eye contact is remarkably powerful as one feels the search for some mutual respect and understanding. Then it turns around me and is gone.....Back on the boat and sometime later, I ask Sophie what it was about swimming with Sea lions which was so fantastic. She thinks for a moment and said she was so glad that she had braved the cold water. It wasn't to be missed: "it takes you completely out of yourself". Yes, I agreed, so it does.

Cloke and Perkins (2005:916) would argue that this is an embodied experience and performance whereby the seals and the swimmers were key actors and where the seals "embodied the intimate immensity of nature". There is another overlooked element of embodiment with regards to wildlife tourism. Thrift (2001) refers to kinaesthesia, a heightened awareness of the relationship between the body and its environment. Indeed in such close proximity to wildlife the tourist becomes exceptionally aware of their own body in relation to the wildlife spectacle; particularly its spatial presence, its quietness and stillness. In some instances, there is a strong desire to make one's body merge into nature; to be invisible and unthreatening so as to maintain any close proximity and avoid disturbance.

This notion of kinaesthesia represents an important counter-argument which, for one respondent at least, raised an important issue: If an animal looks at you, it implies disturbance and therefore a change in 'normal, everyday' behaviour. As Dawn (Baja) puts it: *"in fact it's far nicer if they don't look at you. It's like children when they are playing together, you know, you are there but you are like a fly on the wall, you are not spoiling the atmosphere, and you can enjoy watching them play and just being themselves."* Avoiding disturbance is at the centre of wildlife tourism management policies and will be returned to in section 4.7.

Finally, close viewing and a feeling of intimacy is an important element of tourist satisfaction. However, large tour groups and organised, mass wildlife viewing can lack

intimacy, especially for the more discerning and dedicated wildlife viewer as David (tour leader, Natural History Tours) explains: *"we went whale watching in Kaikoura which for most people is very exciting, but for me, it didn't come close...we saw them and it was quite good but it was hardly that close and they weren't there for very long... but a lot of it was that we were on a much much bigger boat with a commentary from people who obviously did it six times a day. And they were kind of saying 'now you will get excited about this won't you' and I don't know..., I didn't.... whereas seeing the Albatross on a small rib - they were all around us and it was just magical; not so contrived. It's better on a much smaller boat."*

4.4.8 Numbers

In total contrast to the one-to-one or eye-to-eye experience, large numbers of one species or simply the opportunity to enjoy many new species in a short space of time evidently contributes to a memorable experience as these typical quotations illustrate:

"I think the most memorable things that come to mind are spectacular incidents when you see tens of thousands of birds all at one time like the knots I was telling you about at high tide or the tens and thousands of geese coming over (Ian, Andalucia).

"I think one of my most memorable moments was in the Shetlands where we went out in a boat and there were just so many birds; all around you. We were totally surrounded by sea-birds. It was absolutely incredible. You just felt so insignificant" (Rebecca, Andalucia).

"We were in the Aleutian Islands and within the space of five, maybe ten minutes I saw my first Orca, I hadn't seen one until then and it was absolutely thrilling. This huge thing that just came up and then, as I say, within ten minutes we saw a small group of Sea Eagle right up on the very top of some rocks nesting. Below it on other rocks there were sea lions and there was a Brown bear, again a first for me, climbing up over the nearby hillside. And to see all that was staggering. But I think the Orcas were absolutely amazing" (Matthew, DWT).

"At the Dijbe fish ponds in Poland we saw about 40 species of birds in about ten minutes!" (Simon, Andalucia).

There are, however, drawbacks to seeing a large number of new species in a short space of time. As the author alluded to earlier, it can make one rather blasé about the significance and privilege of what you are seeing, it can very quickly lead to an overload

of information; making identification, particularly of birds, very difficult to recall and, furthermore, it can develop high expectations for any future trips

4.4.9 The creation of interesting narratives

Whilst collecting participants' accounts of their wildlife encounters, the author could not help but notice the subtle slip into narrative. It seems that everyone likes to tell a good story and that as social animals ourselves, we enjoy listening to other people's stories. DeRuiter and Donnelly (2002:260) found that asking participants to describe a particular wildlife encounter "garnered lengthy responses" which were "ripe with passion, thrill and wonder". As these renditions unfold, it becomes very apparent that embodied wildlife encounters make for good story-telling and captivating narratives. According to Hunt *et al.* (1992) animal interactions encourage and stimulate conversations. This is an example of animals as "social lubricants" (1992:247) and was certainly evident whilst on tour and in conversation with participants who loved to relive and embellish their stories:

"I've ended up in some dingy places at the back of the industrial petro-chemical plant in Bergasse in Bulgaria is not the most salubrious place but then there's 1500 Great White Pelican roosts there so you have to put up with the smell of Butane gas....." (Simon, Andalucia).

"And I had been surfing for about twenty minutes when I suddenly realised that there were loads of Gannets just a little bit out from the shore bobbing the waves. Obviously the weather conditions had got a shoal of fish nearby and there must have been thirty or forty Gannets just diving into the sea and I was very very close to them and it was just thrilling. It really, really was thrilling because they are spectacular birds at the best of times and when they are all just piling into the sea like that dive-bombing and it really was the strongest sea I had ever been in and the undertow was quite strong too and there were times when I could barely stand on my feet. It was such a dramatic moment..." (James, DWT).

James' narrative illustrates how the embodied wildlife experience instigates a heightened response to the environment. There are some very interesting studies and discussions on embodied experiences of nature (Curtin 2006; Franklin 2003; Markwell 2001; DeMares and Krycka 1998; Patterson *et al.* 1998) which depict heightened experiences brought about by the forces of nature and the danger of the environment coupled with wildlife interactions, as Joe's story exemplifies:

"One of the most memorable moments was coming around a corner of a ledge about a 1000 feet up and meeting a golden eagle on the other side...almost eyeball to

eyeball...you know I couldn't take it all in, it was incredible just being so near such a large thing, you know and just around the corner. It has just left a good impression. There again I mean going along on your hands and knees along a precarious edge....with a very long drop....." (Joe, Baja).

The emotion and excitement which is felt at the time is communicated in a lively rendition of these memorable accounts. On tour and at home, animal encounters make good talking points.

4.4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the characteristics of memorable wildlife moments. It has attempted to give a broad overview of the breadth of possibilities experienced by this market. What has come to the fore is the recognition that the most memorable encounters are not always the most exotic; that the preference for charismatic fauna and flora lie in the eye of the beholder and that, although very well-travelled, many memorable moments are focused around endemic British species. There are however apparently universal attributes of the memorable encounter such as seeing something for the first time, the element of surprise, as one never knows what might be encountered, and the desire and joy experienced by being able to get up close to wildlife and the wonderment of seeing large numbers of one species. Finally there is a hint of the peak experience and the emotional and spiritual feelings of being 'in flow' which form the subject of the next chapter.

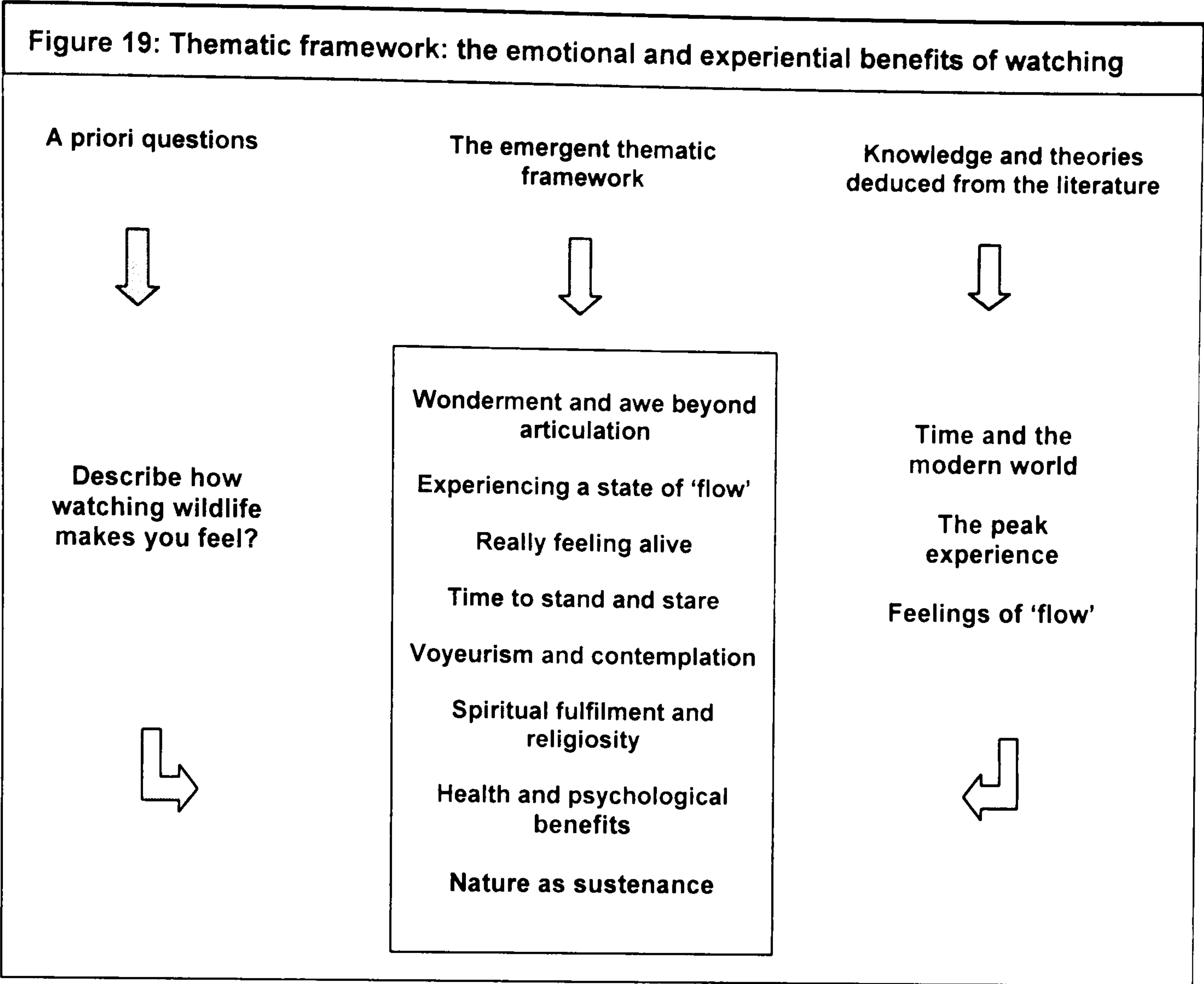
4.5 Wonderment, contemplation and 'flow'

4.5.1 Introduction

This chapter reflects the desire to understand the attraction and the emotion that wildlife encounters provoke. This is the crux of the thesis and possibly even the industry. Why do humans in developed societies, despite (or perhaps because of) their animal deficient existences go in search of wildlife experiences? In the design stage of the project, it appeared to be a straightforward *a priori* question. In the field, however, the complexities that comprise a wildlife experience can be difficult for participants to articulate and problematic for the researcher to capture. This was a frustrating scenario for the author whose own experience on tour touched some of the major themes that arose from the interviews: *"I feel frustrated that I, and my research, is failing to capture the feeling of what it is that makes these encounters so moving and appealing. Somehow it is beyond articulation; beyond words. Almost spiritual, not in a religious sense, but in a way that engages all your senses and makes you feel alive and part of this remarkable world. The difficulty is how best to explore these feelings"* (Travel diary, Baja).

Schroeder (1996) sees the hard-to-define aspects of such experiences in nature as part of their essence and their strength. A problem only arises when social scientists attempt to formulate these feelings into a conventional scientific concept because these 'deeper' emotions originate in a pre-conceptual, non-verbal domain of human experience. As such there may be no fixed set of conceptual dimensions or categories that can completely define or describe them. Thus, the scientific process, with its requirement for clear precise definitions and logical analysis, "may run counter to the very qualities that enable these emotions to function as they do in human experience" (1996:85).

With this in mind, the author took some comfort in other studies which had experienced similar difficulties; particularly Bulbeck (2005) and Modelmog (1998) who claim that the human relationship with nature is one of 'intimate communication': "there is an experience of nature whereof I cannot speak. I do not have the words" (1998:118). Moreover, it is one thing to collect the data but another to adequately articulate it as Cloke and Perkins (2005:914) affirm "the evidence they present is somewhat antithetical to the complexities involved in giving account of the emotional and visceral responses to the pleasures of wildlife tourism". Despite this difficulty in articulating and presenting such 'psychologically deep experiences' (Mannell 1996), several themes emerged, predominantly a sense of wonderment, the changing concept of time, contemplation, and finally the spiritual, emotional and physical benefits of wildlife watching. Figure 19 displays these multiple complexities.



(Source: Author)

4.5.2 Wonderment and awe

Given the combination of wildlife spectacle and setting, a sense of wonderment and awe is a principal theme to arise from the transcripts. Wonderment is an aroused state of cognition whereby wildlife tourists marvel at the magnificence of the objects of their gaze. This simple singular definition, however, does not adequately cover the depth of expression. Instead, there are several perspectives of 'wonderment':

First, there is the emotional response of awe, wonder and a sense of privilege:

"It's like those Frigate Birds, they were so graceful and such beautiful movements and everything and I know they kill things and all that but that's not the point, you know, it's just beautiful and how graceful and elegant and all of that, you can admire. And I think in a way, it is like, you know, seeing an artist or somebody that does something that you can't do or can't do very well. You look at it and you think isn't that clever, isn't that wonderful what they do" (Dawn, Baja).

"I loved watching the hundreds of seabirds which would follow the boat in the Antarctic, there were albatross, skuas, gulls, petrels, hundreds of them and I used to stand at the

back of the boat, I could watch them for hours it was like a ballet. So beautiful” (Sophie, Baja).

Secondly, there is the cognitive wonder of nature's design:

“When I am looking out the window I can see birds on the bird table and just every day it's a thrill to contemplate the way they are made, the way their feathers are, the subtlety of their colours. I feel a sense of amazement about them. Because the very fact that they can fly is amazing, it is something that human beings can't do. So you see a bird and you think well what an exquisite piece of engineering and of dynamics and physics and its just fantastic the way they fly so well. They have character you see. So all this, for me, builds up a pattern of an infinitely varied world” (James, DWT).

“The odder is it the more sort of amazement I feel. I don't know, it is so difficult to explain, you know I am quite happy...I mean I have stayed in a rock pool and people think that you are mad laying in there with your face in the water just sort of watching things. I just like the 'totality'. I mean anything is interesting even just watching a trail of ants building towers is interesting...why they avoid each other on the paths and all the sniffing... they evoke a childish sense of wonderment” (Joe, Baja)..

“It is the sheer diversity, the colours, the shapes and the fact that it is there at all. It also makes you question things such as why are they here and where has it all come from, is it evolution or is there a creator. I do think that the notion of intelligent design¹ is rubbish but it does make you stop and think about it and also our part in it. Where do we belong? Because we are part of it too” (Anne - Baja).

Finally, the wonderment of unlocking immanent connections to nature.

“Just the absolute wonder of it, the beauty of it, that's about all you can say, you know, it's just there and it seems so fundamental to everything, you know, we are part of it and it's wonderful to see that these things exist and the wonder of it all stays with you” (Joe, Baja).

4.5.2.1 Wonderment beyond words

When asked to describe how it made them feel, participants found it incredibly difficult to respond. Their embodied experience and subsequent emotions appear to remain on the

¹ Intelligent Design (or ID) is a highly controversial claim holding that certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent designer, rather than an undirected process such as natural selection. Most ID advocates state that their focus is on detecting evidence of design in nature, without regard to who or what the designer might be.

edge of speech. Only a handful of participants could take the researcher beyond that edge. For the most part responses had a tendency to rely on familiar words and phrases:

"Its just, you know, there are moments when you just hit a vein of birding where you think – wow – you know it is something which it explodes into your memory. It's exciting, it's amazing. Like today when we were on the beach and we had hoards of raptors coming over – yeah – its just one of those experiences" (Simon, Andalucia).

"I was going to say elatedthen sort of excited" (Penny, DWT).

"It's thrilling" (Matthew, DWT).

"Amazed.. I've seen it at last! Excited actually I think, yes. You sort of stand still, can't believe that you have seen it in the wild rather than in the zoo or somewhere else" (Penny, DWT).

"I guess I enjoy it mainly because it's beautiful, it's fascinating. I mean it's all the obvious things really. I don't know that I can't tell you any more than that really (David, tour leader, Natural History Tours).

"I find it exciting, it's exciting, it's thrilling, I find it exhilarating. I can't say anymore than that, I can't find the words; it's like communicating again; well it's like communing rather than communicating with nature isn't it? It's communing with nature really" (Dawn, Baja).

Rather than seeing this as deficiency, Bulbeck (2005:xix) concludes that "some things about contact with animals cannot be said: those things which are not about the 'I reflected in their 'eyes', but which are indeed about an indescribable, mysterious, deliriously pleasurable other". Thrift (2000:36) reminds us that that "95 per cent of embodied thought is non-cognitive, yet academic attention merely concentrates on the cognitive dimension of the conscious 'I'" which ignores the embodied dispositions, or instinctive responses, which are biologically wired. Therefore much of human-life is lived in a non-cognitive world. If there is any grain of significance in the biophilia hypothesis (Kellert and Wilson 1993) where affinity for all life is an innate human trait, and if Coveney and Highfield (1991) and Hawking (1988) are correct in their belief that human time is not merely the time between birth and death but should be extended to include the entire evolutionary history of the human species, then perhaps it is no wonder that the human - wildlife encounter is beyond words; emotion and 'hard-wired' instinct and connectivity become the only language of the moment and this language is hard to convey to others. Indeed Tanya's response expresses this well:

"It's that precious moment and I know that people go 'oh wow - isn't it fantastic' and we all do that and we did that yesterday but it doesn't describe it, I mean words just....like when I get home and email my friends and my family about the trip there is no way that I can explain so I just say that there are no words to describe what the whales were like. It is sort of a feeling that you have.... a kind of real sense of wellbeing and positive rush of, you don't know it, but you maybe really really happy and they just do what comes naturally but for us human beings, or some of us, it is a very intense experience" (Tanya, Baja).

Words fall very short when talking about wildlife experiences which is potentially why so little work has been done in the human-animal interaction. The 'magic' of the experience can be knowable but is unable to be described in words, much less measured and quantified in a 'scientific' way. This makes 'Third Force' psychologies difficult to explore as verbal output is a major means by which social scientists explore human thoughts and feelings (Schroeder 1996).

Nevertheless, there has been some pioneering work in this field of humanistic, existential school of psychology. Chawla (2002) attempts to understand the magical form of consciousness characterised by the "silent intuition" of the union of self and other, individual and world; this 'at-one-ness' with nature. Others have attempted to explain this silent process based upon the work of Maslow (1964:73) and his notion of 'peak experience' which he describes as "moments of highest happiness and fulfilment" in which an individual might feel: "disorientation in space and time, ego transcendence and self-forgetfulness and a perception that the world is good, beautiful and desirable: feeling passive, receptive and humble and a sense that polarities and dichotomies have been transcended or resolved: and feelings of being lucky, fortunate or graced" (Keltner and Haidt 2003:302). The occurrence of these experiences is seen to both reflect optimal cognitive and emotional functioning and to be important to the well-being of the individual.

These feelings are explicitly represented in many of the *in vivo* responses quoted in this chapter thereby giving further credence to the few studies that assert that 'peak aesthetic experiences' are often "achieved through the nature experience" (Mannell 1996:407; Chenoweth and Gobster 1990) and more specifically with human-animal encounters (Curtin and Wilkes 2007; Curtin 2006; DeMares and Krycka 1998; Wilson 1984; Laski 1968). These peak experiences can be linked to cathartic experiences which can make the participant's everyday problems temporarily diminish. They are generally very brief and momentary, some can be life-changing; others are merely inspirational and humbling:

"Seeing a beautiful bird is a moment of beauty, a moment of insight, a moment of revelation and inspiration, whatever and its gone sometimes in a flash, like a moment of music which makes you shudder and then its over" (James, DWT).

During the fieldwork the author noted that there were several points on tour that would fit the notion of a peak experience: *"I will remember the feeling of swimming with these sea lions for ever; not necessary as a highlight of my life but a significant experience for which I feel very privileged" (Dawn, Baja).* Similar feelings were provoked in the author by *"the humpback whale who breached no less than thirteen times right next to the boat, the grey whales in courtship, the close proximity of the humming bird feeding from the cactus flower and seeing the tracks of the Iberian lynx and her cubs in Andalucia" (Travel diary, Baja).*

According to Mabey (2005) these feelings have been the subject of much art and literature throughout history. For example, Wordsworth's poetry is famous for describing a strong felt connection between people and nature. Nature is a window opening into a deeper, universal experience with spiritual significance. Beyond the material connections that exist between parts of nature such as the wildlife and its habitat, Wordsworth points to a higher, less readily touched connection which is felt at sudden unpredictable moments and cannot be conveyed in words.

4.5.3 Experiencing 'flow'

In the human experience of these unpredictable moments, there is a distinct kinship between Maslow's peak experience and the theory of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi 1968). While sharing a common heritage with Maslow, Csikszentmihalyi believed that Maslow had left too many unanswered questions particularly as to whether *any* activity could generate a 'peak experience' and whether all peak experiences felt the same. What were the qualities of this highly subjective experience? In essence it is the complete involvement of the actor with his activity. For Csikszentmihalyi (1988:35) the concept of 'flow' was "very important for understanding the strivings of the self and the quality of individual well-being".

The theory of flow has been pivotal in research of wilderness experiences in North America (Priest and Bunting 1993; Mannell *et al.* 1988). It is a particularly apt model with regards to wildlife tourism as clearly seeing wildlife in its natural setting has the remarkable power to uplift the human spirit. Simply being in its presence can evoke feelings of profound happiness in which is incorporated all the identified elements of the human emotional peak: intention, reciprocity, connectedness, aliveness and harmony. In this state of consciousness where the passage of time is distorted and participants are

totally absorbed in their activity and the moment Csikszentmihalyi (1990) would suggest that they have entered a state of 'flow' where the awareness of self, particularly the ego, falls away and thoughts and skills can run freely and creatively. These are the "best moments of our lives" (1990:3) bestowing great satisfaction. In this reprieve from everyday reality dwells a still, calm and focussed existence bound in the present. Concentrating on the wildlife and using carefully developed skills to track, spot and identify fits this theory of 'flow':

"We were just focussed on the wildlife. Nothing else" (Carol, DWT).

"I think that that is one of the advantages of bird-watching, you are concentrating on what you are doing and if you are walking along, things can go through your head as you walk. Its one of these activities like climbing, you can't actually think about other things especially if you are trying to identify them" (Linda, DWT).

