

Edition 56: Women & Animals

Transcribed by Jenna DI Quarto

:theme music - Real Voice by Thistle Pettersen:

:sauntering acoustic guitar fades in:

*"...But through the hallways of academia
And on the face of the moon...
The footprints of conquest
Haven't left us any room.
To say what we think, or...
To speak what we know...
To hear different voices
At least a sound from below..."*

Oh-oh oh oh oh oh...

:vocalizing fades out:

Thistle PETERSEN: Greetings! and welcome to the 56th edition podcast of Women's Liberation Radio News for this Thursday, December 3rd, 2020. This is Thistle Pettersen, WLRN founding member and ever resilient weed growing up through the cracks of patriarchal civilization.

This month's edition focuses on women and animals. We'll hear an interview I did with Falcon River, lesbian feminist homesteader who lives in Michigan with her partner, Ruth Barrett, and their many animals including chickens, horses and dogs. Falcon spoke with me last week about her views on the relationships women have cultivated with horses and her current relationships with the animals in her life. Following the interview with Falcon, you'll hear WLRN's April Neault offer her mini commentary on why she owes her life to dogs before you will hear Linda Conroy, feminist herbalist, talk about her animals on women's land here in Wisconsin. Finally, stay tuned for commentary from Sekhmet SheOwl about the significance of women's relationships with animals and the importance of understanding the female experience across species.

The team at WLRN produces a monthly radio broadcast to break the sound barrier women are blocked by under the status quo rule of men. This blocking of women's

discourse we see in all sectors of society, be they conservative, liberal, mainstream, progressive or radical. The thread that runs through all of American politics, except for separatist feminism, is male dominance and entitlement in all spheres.

To start off today's edition, here's Emiliann Lorenzen with women's news from around the globe for this Thursday, December 3rd, 2020.

:xylophone plays root-third-fifth to indicate news segment, fades into typewriter - keys typing, bell, and register return:

:mellow lo-fi beat fades in:

Emiliann LORENZEN: In the US, migrant women who alleged abuse by a Georgia gynecologist have been deported. Dr. Mahendra Amin has been accused of performing procedures on women that were medically unnecessary and without their consent. According to The Associated Press, Amin allegedly "performed operations that caused or worsened [the women's] pain without explaining what he was doing or giving them an alternative ... but there hasn't been evidence to support the initial claim that he performed a large number of hysterectomies." U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has deported six women, and at least seven women have been told that they could soon be deported. According to a law professor who is working with several of the women, "ICE is destroying the evidence needed for this investigation." ICE denies this allegation.

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In Mexico, police opened fire on femicide protestors on November 9th. After the dismembered body of 20-year-old Bianca "Alexis" Lorenzana was found, protestors took to the streets and tried to force their way into Cancun city hall. Alexis' mother had originally asked for a peaceful protest, but partway through the protest she said, "Burn it all because Alexis would have done that for you." Some protestors broke windows and sprayed graffiti. Police opened fire as they approached city hall, causing the crowd to disperse. Approximately 10 women are murdered in Mexico each day, which has given rise to an outspoken feminist movement.

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In Norway, hate speech has been outlawed against transgender people on November 24th, which expands its penal code that has protected gay men and lesbians since 1981. According to the penal code, "People found guilty of hate speech face a fine or up to a year in jail for private remarks, and a maximum of three years in jail for public comments." People charged with violent crimes can be given harsher sentences if a judge decides their actions were motivated by someone's sexual orientation or gender identity. The law's opponents argue that it could criminalize free speech if anyone criticizes LGBTQ+ politics. But an assistant professor of law from the University of Oslo said that "the bar for prosecution is high, requiring direct incitement against people or language that dehumanizes them."

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In Idaho, Lindsay Hecox, a male student athlete at Boise State University, along with the ACLU, are trying to overturn Idaho's Fairness in Women's Sport Act. The Act was passed on March 20, 2020, and the lawsuit was filed in April of 2020. The state of Idaho, represented by Governor Brad Little, is joined by two female athletes from Idaho State, Madison Kenyon and Mary Kate Marshall, as Appellants in defense of the law. The Women's Liberation Front and the Women's Human Rights Campaign USA have each filed an Amicus Brief with the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in the case of Hecox v. Little. The Women's Human Rights Campaign USA has also released an amended version of the Equality Act called the "Equality for All Act." For more information about what these women's rights groups are doing go to www.womensliberationfront.org and www.womensdeclaration.com