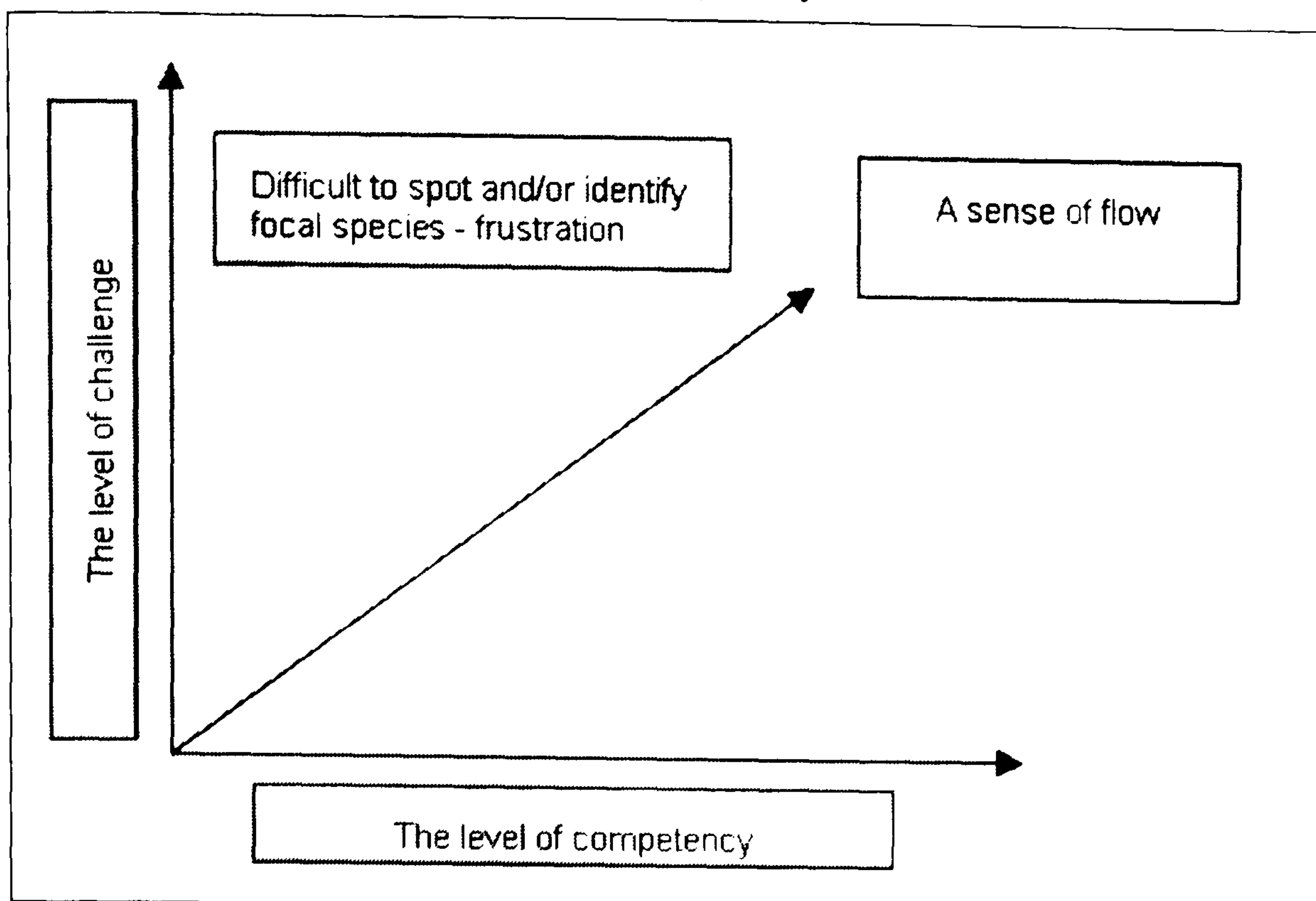
Moreover there was evidence of a much 'deeper' experience where the feelings of flow allowed the participant to go into an altered state; to enter and to belong to the 'orchestra of nature'.

"The sea, the colours I find, you know the thrashing of the waves and that, I can get involved in that; it is like a sort of music and I think that the whales are part of that sort of music; part of the theme of life really. The whole. Again I was sort of saying about ecology, it all works in like a cycle; it all works together. It is not just one thing, it is everything and its almost like music" (Dawn, Baja)

"It's a long time since I felt so happy, relaxed and fulfilled" (Marie, Baja).

According to Mannell (1980) 'flow' differs from peak experience in several ways, it recognises that the experience need not be an 'all-or-none' experience and that the degree of flow can vary from modest involvement to intense peak-like involvement. However flow can only occur when the level of challenge inherent in the activity does not greatly exceed a person's competence. If their competence falls short of the challenge then frustration can invade the sense of total fulfilment. Figure 20 indicates how 'flow' is often conveyed as well as the fine line between frustration and flow.

Figure 20: Concept of 'flow': challenge v competency



Adapted from Csikszentmihalyi (1975)

The level of challenge can overcome a tourist's competency in the field particularly when trying to spot or identify species (see for example the discussion in Section 4.3) and this was witnessed occasionally on tour when the more novice participants struggled to scope wildlife or mis-identified it. Nonetheless for the most part the wonder of the landscape, the wildlife, and the 'at-one-ment' with nature win over the moment.

4.5.4 Really feeling alive

Such engagement with nature can be an epiphany of self-realisation. As noted by Bulbeck (2005), people can have intense emotional and sensual responses to the natural environment. They feel very much in touch with both themselves and with the world around them which provokes an intense feeling of delight. Writing of such feelings of well-being Diener (1992:4) claims that they invoke a global assessment rather than simply a "narrow assessment of a one-life domain". This opening up is portrayed by Marie (Baja) who reiterates at the airport on the way home that: *"by the end of this week I have seen and heard things in the natural world that I didn't know even existed. It was as if my senses were coming alive and it was so exciting to discover so much"*.

Clearly it is the gaze that begins this journey of fusion and synthesis with the natural world. Lefebvre (1991:286) claims that "the hegemonic role of visibility overwhelms the whole body and usurps its role", but whilst the visual 'spectacle' is at the centre of the wildlife experience, it is by no means the only sense that is involved. Instead there are olfactory experiences such as the smell of the whales' blow, the pungent smell of a bat

colony or the cloying smell of guano; all of which are experienced in a unique soundscape; thus the experience is a heightened, multi-sensory one.

According to Bacon (1996:311) experiencing all the various senses allows the individual to enter an 'aesthetic mode'. For the aesthetic mode to occur a psychological distancing from the routines of everyday life is necessary. Being immersed in watching wildlife helps the facilitation of this distancing process: as this exert from the author's travel diary from Magdalena Bay exemplifies:

'How many times in a lifetime does one experience nature at work like this? There are blows all in front of the bow, right out to mid-horizon. A rough estimate is 30-35 Grey whales. We could hear and smell their breaths. The synchronicity of the whales is beyond all comprehension. One minute we are looking at all the blows, the next flukes, and the next they are all gone as they dive and surface in time with each other despite the fact that they are spread over such a large area. I feel very relaxed and at awe with everything: one of those truly happy moments when you are totally unconcerned with the trivia. Perhaps this is Wang's (1999) existential authenticity: a feeling of being really alive, of being connected. There is a palpable atmosphere of happiness and utter contentment amongst the tour group' (Travel diary, Baja).

These feelings of euphoria are also represented in other wildlife tourism settings and in nature itself. Seeing beautiful flora and fauna *"makes me smile, it makes me jump up and down. It just gives you great pleasure really. When you get close to something there are so many other senses that come in to play, then they have the excitement and experience and you realise just how real it all is"* (David, tour leader, Natural History Tours).

"Well it's really exciting – I like – well you get a rush of adrenalin" (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).

"You can literally be jumping up and down with glee - it doesn't happen very often that sort of thing, but you can get it, definitely thinks like rainbows and stuff like that. Certainly nature is all round you; it makes you peaceful" (Linda, DWT).

4.5.5 Time to stand and stare

Price (1999:252) suggests that "nature is a 'refuge from modern life; a reprieve from irony and self-awareness". It is akin to stepping outside of everyday trivia and into a different world, a more real world where there is a natural rhythm to events rather than a rhythm dictated by artificial time constraints and socialisation. Therefore, human experience of

nature and wildlife are not only spatial events but also temporal ones too. In the liminoid, embodied space of the nature and wildlife encounter, socially constructed, modern fast time dissipates and is replaced by still life and motionless time; bringing participants back in touch with nature's slow, 'glacial' rhythms: real time as opposed to clock-time (Thrift 2001; Gell 1992). Bergson (1991) observes time and body, and suggests that people do not so much think 'real time' but actually live it sensuously and qualitatively.

The philosophy of time is a complex and difficult subject to comprehend. Unlike space, time is invisible to our senses and our understanding of it is always mediated. Durkheim (1968) argues that time is a social institution; that our understanding of time is a social construct which is different from and opposed to the time(s) of nature. More modern thinking, however, sees this assumption as outdated in that the social sciences have failed to take account of developments in the natural sciences. Adam argues that "a comprehensive understanding of time is not possible from a position where nature and society are treated as separate; human society as nature is the basis from which to understand the multiplicity of times" (1988:205). Macnaghten and Urry (1998) suggest that humans and other animals are not just affected by clock time but are affected by multiple rhythms. Nature is intrinsically temporal and there are many different times in nature. Hawking (1988:33) summarises that "there is no 'one' time, only 'times' as there is no unique absolute time. Instead each individual has his own personal measure of time that depends on where he is and how he is moving in the universe".

In Western societies, normal day-to-day time is conceptualised as linear where time is taken to be an infinite succession of instants each identifiable before and after. McTaggart (1927) refers to this as the B-Theory of time. Events are seen as separate from each other: *y* is after *x* and before *z*. This understanding of time can be distinguished from the A-Theory which is the sense of time as understood by the 'past-present-future', where past events are retained within the present and carried forward into the future (McTaggart 1927). In this concept, there is only the present which is comprised of the memory and experience of the past and the anticipation and expectation of the future. In B-Theory the present is merely a knife-edge, whereas in the A-Theory, the present is much longer and more significant. Therefore, the A-Theory of time is arguably more akin to a cyclical concept of time similar to the cycles in nature (i.e. the seasons, night and day, biological life-cycles) whilst the B-Theory is an imposed concept of time driven by society and economy.

Macy (1993:206) refers to current time as being "like an ever-shrinking box, in which we race on a treadmill at increasingly frenetic speeds which allows us only the briefest experience of time". Eriksen (2001:148) agrees that "a fragmented and rushed temporality is typical of a growing majority of the population in rich countries" and that this acceleration of time affects the production of knowledge and the very mode of thought in

a contemporary culture which is dominated by high speed information and technology. According to Macnaghten and Urry (1998) this compression of time involves an increased pace of change and ephemerality whereby products, places and people go rapidly in and out of fashion. Moreover, time-saving devices such as the computer end up costing rather than saving time as work and leisure time is blurred (Eriksen 2001). Efficiency is the only value in economics, politics and research and “when fast and slow time meet, fast time wins” (2001:150). Slow time, when we can reconnect with significant others and enjoy the world around us, is our most precious yet scarcest commodity which leads modern, industrial societies to conceptualise time as a resource.

It is interesting that despite the promise of a new leisure class, the spirit of capitalism and the discipline of the Protestant work ethic is still engrained in modern societies: “where waste of time is thus the deadliest of sins. Loss of time through sociability, idle talk and luxury, even more sleep than is necessary to health.... is worthy of absolute moral condemnation” (Weber 1930:158).

Macnaghten and Urry (1998) contend that time is rarely analysed in relation to pleasure and even less so in our experience of nature. Lefebvre (1991) maintains that with modernity, lived time, experienced in and through nature, gradually disappears. Perhaps it is no wonder given the pressures of everyday life and the often overwhelming economic wheel that feeds modern consumerism that the demand for wildlife and nature-based travel experiences has escalated as it momentarily allows the human spirit to re-engage with nature and escape the stresses of modern living. As Krippendorf (1987) asks us to consider: do holidays represent the ‘time of your life’ or more significantly ‘time for your life’?

The above debate has frequent resonance with participants’ experiences:

“I mean this is one of the tragedies of modern life, all the things that we’ve got that are supposed to save us time like the computers and the dishwashers and all the rest of it actually don’t because the time we save is then filled with something else and the world has lost, well the Western world has lost the ability to stand still and look. You know what is that Wordsworth poem? ‘What is this world if full of care I have no time to stand and stare’ and that’s right, people have lost the ability to stop and contemplate” (James, DWT).

Clearly, one of the joys of wildlife watching is that it provides this time to stand and stare. As Figure 21 illustrates the experience has extraordinary and multiple effects on time: *“I think time stops. You are so absorbed in what you are doing” (Penny, DWT).*

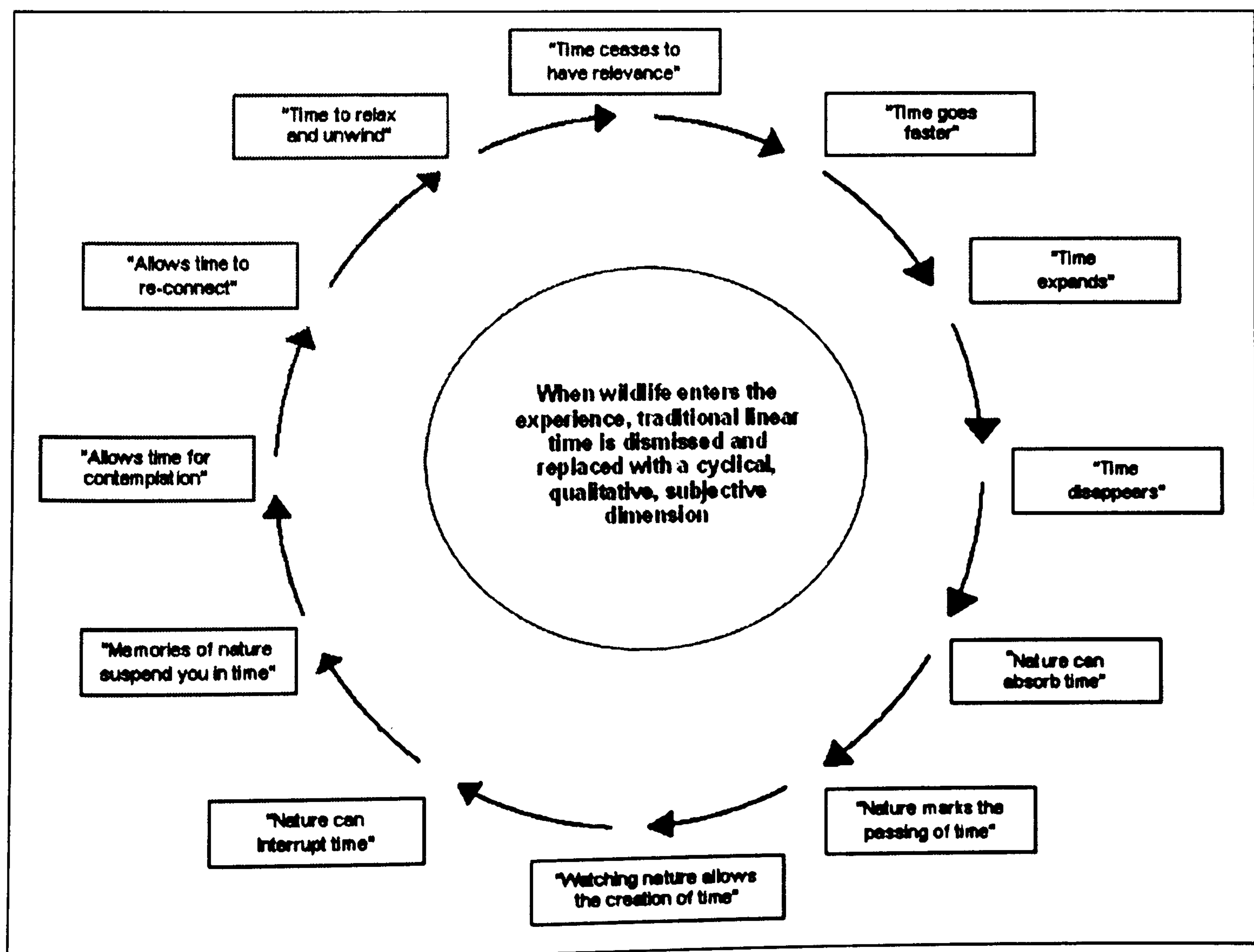
"Time expands. Definitely. I'm amazed at how it goes so quickly and that...I think it is because you are totally absorbed in what you are looking at. Everything else is blocked out. It's like watching the birds here on the feeders in my garden, half-an hour goes in a trice" (Sophie, Baja).

"You are just quiet for that minute you know. You just stand still don't you, well I do anyway. Time stops" (Linda, DWT). "You're so busy in what you are doing, you're not thinking about anything and the time just disappears" (Marie, Baja).

"Time goes a lot faster than you anticipate. Yes you are not sort of looking at your watch all the time. Uhm.. well...that's not always true. If it's a cold windy day and you are sitting there waiting with a telescope for something to happen and a certain bird to appear.. but even so usually it doesn't matter" (Linda, DWT).

"I think as a bird-watcher you have got to learn to be patient. Therefore time needs to cease to have the pressure that it normally has. It is quite good for me to watch the birds because it's a time in the day when I don't just dash on to the next thing" (James, DWT).

Figure 21: Wildlife watching and the multiple dimensions of time



(Source: Author)

Therefore time has several key dimensions to the wildlife experience as Figure 21 demonstrates. Nature can fill in time and make it special as Rebecca (Andalucia) explains: *"I don't start work now until 9.30am. 9.30am is the earliest and that is a very precious time as Tony goes off about 8.30am. All your life this has been a very busy time. Get them to school, do this and that. Now it feels like I've got lots of time; this lovely time. I fill up the bird feeders, do the water in the bird bath, make another cup of tea and sit and watch the birds before I go to work"*.

Wildlife and nature also mark the passing of time: *"There's a lovely part where I cycle over the bridge by the river. Its somewhere that I've always remembered: a whole avenue of horse chestnut trees and I love watching them change, first sign of autumn, first flowers, first conquers. It's quite interesting how conscious I am of them and how connected I feel to them. It's like the first birds to sing in the morning and the first swallows to arrive in spring"* (Rebecca, Andalucia).

Furthermore, it can allow the creation of time: *"And my wildlife does that for me, it has got that element to it: contemplation and just stepping out of the rat race and the spiral of time for a few moments and allowing you time to just float free will"* (Ian, Andalucia).

"So much of our lives we are controlled by something, albeit a timetable, a job, a pay packet, a deadline to meet, a family wanting something done for them. When you are there all those things sort of disappear. I mean most of the time I am by the coast I am either off duty or on holiday so for example I probably wouldn't even have a watch on because you don't need to worry what the time is. So it just all adds to this feeling of not being trapped and not being controlled because you are in a very open and free relaxing place: it just seems to cut across all the ordered things that we have in daily existence" (James, DWT).

Finally, time is reflected in the length of the sighting. *"Nature is very fleeting it can be just the flash of a wing, the ripple of the surface of the water when a fish comes to the surface and instantly it has gone whatever it may be and so a lot of nature's encounters are very brief. That's why if you can actually get the more lasting sighting you are very lucky because you don't get that very often. A fox running out in front of you or a stoat in the undergrowth by their very nature they are very very quick sightings"* (James, DWT)

Given the tiny slice of human experience which is situated in the cognitive domain Norretranders (1998:128) argues that much cognitive thought and knowledge may, indeed, be only a kind of post-hoc rumination: *"to be aware of a (fleeting wildlife) experience means that it has already passed"*. This post-hoc realisation sometimes leads

the wildlife tourist to want to suspend the moment due to the intense pleasure of watching something special: *"wildlife is always so fleeting. I want to suspend these moments in time but I can't! Stop the clocks!"* (Sophie, Baja).

Tourists themselves can appear suspended in time especially after a spectacular encounter. This was exemplified on the boat when the tour group watched a group of humpback whales who had repeatedly breached themselves right in front of the bows: *'As the ship's bell rung for lunch we obediently responded like Pavlov's dogs. However, whilst we were there in person, our spirits were still with the whales. It was like we were still suspended in the action we had just witnessed. Our eyes naturally drifted towards the horizon visible from the dining area; scanning, not wanting to miss out'* (Travel diary, Baja).

Therefore in this 'go-faster, future-orientated' world, wildlife can make us stop and take a breath before moving on to the next pressing task. Thrift (2001) calls this "still life in nearly present time" and Gell (1992:69) refers to it as the 'motionless present'. Here is a space in time which allows observation and contemplation.

4.5.6 Voyeurism and contemplation

Whilst the preceding discussion asserts that seeing wildlife can provoke a feeling of connectedness with the whole of nature, there is a fine theoretical distinction between being a spectator and being a participant, and the definition along this continuum varies according to the respondent. For most, however, wildlife watching is situated more towards observation and spectacle: 'you are of their world but not in it' and of 'seeing them in their world, not our world' (Montag *et al.* 2005). This is principally apparent when the wildlife is active as opposed to passive, i.e. when it is in pursuit of prey, when it is in courtship or rearing young. Such observations provide a platform for contemplation of the human 'other' and the human condition:

"There is an element of creation which is brutal and when a Sparrow hawk flies through the garden, its thrilling and exciting but you also know that probably at least one small bird has copped it and so that there is that tragic side to it as well which is a mirror of our life as well. I mean our life can be happy and tragic all at the same time and I don't understand why that can be" (James, DWT).

"Whilst the emotional thrill of seeing a glimpse of wildlife doesn't last, the memory does. I think that moments of insight in our lives are part of the human condition but they don't last long either" (Ian, Andalucia).

Richard Mabey (2003), a popular nature correspondent, also explains this particularly well. He claims: “an honest experience of nature would find that the natural world is an arena of endurance, tragedy and sacrifice as much as joy and uplift. It is about the struggle against the weather, the perils of migration, the ceaseless vigilance against predators, the loss of whole families and the brevity of existence. The natural world is like a theatre, a stage beyond our own, in which the dramas that are an irreducible part of being alive are played out without hatred or envy or hypocrisy. No wonder they tell us so much about ourselves and our own frailties” (2006:13).

The same theatrical analogy is present in several of the participant transcripts and has appeared in some of their excerpts. Words such as theatre, arena, orchestra, music, stage and ballet are frequently voiced. In witnessing the life of animals, participants can not help but compare and contrast their own experience of life and death. Montag *et al.* (2005) conclude that the contemplation comes from not just seeing wildlife but from being able to witness real life dramas and behaviours:

“I suppose one is first attracted by the colours and the calls but I am particularly interested in bird behaviour; that intrigues me more. I think it's because of their social lives and organisations” (Matthew, DWT).