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In Saudi Arabia, Loujain al-Hathloul and 12 other activists were arrested in May 2018 for "conspiring with foreign organizations hostile to the kingdom." Loujain gained prominence in the campaign for Saudi women to win the right to drive. Her family says that she has been tortured these past two years. On November 25th, her case was transferred to the Specialized Criminal Court, which was set up in 2008 to try terrorism cases, but "has been used to prosecute peaceful dissidents and it is notorious for violations of fair trial standards." Loujain's sister urges people to keep her story in the public eye because "the only thing that works now with Loujain's case and the other activists' case is outside pressure."

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The Supreme Court of Kyrgyzstan has ruled that a police crackdown on a feminist group in Bishkek on International Women's Day in March was illegal. Kyrgyzstan is located west of China, and Bishkek is its capital. On March 8th, feminist activists planned to hold a March of Women's Solidarity, but they were attacked by unknown individuals. The police violently dispersed the crowd and arrested 11 activists, who were fined for "holding an unsanctioned public event." The women's lawyers plan to file an appeal with the Supreme Court against the fines that were imposed.

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In Sudan, authorities announced that they will end child marriage and enforce the country's ban on female genital mutilation. Police officers must inform local communities that FGM is illegal following new laws passed in July that make it punishable by up to three years in jail. According to the UN, 87% of Sudanese women have undergone FGM, and girls are typically cut between the ages of 5 and 14. The council of ministers also announced that they will adopt all articles of the African charter on the rights and welfare of the child, which began in 1999.

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Sweden has seen a 65% decrease in the number of referrals to gender clinics since the Fall of 2019. The scientific community in Sweden has pushed back against the government since it proposed a law in 2018 to reduce the minimum age for sex reassignment surgery from 18 to 15. Upon the Swedish Nation Council on Medical Ethics' recommendation, the Swedish government has tasked three government agencies to "strengthen the knowledge base for the assessment and treatment of gender dysphoria among children and adolescents." Experts have also called for more balanced media coverage of this issue, including a 3-part documentary called "Trans Train," which includes interviews with detransitioners and the revelation that the medical transition of minors is not evidence-based.

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In the UK, a political support fund for women has launched called the Activate Collective. Actress Emma Thompson donated £50,000 to kickstart the first round. She said that "women, particularly women of color, disabled women and women on low income, need financial backing to overcome multiple barriers to entering politics." Sophie Walker co-founded the fund, and she was the former leader of the Women's Equality party. She said, "One of the things I discovered as a total novice politician, was the extent to which the amount of money you have makes a difference to the

extent to which your voice can be heard. I feel very strongly that there is a massive dearth of women's voices in politics, and that we particularly need to support women from minoritized communities."

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Nigerian women are standing up to sex trafficking in Italy. Osas Egnon opened a shelter for victims of trafficking in Sicily called Women of Benin City. Most of the women come from Nigeria's Edo state, and its capital is Benin City. The traffickers take the women to countries like Italy and force them into prostitution. The women must pay the traffickers up to \$35,000 until they are free, leaving many of them in debt bondage. The traffickers prey on the women's spiritual beliefs, forcing them to swear to juju oaths, where they promise never to report their abusers to the police, to obey their "mamas" or madams, and to fully pay their debts. The women believe that if they break their oath, then their family will be harmed. This manipulation is one of the biggest obstacles to freeing these women. The shelter allows the women to stay for a year, giving them access to education, training, and time to recover from their trauma. I recommend the film "Joy" on Netflix, which illustrates this issue.

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Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie won the Women's Prize for Fiction in 2007 for her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Her book has recently been voted the best book to have won the Women's Prize for Fiction in its 25-year history. She is a feminist, and in an interview with the Guardian, she denounced cancel culture and censorship. She also spoke favorably of JK Rowling's "perfectly reasonable" essay on sex and gender. She said, "JK Rowling is a woman who is progressive, who clearly stands for and believes in diversity."

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Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Toni Morrison will be one of six women inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, New York. The virtual induction ceremony is scheduled for December 10th at 7:30pm and it is free and open to the public. Mary Church Terrell, Aretha Franklin, Barbara Hillary, Barbara Rose Johns Powell, and Henrietta Lacks will also be inducted during the ceremony. Register for the event at <https://www.eventinterface.com/NWHFVirtualInduction2020/>

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November 25th was the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and it starts the 16 Days of Activism, which runs until Human Rights Day on December 10th. The World Health Organization states that “violence against women – particularly intimate partner violence and sexual violence – is a major public health problem and a violation of women's human rights ... Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent, and devastating human rights violations in our world today. Whether at home, on the streets or during the war, violence against women and girls is a human rights violation of pandemic proportions that takes place in private and public spaces.” The UN put together ten ways you can end violence against women, even during a pandemic, including funding women’s organizations, starting conversations, and knowing the data and demanding more of it. The full list can be found at www.unwomen.org.

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On December 1st, the High Court in England ruled that “puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones are experimental treatments which cannot be given to children in most cases without application to the court.” The judgement concluded that children 15 and younger would not be competent enough to give consent and to understand the long-term risks and consequences of such treatment. Clinicians would also be allowed to involve the court when there is any doubt that a 16 or 17 year old would be positively served in the long-term by puberty blockers and hormones. Thank you Kiera Bell for being brave enough to bring this case to court, and congratulations on the positive verdict.

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That concludes WLRN’s world news segment for Thursday, December 3rd, 2020. I’m Emiliann Lorenzen. Share your news stories and tips with us by emailing wlrnewscontact@gmail.com and letting us know what’s going on!

[Jonna Jinton kulning, ancient Scandinavian women's herd calling practice](#)

Danielle WHITAKER: That was Swedish artist Jonna Jinton performing a call for cows to come in from pasture. The singing technique you just heard is called "kulning" and is an ancient Swedish herdingcall, that was used by women in ancient times to call home the cattle and goats to the farm in the evenings. It was also used as a form of

communication, since the high pitch sounds can be heard through very far distances. Next up we'll hear an interview Thistle did with Falcon River, lesbian feminist homesteader in the State of Michigan.

PETTERSEN: Welcome to WLRN, Falcon River. Can you tell our listeners a little bit about yourself and the land that you live on?

FALCON: Sure. Well first, my name is Falcon, yeah, Falcon River, and I want to thank you, Thistle, for inviting me to share some time with you. I am - currently I live south of Lansing, Michigan out in the country on a little 10 acre piece of heaven with my wife, Ruth Barrett, and our menagerie; We have 2 horses, 3 dogs, 40 or 50 chickens - I can never exactly count - and 2 guineas, and of course, all the other wild creatures that share this place with us. So, yeah, we've been we've been livin' here for three years... But I have to say I've always- I grew up in the country and in my life I've always chosen to live out in the country...

PETTERSEN: And you've always had a relationship with animals your whole life. Before we turned on the recorder you were telling me about your dog, Fluffy. Maybe we can start there.

FALCON: *:laughs:* Sure. Fuffy was my first love. She was the family dog. And I must say that I didn't have the best kind of parents, as many of us, and I didn't have the most...easy life growing up, especially growing up in West Virginia and...in the mountains in the 50s and 60s...So, anyway, Fuffy was this collie, and he was devoted to me, wherever I went she would follow. And she was really my first understanding of what loving affection could be. She was always next to me. I think the thing that was most touching for me is that my mother was not a very affectionate person and my father less so and, if I were injured or something it was - I was on my own. But Fluffy would attend to my wounds with such methodical attention and, I know some folks who probably are - would be a bit uncomfortable with this but, she would clean my wounds. And I mean, if I had a cut or a scratch she would literally hold me down with a giant paw and make sure that that wound was absolutely clean. And she did it in such a way that was so...I was like her puppy.

PETTERSEN: Yeah.

FALCON: She was the mama dog and I was her puppy. And I just really learned so much from her about... I mean, I watched her over and over again - if someone came into our yard, Fluffy would look at them, pause and look at them, and in just a second

or two she'd size them up. If she gave a bit of wag of her tail, they were okay, but if that low gurgle sound started in her throat, then...no. *:laughs:*

PETTERSEN: Mhm.

FALCON: And she would not let anyone come close to me that she didn't deem appropriate.

PETTERSEN: Huh. She was protective of you.

FALCON: She was, and she was the best judge of character that I ever knew.

PETTERSEN: Uh-huh.