There is also a spatial element to the notion of spectatorship. An encounter with a wild animal suggests more of a meeting, of being in a shared space with both animal and human being acutely aware of one another (see the discussion in Section 4.4 on eye to eye contact). Rolston (1987) suggests that wildlife is a source of fascination because they are spontaneous and a window of life that can be looked in to and from which something looks out. This is more akin to participation. In direct contrast, watching through binoculars or a telescope from afar is more analogous to being an observer or spectator and therefore has voyeuristic connotations.

Despite the difference in setting, this voyeurism has some common characteristics with the notion of the ‘urban flâneur’, so immortalised by Baudelaire who was describing the movement of population from country to town. The flâneur seeks to immerse himself in the crowd and wallow in its rush of sensory information, but even so experiences a sense of not quite belonging; of being an onlooker. Wildlife tourists have a similar voyeuristic experience in that they themselves are out of their ‘normal’ environment and context. Whether they are on the icecaps, on the savannah, in the rainforest, or in the ocean, tourists do not belong in that environment; they can only be onlookers as they pass through the various habitats. Therefore they become a ‘flâneur au nature’; in the scene but not part of it. Rather than reduce the experience, this voyeurism can provoke deep contemplation.

"You know, you are there but you are like a fly on the wall, you are not spoiling the atmosphere, and you can enjoy watching them be themselves and it makes you think...." (Dawn, Baja).

"The more mature you get the bigger that sphere becomes until you appreciate that it is a great world and everything is interdependent and everything is worth considering and trying to understand" (Ian, Andalucia).

On tour, the feeling of being a 'flâneur au nature' is exemplified when three whales engrossed in a courtship dance made their presence felt right next to the skiff. The author's travel diary details the scene and the responses of the tour group which encapsulates much of the discussion explored in this section:

'The boat engines cut and there is total silence. The sense of privilege at this is totally overwhelming. You feel so close to nature, yet there is a profound sense of voyeurism. These animals are courting and mating and I feel like I am imposing; walking in on a romance. Everyone is completely silent and still, and totally mesmerized by the scene; their silence adding to the intensity of the atmosphere and experience'.

'As the whales make long, loud exhalations, all your senses are alive and you feel totally absorbed in this moment and place. Time has no perspective, no meaning and no relevance; all of the petty everyday concerns, such as being cold or wet, are once more washed away by events. We watch in awe as one whale breaks free from this courtship; presumably satiated, and breaches once, then twice more. As their story is enacted in front of our eyes, the ocean becomes a theatre and we their audience' (Travel diary, Baja).

Kaplan (1993) asserts that although snapshot experiences of beautiful landscapes can temporarily lift one's moods, extended dialogues with wildlife like the one above can restore one psychologically and allow opportunities for inner contemplation and change. The deepest and strongest attachments between people and natural occurrences gives rise to spiritual experiences in which people feel a sense of connection with a larger reality that helps gives meaning to their own lives (Schroeder 1996). Frankl (1962, 1997) suggests that meaning in leisure lies in four dimensions, physical, mental, social and existential or spiritual.

4.5.7 Spiritual fulfilment and religiosity

Moments like these are common on an intensive wildlife tour and clearly they do have a spiritual component in that they never fail to stir the spectator's spirit. This ability of

natural settings to provide spiritual experiences has long been recognized as a leisure benefit (Mannell 1996). Whilst the term 'spiritual' has religious connotations, its meaning in this context is how nature and particularly seeing wildlife affects the participants' 'spirit', i.e. the vital principle or animating force and fundamental emotion within them. Spiritual needs and experiences have received little empirical attention in the nature-based leisure and tourism literature (Mannell 1996; McDonald and Schreyer 1991). Bulbeck (2005:xxii) is critical of the lack of spiritualistic orientation in the biophilia schema (Kellert and Wilson 1993), especially she says, "given the search for meaning by many (mainly white and middle class) members of Western society". However, the spiritual components of wildlife watching are once again, difficult to explore and articulate. When the subject was posited in the conversation with participants, it inspired either extreme brevity or the occasional lengthy introspection:

"I'm not a terribly spiritual person but I live my life on the principle that happiness is lots of little things and so it is the same on a wildlife tours; it's all the little unexpected wonderful things that can happen and yes it does make you feel privileged and happy and I suppose uplifted" (Michelle, Baja).

"It is spiritually uplifting as I say you always feel better for it somehow. I'm not particularly religious but it does make you feel the wonderment of it all and all the colours and the shapes are enriching. As I said I couldn't live without it. After a busy day or stressful day at work, it's wonderful to work out in your garden and just unwind. Just touching the soil and being actively involved in doing something outdoors in nature lifts you" (Sophie, Baja).

"The best spiritual moments are the ones you are least expecting when you think you are being quite calm and serene and you have a moment of revelation. Seeing wildlife is like that. It has the ability to break into your day completely unannounced; that is completely important to me and it's just utterly thrilling when that happens. And it could be anything. In the middle of the night for example, you are fast asleep and occasionally there is a Tawny Owl who sits outside our window hooting and suddenly you are awake. 'Why am I awake? Oh that owl is there...and that has just burst into the middle of your night's sleep and you don't begrudge it because it is lovely; it's uplifting" (James, DWT).

Questions regarding nature as a source of spirituality also prompted discussions of religion. Inglehart (1990) proposes a shift away from traditional religious values centred around organised religion to values focused on the natural world. Indeed the following quotations suggest that the beauty and diversity of the animal kingdom and its habitat provoke deep contemplation regarding creation and the question of whether there is a God:

"You know it does give you very much like a spiritual sense of this just didn't happen by itself. There is some force, something whether you call it god or whatever you call it, but it just didn't happen by chance...I don't know how many millions and millions of year you are talking about but there is something that is beyond our understanding" (Tanya, Baja).

"Well, I think I see a certain, strong evidence of a loving creator in the beauty of the things" (James, DWT).

"I was looking at that humming bird and thinking isn't that marvellous. I believe that all creatures were created by God as well and I think that that is also part of us. You know that we are all created by God and we can appreciate one another and everything" (Dawn, Baja).

Therefore, whilst psychologically deep experiences with wildlife and nature can be thought of as predominantly secular experiences, they may have religious overtones and be associated with religious experience for some people (Mannell 1996).

4.5.8 Psychological and other health benefits

Given the evidence that wildlife watching allows time for contemplation, is spiritually uplifting and emotionally and sensually absorbing, it follows that there are possible psychological and other health benefits to having access to natural environments and particularly wildlife. There are two different categories of wildlife encounter discussed by the participants; the out of the ordinary ones experienced on tour and the day-to-day wildlife encounters which are experienced much closer to home. In the former, it is difficult to proclaim psychological benefits as the 'being on holiday' environment itself can be regenerating. However, there is an important message in the latter type of encounter as it is evidence that sharing our world with abundant flora and fauna enhances our day-to-day well-being and happiness which in turn has significant psychological and other health benefits. From the basic: *"it cheers me up"* (Peter, Andalucia) to the mere uplifting of spirit: *"There are times when I'm feeling grey and down and low. A chance encounter or a chance spotting can just bring a momentary ray of sunlight"* (James, DWT), and finally, the more profound realisation that life is good:

"When you have not been sleeping and you wake up very early and you hear the dawn chorus and you hear the birds, you can suddenly in seconds feel uplifted because all your life you are depressed about something. From time to time, you suddenly go through a bad section and you are not sleeping and you suddenly get this sort of dawn chorus or you hear an owl at night. And you think, well, there's nothing really to be depressed

about because life's quite good really. I think nature can make you feel good in that sense so it can be uplifting for you" (Rebecca, Andalucia).

"I don't know if you have times when you are really sad or whatever and you can sit and watch an animal doing something and you can get a sense of emotion that takes you out of the situation that you are in" (Dawn, Baja).

Experiences in nature have long been seen to have health benefits. The idea you can be mended by the healing currents of the great outdoors by engaging with rhythms and ways of life different from your own goes back to classical times (Mabey 2006). The Romans recommended rambling as a way of resolving emotional tangles (*solvitur ambulando*) and the French philosopher Foucault wrote that the countryside, *"by the variety of its landscapes wins melancholics from their single obsession by taking them away from the cause and the memory of their sufferings"*. Adler (1989:1375) suggests that merely walking in the countryside can be a "search for a vantage point from which to grasp and understand life". It restores the natural proportions of our perceptions, reconnecting us with both the physical world and the moral order inherent within it (Wallace 1993). Penny's excerpt below perfectly exemplifies these assertions:

"Oh if you are feeling depressed, I go for a walk (laughing). As soon as I start walking even if it is just slowly along, everything seems to change and fall into place more somehow and it is relaxing and you think about other things apart from any problems that you might have. I think seeing things happening in the wild, it might not be animals necessarily, but when you see primroses beginning to come out and other things, it does uplift you, yes" (Penny, DWT).

For those who doubt the power of nature, Pretty (2006) has reviewed hundreds of studies that appear to prove that the merest glimpse of nature does one good. Mabey (2006), however cautions the soft, romantic and cosy impressions of the natural world portrayed in popular media; a vision similarly portrayed in the 18th century when the countryside began to be promoted as the fount of all virtue and true wisdom - a notion, he claims permanently damages our ideas about the quality and virtue of urban life. Nonetheless, whilst these participants value the cultural aspects of urban life, the built-environment does not entirely sustain them: Going on wildlife tours and seeing wildlife in the everyday satisfies an important need:

"I mean I like the feel that a city or large town gives you; there's lots going on and lots to do, but I feel the need for the beauty of the countryside. I would go as far as to say that certainly as far as bird life is concerned, there is definitely a spiritual dimension to that. I don't just see them as creatures, I see beauty in them and I mean I do find bird-watching

and having the wildlife in the countryside near me spiritually uplifting and important for my soul as well as just a hobby” (James, DWT).

4.5.8.1 Nature as sustenance

In these profound ways wildlife experiences whether on tour or at home can sustain the human spirit. The knowledge that it is all there waiting to be discovered and the memory of past sightings builds hope and expectations of the next occurrence.

“When you have seen something beautiful you’re never the same again because you know it happens. Even if you can’t actually capture that moment again which you can’t because it is so special and unique, you know it happens and therefore you can just take the knowledge that that happened and say maybe it will happen again” (Edward, DWT).

“It is a moment of ecstasy for me seeing beauty in a bird and it doesn’t last very long but the memory, the facts of it, the knowledge that it happened does sustain me because I know it happened and the memories do sustain you and enrich your life (James, DWT).

“Not in the sense that you become euphoric and kind of go round with a smile on your face all the time but it gives you that sort of contentedness and also it is like sustaining you in a sense...I mean I like going away but also I like home but I think the reason I want to go home is because you have been nourished. I know it sounds corny but it is like nourishment for me. Something to sustain me for when I go home and until my next trip” (Tanya, Baja).

4.5.9 Conclusion

This section, whilst dependent on only the few participants who were able and comfortable enough to articulate the effects of watching wildlife on their emotions and feelings of well-being, reveals some pertinent findings. Namely, how the enhanced ‘state of being’ and the profound sense of wonderment is seemingly beyond normal expression as the multi-sensory experience exists on the edge of verbal consciousness. The wildlife encounter involves more than the visual spectacle. Instead all the senses are heightened as the individual moves into a state of ‘flow’ where all thought and action is concentrated on the moment in the task of spotting, watching, identifying, recording and enjoying. There is a momentary loss of self-awareness and an existential consciousness and connectedness with the living world. When wildlife enters our experience, time leaves. Linear (or B-theory) time slips away and has little relevance to the present. In its place time expands. What appears to be only a minute in real time can become much longer in

nature's time. This stepping out of the pressures of the everyday brings a host of psychological benefits; particularly the provision of still and motionless time in which to marvel, contemplate and philosophise. Just glimpsing wildlife, taking a walk in the countryside or hearing an owl at night can lift the spirit and help put everyday concerns into a different perspective.

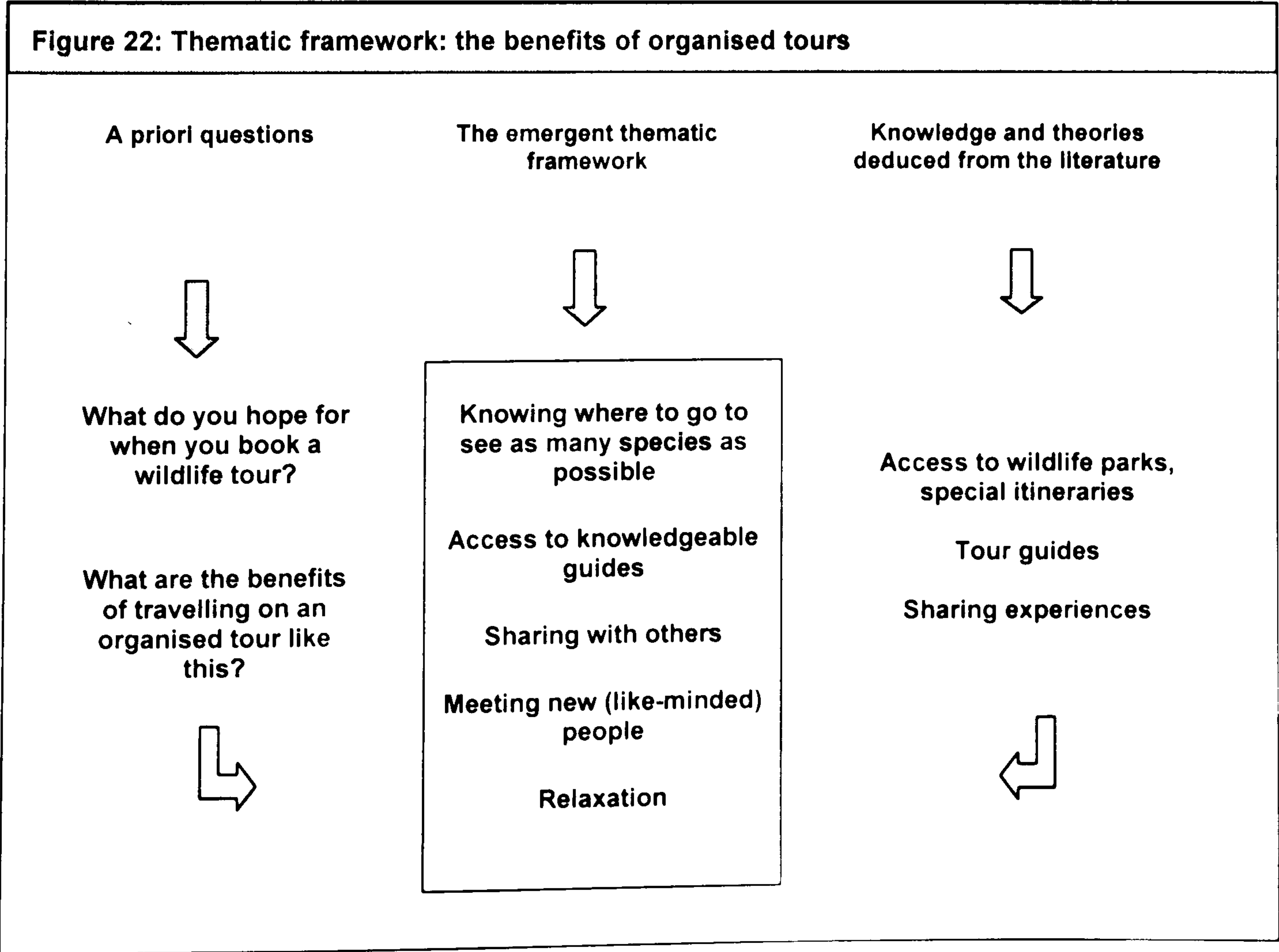
Having ascertained these intangible benefits of wildlife watching, the next section moves on to look at the more tangible benefits such as access to good sites, knowledgeable guides and the meeting of like-minded people.

4.6 Benefits of organised tours

4.6.1 Introduction

As Section 4.1 explains the ‘general naturalist’ segment of wildlife tourists tend to be well educated and well-travelled with a high level of disposable income. They are inclined to shun the contrived spaces of mass tourism and instead seek an authentic, successful and somewhat educative tourism experience. Clearly, they have the expertise and the means to travel as ‘do-it-yourself’ tourists yet choose to travel in small, organised and guided groups. Whilst on tour it became apparent that for some participants tight schedules, group dynamics and the lack of freedom to roam had the potential to reduce satisfaction which begged the question as to what motivated them to continue to travel on guided wildlife tours.

Whilst the market is beginning to lean heavily towards independent itineraries (McMillan 2007; Mintel 2006), there remains a core market which chooses small group travel due to the benefits that it offers. In order to explore the nature of these benefits, the research aimed to uncover the reasons that overcame the desire for independent travel. Figure 22 displays the *a priori* questions and the themes that emerged during the interviews and via the ad- hoc discussions on tour. These are then discussed in greater detail below.



(Source: Author)

4.6.2 Knowing where to go

For this segment there are two primary motivations for travelling: first, to see a number of, or as many, different species as possible and, secondly, to experience and appreciate a specific country or place. Whilst it is not always the case that wildlife frequents unpopulated places (for example along migratory routes or in unique habitats) a greater abundance and diversity of flora and fauna tend to be found in more remote, 'edge of the world' places which often require considerable planning to reach. Moreover one requires considerable knowledge of, and relationship with, a place in order to locate the desired wildlife. For some participants the basic decision on whether to travel independently or with a tour operator can depend on these two factors: *"how difficult a place is to get to and how much we want to see as many birds as we can"* (Linda, DWT).

"We went to the Falklands with a tour operator because it is renowned as a difficult place to get to and went to Chile, I think, because the advantage is that you see all the birds. They know where to take you to and certainly you see a lot more than you would otherwise" (Linda, DWT).

Similarly, *"we went on organised trips to the Antarctic and Trinidad and Tobago and Baja because they are more remote and less easy for us to get to ourselves and find our way around. Also they know where to take you"* (Sophie, Baja).

Whilst seeing wildlife is the primary pull-factor, it is important to reiterate that the experience is much broader than just *"racing around and ticking things off"* (Michelle, Baja). There is a strong desire to see and experience places off of the beaten track and as Michelle explains: *"these tours do get you out in the countryside of a country. You do see a little bit more about how people live. I couldn't for the life of me do the tourist enclave bit"*. Getting away from the contrived tourist spaces and seeing animals in their natural settings is an essential component for the dedicated wildlife holiday market. The ability to offer this depends entirely on the skill of the tour leader / wildlife guide and for this reason the employment and retention of knowledgeable and personable leaders is central to the tour operators' success.

4.6.3 Access to knowledgeable tour leaders

This was apparent from the beginning of the first tour where the author noted: *'The journey to El Rocio was jovial, Mark kicked straight into tour guide role; giving brief details and points of interest along the way. Energetic and enthusiastic commentary; it occurred to me then, early on, that the role of tour guide was perhaps not so enviable after all'* (Travel diary, Andalucia).

Tour leaders have been described as information providers, sources of knowledge, mentors, surrogate parents, pathfinders, leaders, mediators, culture brokers and entertainers (Cohen 1985; Schuchat 1983; De Kadt 1979; McKean 1976). Alongside these numerous roles, leaders provide four major functions: instrumental, social, interactionary and communicative (Cohen 1985). A number of writers have studied the role of the eco-tour guide (Haig and McIntyre 2002; Ballantyne and Hughes 2001; Weiler and Ham 2001) paying particular attention to the communication and interpretation of the natural (and cultural) environment (see Tilden 1957 for a definition of interpretation); not only in terms of identification and explanation of focal species but also with regards to the sustainable management of wildlife / tourist interactions, conservation and the modification of behaviour (Moscardo *et al.*, 2004; Orams 1997; Moscardo 1996).

Other studies, however, are less optimistic about tour guiding suggesting that their traditional role is largely superfluous in authentic and independent forms of tourism where the emphasis is on individual experience and interpretations of reality rather than the reliance on tour leaders to provide meaning in what tourists see (Reisinger and Steiner 2006; Almagor 1985). Whilst this may indeed be true for some forms of guiding, particularly cultural tours, little attention has been paid to the dedicated wildlife tourism guide, or tour leader as they are most frequently referred to, where the leader is in the company of their clients for the whole duration of the trip as opposed to the on-site interpretative leaders to be found in many ecotourism attractions or destinations.

On the contrary, this research indicates that wildlife tour leaders are central to the tourist experience and are a fundamental component of the trip: so much so that it is common for tours to be bought based upon who is leading them and where customer loyalty can be as much to do with the tour leader as the tour operator. Their reputation goes before them and participants frequently recommend them to friends. There are a number of key attributes that a guide must have: versatility, excellent field skills, sound local knowledge, reputation (many write natural history guide books), and good administrative and organisational skills.

Whilst itineraries are generally laid out in the tour brochures, once at the destination, tours are often more dynamic. Itineraries may change according to the weather, recent sightings, new opportunities or group decisions and so leaders must always have contingency plans based upon local knowledge: *"We went on to the Picas in Spain, the weather was poor, where we were it was very misty, and so our leader was able to say, well actually just because we have got mist here.....if we go up over the other side of the hill; we'll probably get into the sunshine. So we'll swap our itinerary around and yes so it was"* (Diane, DWT).

It can take leaders a long time to 'scout out' their patch and they can become very protective of their geographical area and their knowledge: *"If I'm on my own patch, which for example, is Central Spain and Extremadura, I am much more cautious about who I tell particularly other tour leaders who are leading for professional companies – not individuals. I'll tell individuals information that I will never necessarily give to other tour leaders on my own site, because that's like trade secrets effectively. If I have put the time and the effort in finding sites and I know where the individual birds are; somebody is paying me good money for me to show them those birds and they are coming with me to do it and I don't see, for example, why I should give out information for difficult to see species so that another group who is leading a professional tour in that area who maybe comes once a year and doesn't scout out the site has that information; I don't think that that is necessarily fair. Often I will, but sometimes I won't and it depends a lot on who you are talking to (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).*

At the simplest level, the tour leader, often in unison with local guides, escort the tourists to prime locations where focal species can be seen. They will, as the above abstract illustrates, have researched the area well, will know what has recently been sighted and the best places from which to view the wildlife. They are experienced naturalists who can identify wildlife by their calls, their tracks and even their distant silhouettes. Due to these enviable field skills, tour participants will encounter a lot more species than they would if they were travelling independently as the following testimonials illustrate:

"Well I go on my own as well and comparing it with that, I tend to see more birds because, like today, the leaders..... we saw those birds that I wouldn't have seen even if I'd stayed there all day" (Ian, Andalucia).

"You tend to pick up a lot of stuff which you wouldn't pick up otherwise" (Simon, Andalucia).

"You are led by someone who knows the terrain who knows..., who can speak some of the language, but who knows where the good sights are and the sort of places to take you" (Diane, DWT).