FALCON: Quite frankly, I still rely on my dogs and my horses to size people up because we...If you come up my driveway, and my dog doesn't like you, you need to turn around and go back out. I don't expect people to be - I mean I understand a lot of people are frightened of dogs or don't really relate to them, but I watch how my dogs respond to people, they can spot an aggressor or someone who isn't presenting themselves as truly who they are in a hot minute.

PETTERSEN: Yeah, that's amazing. Can you talk a little bit more about the mutual relationship you had with Fluffy? I mean, she treated you like a puppy and was very protective of you, but yet I've heard in relationships with dogs - I've never had a relationship with a dog - that you kind of have to assert your dominance. Did that happen with Fluffy?

FALCON: I don't - We may generate more than a few comments here but, I make the big difference between domination and leadership - with my dog and with my horses, and in fact with my flock of chickens. And domination - you cannot, except for maybe a super small dog, you can't dominate a dog. They have teeth. And they are much faster, and sometimes, stronger. And why would I - I don't want...I fought patriarchy my whole damn life. I don't want to live in a dominator relationship with anybody. But I do want to work in partnership with everyone and live in partnership, and sometimes, even in partnerships, it falls upon one or another person to step into leadership. There can be leadership, and still have partnerships. And I've learned that, not through my relationship with human beings, but through my relationships with my animals. So, I endeavored to be as honest and consistent as I can be, and in that way, my animals trust me. So that when I ask something of them, they comply with my request because

they trust me. They don't comply with my request because I'm commanding them to do so and I'm their dominator; They comply with what I ask of them because they have had an experience of me and know that if I ask them to do something it's for all of our best interest.

PETTERSEN: Yeah, and this strikes me as a profound difference between how men have domesticated animals and really imposed that dominant - you know dominator culture on their relationship with animals in general, generally speaking, and how women have a different kind of relationship with animals. Can you talk about how the relationship between women and horses got started and co-evolved?

FALCON: Well...Gosh...First of all I will have to say that I'm not a scholar, nor, you know... I'm not an archaeologist but I have studied that relationship between women and horses and, more interesting - that I've been interested in studying because in other aspects of my life I'm also a Wiccan priestess, and I've been very interested in the magical representations between women and horses, and the goddesses of different cultures and horses, and horses in society through thousands of years, and it is my personal belief - I have nothing in fact, nothing that I can specifically point you towards and say here is the proof - but it is my personal belief that women are responsible for the domestication of horses. It just makes sense, and yes, horses in ancient times were also hunted for food; However, I think it's women because they would have been responsible for creating the shelters. There is some - I'm also an archer and I teach archery and there is some possible indication that women invented the bow because women would have hunted small game. [unintelligible] And men would have used larger and heavier weapons like spears. But getting back to the horses, because women create shelters and women create family groups, and animals like horses and wolves, for example - I'm pretty sure that it was probably a woman who threw a scrap of meat to a wolf pup, y'know. I know that's a great simplification but you understand what I'm trying to say here - women have always had, not a dominating relationship with horses, so much as a...

PETTERSEN: ...a partnership?

FALCON: Yeah, a mutually beneficial relationship. There are entire cultures in other parts of our world that sustain themselves on mares milk and mares blood - ancient cultures - and if people are interested I would invite you to look at the horse culture of current and ancient Mongolia, for example, where those folks live and travel with their herds of horses, and horses sustain them in ways that we can't even begin to imagine. So, that family relationship that women create, and the herding relationship that the

female horses create. By the way, there is this stereotype out there that, in a wild horse herd it's the stallion that is the leader; That's a bunch of crap. The stallions follow along behind the herd, but it is the lead mare and either her daughter or her sister that decide where the herd goes.

PETTERSEN: Mmm...hm!

FALCON: And in the archaeological records I would draw your attention to - I'm fairly certain that folks will have seen and heard of the painting, the wonderful paintings of animals in the caves in Lascaux, France. And if you aren't aware of what I'm talking about, look it up. There are wonderful paintings deep, deep in the ground that were most probably - it has been established recently - were most probably done by women, because the artists left their handprints on the wall, and they're quite small. Quite small. And one of the most famous of these paintings is an image of two horses standing side by side, one looking one direction and one looking the opposite. If you watch any wild horse there today you will see the lead mares do the same thing. The reason they do that is that they're working in partnership so that one can keep watch while the other eats. And that way they can [unintelligible] for themselves and the herd.

PETTERSEN: Mmhm. Wow. How old is that painting?

FALCON: *:chuckles:* I have no i- I mean, millennia, maybe, maybe 30 40,000 years old,

PETTERSEN: Mmhm...And currently today, you have a relationship with two horses on the land where you live. So, in the patriarchal dominant culture, there's this idea that you have to break a horse's spirit, right? ...which is a horrible - I think the horrible approach to having a relationship with a horse. Can you talk about how you interact with your horses on your land and the spirit of the horses that you're living with?

FALCON: Yeah. So, first of all, both of my horses are rescues. The elder horse is 19. Her name is Eowin - E O W I N - and Eowin is a purebred Tennessee Walker, and also a purebred, what's called 'Champagne'; Tennessee Walking Horse is a breed, and the Champagne Horse is what's called a color registry in the horse world. Both of those creatures are created by intensive inbreeding. And so when there's intensive inbreeding there are of course attendant health issues in the resulting bulls that are born. Eowin - I rescued her from Walking Horse breeder who, because Eowin didn't perform up to her expectations she put her out for sale to the meat industry, and I got there before the meet buyer did, with cash. So Eowin is Golden Palomino and beautiful. And she still lives - even though I've had her for 10 years, she still lives with

the residual trauma of the way that Walking Horses are treated. The other horse that I have is a young Mustang. Her mother was caught wild out in Nevada and gave birth to this baby in one of the BLM basically kill pens. However, the mother and baby were rescued along with several other hundred other Mustangs and take them to a sanctuary.

PETTERSEN: So we had some technical difficulties, Falcon you were talking about the Mustang, that you rescued, where she was born, who her mother was - can you keep talking about that?

FALCON: Sure, so, our little Mustang, Maddie, is approximately three years old, and she came in with her mother to a local rescue organization here in Southern Michigan, and when she arrived she was near death. She was emaciated and sick with a disease that's carried by Opossums, of all things, because she had been eating dirt and pick up some Opossum feces - anyway that disease is often fatal, so it's taken us the last two years to bring Maddie back to full health and function. So, anyway, she's completely healthy and entirely full of herself. *:chuckles:* And, what I wanted to say is - so I have these two horses here, and each one of them have gone through traumatic experiences - one who is 19 and the other who is three - and what I want to say about that is, with each one of these animals, I have had to learn to develop different leadership strategies, so that they trust me and accept my leadership - not my dominance, not my dominance - but I do make sure that I behave in a way that is consistent and that I behave in a way that is worthy of their trust, and once an animal gives you their trust, then that's everything. It's the greatest gift, and it's a huge responsibility, which I don't feel that humans take seriously at all, but I've learned more about living in partnership, and I've learned more about developing true leadership skills in living with my creatures than I ever learned from any other human being. So...

PETTERSEN: You're like Artemis.

FALCON: *:laughs:* Artemis claimed me when I was a child, and she has been my guide ever since. I didn't always know it, but I know it now.

PETTERSEN: Wonderful. Is there anything else you'd like to say to our WLRN listeners, Falcon?

FALCON: Yes. Don't give up. We're going to get through this. And we're going to create a better world from it.

PETTERSEN: Right on. Don't give up on the feminist movement, which was another conversation we were having a little bit before we turned on the recorder. *:laughs:*

FALCON: *:laughs:* Oh my god. I've been a feminist since 1975. Oh, Lordy, we could have many conversations.

PETTERSEN: Yeah.

FALCON: Yeah.

PETTERSEN: And maybe it behooves us feminists to turn to the animal world and the animals in our life and learn from them as you have in how to better relate to one another.

FALCON: Well I will be honest and tell you that everything I learned from animals informed my own particular views on feminism, and how it could be and how it ought to be. Absolutely. Animals for my first companions, my first and my greatest teachers. Always have been.

PETTERSEN: Yeah. Fluffy

FALCON: Fluffy. Yep.

PETTERSEN: Wonderful. Okay, Falcon, well thank you so much. Have a great day.

FALCON: Thank you. Thank you everyone. Keep on keeping on.

PETTERSEN: Right on.

FALCON: *:laughs:*

[Nellie McKay - The Dog Song](#)

WHITAKER: That was The Dog Song by Nellie McKay. Now we turn to a mini commentary WLRN's April Neault prepared for this podcast in which she shares about her beloved childhood dog, Bear.