"A good tour leader will have researched it and will know where to go precisely and that is the most important thing. And most leaders are very, very good at it indeed" (Edward, DWT).

"When you go on a tour they know what they are doing and you see things that unless you did a lot of research you wouldn't know about" (Michael, DWT).

In addition to the knowledgeable tour leaders, participants themselves can be good spotters and identifiers and may even be experts in their own field (see section 4.3). Quite often they have a particular skill or experience which can add value to the group and can enhance the trip for other members. Tour leaders are generally expected to be interested in everything and to have a specialism but are not necessarily expected to know about all the flora and fauna; therefore they tend to welcome and involve people who have complementary skills and who can enhance the experience for everyone:

"A big plus of these tours is you'll find the birders will be scanning the skies and trees and the flower people will be heads to the ground and so you get to see a lot of different things (Edward, DWT).

Moreover, when group dynamics work well, it facilitates the sharing of experiences with like-minded individuals which has the potential to augment the wildlife encounter particularly if the experience is shared with a 'significant other'.

4.6.4 Sharing with others

The desire to share experiences is arguably linked to personality types; particularly how self-contained the participants are. Responses could be positioned along a continuum with it being of paramount importance for some to being equally enjoyable if you were by yourself for others. However, for most, sharing wildlife encounters definitely enhances the holiday experience.

As Dawn (Baja) says: *"I could have done it on my own, but I prefer to have people around me. I like to be able to share with people at the time. And it is nice like when we saw them (humpback whales) leap and everybody said 'ahh' didn't they, you know, and we were all in tune. And I think that is nice when everybody can be in tune and that everybody is sort of working together".*

"I mean you don't go on about it to all and sundry. But like-minded people, yes you certainly share it with those. It just makes the experience more meaningful" (Matthew, DWT).

"For me it's crucial, it's a key part of the overall enjoyment of going on a tour. The other thing I do is give wildlife talks because I like to share my experience with other people and photography is a part of that" (Edward, DWT).

The human tendency to want to share experiences is best illustrated by the tour leader who admitted: *"the more that I tour lead the less I go out birding on my own. Keith (a*

colleague) does exactly the same. He doesn't pick up a pair of bins now if he is not on tour because if I can't share it with someone, it's a waste of time. I really don't enjoy it that much. I get fun from it, but it is very sort of transitory and unimportant and the thing is I really enjoy it. Like today, in fact, possibly the worst thing of all, when you see something really good and nobody seems interested in it – that really then is very difficult (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).

Equally it can be disappointing for a tour leader if the encounter does not hold a person's attention: "well it was funny today because one of the people in the group I was repeatedly pointing out things and they were not responding at all. And that to me was almost like a snub – and I don't really care because if they want to see it, they'll look and if they don't, they don't have to. But I was disappointed, disappointed (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).

The desire to share can be more complex than merely the emotional fulfilment sharing can elicit, it can also be more functional such as the desire to help fellow travellers make a sighting, to share knowledge and skills, for confirmation of a sighting and for the laying down of shared memories:

"It's not terribly important for me to share the experience, but having said that, because folk have been very good to me in the past and I know how frustrating it can be. And even now there are times when I cannot get a fix onto something that everybody else has got, so you know how it feels therefore you do try" (Michelle, Baja).

"Very simply two pairs of eyes are better than one and you are liable to see more and I'm happy if I can assist another. When a close friend of mine was alive we used to go out with the local group in Berkshire but when she died I ceased to do that. Most of my bird-watching apart from these professionally led trips is on my own but being able to share it does make it nicer" (Peter, Andalucia).

"Shared experiences are very important. If one of you sees a bird and then the other sees it, that is great. Also it can confirm it for you. If they don't see it, then you think that perhaps I didn't see it and I was imagining it! So it's much better if we both see things together and later we can recall the moment and discuss it (Marie, Baja).

"Oh yes I think it probably is enhanced by sharing. It's a different feeling sharing with people I don't really know. We all know each other on this holiday, but we don't actually know each other do we? But when I point things out to my son it is a completely different thing" (Ian, Andalucia).

Mutual sightings like this make for shared memories and therefore become more important in the telling of shared narratives and histories (see Curtin 2006; Fredrickson and Anderson 1999). Therefore sightings with significant others can take on a greater importance: *"With my husband it is important yes because we share the same interests (Sophie, Baja). Likewise with Linda (DWT).*

The desire to share experiences, however, is not universal. As Diane (DWT) explains her husband's typical response: *"he sometimes will not want to say 'hey I've found such and such' because then they come trampling all over it and then he doesn't get his photographs and you know.....Sometimes we might photograph something and then if there is someone close by, we'll say: 'hey have you seen this' and then we will share it. But you want everybody to enjoy things as much as you are I think".*

The counter-argument to the need to share was not as frequently mentioned, however for some participants communal with wildlife can be a highly reflective and personal experience. This heightened experience can *"lose something when you have got a number of people with you no matter how close they may be to you" (Tanya, Baja).*

4.6.5 Meeting new people

As the recent Social Trends survey depicts, British society is becoming more lonely and insular (ONS 2006). There are higher incidences of divorce and of single occupancy housing. Working hours, new technology, the gradual erosion of the typical nuclear family and longer life expectancy for some, point towards a demand for holidays which can easily be taken by the single person. Human beings are social creatures who often feel more comfortable in groups and who seek out the company of like-minded individuals with whom they can share holiday experiences. Furthermore animal sightings and encounters act as good social lubricants; talking points which can bring people together (Hunt *et al.* 1992). Fundamentally, the attraction of nature and wildlife can be mutually participated in and enjoyed:

"I mean it's just the way I see it but I also want to really totally experience it but its this sort of a trip where you are with people who feel the same way, it is a big plus" (Tanya, Baja).

"It's nice to go on holiday with like-minded people. It's pleasant company. Not in the sense that you want to make life-long friends but, you know, you might only meet people over dinner one evening but you can have some very interesting exchanges" (Michelle, Baja).

"When I go on my own I usually meet someone and have a few beers as well... but here I know I've got a group of 'friends' waiting to have dinner tonight so I don't have to worry about going to a restaurant on my own so there is a social aspect of it as well" (Ian, Andalucia).

"The company was great - such nice people, some of whom I feel sure I shall keep in touch with and deepen new friendships" (Marie, Baja).

The social aspect of joining a tour group was highly apparent from the beginning of the first tour when it became obvious that it was an ideal way to travel for single travellers as these excerpts from the author's diary illustrates:

I chatted with Judy for the first time today when she told me how she had met her late husband on a Travelling Naturalist trip to Canada and how easy and comfortable she since felt travelling as a single person. I can see that if I was a single person and I could afford this type of holiday, I would definitely be attracted to wildlife holidays where I know I would meet like-minded individuals and would not have to dine alone. The tour operator later revealed that several romances had begun whilst on tour and this was not at all unusual (Travel diary, Andalucia).

Finally, meeting new people also has a utilitarian benefit in the way of knowledge exchange. Stories and experiences unfold over mealtimes and in between wildlife watching, particularly with regards to destinations, itineraries, companies and tour leaders /leaders and this knowledge is used to reinforce future trip decision making.

4.6.6 Relaxation

As an independent traveller, it took a while for the author to appreciate how much people enjoy not having to think about the logistics of their holiday. For those who have hectic routines and work pressures where decision making is a crucial determinant of their job, there is a definite delight in not having to make any decisions. Discussions with the tour leaders revealed an amusing absolution of responsibility:

"I get professors, solicitors and doctors and they all sort of say what is the weather going to be like tomorrow, should I take a waterproof?..... They completely aggregate all decisions to you really. They all feel the same. One of the reasons why they go on group travel is so that they don't have to make all the decisions. They do have a view, I mean they don't leave everything to me but, in general, there is quite a strong tendency that way (David, tour leader, Natural History Tours).

One of the key reasons why people come on these tours is that everything is done for them. Not only is it easier for them but they are pretty sure that they are going to see what they want to see and generally as you get older, it is nicer to have it all organised for you and not have the uncertainties and the delays and all that sort of thing (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).

As participants themselves explained: "I don't have to sort my own hotel out or drive around trying to find a place to stay in the evening" (Ian, Andalucia).

"It would be just too much hassle to do it yourself" (Simon, Andalucia).

"Travelling with a wildlife company takes away all the hassle. They do all the bookings and stuff like that and especially when my life was busier than it is now.....you know I just haven't got the time to plan these things. And also they know where to go and what you are likely to see and it is their job to make sure that you do see what you want to see because that is how they get their custom" (Matthew, DWT).

"One of the reasons we started going on tours was so that we could go and see all of these lovely things but didn't have to drive ourselves around" (Diane, DWT.)

4.6.7 Conclusion

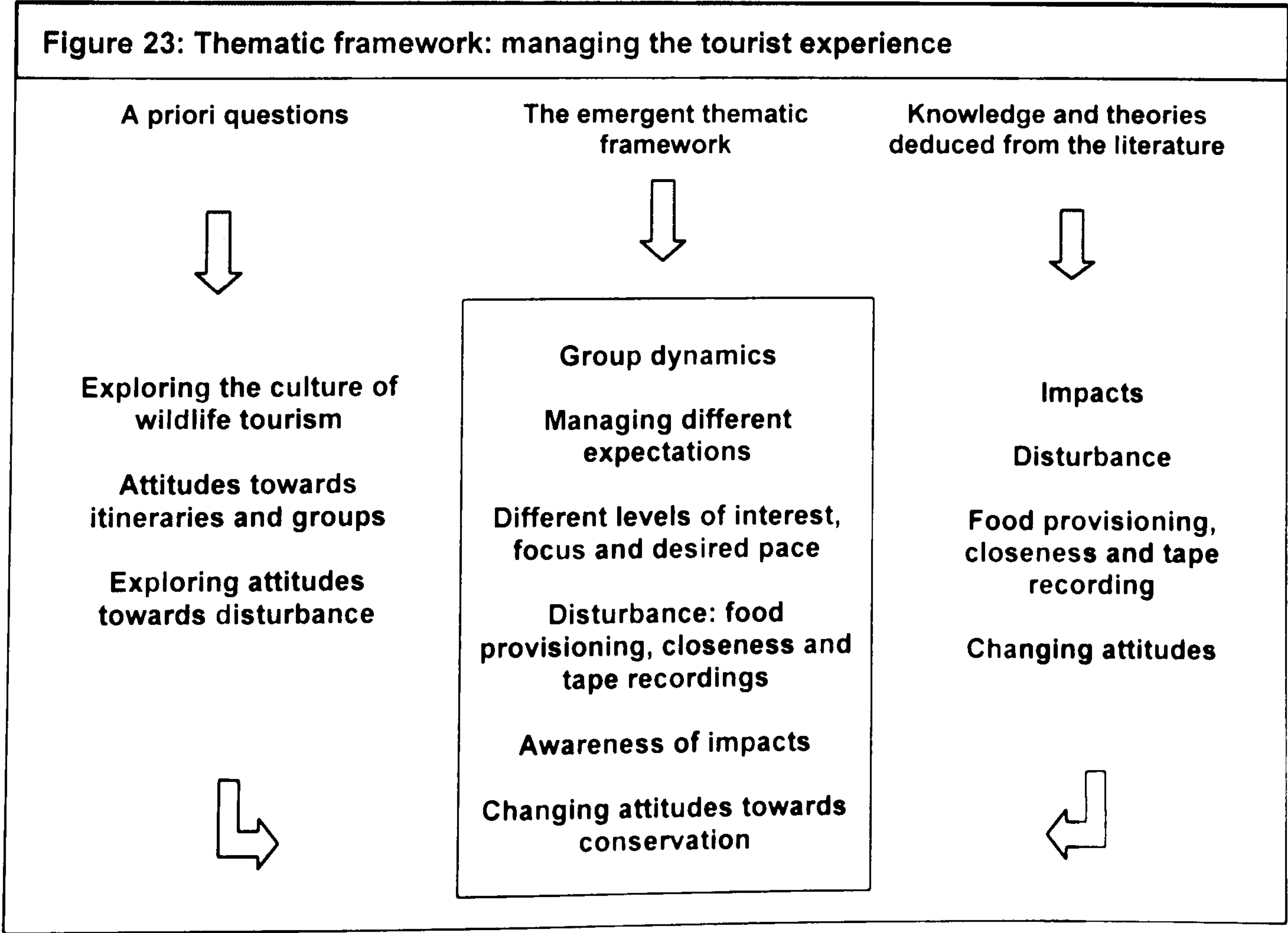
This section has highlighted the main benefits of booking an organised wildlife tour. Clearly there is a lot to be gained from merely choosing a destination and an itinerary and letting the tour operator worry about the planning, travelling and locating the focal species. On top of this there is the chance to meet new like-minded people and to be able to share the joys and even the difficulties of wildlife viewing. It particularly highlights how the role of the tour leader is fundamental to the success of the tour. Their role as social facilitator and 'stage director' is further explained and developed in the last section of the results chapter which reveals the management dilemmas and the more controversial issues with regards to the wildlife tourist experience.

4.7 Managing the tourist experience

4.7.1 Introduction

This final section of the results and discussion concentrates on aspects of the tourist experience which are in the control of the tour operator or the tour leader. Its focus is a further exploration into the culture and expectations of the general naturalist market. Here there is further evidence to suggest a shift away from merely ticking off species to a moderately paced, interesting and relaxing holiday experience where wildlife is a central but not exclusive focus. Once again, tour leaders are seen as an intrinsic part of this experience. Chapter 2 alluded to the potentially consumptive use of wildlife in wildlife tourism based upon the assumption that any human presence impacts upon the habitat and its wild inhabitants. Just being there has a direct impact on the wildlife. This section explores participants' awareness of potential impacts and their attitudes towards common modes operandi such as the use of tape lures and food to attract focal species.

Finally, the wildlife sector is coming under greater scrutiny by industry watchdogs who ask operators to exhibit responsible tourism policies and indicate the positive benefits to developing economies, conservation efforts and to tourists whose attitudes and behaviour may change as a direct result of witnessing fauna and flora. Here there is some evidence of a propensity to support wildlife organisations, an awareness of the importance of involving local communities but little beyond the personal and psychological benefits already discussed. Figure 23 outlines the main emergent themes which are further discussed.



4.7.2 Group dynamics

The author, having felt outside of the group in Andalucia (see Section 3.13.2) began to witness and explore the importance of group dynamics. Through experience and discussions, it became apparent that there was a certain element of luck and leadership involved as to how a group bonded. Michelle and Tanya had both encountered groups where awkward individuals had dominated or manipulated the wildlife agenda and where nothing had been good enough. Not everyone understood that there was no guarantee that focal species would be seen and this could put pressure on the tour leaders and the rest of the tour participants. The only way to overcome this was to be very careful to select the right tour from the right company and to make sure that the tour delivered the desired focus. As Michelle (Baja) explained: *"you have to be particularly careful with the type of groups they take and where possible ensure that there is a good, mixed agenda"*.

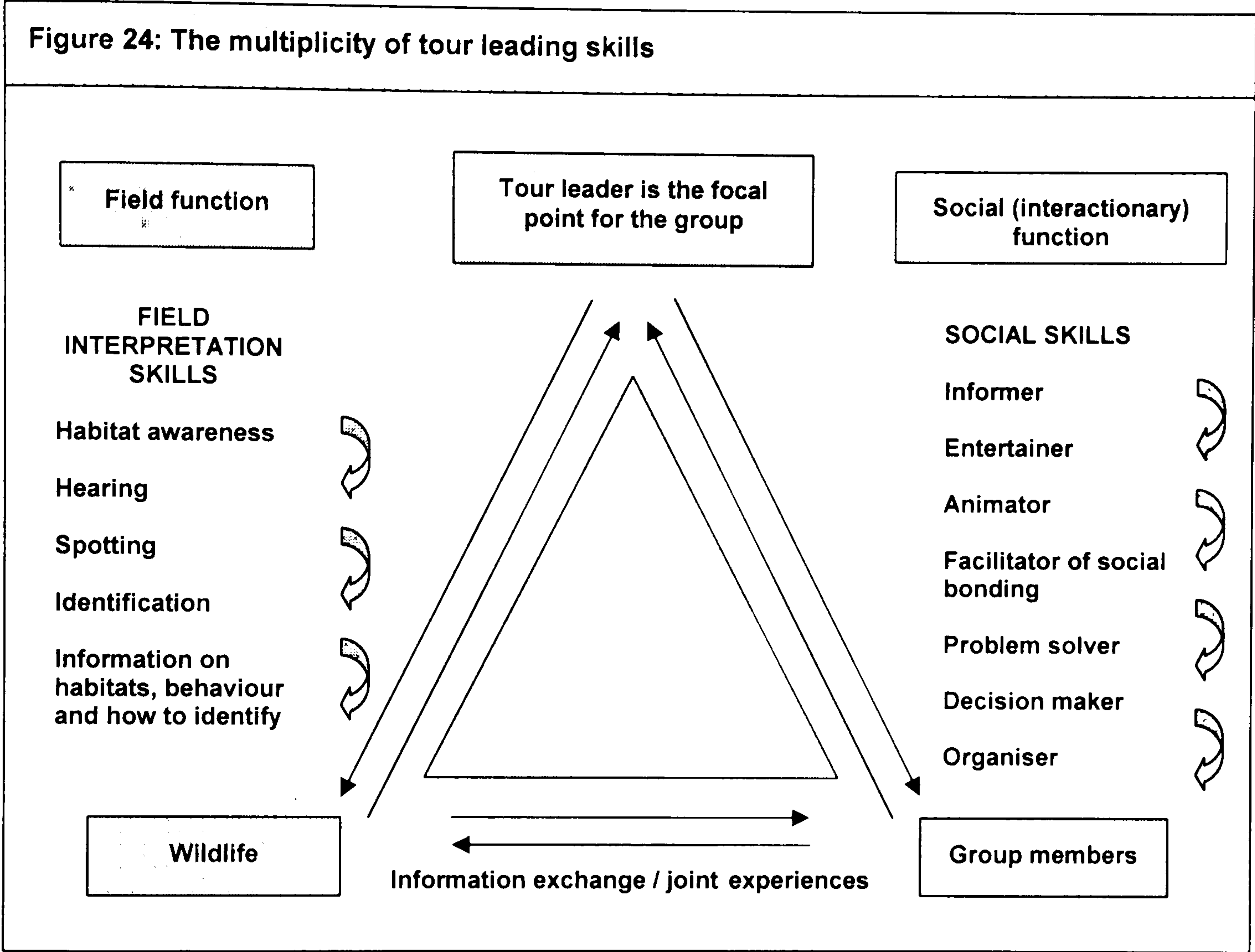
It transpired that nearly everyone had encountered difficult people. So much so, that travelling alone with a guide or on independent, tailor-made itineraries is very appealing if you can afford it and several participants had, or were considering travelling in this manner; fully supporting market predictions (Mintel 2006) in the growth of independent itineraries:

"You can never guarantee that you are going with like-minded people and that has always been the case, but that is why I travel mostly on my own with private leaders in lots of places that I go to and sometimes just completely on my own like when I went to Iceland for three weeks and I explored the nature parks and places where....I mean you see birds everywhere you don't need to have to go to a national park in Iceland, they are everywhere; just by the side of the road (Tanya, Baja).

Meanwhile handling difficult participants and situations was seen to be the responsibility of the tour leader whose role as social facilitator is well documented in the literature. Cohen (1985) refers to this as an interactionary function: i.e. facilitating interaction between tourists, being friendly and approachable, listening to and respecting preferences. Tour leaders take this role very seriously as it can make or mar the experience for everyone. As Mark (tour leader, Andalucia) reiterates, the tour leader is the focal point on tour:

"It's often about finding common ground. How much do these people have in common though? How much do these people have in common with me? Virtually nothing. Yet I am the focal point for the group. Everybody can inter-relate to everyone and everything else but the binding people in the group are the leaders".

This is illustrated in Figure 24 below which also highlights the field and social functions as well as the multi-skills inherent in tour leading. According to the tour leaders and the tour operators who participated in this study, there is always a lot of interest in becoming a wildlife guide from people with a wide knowledge of fauna and flora. In reality, for the general naturalist market, leading a tour requires a leader to know more about people than about wildlife; particularly with regards to ensuring group congruity.



(Source: Author)

As mentioned in Section 4.1 group size, either too big or too small has an enormous bearing on trip satisfaction and leadership. Too many people and it becomes cramped: *"We stopped in Toulouse and it was so hot...and seventeen of us in this blooming minibus. There was no room for luggage inside so it all had to go on the roof and that was a worry. It was absolutely stifling and you know you couldn't open the windows because the ones at the back were complaining about the draft"* (Diane, DWT).

Small groups can be equally daunting for tour leaders: *"When people don't get along, it is one thing in a big group but different when you only have a small groups and big groups have their plus and minuses. I mean next week I've only got three on tour which is a couple and one – now if they get on it'll be absolutely brilliant. But if it doesn't work, it's going to be very very hard and that will be really working on a people basis rather than anything else"* (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).

From a management perspective, eight to twelve seem the optimum number, but this division is much less clear cut for tourists as the following testimonies suggest:

"You get conflicts of personality more in a larger group than the smaller groups that we've been in, we haven't had conflicts of personality in these" (Rebecca, Andalucia).

"It's not necessarily good being in a group, No. Not for me. I think it is nice to have two or maybe three people with you but big groups can sometimes spoil it. It depends on who is in the group (Matthew, DWT).

A tour group is made up of individuals and their preferences; some of whom may have a longing or a tendency to 'wander off' on their own. Part of this desire can be about learning the culture or adjusting to a new form of travel. The desire to be independent, or to temporarily 'escape' the claustrophobia of the group is often tempered with the desire to see the focal species as this extract from the author's diary explains:

'When I took off I missed out on Crested Tit – typical! I felt very disappointed with myself, wished I'd stayed with the group. Now I understand why, despite the desire to walk, Barry stays close to the group' (Travel diary, Andalucia).

This is not an unusual desire especially for those who are in people-orientated jobs; part of the holiday experience is the desire for retreat, for silence, for contemplation rather than constant social interaction:

"Sometimes it has to be on your own and I need to do this. That's why I went the long walk round (in a reserve that day). I knew that everyone was still there and you are connected with them but I knew it was all right because I knew I could get around in time and I need to do this, I need to sort of go off on my own and have views of my own; totally my own (Rebecca, (teacher), Andalucia).

Again, this can be about learning and accepting the culture of being a wildlife tourist: *"you get people who join a group for the first time who might be.....maybe they just got taken by an advert or they just got to the age where they start to feel...sometimes they take a little bit of adjusting because its a different sort of travel, group travel, there is more give and take and they have to learn.. There is a culture, yes. It's generally a pleasant culture but it does need a bit of learning (David, tour leader, Natural History Tours).*

This is more difficult for some than others: *"there were two difficult people. One who was there actually with his wife. She was OK, but he didn't fit in. He didn't want to be within a group. He wanted to go off and do his own thing and it caused...we were forever waiting*

for him or wondering where he had got to and things like that.....so that didn't go down too well" (Diane, DWT).

Part of managing group dynamics is allowing some flexibility and free time into the itinerary. This allows tour members unmediated time in which to escape, to reflect or to bond with other tour participants. It also allows a small break for the tour leaders; otherwise, just like on birding tours, it can become too intensive and claustrophobic, even for them. Therefore building in free time, such as relaxing by the pool, or walking along a beach, encourages new modes of expression:

"It's another social system that is different because different people may be mixing there in different ways. People can go and read or relax or something completely away from what they've been doing for the rest of the day and then come back and maybe have a shower, maybe go and read on the balcony and they've still got time to do a couple of things or even walk before they come back in the evening before the roll call. Otherwise it's mostly from the moment you're up until you go to bed, you are always with people. And actually that is one of the things that I find the most tiring (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).

4.7.3 Managing expectations

Whilst general naturalists tend not to go on tour with a wish list, there is a sense that it may be a once in a lifetime to see a particular focal species: *"If we were the sort of people who could jump in the car and go off at the drop of a hat and drive all round the continent. It might be different. But the fact that you might go once a year, this is your only opportunity to see these sorts of things" (Diane, DWT).*

But this desire has to be carefully balanced in order to please everyone. Leaders must be flexible enough to appreciate when the desire to see something in particular is not shared by the majority: *"I try and sense when people have had enough of somewhere and then move on (David, tour leader, Natural History Tours).*

"I am not too disappointed if I don't get to see all the birds they list in the trip spec. For us, the birds we haven't seen, there are so many of them that you don't normally say right today I'm going to see x .. There were several days where obviously our leader wanted us to see several birds which were endemic. But they are all new to us so to that extent we spent a lot of time looking for a certain duck and it was no big deal, but you know it was obviously bigger for them than it was for us" (Linda, DWT).

Indeed tour leaders can feel inadequate if they cannot, or do not, produce all the species in the trip specification. There is the immediacy of not seeing it on tour plus the double exposure of it not being published in the trip report which is often posted on-line to attract new and perspective clients. These anxieties can be communicated to clients who are well aware of the pressures some leaders may be under:

"And the leaders I think tend to feel that, particularly where you are getting a bird which is endemic to the area and is not seen anywhere else, if you don't get to see it then they haven't produced the goods. There is actually a clear pressure on them to find these things whereas the people on the tour don't give a damn about it. It got to be a bit of a joke actually. In some ways I think it was more pressure from him than from us (Sophie, Baja).

One participant, Penny, had been on a Sunbird holiday to Madagascar. The trip was chosen for its destination, itinerary and timing of the tour. Her narrative below provides an excellent insight into a 'bird listing' experience by someone whose interests are much broader. It also highlights the group dynamics, being accepted and the culture of the tour. It perfectly exemplifies some of the points made in the results and discussion sections:

"I think it is possibly to do with the group that you are with and what the majority really needed and they were definitely listers and Sunbird were catering for this, they were ticking off as many endemic birds as they could find and of course Madagascar is a tremendous place for that and you see these things no where else in the world so it was very important to them.

But the thing that struck us as soon as we had seen this bird, we were whipped off to the next thing without even watching it or seeing how it behaved or how it integrated.. and other birds that we had never seen.. you know.. they may have seen them somewhere else but we hadn't all seen these different birds and we were whipped around like anything without having enough time to enjoy them before ticking off the next thing.

Well, I don't know if I dug my toes in, but I was so fascinated by the Lemurs. I mean there were so many different Lemurs and they were absolutely beautiful and the trip was altered slightly so when there were the most Lemurs, but in order to accommodate the birders, we actually only had one day instead of two or three to enjoy them. But I was also.. I mean Madagascar is so unique there are some wonderful chameleons and all sorts of other animals and creepy crawlies and beetles of all sorts and flowers as well. Wonderful, wonderful things. So I am afraid I tended to start looking at other things to the annoyance of everyone else as I held them up a bit.

But if they did spend quite a while....I would wander off a little... but it is not a place where you could leave the group really because it was quite wild and we would be led along a track and this did happen to me actually. I was going to come back along the track because I had seen some Lemurs that I wanted to look at again and lost them (the group).... they were eventually coming back.. but in the rain forest there, it is not really the place to wander off but there were so many beautiful things to see there and so fascinating. I mean, the fact that..., it didn't worry us that we had to get up at 4.30am every morning to see the birds really early because you got used to that and we quite understood that, but it was just that they...seemed to miss the point..

I was actually, in the end, I was accepted but unfortunately it was the day before we left when I had stayed behind to photograph some lizards and things that were fascinating and as a result they had moved on because they were looking for, I can't remember what the bird was, but it was type of partridge bird which was very unusual and as I was walking back I saw this bird you see. So I said was it this you were looking for? And it was, they had been looking for it for three days. After that I was accepted as perhaps I had got eyes in my head after all (laughing) but it was a bit late!" (Penny, DWT).

This obsessive desire to tick off a wish list can also cause considerable stress to the tour leaders especially if they are more used to a different type of clientele. More often than not, tour leaders are freelance and guide for a number of different tour operators each with their own unique mix of client expectations. Some tours are clearly easier to lead than others: *"The thing I do like about the Travelling Naturalist is the fact that you never, I have never had a person on a trip who is a really hard core birder; somebody who is pushing. Everybody loves to see their birds and they enjoy it but it gets to a point often when they just get tired of it – whereas you are not with a person who would go from dawn til dusk and beat you into the ground to get to try and see everything possible which is really nice because you don't have that pressure on you (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).*

Moreover, there is an easier relationship with clients which makes for a more conducive working relationship; one in which the happiness and holiday satisfaction take greater precedence over the ticking off of species: *"you could be a hopeless people person but not with groups that we run. It would depend on who you are leading. For example, if you want to go to the extreme end of the spectrum. So for example Birdquest, who deliberately go out...they have two completely different types of trips; ones number-crunching and ones that are not; I don't know about the ones that are not, whether they are or not. But the number-crunching trips certainly have a reputation of being extremely intensive and basically some of the leaders, to be quite honest as I've heard, are not interested in people management at all. You are there if you are there and if you are there they will show you a bird and that's as far as they will go" (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).*

In direct contrast to this leadership approach, the author noted on both trips how, on the contrary, every attempt is made to let every member of the tour see the focal species: *'scopes were available for everyone and it is amazing how patient the leaders are in a) explaining where the bird is and b) what it is (in my case, again and again!) (Travel diary, Baja).*

4.7.4 Managing different levels of interest and focus

One of the most frequent comments from this clientele is the desire for a broader focus. Whilst seeing wildlife is the most important aspect of the trip, understanding and experiencing the 'sense of place' is a close second and if overlooked is detrimental to the trip:

"The thing about travelling to areas where you have opportunities for wildlife is also the issue about trying to connect with local people and in Laos particularly as that was a different sort of a trip but I mean I did see river dolphins but it was much more geared to meeting local people and cultural stuff. I think you can pursue your kind of bird interest or whatever at the expense of not remembering anything about the country you have been to and that is one thing I try to bear in mind like I think it is so nice to have private leaders (Tanya, Baja).

"I think I am hoping to see quite a lot of birds and these are birds which will be new to me. But, err, rather wider than that, I think I particularly want to see the landscape and I want to see the people and I want to know how the country works (Matthew, DWT).

These aspects are clearly enhanced by the employment and inclusion of local leaders who add interest and local knowledge to the overall experience: *"It is good to have a good all-rounder but also to have local trackers and people who have knowledge of the area is a great help on these trips as well (Penny, DWT).*

In developing countries such as Mexico, their absence can raise questions regarding community involvement and ownership as Tanya explains: *"Actually (whispering) I was, for a moment, a bit disappointed when we realised that our guide here was an American. I would have preferred a Mexican guide. I mean its fine, he's interesting but (again whispering) I think it would be nicer and you would get more out of a Mexican about their culture. I mean the crew here speak a bit of English but it's not an awful lot really I think you get more out of it with local input and you find out more" (Tanya, Baja).*

4.7.5 Itineraries, focus and pace

As Section 4.2 proposes, there is a keen interest in the relationship and co-existence of wildlife and people: how people share their environment with wildlife and whether it is a harmonious co-existence. There is a danger of losing this focus if itineraries allow the tours to become too bird focused:

"I mean I did find that a lot of their (The Travelling Naturalist) things are very bird-orientated and there are lots of these places where there are lots of animals; I don't know what animals there are in Mexico apart from the Coyote and there must be other animals that we don't have in England. You could do a wildlife thing in amongst the people. You know it's getting the whole picture rather than just bits of it (Dawn, Baja).

Moreover the habitat is often of equal interest and importance as the species which reside in it: *"This was one of the things with these listers and tickers, I don't think you can just look at one thing without having some interest in the other things that are around it as well as their habitats (Sophie, Baja).*

Finally, the pacing of the tour must be finely tuned and must attempt to accommodate the needs of the clients. The very nature of wildlife watching determines a relatively slow pace. Waiting and watching intently are not physically demanding pursuits. Younger, active clientele however can be frustrated by the lack of walking and exercise. Again this is based on a cost – benefit analysis. The benefit is that clients see more species, but the cost is that it tends to be a very mediated, vehicle dependent holiday pursuit:

"What we found in Chile was that we would have done a lot more walking had we been by ourselves (Linda, DWT).

"You recognise birds at the speed of the most expert watchers but you walk at the speed of the slowest person. Like today, we didn't hardly walk at all, so I like to mix up walking and birding holidays. I expected pretty much what we are getting; loads more birds but much less exercise (Ian, Andalucia).

Once again, getting the pace right is more a question of people rather than wildlife skills. For this market there needs to be a fair pace, but not one which is dawn until dusk: *"They are up at six in the mornings and I don't do mornings. It's a holiday and I don't want to go back home exhausted because I'll be exhausted by the job after a week or so" (Simon, Andalucia).*

"It's a shame because if you don't get up early you miss stuff, but on the other hand you can't just drive yourself into the ground. In Bulgaria last year, it was like ten or twelve

days but it was too long and we stayed in set places for two or four days at a time, but you know, you are constantly on the move and after about ten days you really can't do it" (Simon, Andalucia).

"Well its like the guide I was telling you about in the Canary islands, he said to me that he has to remember which company he is guiding for as to whether lunch is important or ticking off the next bird is important. It must be difficult for them as Nature Trek, for example, has two sides to it; they do run tick-orientated trips as well but do not detail them in their main brochure" (Michelle, Baja).

The desire to see focal species coupled with the tour leaders' predisposition to satisfy clients' wishes can encourage controversial management policies such as the use of tape recorders (Peters 2007), the provision of food (see Lewis and Newsome 2003; Chin *et al.*, 2001; Fulton 2001; Orams 2001a) and the propensity to want close encounters with wildlife.

4.7.6 Using tape recorder / food provisioning / managing closeness and disturbance

Participant attitudes towards these methods were explored with a number of questions to see if they had encountered the methods whilst on tour and how they felt about their adoption. The use of tape recordings of bird song surprisingly produced the most cognitive dissonance. Some enjoyed the experience at the time as they got to see the birds they wanted but later felt that the practice was questionable as it lured the bird out of its normal territory. Moreover it affects the feeling of spontaneity and authenticity of the experience with frequent reference to it as 'cheating':

"I've been on a tour where they have played a tape and the bird appeared to see what the racket was. I didn't actually agree with that because it was an artificial situation probably at the end of the day it didn't do the bird much good – they were only doing it because there weren't many birds around – there weren't many of those birds and I felt that they shouldn't really have done that (Ian, Andalucia).

"Well I did (enjoy it) at the time because I saw the bird, but then afterwards I thought well that wasn't...if everybody did that that bird would probably have a nervous breakdown or something. But its artificial, the bird didn't come out on its own volition (Ian, Andalucia).

"Some people use I pods. I've seen this in Poland; I pods, PDAs.... To a certain extent it's artificial and you can over use it. I think the reason we had so many problems with Hazel Hen in Poland because it was the Polish Bird Fest and I think everyone had been

out there and I think that the birds had just got fed up with it. So you can harass the birds. Some people won't do it and some people will" (Simon, Andalucia).

"You know it could be very disruptive pulling the males outside of their territory and disrupting them from feeding their young or their courtship or whatever. So I think if it is going to be done, it's got to be done very very responsibly indeed (Matthew, DWT).

"I think its cheating! (Carol, DWT).

Mark, one of the tour leaders, however, provided a counter-argument to the impact of using sound lures: *"you have to bear in mind whether it is better to quickly flush out a bird with bird call than have several pairs of feet trample over its habitat. At least it's quick and you move on" (Andalucia).*

There is something to be said for minimising levels of duration and disturbance: *"It worries me sometimes with these photographers because they disturb wildlife because they get too close. In some cases unnecessarily close I think. And also I'm not very keen on people who go in and beat bushes to get a sight and that sort of thing and I am not keen on people who play bird sounds to attract the birds because it is artificiality because the birds have been decoyed into a false situation with mating sounds. Really I prefer the birds to come to me naturally if they are going to come" (Peter, Andalucia).*

"The thing that I always try to bear in mind is that we are the privileged spectators and we should never interfere. We should never try and coax them to come close to us or that we should try not to get so close just so that we could get a good picture and that's like here, like yesterday, they were very respectful because they didn't get too close to the whales when we were out in the panga. I really am quite, I think it's not....We don't have the right to go and interfere and I think if I was anywhere where this was like a problem, I would be very very vocal about the fact that I was unhappy (Tanya, Baja).

Flushing out birds is another trick which can be used to enable a sighting. This was not experienced first hand by the author as the company leaders were very careful not to cause disturbance wherever possible. However some participants had experienced 'flushing' and it caused them concern:

"I'd rather sit it out. Up on the Berkshire downs a year and a half ago and it took me about nine visits to get a sighting of a rare bird because every time I went up there; people would just charge in and it had flown three and a half miles down the road. It's counter productive doing that because you spoil it, not just for you, but for everyone else as well. It would have been an easier tick if they'd sat on the track and just waited for it (Simon, Andalucia).

"What I am not happy about at all beating birds out which was done on a Birdquest trip. Yes flushing them out. I think if you haven't got the time to sit, or just stay and see a bird, well tough. It goes on a lot and it even happens down here at Portland Bill (Matthew, DWT).

Responsible tour leaders have softer methods to attract birds and are very aware of the potential negative impacts of disturbance: *"we call birds sometimes using what I call 'pschhing' which is making a noise because the birds just come out because they are curious. My feeling is that you have to go some where and you have to respect what's there and if you want to go back and see the same again, you mustn't disturb more that you are disturbing it just by being there. Especially if you have got birds which are stressed because they are on migration like the White Stork; they are there because they are resting."* (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).

The provisioning of food is also highly debatable subject area. Many people in the UK feed garden birds and it has become noticeable how bird feeders, nest boxes and bird food have gradually taken up more floor space in garden centres (personal observation; RSPB 2007). Therefore the provisioning of food at various accommodation outlets to encourage birds is not seen to be outside of 'normal, everyday' behaviour and was therefore not perceived as a problem or impact of wildlife watching. On the contrary, it was often seen as something to be encouraged particularly if by attracting birds to the vicinity, people would begin to be interested in them. *"I think that you should. I always tried to get people interested in wildlife because I feel that I am showing them a skill; I am passing on something that is good; teaching them how to look because I don't think people look if they haven't been talk to look. It goes through bird observation or any observation – until you have been taught to look you can't see."* (Rebecca, Andalucia).

"I don't mind that as it is no different to what we do in our gardens and you are supporting them. So I don't have a problem with and in Tobago it was done properly. They also used tape recorders to bring birds out. Now that I don't really agree with as I think you have to wait and let things come to you or just enjoy what is there" (Sophie, Baja).

Unlike sound, participants felt that at least with food provisioning, the wildlife benefited in some way. *"At least with food they get something. With sound we are taking it from them and they don't get anything out of it at all"* (Peter, Andalucia).

"To a certain extent it is artificial but on the other hand it provides them with a food stock. If you do some of these Romanian or Finnish bear expeditions people live in a bunker and they dump fish out for them and they wander up and eat the fish and that's how you see the bear. Otherwise you wouldn't see a bear. The bears don't see the humans but it

gets fed. And you have a happy bear who wanders off into the forest" (Simon, Andalucia).

"I was thinking about the red kites. Uhm.. well they do it with butterflies as well. They will sometimes put fruit on the path because they will come down. It's a spectacle that has become profit making. Especially on a tour when you want to ensure that your participants have actually experienced what they are there for. I think it is OK (Rebecca, Andalucia).

"I think it is all right as long as the right food is put out particularly for birds" (Edward, DWT)

The issue of getting close has been discussed in Section 4.4: *"It's fairly important, yes to get close. You know it is not much fun seeing your first condor, or whatever it is, just as a dot on top of a mountain. I think particularly for the first time, you do want to be fairly close up; albeit that might be with binoculars. You really want to be able...I mean it is not good enough just for the leader to say that's a condor because he notices a condor, you want to be able to actually see it closely enough so that you, yourself can be satisfied that it is in condor (Matthew, DWT).*

Getting close enough to be able to see something properly, using binoculars, is the key to success but this is not a prerequisite for accepting disturbance: *"Its back to the question as to whether you are interfering with the natural life of the birds. I've seen tourists walking through fields of growing crops to get close to something which I wouldn't do. If I was on a tour where this sort of behaviour was taking place I would hold back. In Morocco once I was very conscious of the fact that we were trampling on someone's crops to see a bird". (Peter, Andalucia).*

Fanatical birders (i.e. listers), appear to have a particularly bad reputation with participants; most of whom at some point had encountered misbehaviour:

"Where I live, we never ever report what we see there to birders because word gets round so rapidly now so we just keep it to ourselves. I have seen a bird that can be hounded to death. "And when we were at Sandwich Bay, we have seen a bird land totally exhausted and sort of flopping into a bush and there would be these people there standing around it..and they would surround the bush and someone would try and make the bird fly so that they could all see it..., it's not there to be stared at and ticked off. I mean they couldn't actually describe what the bird does; all they know is what it is. I think to some extent they are missing the main point. I think I would rather just look at something and you know and just take it in....A lot of people you see are just rushing off

to get the next tick and they just link them en masse - all they are talking about is a lifetime list...it's a very weird way of looking at the world" (Joe, Baja).

Disturbance of wildlife (see Curtin *et al.*, 2008; Curry *et al.*, 2001; Yarmoloy *et al.*, 1998; Stockwell *et al.*, 1991; Freddy *et al.*, 1986) implies a change of behaviour and this is perceived to affect the authenticity of the sighting. Tour participants want to see the focal species behaving 'normally': *"I always worry that my being there is going to change what they are doing" (Joe, Baja).* Yet clearly just being close to wildlife and in their vision can make this a contradiction in terms.

This is not just directed towards fauna, disturbing flora too is a concern less muted: *"Sometimes I feel rather agitated if I've got a biggish group and there are a lot of plants that people are treading on and I have got no idea what the long term effects of that is. It isn't necessarily bad, but certainly at the time it feels bad and it might be something that needs disturbance and maybe it's a good thing but I think whereas they might notice the plants in flower, they must trample the ones that aren't so I am sure that there is some effect there (David, tour leader, Natural History Tours).*

4.7.7 Awareness of impacts

Contrasted to other forms of travel, particularly the mass, enclave-type of tourism development which they are very familiar with, the small group size and environmental focus of wildlife tourism is enough to put wildlife tours in a good light with regards to negative impacts. Most participants genuinely believe that their interest and behaviour at the destination is more wholesome than their typical package tourist counterparts. However issues such as overuse of wildlife sites, benefits to the local economy and sustainable development do concern them:

"Obviously places like Lesbos, you can see that bird-watching and eco tourism type industry benefits the local economy but whether it actually benefits the local ecosystem is questionable because they have gone a bit over the top - there are too many people riding around doing too many of the same places and disturbing too many of the rare birds so perhaps its too busy. Something like Kruper's Nuthatch, there's only about five. Everyone goes and disturbs the same tree and the same bit of forest, next year there is only going to be four, so perhaps it's not so good" (Ian, Andalucia).

However, the typical discussion with regards to impacts tends to be balanced by the fact that tourism supports a contingent valuation of wildlife (see Tisdell and Wilson 2002; Hoyt 2001; Green and Higginbottom 2000; Davis *et al.*, 1999; Davis and Tisdell 1996; Groom

et al., 1991); i.e. that economic benefit from tourism will somehow ensure the conservation of species:

"On the other hand if the bird-watchers weren't going there they wouldn't keep the places like Colony Pool where there are hundreds of waders. They would just drain it and build a hotel so I guess it's a compromise. I mean look at this place...(El Rocio), they wouldn't look after it the way they do if companies like ours didn't come here and put money into the economy because of it. So there is obviously positives and negatives – it's just a compromise. (Ian, Andalucia).

"Unless there is an economic value it (wildlife) will probably go. So no, usually I think that wildlife tourism is a good thing rather than a bad thing (Linda, DWT)

"There are various places in the world where the fact that tourists are coming in and spending money will make them think before they start destroying wildlife. If you take Malta, for instance, where they shoot practically everything that flies, some would say that we mustn't shouldn't go there while they continue shooting – we shouldn't spend our money there, but the other one is that you should go there so that they can see that wildlife tourism is producing money for the local economy and therefore they will preserve the wildlife" (Peter, Andalucia).

This is a view which tends to be supported by tour operators. The Travelling Naturalist's environmental policy (2007:5) states: *"we believe that ecotourism has a truly important part to play in the conservation of many threatened habitats worldwide. Indeed tourism can be the major factor in saving an area from damage by destructive forestry or agricultural practices. We think that ecotourism also has a role in promoting the whole idea of conservation, especially in those countries where it is given a low priority. We will therefore continue to run tours to several countries with a dubious environmental record believing that by working with conservation-minded local agents and organisations within those countries we can help to strengthen their hand."*

Impacts are also perceived to be lessened by the presence and network of local leaders whose livelihoods depend on the sustainable presence of wildlife. *"I think most trips are well organised and responsible and often when you have got access to places, wardens are there and if you enter a particular forest, you've got to get a permit and they are fairly well regulated so there is not really that much of a concern" (Simon, Andalucia).*

"Probably also because there are a lot of other people in the area and leaders rely on everybody being responsible and not flushing stuff away and spoiling it for other people. It's a very close-knit community. If you flush it from the site, then you'll upset other

people. You later come along with paying punters to see them and then they're gone" (Simon, Andalucia).

The tour leaders themselves very aware of the potential impacts and levels of responsibility both towards leading the group and towards the wildlife and destinations. One thing that is considered fundamental to the sustainability of the industry is *"to get the money into the hands of the locals"* (Mark, Andalucia).