:twinkling, mid-range chimes lilt in, arpeggiated major chords:

:hand drums and percussion enter in later:

:song eventually becomes subtly upbeat and pop-y:

April NEAULT: I think I've always loved animals. I only really discovered it when we got our first dog, Bear. My parents had decided we were allowed to get one and I eagerly volunteered to drive up with them to go get her.

:sounds of keys, a car starting and shifting into gear:

Driving in our car was a big deal back then. We didn't make many trips "to town" which was made up of just over 2000 residents. Living in the woods had challenges for a kid growing up. I certainly didn't like it when I became a teenager. But as a child it gave me unfettered access to the untamed pine forests of Northern Ontario. For that, I am eternally grateful.

:we hear the interior of a moving car, the light jingle of dog tags and a dog snoring:

Bear was allowed to sit in the back seat with me and on our way back home she fell asleep on my lap. I remember feeling so special. Here was this creature that didn't know me and she trusted me enough to fall asleep, on top of me no less!

Like most family dogs Bear joined me on many adventures. I'd be Indiana Jones and she was short round, or one of those evil Nazis he was always at odds with depending on what tales we were playing out. Bear had the habit of making it difficult to hide during a game of hide and seek as her tail end would always be wagging out of the cedar thickets or tall grass down by the water I had chosen to hide in. But I could forgive her anything.

:clumsy footing in tall grass, a quiet whimper, a girl urging "shh!":

The passing of Bear and many dogs since has been the hardest thing to cope with in my life. They have always been more than companions for me, teaching me about nature and life wherever we would go. During my childhood, dogs helped me feel comfortable with myself and made it okay to be me. When my anxiety became worse during my teenage years, dogs gave me a reason to get up and get outside. In this way, they helped me experience a world outside of my mind that told me to be frightened of everything.

When dogs die, I feel like they take with them the best part of me. They shared only the good moments of life.

:The sound of the woods, tweeting birds:

:We hear walking through the woods, and a faster footstep, 4 paws, hurrying by, a jingle of dog tags:

The part of me that went outside to tell the trees about my day, the exploration that happened in abandoned spaces around where I lived and we marveled together as the natural world reclaimed those spots.

:An excited dog, panting and barking:

We'd watch patiently as the fox and her kits would cross our path...

:foxes scurries by and vocalizes:

...and struggle to regain our composure when a bear would slide down from the old pine tree next to us, to go charging off into the opposite direction.

:branches breaking and leaves swaying; a bear grumbles and runs off:

We'd discover mud holes and marshes, salamanders and snakes...

:Dog vocalizing and splashing through water:

...and curse those wretched partridges for disturbing our thoughts as they noisily flew away not five feet from where we stood.

:Frantic fluttering and cranky chirping:

We'd take it all in at the summit of our 4 hour hike and break our sojourn with some homemade snacks I had made in anticipation of our adventure.

:Panting and tags jingling; Bear crunches down on a biscuit:

Dogs have taught me everything I've ever learned of value; compassion, humour, and above all else, the virtues of a good afternoon nap. *:dog yawning:* I have come to realize that the direct nature of the language of dogs and the natural world has kept me sane. That is, they have kept me grounded in reality and gave me the courage to be comfortable with it. When I decided to give my authority over to the natural world, the bullshit reasoning of human male supremacy all faded away. I owe my life to dogs.

:sound of happy dog panting, being pet, tags jingle lightly:

:music fades out:

WHITAKER: Next up, hear Linda Conroy, feminist herbalist with Midwest Women's Herbal, speak with Thistle about her animals at Moonwise Herbs' Wisconsin based homestead. To hear the full interview with Linda, go to WLRN's interviews tab on our wordpress site.

PETTERSEN: So, Linda, can you tell our listeners a little bit about the land that we're on right now and who you are and what you do?

Linda CONROY: Sure. My name is Linda Conroy, I am an herbalist and a community organizer and *:laughs:* ...I wear many hats, and the land here I purchased about a year and a half ago. I had been looking for land that I could offer my women's herbal apprenticeship programs on, and that I could, you know, co-habitate with animals and plants, and so I found this land it was affordable and it was near the location where I wanted to be, and so it works really well. It's an interesting land on the edge of town. I think a lot of times, people who were women who are healers, and sometimes called witches, live on the edge - on edges, and sometimes I feel like...it's just curious to me that we live on these edges. So, the land is really special; It's been something I've been getting to know, so I spend a lot of time when I'm working with plants, animals, the land - getting to know the entities that I'm living and being with. I don't try to go in the way that our typical culture does and conquer the land, so, I'm watching, observing, seeing where things want to be. And the animals fit into that so nicely because they teach me and they guide me on what they want and what they need.