"They see you bring people to see the wildlife in a responsible way, and that they are spending money in the local economy and they are doing something which is perfectly acceptable in the countryside; they are not killing anything, they are not destroying anything. They are sensible people who are doing something which may seem odd but very respectable and they are bringing something into the local economy and I think that is fundamental and more and more, I see that now as well that we should be trying to support any local initiatives that are going on" (Mark, tour leader, Andalucia).

There was some evidence of this in Baja; the area's wildlife did appear to instil a sense of responsibility amongst the Mexican crew: *"Overall, I found it reassuring to witness the crew's deep admiration and respect for the wildlife in their midst; they genuinely didn't seem to hassle the whales. Instead, one got the sense that they weren't purely perceived as a commodity; that they genuinely seemed to assume some guardianship over them"* (Travel diary, Baja).

Whilst the revenue and support for conservation is seen as a positive impact, there is a great deal more scepticism as to how much money stays in the local economy and how far the local community are involved or empowered. Some participants were particularly aware that it might not be as much as they would expect as Tanya (Baja) ponders:

"It's difficult with this kind of...narrow kind of we've come here and we have bought this package haven't we basically? With it we have provided employment for these guys for their services on the boat but I am not entirely kind of....on this particular one I don't know...we are not in contact with local people really and we are not distributing our dollars very much. We are not interacting with many Mexicans and we aren't going to be campaigning for Save the Whale when we get back are we? Well we might? Some people might actually join something or buy Christmas cards in support of the whales". "It is, in reality very difficult to know just how eco, ecotours are. "So many operators now just call everything 'eco' whether it is an eco-lodge or eco-resort or tours or whatever and I just sometimes feel that I don't really know this".

"I would prefer to think that the local community are benefiting in some way, but like on this tour, it becomes quite difficult to ascertain whether that is in fact the case" (Michelle, Baja).

Part of this belief stemmed from the accommodation that they stayed in. (Wildlife tourism often uses the same accommodation infrastructure as mass tourism). Here it was noted that hotel development tended to exclude local people and ignore the environment. More could and should be done to attract wildlife in tourism development. Moreover, hotel development which has no sense of individuality or local distinctiveness is questionable for some participants. Striking the balance between comfort and minimal environmental impact is a conundrum for the operators who package the itineraries:

"It's a bit like this hotel, it is very much more touristy than the last one which I felt had its faults but I liked it, yes. But when you think about it you see, this has got – its an image of being pretentious and somehow or other its very self-enclosed and what I think I don't like and it is interesting in a place like last night talking to local inhabitants, I felt that they were part of it but in this one there is no where that you can talk to local inhabitants and it is very much an enclosed space for middle class people. When places become enclosed that it is when they are not looking out at the wildlife or what is outside. And that worries me. And you are suddenly in a place where only tourists go" (Rebecca, Andalucia).

"I don't think that enough money reaches their economy. For example, in Tanzania, some of the time we were accommodated in travel lodges or whatever, or hotels owned by international companies and you think how much of this money is actually going to get back to the locals. I mean some of it does obviously because the waiters and the chambermaids, they will benefit, but perhaps not as much as one would like. I went to the Gambia once and there all of the hotels were owned by European or Scandinavians and they were creaming most of the profits off (Matthew, DWT).

"If you take this hotel development, the wildlife isn't here as far as they are concerned – it isn't here – not in the picture at all". Moreover the hotel grounds could do more to attract wildlife (as per gardens back home). "It's pretty bleak between here and the swimming pool. If it could be much more wildlife friendly by having flowers that are indigenous and will grow quickly and that sort of thing breaking up large expanses of grass. It's something very simple." (Rebecca, Andalucia).

"We were in Sabah in Borneo in a lodge right in the middle which was like a four star Hilton and one wondered why you had to have this incredible luxury on a holiday which is really the reverse of what you are trying to achieve. It's a question of trying to get people to realise that you can exist without all of this" (Joe, Baja).

Unfortunately Joe's point is not wholly supported by those who work within the wildlife tourism industry. Awareness of impacts does not appear to necessarily mean behavioural change. For example Jeremy admitted that when booking trips he paid very little attention to whether accommodation was locally owned. The motivations for doing the trip and the desire for comfort and ease overrides concerns regarding the economic impacts:

"Hotels matter a lot I think. People like a good place to come back to and they make lots of comments on the hotels. As you get older, as the clients get older they are more and more concerned about the comfort, the food, that sort of thing. I don't mean that that is the case for everybody, but it's a general trend I'm sure. They can afford it so you might as well buy what you want really and they want en suite, they want good food, they want nice wine; all that sort of thing: plenty of room, not to be disturbed at night (David, tour leader, Natural History Tours).

Finally participants voiced notions of being pathfinders; a small number of tourists who pave the way for future development. There was a palpable feeling that destinations such as Baja, having been discovered by the wildlife tourism industry, were at the crux of further expansion; a scenario which has already consumed areas of Antarctica and the Galapagos Islands as Sophie (Baja) explains: *"The Antarctic worries me. There are more and more ships going there and some really big cruisers too. It isn't a good thing as that used to be such a pristine environment. The Galapagos as well. I am not at all keen to go there because I feel it has been spoilt by tourism and I don't want to be part of that".*

Such destinations soon become attractive to larger and potentially less interested markets (Duffus and Dearden 1990) as this extract from the author's journal illustrates: *"My mind returned to John's presentation on fin whales the night before. I had half-heard him comment as to why he doesn't like to name the animals he studies. I ask him now to explain the reason for this. It seems that whale watching off of the New England coast (which is his other job) is a different product entirely; more like mass tourism. Here (and occasionally with Baja) he encounters people who unless a whale comes right up to the boat or breaches right in front of their eyes, then they haven't been whale-watching. He refers to the "circus mentality" of some types of whale watching and feels that giving whales names gives the wrong impression and feeds unrealistic expectations. I totally agree (Travel diary, Baja).*

It was difficult on tour to ascertain the scale of the whale watch industry in Baja. At that time, it looked low key, but it is difficult to be certain how the numbers swell in the peak season. Moreover the company whose boat the tour participants travelled on had

produced promotional images which may encourage high expectations as this excerpt from the author's diary shows:

'We planed over the water at great speed and with great expectations on my part at least. The picture in the brochure (and in Naturetrek's brochure) had hinted at very close, eye to eye contact with Grey Whales. I wondered if that would truly materialise and secretly I hoped that it would. As we made our way back towards the mouth of Magdalena Bay we began to encounter whales; usually in small groups of two or three. Luis lulled the engines and approached them slowly and carefully always along the portside, never really close and never directly behind or in front of them. Clearly it is a careful and considerate approach in line with whale watch regulations and guidelines elsewhere. I do not get the impression that we are overly disturbing the whales (although over the next day or so I am less sure as the number of whale watch vessels increase)'. (Travel diary, Baja).

This was an opinion supported by other participants: *"I can see in years to come that there will be a lot more boats in the Sea of Cortez and it will lose the meaning of it; it would lose something if there were huge numbers of boats all competing to see the whales. You probably wouldn't want to be part of it (Marie, Baja).*

When asked whether if a participant thought that they were having an impact, would they still travel to see these things, most had a similar response: *"Well it's chicken and egg. Do you say that if we don't come, then someone else will and nothing will be gained. It's quite hard (Carol, DWT).* This is a debate frequently voiced and used to justify trip decisions and reduce cognitive dissonance.

Some were acutely aware that getting to the destination comprised the biggest impact and this had begun to affect decision making: *"I've got to the point now where I feel that we have seen three different rainforests, we don't need to see another and with global warming we have to think about this a bit more. We felt a bit guilt going to Turkey for two days just to see the eclipse; such a long way to go for such a short period of time (Sophie, Baja).*

But as aforementioned, such altruism is not a common attribute evidenced by the growth in this type of travel, the reluctance to pay an environmental tax and the wish to see these places and their wildlife before they vanish into extinction. Instead participants concentrate mostly on the positive attributes of their travel particularly the communication of the importance of conservation and to enthuse people with a love of wildlife and biodiversity.

"In a sense anything we do will have an impact and if one was really bothered you wouldn't do it. On the other hand you hope that by doing it, this is the point that came up in the Antarctic, we hope that by people having the experience, they will be able to communicate to others how important conservation is" (Michelle, Baja).

"Even if it is about talking to your friends or your family then something good, in a small way, has come from us being here. In this small way, we have hopefully contributed positively. I think the Galapagos trip was like that because it is so intense because of the species and the numbers of animals there and the birds really really overwhelm you. I think coming back from the Galapagos, I felt very emotional for a long time. It really and truly affected me. Afterwards I joined the Galapagos Conservation Trust and I am now supporting their work as much as I can" (Tanya, Baja).

4.7.8 Conclusion

This section has enabled a greater insight into the tangible and operational, rather than psychological, experiences of the tourists. It further demonstrates their expectations, their experiences of group travel and the high importance given to the field and social skills of the tour leaders whose role is fundamental to the success of the tour; a point demonstrated by the model of the multiplicity of tour leader skills.

General naturalists, along with the wildlife tour operators and their tour leaders, are only too aware of the impacts that their visit has on fragile habitats and species. They are particularly sensitive to potential disturbance of focal species, of the importance of their visit to the local economy and contribution to conservation as well as the environmental footprint that travel to the destination naturally involves. However, they prefer to concentrate on the positive impacts of this type of tourism.

In its entirety the results and discussion has moved the reader through each element of the wildlife tourist experience from their initial interest and view of nature, wildlife as a presentation of their self, the development of essential field skills and photography, memorable wildlife encounters and the spiritual and psychological benefits of combining watching wildlife with a holiday experience, to the benefits of organised tours and the operational and organisational elements of an itinerary. The next chapter attempts to draw these separate themes into firm conclusions and proposes a consumer-orientated illustration for the management of wildlife tourism which will move the sector towards reducing the negative impacts and increasing the positive ones.

5.0 Conclusions and Implications

The aim of this research was to explore the culture of wildlife tourism in order to contribute to a better understanding of what it means to enjoy wildlife experiences, the content of what exactly is enjoyed, the process through which people attend to and perceive wildlife and the emotional responses it provokes. In order to provide suitable answers to these questions, this chapter will use the objectives of the thesis to structure the main findings thus demonstrating that the objectives have been met. Section 5.2 proceeds to highlight the findings which represent new contributions to current knowledge. Finally, the possible implications of this qualitative thesis, its limitations and the further research required are reviewed.

5.1 Summary of main findings

5.1.1 Objective 1: *To review the current literature concerning wildlife tourism, human dimensions of wildlife, mankind's modern relationship with animals and the nature of the lived experience.*

The literature review demonstrates that wildlife tourism, which can incorporate anything from insects (dragonflies, butterflies, glow-worms), flowers, mammals and birds, has become a potentially lucrative activity which is attracting attention from tourists, destinations, governments and researchers. There are a number of positive benefits associated with wildlife tourism, namely financial contributions, non-financial contributions, socio-economic incentives for conservation, environmental education and psychological benefits for tourists. However, there are a number of negative impacts which dominate the literature particularly with regards to disturbance such as the disruption of daily behaviour including feeding, breeding and resting. Whether the positives outweigh the benefits has yet to be tried or tested and may well depend upon how the resource and visitors are managed which in turn depends upon understanding the expectations, the behaviour and the experiential benefits sought by tourists.

Given the spectrum of tourist-wildlife opportunities, it follows that wildlife tourists are by no means an homogenous market, there are significant variations in typologies, from the 'serious' to the 'casual' and from the 'specialist' to the 'generalist'. Therefore planning and management become more difficult as the behaviour and needs of each segment differ enormously. However, what is apparent across each segment is the desire to see nature and wild animals in their natural habitat. Much has been written about why this should be so and a number of themes emerge such as a desire for a more active rather than passive holiday, a desire for travel to be life-enriching, and the fact that once very remote locations such as the Polar Regions, rainforests and reefs are now within possible

reach. More importantly, however, a number of authors argue an intrinsic, innate and possibly genetic desire to reconnect with nature due to urbanisation, industrialisation and commercialisation, and a burgeoning interest in the theory of biophilia (Wilson 1984) in which we are hard wired to be connected with nature, wildlife, and nature's cyclical rhythms. Some would even go as far as to say that urbanisation and decontextualisation with nature is the root of many social and health problems that are inherent in modern society (Bird 2007).

It is accepted that our view of the animal kingdom is socially and historically constructed which underpins studies that explore what constitutes charismatic species and their commodified performance. Moreover, it is the recognition that humans not only share spaces with the animal kingdom but that the basic principles of survival rests on similar behaviours such as nest building, seeking food, mating and rearing young; activities with which we, as humans, can associate and empathise with. Empathy is based on emotion and it is through this kinship and connectedness that we may see the animal kingdom. Whilst such anthropomorphic views are often condemned, others may argue that it is precisely this empathy which helps us to consider the plight of our fellow creatures.

Understanding wildlife tourists' attitudes towards the environment is an essential component of resource management. A key consideration is how humans perceive themselves in relation to the natural environment, i.e. whether they are ecocentric or anthropocentric. At the very basic level it is the consideration of whether wildlife has intrinsic value or merely extrinsic, i.e. recreational and economic value. The work that has been carried out on wildlife value-orientations tends to originate from the United States and shows a positive correlation between pro-protectionist / conservationist values and education, affluence, urbanisation and post-materialism; attributes which also describe the typical profile of a wildlife tourist.

The literature also explored the philosophies behind the *'lived wildlife experience'* and found that the experiences in nature have an existential authenticity, i.e. that it is the out-of-ordinary experience which is authentic rather than the object of the tourist gaze. Whilst wildlife tourism marketing often advocates one-to-one, up-close and personal experiences with wildlife in natural settings, the experience is very often mediated, usually by physical barriers such as boardwalks, viewing platforms, zones (or enclosures) and also by guides, by codes of conduct and other such methods to control tourist behaviour. Equally, the attributes of the setting (i.e. habitat) can facilitate or restrain the types of possible experiences.

Experience itself is a complex and profound concept to explore. It appears to exist in a blend of past and present. Van Manen (1990) concurs that while experiences have a temporal structure, they can never be fully grasped in their immediacy. Instead they

gather significance as we reflect on, and give memory to, them. Moreover, they gain hermeneutic significance as we (reflectively) remember them.

DeMares and Krycka (1998) claim that wild animal encounters trigger peak experiences and transcendent consciousness; transcendent because the persona of the experiencer is not dominant, almost that the experience, always spontaneous, is so intense that it overrides the normal state of '*being*'. There have been substantial studies which indicate how tourists benefit from these enriching close encounters. Findings suggest that watching wildlife promotes both cognitive and affective benefits such as an increase in knowledge and awareness, pleasure, curiosity, sense of wonderment, privilege and amazement which together promote a lasting positive mood.

However, more has been written about the wider emotional and psychological benefits of experiences in nature than watching wildlife *per se*. White and Hendee (2000) proclaim that there is a correlation between wilderness and the development of self, development of community and spiritual development which implies a profound sense of connection to nature, the larger universe, a higher power, a feeling of oneness and a connection to '*other*' as opposed to connection to '*self*'. However, investigation into the spiritual aspects of wildlife tourism is hampered because spiritual experiences are intensely personal and often inexpressible. Moreover the personal meanings of the term 'spirituality' make it operationally difficult to define and therefore investigate.

Nevertheless, there are a number of physical attributes which have been identified as a key feature of the visitor experience. These are physical closeness to wild animals, interaction, authenticity, the natural setting, small tour groups, presence of additional wildlife, education, interpretation and conservation, simplicity and lack of commercialisation rank highly important. Conversely inappropriate tourist behaviour (avid photographing), large group sizes, and particularly different motivations of different visitors are cause for concern.

Finally, Section 2.5 explored the spectrum of management techniques which may be employed to alleviate or reduce disturbance. These include physical controls such as protected zones, barriers, boardwalks, fences and paths; direct controls such as rules, regulations and permits to prohibit or restrict detrimental visitor behaviour; and finally indirect controls such as codes of conduct, interpretation and environmental education. These techniques can be divided into ecological and human categories of management with most emphasis being made on the latter. Despite good intentions, conflicts with objectives relating to visitor satisfaction can be a critical and difficult issue when it comes to deciding upon effective management actions. Trade-offs are likely to occur between maintaining low visitor density whilst providing public access; between maintaining low

disturbance levels and desired close proximity between wildlife and visitors; and between a sort after natural experience and a highly managed one (Higginbottom 2004).

5.1.2 Objective 2: *To investigate the business of wildlife tour operating; who are the major players, who are their clients and what products do they offer?*

The British wildlife travel market can be divided into six broad product categories: Expeditions, Bird Tours, General Naturalist, Domestic Tours, Safaris and finally Adventure/Exploration. However, a certain amount of blurring exists between and within each sector with considerable movement by clients from one operator to another and from one special interest to another. This means that the typical generalist – specialist continuum proposed by Duffus and Dearden (1990) or the expert – novice continuum (Higham 1998) is too simplistic a model for this market. The product and tourist spectrum comprises a number of continuums; each ranging from knowledge and activity intensive, to passive activity, relaxation and general interest.

For these operators, continued success in the market place is highly dependent on product development especially given the high rate of repeat business. Consequently, new wildlife destinations are regularly sought to avoid stagnation. It is also clear that the wildlife market has changed considerably. According to the tour operators, the new traveller and the new market arrived in the late 1980s alongside more conspicuous consumption, money, sophistication and media influences. Long overland, adventurous expeditions with a certain degree of hardship and reverence have been misplaced by the desire to travel in comfortable surroundings, for example bathing under hot running water, walking only moderate distances and being generally sheltered and cosseted from the harsh realities of nature travel. Therefore, it has become a highly comfortable, safe and mediated experience despite the remoteness of the destinations. In both specialist and generalist markets, the importance of good tour leaders and interpretation cannot be overstated. The role and quality of guides in providing the educational element of the holiday is a principal selling point.

Overall there has been a gradual shift from a highly specialised market offering intensive physical activity and high involvement in a particular species (usually birds) to a more general market that is looking for an interesting, but pleasant and relaxing holiday based around a general interest in nature and the environment. Nevertheless, both markets co-exist resulting in a complex product and tourist spectrum ranging from knowledge and activity intensive, to passive activity, relaxation and general interest. Neither market is inclusive. Instead there is a degree of movement between one and the other which has lead to operators offering a wider range of products to suit the hard-core expert and the novice enthusiast. In all cases, there is a tendency to appeal to a minority, dedicated, but lucrative market which is defined by the operators as affluent, middle-class, well-educated

and middle-aged / retired with more females than males; a profile which supports other studies into wildlife tourism populations (Bulbeck 2005; Muloin 1998).

5.1.3 Objective 3: To *discover how wildlife tourists became interested in wildlife and how their love of wildlife and nature translates into their everyday world*

Discussions with participants suggest there are four ways that their love of nature began: via parents and grandparents; via their partner and his or her interest; growing up in a rural environment or following a surprise and memorable wildlife encounter. Family influences are by far the most prevalent instigation of love and awareness of the natural world, closely followed by the influence of friends and teachers, and the environment in which they grew up in.

There is a distinct over-lap in gardening and wildlife tourism market segments. Participants view their gardens as an extension of their interest in wildlife. As participants become more experienced and knowledgeable, they will begin to look at habitats and particularly the plants that attract or support focal species, allowing them to understand what species they are likely to see given certain habitats or vegetation.

Having designed a space where wildlife is welcome, seeing things in their own garden is just as thrilling, and sometimes even more significant than seeing wildlife on tour. In part this thrill is due to the nature of the encounter, in that they themselves have been successful in creating an environment which attracts wildlife, and the caring and nurturing emotions it provokes. There is a tenable sense of responsibility and relationship with these regular garden visitors which appears to fulfil an emotional need to tend to other living things and provides a means for relaxation; particularly for the female participants.

Linked to the themes of wildlife gardens and caring for nature is the fascination that participants express with the relationship between human habitation and industrial development and wildlife. There are three elements to this theme: how wildlife adapts to a changing or built environment, the reassurance that they are adapting and the pure joy at seeing nature amidst urban or industrial 'greyness'.

Finally, it is clear that for this market segment, love of nature and wildlife go far beyond the holiday experience into their everyday world. All participants belonged to wildlife conservation organisations such as the RSPB and/or their local Wildlife Trusts. Many were involved in some voluntary aspects of conservation and others made donations to wildlife-orientated charities such as the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society. They have a tendency to carry binoculars with them for every outdoor activity they partake and they were on the lookout for wildlife as much at home as when away.

5.1.4 Objective 4: *To understand how wildlife tourists perceive the natural world, i.e. whether they have an eco-centric or anthropocentric view of nature*

A detailed discussion of ecocentrism and anthropocentrism is given in Section 4.2.6. The participants in this exploratory research showed a distinct leaning towards ecocentrism. They fit the aesthetic, spiritual and athletic domains of Godfrey-Smith's model of instrumental justification for the existence of wildlife (1980) whereby wildlife is valued for providing spiritual revival and aesthetic delight, and for tourism and recreation. They derive immense satisfaction and inspiration from the marvel of diversity and feel themselves to be part of the world's living whole; not separate from it but living in amongst it; thus the fascination with the way that wildlife inhabits our own lived spaces, even in industrial or urban settings. There is also the recognition by some participants that we could not function as humans without such abundant wildlife. This leans the findings towards biophilia (Wilson 1984); particularly the naturalistic, ecologicistic, aesthetic, humanistic and moralistic components of the hypothesis (Kellert and Wilson 1993) and the inherent need to have nature around them in some form whether on holiday or merely watching the birds in their gardens. In addition, their own identity and personal fulfilment is derived from contact with the natural world.

Whilst participants would not describe themselves as viewing wildlife in an anthropomorphic way due to the scientific study and identification that is inherent in the culture of dedicated wildlife tours, female participants frequently referred to their being '*a relationship*' with wildlife; that there are elements of communication between human and animal species. For example, when an animal makes eye contact with them and when regular birds in their gardens become accustomed to them. There was also evidence from both males and female participants that there was empathy with the plight for survival and rearing young; once again implying the connection between wildlife and humans.

5.1.5 Objective 5: *To explore the field skills involved in wildlife watching; particularly with regards to identification and photography*

As previously mentioned, the interest in wildlife transcends the mere holiday experience. So much so that it becomes a way of life and denotes who they are; thus the boundary between '*holiday self*' and '*actual self*' becomes blurred. This is due in part to the intellectual capital and skills that are developed and enhanced through the watching and learning about wildlife which are an intrinsic part of wildlife tourism. The skills and expertise required help to construct their own identity on tour and at home in their daily activities.

There is a distinct culture associated with wildlife tourism which is evidenced by dress code, the technical equipment and skills required, and their tourist behaviour. Quite often this represents a continuation of their (once if retired) professional selves. This has resonance with the notion of '*serious leisure*' espoused by Stebbins (1992, 2007). It also highlights the personal need for achievement, challenge and perceived competence in the process of widening one's wildlife identification skills, experience and knowledge whilst on tour. Whilst this is apparent in all participants, there are differences in the degree to which this is important. Within this segment, there are those for who identification is a must, those who want to be able to identify species but find it difficult to remember them, and those who are very motivated to see and learn about new things but who are less concerned with naming everything.

Identification, being adept at using binoculars and spotting wildlife adds to an immense sense of achievement that manifests itself in three ways: being the first to spot something, finding, tracking and identifying wildlife on your own accord, and developing the patience to wait, watch and study. On tour, these skills help the tourist to gain kudos in the group. Equally the reverse can be true, spotting something but wrongly identifying it on tour can be a source of embarrassment.

Photography is another intrinsic part of a wildlife watching holiday. It provides tangible evidence as to what has been seen and is used as a record of identification, as a way to consolidate memories and to tell stories, for the challenge and satisfaction (photographing wildlife is not an easy thing) and finally as a way to further develop the '*professional self*' for illustrated talks at wildlife meetings. Once again, the desire for developing photographic skills, whilst common, is not an homogenous trait. Some participants considered that wildlife events are best enjoyed in their entirety rather than mediated through a camera lens. Furthermore the equipment and the rush to get the shot can be an encumbrance.

Finally, wildlife tourists come with a travel history and a travel career which is evidenced by the exchange of stories whilst on tour. This social interaction is also important in deriving a sense of self which in this case has both social and geographical connotations; participants are not only who they are but also where they have been. There are similarities to the Travel Career Ladder advocated by Pearce (1988) except that careers are based upon habitats, focal species and new destinations. Their careers give them certain authority and presence whilst on tour and turn them into opinion leaders. Their stories can reinforce or instil demand for certain places and wildlife.

5.1.6 Objective 6: *To understand what constitutes a memorable wildlife experience in terms of charismatic species and close proximity*

When asked to describe memorable wildlife experiences, participants gave a wide range of responses which depend upon a number of key factors such as the charisma of the species, its rarity, the level of surprise, seeing something for the first-time, the degree of close proximity and species congregated in large numbers. However, unforgettable wildlife experiences are not necessarily made up of the exotic. Highlights can include relatively common British birds or rarer endemic birds and animals which visit participants' gardens. Moreover, seeing something in a new place or getting a better view of it also constructs memorable experiences.

Whilst the literature details the types of wildlife which are deemed charismatic by the mass market or wider population, this study confirms that, for the dedicated wildlife watcher, charisma is not so easily defined as it is not necessarily dependent on the large, 'cute' or 'cuddly'. Instead most species are appealing in some way and participants generally share a desire to see as many endemic species as possible on tour including insects, reptiles and plants. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and varies according to their particular interest. Nevertheless favourites include birds, large mammals and of course cetaceans, which consistently provoke strong emotions and memorable moments. Key behavioural attributes such as inquisitiveness, intelligence, playfulness and nurturing young render animals as charismatic.

When asked to describe favourite birds, colour and behaviour are important. Raptors score highly but also many of Britain's endemic birds such as Wrens, Ospreys, and Spoonbills. Participants, despite being well travelled, appeared to give as much, and sometimes more, credence to endemic British charismatic species found much closer to home: species can become even more favoured and 'special' if they make their presence felt in the participants' home surroundings.

Due to the intensity of wildlife tours, the richness of the locations, and the skill of the tour leaders, wildlife encounters can come in close succession and render the experience too much to take in at the time. Instead wildlife experiences tend to gather significance as time lapses and they have been absorbed and reflected upon. At the time the importance and significance of what is being witnessed is somehow lost in the excitement of the event; it is only later that the true significance of what has been seen becomes 'hard-wired'.

Participants consistently explain that it is not always easy to pick out the 'best' or most memorable wildlife events because almost everything they see is astonishing and relevant in its own right. Each special moment and encounter combines to make a

generally enjoyable and memorable wildlife trip. Nonetheless there are certain characteristics which help determine a memorable moment.

First-time sightings are always memorable because of the novelty of the experience and the fact that the wildlife, which has previously only been seen in books or on television, suddenly takes a more real form and context. These moments particularly stand out if they are accompanied by a sense of achievement, of having discovered and identified it for oneself.

Inherent in the extracts regarding memorable experiences is the perception of 'the unexpected' and the spontaneous. The surprise can stem from the fact that sightings of wildlife cannot usually be guaranteed. Therefore, the anticipation of potentially seeing something is almost as exciting as seeing it. For this generalist market, there are few prior expectations and therefore non-sightings do not always provoke disappointment. Besides where there is disappointment at not seeing a species the first time, it can make it all the more special when at last it is encountered. Linked to this is the notion of 'what might be', the anticipation and excitement of witnessing the drama of survival which is played out in the wild, therefore participants can be equally mesmerised and fascinated by the 'kill' or the cruelty of nature. Participants frequently use language associated with theatre, drama and music to explain such significant moments.

Even for this dedicated and knowledgeable market, close proximity, one-to-one or eye-to-eye contact enhances the experience. This is for three reasons. First, it allows a closer, more detailed view; secondly, it is a more intimate encounter; one that suggests a meeting rather than a viewing; and finally, it allows for a totally unmediated view. In total contrast to the one-to-one or eye-to-eye experience, large numbers of one species or simply the opportunity to enjoy many new species in a short space of time also contribute to a memorable experience.

5.1.7 **Objective 7: *To explore what feelings are evoked when watching wildlife***

In the field, the complexities that comprise a wildlife experience can be difficult for participants to articulate and problematic for the researcher to capture. Words fall very short particularly when talking about the emotions that are invoked when watching wildlife which is potentially why so little work has been done on the human-animal interaction and emotion. The '*magic*' of the experience can be knowable but is unable to be described in words, much less measured and quantified in a '*scientific*' way. Despite this difficulty in articulating and presenting such psychologically deep experiences, several themes emerge; predominantly a sense of wonderment, the changing concept of time, space for

contemplation, and finally the spiritual, emotional and physiological benefits of wildlife watching.

Given the combination of wildlife spectacle and setting, a sense of wonderment and awe is the principal theme to arise from the transcripts. There are three perspectives to this: there is the emotional response of awe, wonder and a profound sense of privilege at seeing wildlife, there is the cognitive wonder and amazement with regards to nature's design and diversity, and finally, there is the affinitive wonderment of unlocking our connections with the natural world.

In this, there is a distinct kinship between Maslow's peak experience and Csikszentmihalyi's (1968) theory of '*flow*'. Simply being in the presence of wildlife can evoke feelings of profound happiness in which is incorporated all the identified elements of the human emotional peak: intention, reciprocity, connectedness, aliveness and harmony. In this state of consciousness, the passage of time is distorted and participants are totally absorbed in their activity and the moment. This suggests that they have entered a state of '*flow*' where the awareness of self, particularly the ego, falls away and thoughts and skills can run freely and creatively. In this reprieve from everyday realities, participants are focussed on the present using carefully developed skills to track, spot and identify the wildlife; they are '*in the moment*'. The wildlife experience is therefore a heightened multi-sensory one. Moments like these are common on an intensive wildlife tour. They clearly have a spiritual component in that they never fail to uplift and stir the spectator's spirit, and for some people they are an opportunity for deep contemplation regarding the natural world, their place in it and whether it has evolved or been created by God.

The participant's experience of nature and wildlife are not only spatial events but also temporal ones too. In the liminoid, embodied space of the nature and wildlife encounter, socially constructed, modern fast time dissipates and is replaced by still life and motionless time; bringing participants back in touch with nature's slow, '*glacial*' rhythms: real time as opposed to clock-time. One of the joys of wildlife watching is that it provides time to stand and stare; a rare commodity in this fast, consumer-orientated world. Participants found that time expands when they are engrossed in the moment and thus time passes more quickly, they also frequently mentioned the relationship between time and nature. Time has several key dimensions to the wildlife experience, it:

- provides time to relax, unwind and contemplate,
- allows time to reconnect,
- memories of wildlife can suspend you in time,
- the spontaneous wildlife experience can interrupt time,
- watching nature allows the creation of personal time,

- time ceases to have relevance in the wildlife encounter, and finally
- nature and the appearance of wildlife can mark the passing of time.

Given the evidence that wildlife watching allows time for contemplation, is spiritually uplifting and emotionally and sensually absorbing, it follows that there are possible psychological and other health benefits to having access to natural environments and particularly wildlife. Participants claimed that wildlife moments, above all those encountered 'at home' lifted them out of the everyday and restored or sustained their faith in life.

5.1.8 Objective 8: *To understand the expectations and benefits of travelling on an organised wildlife holiday and how the experience is managed.*

Knowing where to go and access to knowledgeable guides underpins the tourist's decision to travel in a tour group. Getting away from the contrived tourist spaces and seeing animals in their natural settings is an essential component for the dedicated wildlife holiday market. The ability to offer this depends entirely on the skill of the tour leader and for this reason the employment and retention of knowledgeable and personable wildlife tour leaders is an essential component of the tour operators' success.

They are central to the tourist experience: so much so that it is common for tours to be bought based upon who is leading them and where customer loyalty can be as much to do with the tour leader as the tour operator. Their reputation goes before them and participants frequently recommend them to friends. There are a number of key attributes that a guide must have: versatility, excellent field skills, sound local knowledge, reputation (many write natural history guide books), and good administrative and organisational skills and the ability to be a good social facilitator.

Participants themselves can be good spotters and identifiers and may even be experts in their own field. Moreover, when group dynamics work well, it facilitates the sharing of experiences with like-minded individuals which has the potential to augment the wildlife encounter particularly if the experience is shared with a '*significant other*'. The desire to share can be more complex than merely the emotional fulfilment sharing can elicit, it can also be more functional such as the desire to help fellow travellers make a sighting, to share knowledge and skills, for confirmation of a sighting and for the laying down of shared memories. Meeting new people with a shared interest is also another key benefit.

The degree of focus is an important consideration for both clients and tour leaders. One of the most frequent comments from participants is the desire for a broad focus. Whilst seeing wildlife is the primary motivation, understanding and experiencing a 'sense of

place' is a close second and if overlooked is detrimental to the overall experience. This is enhanced by the use of local as well as company tour leaders.

Whilst general naturalists tend not to go on tour with a wish list, there is still an undercurrent of stress placed on the tour leader to see as many species that are outlined in the trip spec which is available on-line. This depends on which company and which tourist typology they are leading for. The desire to see focal species, coupled with the tour leaders' predisposition to satisfy clients' wishes, can encourage controversial management policies such as the use of tape recorders and the provision of food. Whilst participants were generally satisfied with regards to food provisioning, they displayed more cognitive dissonance when it came to using tape recorders to lure birds. This, they felt to be an unacceptable and unfair level of disturbance for which there is no gain for the bird. It also detracts from their notion of a spontaneous and authentic wildlife experience. Participants do not want to feel that they are causing an unacceptable impact on the focal species and want to avoid its disturbance if possible. Getting close, as discussed, is important but not to the detriment of the wildlife; they want to witness '*normal*' (i.e. not disturbed) animal behaviour. Fanatical birders (i.e. listers), appear to have a particularly bad reputation with participants; most of whom at some point had encountered misbehaviour.

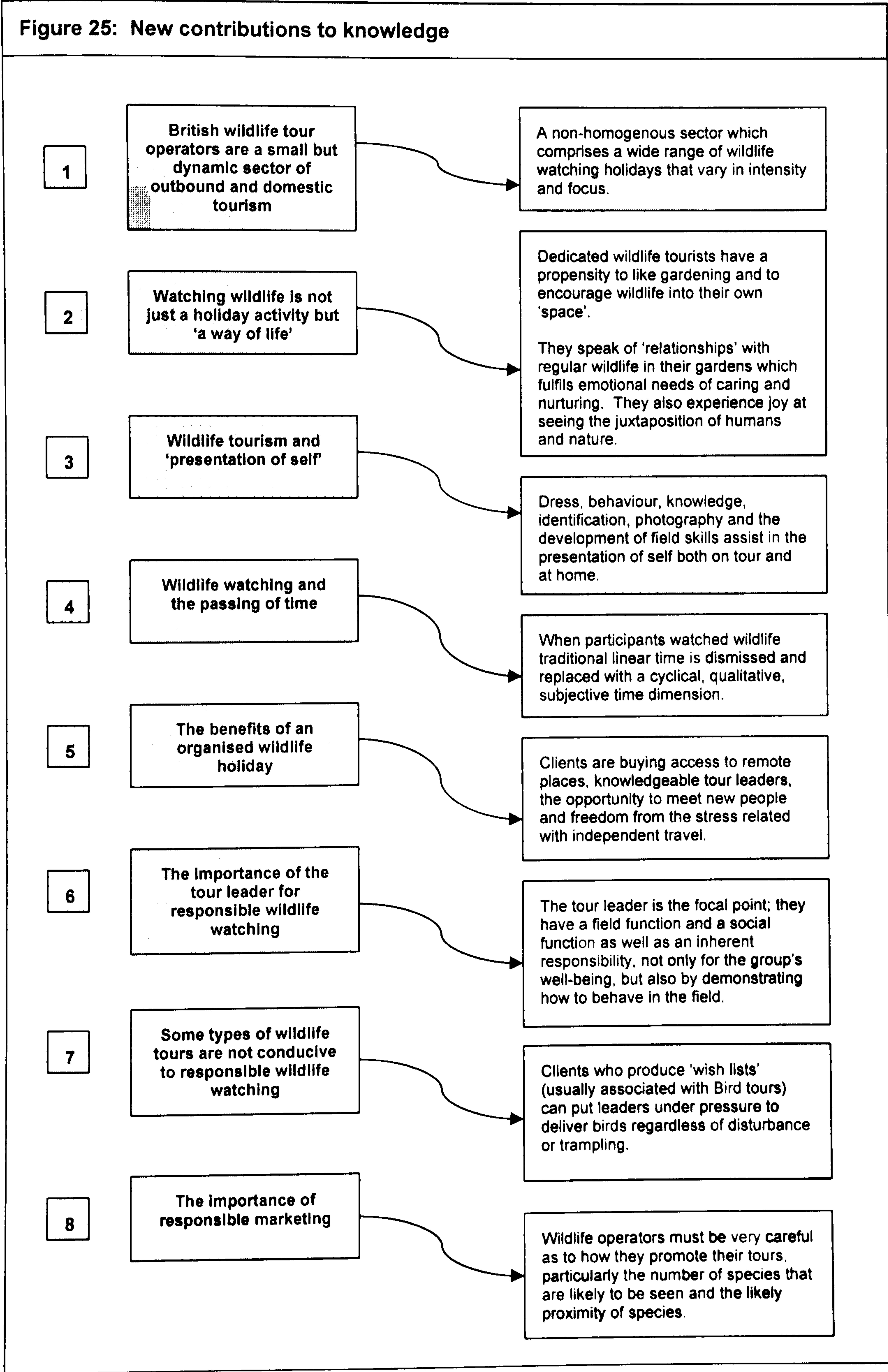
Most participants genuinely believe that their interest and behaviour at the destination is more wholesome than their typical package tourist counterparts. However, issues such as overuse of wildlife sites, benefits to the local economy and sustainable development do concern them. They offset this dissonance by concentrating on the potentially positive impacts such as how wildlife tourism supports a contingent valuation of wildlife, i.e. that economic benefit from tourism will somehow ensure the conservation of species. When it comes to benefiting local communities, some participants were less convinced due to the infrastructure that the wildlife tourists tend to use, i.e. hotel chains.

Finally, participants voiced notions of being pathfinders; a small number of tourists who pave the way for future development. There was a palpable feeling that destinations such as Baja California having been discovered by the wildlife tourism industry, were at the crux of further expansion; a scenario which has already consumed areas of Antarctica and the Galapagos Islands.

Nevertheless, awareness of these impacts does not necessarily prompt behavioural change. When asked whether if a participant thought that they were having an impact, would they still travel to see these things, most had a similar response that if they did not someone else would and nothing is gained. A similar argument is posited for the air travel.

5.2 Contribution to knowledge

Previously unstudied, this thesis on British wildlife tour operators and the experiences of their clients not only supports aspects of the literature on wildlife experience but also contributes several new concepts to the field. These are represented in Figure 25.



1. An understanding of British wildlife tour operators, their clients, destinations, products and the shifting focus from birding holidays to more general naturalist itineraries.
2. For this affluent and dedicated client group watching wildlife is not merely a holiday pursuit but an all-encompassing interest and way of life. The relationship between wildlife watching and wildlife gardening is linked to this and may be more significant than previously thought with participants planting and designing gardens to attract and sustain wildlife. Seeing regular garden visitors instils a sense of responsibility and relationship. It also fulfils a need to tend for other living things and is a means of relaxation. For these reasons seeing wildlife in participants' own back gardens can be equally enthralling as seeing charismatic or exotic species whilst on tour. Akin to this is the joy of seeing wildlife in 'grey' urban spaces; a sign of how well nature can co-exist with mankind and adapt to environmental changes.
3. Self-concept and self-development in relation to wildlife tourism is a new and largely unstudied theme. This thesis reveals that dress, behaviour, knowledge, identification, photography and the development of field skills become cultural symbols within the group and reflect a continuation of their '*professional selves*'.
4. Section 4.5 introduces some key psychological concepts relating to wonderment, contemplation and feelings of flow; many of which have been written about in relation to nature rather than wildlife per se. The exploration of the perception of passing time in relation to watching wildlife, however, is a new concept for the field.
5. In this age of infinite tourism possibilities and independent travel, the desire for organised and accompanied wildlife tours remain attractive for the participants due to the importance of accessing remote places and seeing species that they would be unlikely to see as an independent traveller. Clients are therefore buying knowledge and intellectual capital via experienced tour leaders. Sharing experiences with others and meeting new people with kindred interests are the secondary motivations, so too is the relinquishment of negotiating long distances and decision-making.
6. The above is directly linked to the multiplicity of tour leading skills (see Figure 23) where the tour leader is the focal point as a social facilitator and as a facilitator for experiences in the field notably identification and development of field skills. In addition, they have an inherent responsibility, not only for the group's well-being, but also in the demonstration of how to behave in the field. This requires them to manage tourist expectations and behaviour in an environmentally responsible manner with regards to close proximity, disturbance and the use of sound lures and food provisioning (participants in this study were not in favour of the use of tape recorders to lure birds as it diminishes the authenticity and spontaneity of the experience).

- 7/ 8. Wildlife tour operators do have a responsibility to market their products carefully. Clients who appear with very high expectations and a 'wish-list' of species that they want to tick off are not conducive to responsible tour leading as leaders can feel under immense pressure to deliver customer satisfaction paying little attention to good codes of conduct which minimise disturbance or harassment of species. This is primarily about managing expectations.

Having provided a summary of the main findings and highlighted new contribution to knowledge, the final objective is to provide an outline of the implications of these findings both to the tourism industry and to society as a whole.

5.3 Objective 9: Implications for the management of wildlife tourism

There are a number of implications arising from this qualitative contribution to the field of wildlife tourism. These can be divided into two sections: first, implications for wildlife destination managers, tour operators and tour leaders, and secondly, implications for wider society and conservation.

5.3.1 Implications for destination managers, tour operators and tour leaders

1. The literature treats this sector as if it is one homogenous product or market when clearly this is not the case. Instead the sector comprises a vast array of different products which attract different types of people. Therefore management plans for the sustainable development and management of wildlife '*products*' and destinations cannot be standardised but must reflect the peculiarities of the endemic wildlife, the habitat and the type of people who pay to see them. Furthermore, destinations must carefully consider what market to develop and retain. Once the infrastructure is in place for wildlife tourism, then it tends to attract more people until, eventually, it becomes a mass-market product (Higham 1998; Duffus and Dearden 1990). Participants highlighted this in their examples of whale-watching in Kaikoura, New Zealand, where increased supply and demand detracts from the sought after intimate, one-to-one, personal experience sort by the higher spending, dedicated wildlife tourists, and bird-watching in Lesbos, Greece, where high numbers of visitors detract from the experience.
2. As demand for meaningful interactions with nature and wildlife continues unabated, this will put destinations and wildlife populations under immense pressure as more groups of visitors descend upon resident wildlife. Managing tourist behaviour then becomes paramount for the protection of both the intrinsic value of the world's creatures but also their induced economic value which often supports local communities. This means having site and species related management plans in place which inform tour operators

on how best to give their clients an enjoyable experience without having a detrimental impact.

3. Given that most wildlife tourism is heavily mediated, the experiences espoused by the participants indicate that mediation does not necessarily detract from a heightened tourist experience. Their focus is on seeing the wildlife, not necessarily the setting or the means and therefore zones, hides, viewing platforms, board walks, pathways etc are fundamental in protecting habitats as well as providing safe mediated spaces for tourists.
4. Wildlife tourism can be as trail-blazing as any other type of tourism and, for some destinations, there may come a point where limits of acceptable change determine that the number of operators and tourists are capped to protect habitats and species for future generations. Restricting suppliers (operators) in a market where demand is high or stable will protect premium pricing. Whilst this may be deemed as socially exclusive and prohibitive, it does protect the resource and the experience, as too many tourists, too many operators and too much tourist infrastructure demeans and diminishes the experience for wildlife tourists who seek authentic, natural and un-crowded views of nature.
5. Tour operators and leaders should ensure, and emphasise, the benefits to local communities and to local conservation efforts. These discerning clients are not easily fooled by *'pretty words'* or rhetoric. Air travel and choice of accommodation (quite often chain or tourist hotels) become environmental stumbling blocks in the quest for sustainable wildlife tourism which supports local communities and economies. Unfortunately this market requires moderately high standards which may rule out the use of local accommodation providers. This is a conundrum based on Western standards which is not easily overcome.
6. Whilst clients do have environmental sensibilities, these appear to be overcome in order to satisfy their desire to witness rare and exotic species and habitats, (i.e. there is little evidence from this research that environmental awareness affects intention and behaviour). However these inherent sensibilities need to be met and reinforced by responsible tour leading which abides by codes of conduct, place restrictions and the minimising of disturbance.
7. As this research highlights there are some profound psychological benefits that are sought by clients. The most obvious and tangible are relatively straightforward to manage such as quality accommodation, the development of field skills, interpretation, meeting other people. Whilst the intangible benefits such as the immense pleasure of sightings, wonderment and awe and the reconnection with nature and time for deep contemplation require a style of leadership which provides time and space to absorb the

multi-sensory pleasures of wildlife-watching. Not only including the ocular but also taking time to enjoy the soundscape and the atmosphere of special places; rather than merely rushing on to tick off the next sighting.