PETTERSEN: Awesome. Why do you think it's important for women to have a good relationship with animals?

CONROY: Well...you could even phrase that differently into say that women just have had relationships. *:laughs:* You know, we talk about our familiars, and there are familiars - they're beings that we've co-evolved with - you see goddess images from, you know - that always have relationships with animals - Artemis and, you know, a lot of other goddesses. And so, we've had relationships with animals always, and it's important for us to maintain those relationships; They are part of our lineage and are part of our heritage. They're part of our relationship to the natural world and the land. They are of the natural world. We're animals; We're of the natural world. And so even going into that relationship and thinking about how it's a collaborative relationship, it's not conquering relationship, which is really different than our typical patriarchal culture. But you know, we're drawing on our his- our herstory, and all the relationships that we've had, you know, even pre-Christianity.

PETTERSEN: And what are the roles that the animals in your life play here at the homestead?

CONROY: So I've been raising, rabbits particularly, for over 20 years, and one of the reasons I chose rabbits is they're pretty easy on a small homestead. This is the first land that I've actually purchased, and so typically I'm renting land and so it's been easy for me to move the rabbits and have them in my environment. And they're small animals so they're easy to handle and to work with. So, the relationship with them, and their role is that they play multiple roles: One, they act as fertilizer for my garden. I'm an herbalist, I raise a lot of plants and grow a lot of plants, and so they provide fertilizer for the garden, rich incredible fertilizer. They also provide companionship. I always say the animals get me outside all winter long. You have to go out, you have to tend to them. You have to bring water to them. They keep me engaged in life and I love that. That's super important. That's more than companionship. It's really about moving into that place intending and being of service. And so I'm of service to them and their service to me. And so then one of the other things is that they provide food. So I have ducks and chickens and rabbits, and they all provide food for me. Nourishment. So I nourish them and they nourish me. And we live in that life/death/life cycle that is the natural world.

PETTERSEN: Mhm. And would you call that a symbiotic relationship then?

CONROY: Symbiotic is one way to say it, yes. "Mutual". There's definitely an agreement there *:chuckles:* when the animals come on to the land...Or they're born here, *:chuckles:* some of them are born here. You know, we're in relationship, we know what we're doing together and why we're doing it.

PETTERSEN: And really, because we are animals we've always been in relationship with animals and there's a patriarchal relationship to animals which is one of dominance and what you're practicing here is a mutual relationship with animals where you help them and they help you.

CONROY: Right, absolutely. And it's interesting because the animals often tell me what they want and what they need. I have some new dogs on the property, for example, some young ducks, and so I'm learning from them about where they want to be, how they want to interface with the other animals; I've integrated them so that they can easily become a part of the, I guess I'll call them the pack because the chickens and ducks all live together. And they live, you know, really harmoniously. But they kind of guide me to what they want and, you know, at one point, all of the birds started telling me they wanted more time on the larger area of the property so I started letting them out at the end of the day, and they put themselves to bed at night. *:laughs:*

So it's really fascinating to follow their lead a lot of times, but also be conscious of providing protection for them because they are vulnerable, like the chickens and ducks are vulnerable to birds of prey, so I make sure they're not out in the open area all day long because they would probably get eaten by some other animal of prey so... And that has happened. I, you know, have to provide protection. I've put solar lights out so raccoons can't get to them and that kind of thing.

PETTERSEN: And while you're talking I'm thinking about communication and how we speak using words, but it strikes me when I'm out with the chickens here, it sounds like they're talking, the way they cluck - do you feel that you kind of speak their language and how do you talk to the chickens? Do you talk to them like you talk to people?

CONROY: Mhm, I do, and I silently engage with them as well. There's a language that happens y'know, sometimes I'll be saying, Hey! *:makes a chittering kind of noise:* You know, call them over to me, But then there's the- just the energetic energy that goes into communicating with them. Like right now I'm trying to encourage them the ducks to go into their own building at night. They like going in with the chickens *:laughs:* like they think they're chickens. But, so I'm just standing with them and saying, Hey, go ahead, It's good, y'know.