8. Tour leaders are arguably the most important aspect of a wildlife tour. Their role as interpreters, educators, social facilitators and conservationists is pivotal to the sustainable management and use of wildlife resources. As this and other research has shown, tourists are often aware of the negative impacts of wildlife tourism but this awareness does not necessarily lead to any change in behaviour. Their passion for wildlife and their fascination and strong desire to see species may cause them to behave inappropriately and to justify their actions. Tour leaders, on the other hand, must work in unison with destination and resource managers and lead by example. The eco-centric values demonstrated by this market point towards wishing as little disturbance as possible for the wildlife. This implies that once appropriate behaviour is explained and justified, they are likely to comply for two reasons: first they will adopt the group norms as per the culture of wildlife tourism, and second, inappropriate behaviour can often stem from a lack of knowledge and understanding and once this is challenged, suitable behaviour will follow.

The acknowledgement that tour leaders are such a critical component in the sustainable management and delivery of wildlife tourism experiences implies that wildlife tourism management plans should also involve the local and international wildlife tour leaders who are responsible for accompanying tourists to wildlife destinations. Their training and involvement in the planning and management process is imperative given their prominent profile in the eyes of wildlife tourists, their experience in the field and their knowledge of species and conservation.

The demand for wildlife tour leading is likely to increase and it is apparent from this research that having excellent field skills only represents a small proportion of their role; social and exemplary wildlife watching behaviour skills are arguably more important. New tour leaders (and arguably some existing ones) from both the tourism generating and receiving countries may need training and guidance as to how to: a) manage different expectations of wildlife tourists, b) to successfully ensure minimal disturbance to focal species whilst maintaining trip satisfaction and c) how to instigate responsible wildlife watching behaviour during and beyond the duration of the wildlife holiday. The ideal management strategy would be a move towards the introduction of accreditation schemes for tour leaders who must demonstrate responsible and sustainable wildlife tourism practices. The 'spin-off' from positive accreditation would enhance the tour operators' profile in the eyes of tourists, destinations and eventually the entire industry who would then have definitive ideals to abide by; not least the avoidance of disturbance.

9. When it comes to proximity, most participants clearly enjoyed eye-to-eye experiences. Close proximity to (non-dangerous) wild animals can be immensely thrilling and provide memorable and highly satisfying moments on tour. The key concept for tour leaders and wildlife managers is to be mindful of the *'trip-wire'* moment. This is the instant at which the bird or animal becomes alert to the onlookers and is at the point of taking flight. Unfortunately once this behaviour is witnessed, it is often too close and too late; disturbance has occurred and the experience is diminished as fleeing wildlife does not provide for long, extended and satisfying viewing.
10. Tour leaders should not under-estimate the importance of the social dynamic in the general naturalist market, as part of the attraction is the opportunity of meeting like-minded people. Nor should they undervalue the power of word-of-mouth advertising. Good quality and satisfying experiences are freely voiced amongst participants which may then inform or underpin trip-making decisions; of where to go and which company to travel with. However, counter to this need for socialising on tour, there is also a desire for some reflexive time and space away from the constraints of the group. Whilst it is clearly not desirable to have members 'wandering off' and delaying itineraries, it is desirable to plan times where clients have the opportunity to unwind and swim in the afternoon or before dinner.
11. Tour leading is more to do with people management than being an excellent naturalist. Pacing the tour so that it meets everyone's needs can be a difficult but essential part of managing a tour. The physical demand required, focus and pace is an important factor in trip decision making and accurate marketing can make the task easier for the tour leader. Some companies, for example NatureTrek, use symbols in their marketing literature to illustrate the amount of walking, physical strength and fitness required as well as the focus of the trip, i.e. birds, flowers, mammals and history. Careful marketing of the product is equally important with itineraries that do not overestimate the potential number of species that might be seen and that do not portray very close proximity to wildlife.
12. Finally, using sound lures to attract birds is a contentious wildlife management tool. The participants in this study universally implied that they found this practice to be detrimental to the health of the birds as it lures them away from their normal activities, out of their territory, away from feeding young, away from courtship and searching for food. Unlike with food provisioning which was met with more enthusiasm, they do not perceive any benefit to the bird. Therefore leaders should consider best practice and last resort before using sound to lure birds for their clients.

Further to these implications for the wildlife tourism industry and destinations, there are a number of points which have much wider application.

5.3.2 Implications for wider society

This thesis is a timely contribution to the hypothesis that experiences in nature and with wildlife are fundamental to people's mental health and well-being. The publication of the Natural Thinking report written by Dr William Bird on behalf of the RSPB and Natural England draws upon a significant number of studies to suggest that contact with many aspects of nature benefits mental health in quite dramatic and unexpected ways. In addition, Simon Barnes' (2007) popular book on 'Being Wild' celebrates diversity and draws upon similar themes of biophilia. Many of the observations in these two publications are replicated in this thesis such as the restorative effects of nature and wildlife on human wellbeing, and the intense joy and happiness when witnessing the diversity and theatre of the animal kingdom. This in itself provides a degree of external validity and is further evidence that experiences in nature and watching wildlife are potentially fundamental to human mental health and happiness; that the very existence of wildlife enhances our lives. As mammals, humans are an intrinsic part of the ecosystem. The survival of a healthy environment assures our own survival therefore we can no longer sustain the dualism by which we construct the natural world of society and nature.

First, this research has highlighted the relationship between affinity, or love of, nature with childhood influences which may well be linked, as it is in this study, to later affiliations with conservation agencies such as the RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts. Whilst parents and grandparents were the most frequently mentioned influencers, so too were teachers and school experiences. There is arguably a need to instil such values during childhood and during school curricula. Rather than diminish nature studies to make way for main stream subjects and league tables, perhaps it should become a core subject in order to benefit the development of a caring, empathetic and environmentally aware society. This is especially important given the fact that 80% of the UK population live in towns or cities and that consumerism and economic growth drive us further from our natural roots.

Secondly, the fact that the wildlife seen on home soil has equal if not more importance than exotic flora and fauna seen on holiday highlights the importance of conservation efforts in Britain including that undertaken in the green spaces of towns and cities. Moreover, wildlife does not need to be exotic or flagship to be worthy of our care and conservation.

Thirdly, this study has shown that nature and watching wildlife has the potential to temporarily distract us from our hectic time-driven schedules, daily existence and work / family demands to a space where time is our own, and a place where it is possible to reconnect and restore our mental well-being to a state of equilibrium. Nature and wildlife therefore has curative and sustaining properties beyond the mere aesthetic not only in

our countryside but also in our cities. There is a need for urgent recognition that urban green spaces are imperative to improve community living and quality of life despite the modern requirement for high density building.

Finally, in this unremitting wake of consumerism and the perusal of material-orientated wealth, we are in danger of losing sight of our inherent connection with the natural world. If species are allowed to continue to diminish at the rate that has been witnessed since the 1950s, then our world will be a much lesser place for future generations.

5.4 Limitations of this study

This exploratory, ethnographic study is based on a small sample of '*general naturalist*' wildlife tourists and is a fair representation of their experiences, expectations, values and the tangible and intangible benefits of taking a wildlife holiday. It has raised a number of important themes which arguably need to be tested and quantified amongst both a larger sample of the same population and across different wildlife tourism segments; particularly the love and importance of nature and wildlife to everyday well-being, the prominence of eco-centric values and the wider, psychological and personal benefits of the wildlife experience.

Until now, the specific experiences of the British wildlife tourist have not been explored in such depth and therefore our knowledge of the tangible and intangible benefits of watching wildlife could not be determined to underpin any quantitative study. Therefore although the findings of this thesis cannot be generalised across the entire population of wildlife tourists, they do provide a contribution to knowledge and solid grounds for further research.

However given the resources, and the benefit of hindsight, it would have been useful to widen this qualitative thesis by travelling with different operators and experiencing and investigating different wildlife products and their clients. For example, it is not clear whether aspects of these findings can be extrapolated to the serious bird-watchers/*'listers'* who travel with Birdquest or Ornitholidays, or to those who favour the African safari experience, or equally important to those who partake in wildlife experiences whilst on a general holiday.

It might also have been prudent to explore in greater depth the potential gender differences with the way women and men differ in terms of how they view the natural world, how important identification is, the notion of relationship and the preference of certain species. As it is the differences are too slight and the sample too small to come to any firm conclusion on gender.

Finally, this research is also limited by a number of cultural issues to do with people, time and place. The wildlife tourists represented in this study are all white, educated, affluent and middle-class. They live in prosperous communities which have the means and the time to enjoy nature and wildlife experiences. Not everyone in Britain is so fortunate or so inclined to engage in the natural world in this way; for example urban and rural attitudes towards wildlife are not explored in this thesis but may well be highly relevant to debates regarding wildlife tourism and conservation.

Moreover, animals convey meanings and values that are culturally specific. British views of animals and nature have been shaped by the Romantic Movement, by urbanisation, industrialisation and, more recently, the animal rights movement. Religious and culturally specific narratives are deeply embedded in British psyche; these form values that are rooted in folklore, stories, customs and media representations. It follows that people from different cultures and times look at animals and nature in different ways. Therefore the findings in this thesis may not be transferable to other tourist populations in this country or to tourist populations from the developing countries.

With these limitations in mind, a number of further studies are recommended as post-doctoral opportunities, PhD studentships or as externally funded projects.

5.5 Areas for future research

To talk of the wildlife tourist experience seems to imply a homogeneity which as this thesis has shown is not always present. In order to grasp the multiple complexities of wildlife tourism and to provide a transferable and useful framework for the management of wildlife products and destinations according to discrete markets and products, there is a need to understand and quantify the differences and commonalities between the various wildlife market segments. Above all, future research projects should be undertaken with a view to regarding the sustainability of the industry. How might this human interest or curiosity in biodiversity and nature be managed so that the communal, psychological and economic benefits outweigh the negative impacts of disturbance, habitat destruction and CO₂ emissions from air travel?

There are a number of valuable projects which could be undertaken to improve our understanding and move towards more sustainable management. For example:

1. What are the value-orientations, the psychological benefits and experiences of tourists on mass wildlife-watching experiences such as whale-watching off Cape Cod or a typical mass market safari holiday offered by large tour operators?

This research might take some of the identified themes from this thesis and turn them into variables in a quantitative survey of tour participants in a number of mass marketed wildlife operations such as the larger whale-watch destinations, safari destinations, and site-based attractions such as penguin or seal colonies or turtle nesting sites to name just a few.

As part of this wider research programme, it would also be useful to have a number of exploratory questions regarding the acceptance of codes of conduct and regulations to minimise disturbance. Are, for example, mass-market wildlife tourists ecocentric or anthropocentric? This would test whether in fact tourist populations with an interest in wildlife are, as this and other studies imply, understanding of why they might not be able to get up close to species or interact with them if the reasons and the impacts of this behaviour is explained in the interpretation process. Linked to this might be the question of whether or not tourists would still buy the ticket if they knew that the tourist activity had a negative impact on the species they valued so highly and wished to view.

2. Given the increasing pressure put on the world's natural resources, current debates on climate change and global warming, and the threat of extinction of once common species, it would be interesting, and indeed useful, to explore modern (or arguably post-modern) sensibilities towards wildlife and nature. Inherent in this broad research question are a number of sub-questions such as how important is the presence of wildlife to the general population? Can some of the themes to do with the curative properties of watching wildlife or engaging with nature be applied to a wider audience? Is the notion of biophilia a myth or a reality especially given that most people live in high density urban environments?
3. In addition, this thesis has hinted at the possibility of gender differences between the way men and women engage with nature and wildlife. This notion fits within the realms of socio-biology and has yet to be put to the test in wildlife tourism populations. Such a study might include gender and decision making, behaviour towards wildlife, nurturing instincts with wildlife on home soil, the tendency to want to identify species, to keep lists and to support conservation organisations. There is no reason why gender analysis could not form part of the above research projects as it would provide an interesting element to understanding the market place.

Finally, the above discussion on further research suggests that exploratory thesis such as this one pave the way for further research. As Stebbins (2001:49) asserts, all exploratory research "lacks the sense of finality". Validity and transferability can only come following additional research which can take the theories posited in this study and apply them to future ones. The field of wildlife tourism, whilst popular, is still in its infancy with regard to

the deeper understanding of the psychological and motivational benefits experienced by this form of travel.

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Appendix 1: Discussion guide for tour operator research

List of Questions for Tour Operators

(This is comprehensive list of questions. Some may be more relevant to the generalist operators rather than the bird watching companies. So edit accordingly).

UK Industry

1. How would you categorise the wildlife market?

Prompt for any distinctions between:
 - ▶ specialist operators
 - ▶ generalist operators
 - ▶ any companies who do both
2. Who, would you say, are the top 5 companies?
3. What changes have you noticed in the market place?

Prompt for:
 - ▶ new players
 - ▶ growth in demand
 - ▶ higher expectations
 - ▶ different 'sought after' experiences / expectations
4. What are your perceptions of the larger tour operators such as Kuoni who offer wildlife packages?
5. Do you compete directly with them, or are they aimed at a different market?
6. How do you differentiate your products from those of your competitors?
7. Do you work with any public sector organisations or belong to any industry associations or networks to undertake joint marketing and promotion or product development etc.
8. As an organisation would you describe your trips as ecotourism, adventure tourism, wildlife tourism, or nature-based tourism?
9. It has been proposed that wildlife tourism is a form of adventure tourism, what do you think?
10. What are the 'typical' characteristics of your customers?
11. What is the average group size?

Product Development

12. How often do you change your itineraries?
13. How do you look for new destinations?
14. It has been suggested that wildlife sites and destinations begin by attracting the enthusiast who is knowledgeable and has a low impact, then attract the generalist who comes in larger numbers and has less knowledge and awareness of their impact. For example, I understand that Lesbos was once a prime bird-watching destination that has now become 'over-run' at certain times of the year?
 - ▶ How long, in your opinion, does this cycle of events take, and
 - ▶ How much of a problem do you think it is?

Meeting the Needs of the Market: Sought After Experiences

General attitudes towards wildlife

15. In your opinion, are some species more highly sought after than others. For example do your customers find insects as interesting, or as fascinating as birds or mammals?
16. Psychologists hold the contention that we transpose human societal values onto animals. This supports the notion that we find species which display behaviour similar to ours (i.e family values, nurturing offspring, cuteness, sociability) more attractive. What do you think? Have you seen any evidence that this might be the case?
17. Do you see any evidence that some wildlife tourists are there simply to be able to gain kudos with their peers (i.e. that they have been there and seen that!)? (extrinsic motivation)
18. It has been said that modern western cultures have developed a 'romantic' notion of nature. How far would you agree or disagree?
19. When you are out on tour, how would you describe the general mood of your group? i.e. are they 'expectant', 'excited' or 'apprehensive'?
20. Do you notice any different attitudes or behaviour in your groups with respect to whether they are male or female, from different cultural backgrounds or whether they live in the country or city?

Aspects of the Wildlife Experience

21. How important do you think it is in terms of satisfaction for your clients to get 'up close' to the animals they are observing. Is it the 'closer the better' or are they 'just happy to be there'?

22. How important is being able to photograph the wildlife? What is your policy with regards to this?
23. How much importance do your clients place on education, or acquiring new knowledge about different habitats and species? Would you say this was a prime motive or a secondary bonus?
24. How, as an operator or destination, would you reconcile the needs of the enthusiast with those of the novice
25. Would you say that seeing animals in their natural setting, seeing a wide range of species and sharing their experiences with like-minded people are important motivators for your clients?
26. Wildlife tourism and wilderness experiences have been said to inspire important memories, life-enhancing experiences, periods of quiet reflection, and introspection. What do you think?
27. After a day out in the field what stories are shared, and what is the general mood?
28. What is your opinion of visitors being allowed to touch, feed or swim with wildlife?
29. How do you feel about the use of tape recordings, food provisioning or other techniques to flush out the wildlife?

Management of the Destination

30. Do you think that the development, marketing and proliferation of wildlife destinations is ultimately a good or bad thing?
31. In your opinion, are there some places / species which should be protected completely from tourism?
32. How do you contribute to the destinations you visit?
 - Prompt for:
 - ▶ Contribution to conservation
 - ▶ Local employment
 - ▶ Use of local guides
33. What do you think are the key issues for operators and governments at the wildlife destinations in respect of:
 - ▶ Controlling visitor numbers;
 - ▶ Licensing and regulation;
 - ▶ Protection or preservation of wildlife;
 - ▶ The creation of zones (escape zones and/or MPAs i.e. Great Barrier Reef).
34. It has been said that wildlife tourism can be justified by its potential to foster environmental awareness, i.e. from being a passive observer of nature to an active contributor to conservation. Do you see any evidence that this is the case?
35. Is there anything else that we have not covered that you think might be important?

Appendix 2:
Letter of introduction sent out to members of the first tour group

August 2005

Name
Address

Dear

PhD Research into the Experiences of Wildlife Tourists

I am joining you on the forthcoming trip to Andalucia (17th – 24th September 2005) and am writing to invite you to take part in some research into wildlife tourist experiences.

There is a growing market worldwide for wildlife tourism and many destinations are using their abundant wildlife to attract new visitors. The sustainable management of this growing industry requires a better understanding of consumers and their motivations. Until such research is conducted, it is difficult to provide explicit policy guidelines that protect focal species and habitats whilst satisfying consumer expectations.

To this end, I was very much hoping to spend one hour with you on an individual basis, after dinner perhaps, to chat about your experiences of wildlife tourism. The focus of any questions would be your motivations for taking birding or wildlife holidays, how often you watch wildlife, how your interest began, your expectations when you go on wildlife holidays, your most memorable wildlife experiences, the importance of sharing experiences with others, how important it is to you to get close to focal species, the importance of taking photographs, and highlights of this and other tours.

In addition, I will be keeping a short travel diary which will note the day's highlights and the feelings or thoughts I encountered. If anyone wishes to do the same, this would be a wonderful resource to share.

However, I do not intend that this research intrudes on your holiday at all. During the day, we will be enjoying the wildlife and good company. It will be a unique opportunity to see species we might not have encountered before and, as an avid wildlife enthusiast, I am looking forward to it immensely.

Please do not feel that you have to be involved in this research; it is entirely up to you. Any data collected will be treated as highly confidential and is bound by the Data Protection Act. Equally any photographs taken would only be used with your permission.

I very much look forward to meeting you all in September. If you would like to find out more about the research beforehand, please feel free to contact me on 01258 471331 or email: scurtin@bournemouth.ac.uk.

Until then, best wishes

Susanna Curtin

Senior Lecturer in Tourism Management
School of Services Management, Bournemouth University

Appendix 3: **Revised letter of introduction for members of the second tour group**

February 2006

Dear Fellow Traveller

I am a member of the group on the forthcoming trip to Mexico - Baja California (4th –13th February 2006).

While I am, like you, hoping for a superb wildlife holiday, I am also, at the same time, hoping to use the experience to help towards my research project into wildlife tourism.

In particular, I am very interested in the experiences and views of the tour participants themselves – and this is where I would very much appreciate any help you can give me.

With luck, the days will be full of marine wildlife, birds and plants to see, and there may be only a limited time to share views and experiences with you. I am therefore very much hoping to spend a short time (up to an hour or so) with some of you on an individual basis, just before dinner perhaps, to chat about your experiences of wildlife tourism. The focus of any questions would be your motivations for taking wildlife holidays, how often you watch wildlife, how your interest began, your expectations when you go on wildlife holidays, your most memorable wildlife experiences, the importance of sharing experiences with others, how important it is to you to get close to focal species, the importance of taking photographs, and highlights of this and other tours.

In addition, I will be keeping a short travel diary which will note the day's highlights and the feelings or thoughts I encountered. You will be welcome to share this and comment on it.

However, I do not intend that this research intrudes on your holiday at all – I'll be really grateful if you can offer some time to help with the research, but it is entirely up to you whether you do or not. Conversely, I may not have time to 'interview' everyone that wants to participate!

Any data collected will be treated as highly confidential and is bound by the Data Protection Act. Equally any photographs taken would only be used with your permission.

I very much look forward to meeting you in February. If you would like to find out more about the research beforehand, please feel free to contact me on 01258 471331 or email: scurtin@bournemouth.ac.uk.

Until then, best wishes

Susanna Curtin

Senior Lecturer in Tourism Management
School of Services Management, Bournemouth University

Appendix 4: Discussion guide for participants of wildlife tours

Questions for wildlife tourists but.....

Remember conversational / narrative approach to interviewing

Tell me how your interest in wildlife first began.

Describe this fascination?

How is this interest and fascination carried over into your everyday life at home?

What is it that you really enjoy about watching or encountering wildlife?

(Prompt but do not ask for: Privilege? Feeling close to nature? Feeling spiritually uplifted? Deeper understanding of the meaning of life?)

What do you hope for when you book a wildlife tour?

How disappointed are you if you do not see focal species?

How does it make you feel when you get your first glimpse of an animal or bird?

Tell me some of your most memorable encounters with wildlife.

What happens to time when you are viewing wildlife?

What types of animals do you prefer? Why are these more attractive than others?

How important is the setting in which you see the wildlife?

How compelled are you to take photographs of wildlife?

Why are these photographs important to you?

How important is it for you to get as close as you can, or even touch, the wildlife that you are looking at?

What are your views on feeding wildlife to enable closer viewing?

How important is it for you to learn about the wildlife and their habitats whilst you are on holiday?

How important is it for you to be able to share wildlife experiences with others?

What impacts, if any, are you aware of when you go on wildlife watching trips?

Appendix 5: Interview consent form

September 2005

University Logo

Dear Respondent

PhD Research into the Experiences of Wildlife Tourists: Interview Protocol

There is a growing market worldwide for wildlife tourism and many destinations are using their abundant wildlife to attract new visitors. The sustainable management of this growing industry requires a better understanding of consumers and their motivations.

You have been selected as a key informant to enable me to gain an understanding of what it is like to be a wildlife tourist and to explore the relationship and interest that you have with the natural world.

The research will form the basis of my PhD at Bournemouth University and will be disseminated by publications in scientific journals and conferences.

You can withdraw your consent at any stage before, during or after the interview. If you have any doubts or concerns about participating please let me know before the interview. You will remain completely anonymous and no records of the interview will be kept with your name on them; neither will you be named in any published material or in the PhD thesis itself.

It is difficult to determine how long the interview will take. It is anticipated that it will last about an hour, though some may be shorter, others longer. Subject to your permission, I would like to tape record the interview as it greatly improves my recall of what has been said and enables me to listen more carefully to your answers instead of taking notes.

In order to comply with the ethical code of practice for research, I need to be able to prove that I have your informed consent. If you are happy to take part, I would be grateful if you would sign the following agreement. The form is in two parts; one pertaining to the use of photographs whilst taken on tour and the other permission to use your responses from our interview.

Thank you so much for your help.

Susanna Curtin

I agree to take part in this research and for Susanna to use material from the interview.

I have / have no objection to group photographs, where I am present, being used to support conference papers (delete as necessary).

Name:

Signed

Date