And I'm saying that out loud but I'm also saying it silently and just cheering them on, and it takes a while, you know, to be with them and have some, y'know, patience and, let them find their own way, rather than me forcing them to go into this building, like I'd rather them find their way. And so it's that way with all of my animals, my cats...like when I first got my cats, they were kittens and I kept them inside, and they've really wanted to go outside. They were just itching to get outside. And so, you know, we've learned a way to be collaborative about them having their time outside, and so that's a mutual relationship that we've developed and figured out a way to make it work for everyone with me and them.

PETTERSEN: Mhm. Can you talk about how you communicate with the bees that you keep?

CONROY: Mhm, yeah. So it's very intuitive. It's interesting because I've done a lot of reading about how to keep bees and, this is my second incarnation of keeping bees, on this property. I've kept them previously at another location where I used to live. And in that location I actually kept bees with someone else who was much more controlling about what happened with the bees. So here I've been working with them really intuitively, and again watching them, listening to them seeing what what they might like, seeing where they might want to be placed; And that was even a thing, moving the boxes around before they got here to see where do these bees want to be, and they ended up in a place I wouldn't have thought of, but it has turned out to be the perfect place. And I do that with every being, I mean I've had plants in pots where I've moved them all over the property until the energy feels like yes, this is where you belong, this is where you want to be. And so that's the way I'm working with all the beings on property and in my life.

PETTERSEN: Yeah, I mean, life is within all of us; It's within the plants, it's within the animals...Do you think that it's also within the stones? I mean, aren't we in relationship-like, there's Mother Earth too, right? What are these distinctions between animals and plants and the earth itself?

CONROY: Well ultimately there isn't any, right? I mean, one of the most beautiful images I like to give to my apprentice students to think about this is, if you've ever sat by the ocean or another large body of water, and just merged, and you can really feel that we are part of nature; We are of nature and every other being is as well so, how can we, you know, live that way? I think this is one of the biggest challenges we have today is how do we merge with nature? How do we work with nature? Not trying to

conquer it, not try to control it, because it has its own expression. And so, being an herbalist, I encourage my students to sit with plants, but you can sit with animals. You can have a sit spot in a place in nature and watch animals come to you. I can't tell you how many times I've been sitting quietly and some animals just come up, and they won't even be affected if I'm just merged with nature. But if I'm walking really loudly and making a lot of noise, they won't come there me. And so we can live in harmony. And certainly indigenous people around the world, including all of our ancestors at some point, someplace on the planet, you know, co-habitated with nature, and had this sensibility, and we all can find it inside of ourselves. And so it's how I will choose to live my life with the animals, with all of the beings on the land where I am.

And in gratitude, I do want to mention - you know, we're talking about the land; The land that I live on is a Ho-Chunk land, and, y'know, there are indigenous people who I'm not the owner of this land right now; I'm keeping it. Yes I purchased it, but I'm keeping and tending it and caring for it, and honoring that there are indigenous people whose land this originally was...or is really.

:theme music - Real Voice by Thistle Pettersen:

:acoustic guitar:

*"So speak out, speak over, speak under
Speak through the noise
Speak loud so I can hear you, I wanna know you,
I wanna hear your real voice.
I wanna hear your real voice.
Your real voice, your real voice, your real voice..."*

:music fades out:

:Station tag - describe in detail; creative punctuation use, however you're inspired; feel free to copy/paste if used in another transcription already:

:reversed cymbal crash fading up to a stuttered drum fill of kick, snare, hi-hat:

:describe music/sound:

Sekhmet SHEOWL: Women have had a special relationship with animals for thousands of years. We have cared for them, saved them, lived with them, studied them, and enjoyed their protection in just about every civilization in history. We have arguably shown animals more respect and appreciation than men have, even cultivating caring relationships with the livestock we've raised and kept for food and other goods. So many of the modern world's most passionate environmental activists and wildlife advocates have been women precisely because our empathy and love for animals motivate us to do what we can for them in reaction to men's destruction of nature. Some of the most noble work women are doing and have done is the work of protecting animals and preserving their habitats, simply out of love for these creatures we share the earth with.

Pets provide women and girls with comfort, purpose, and joy that can never really be measured. Sometimes, when our lives feel painful or hopeless or just too hard, the animals we live with are the only reliable bright spot for us. They are a source of simple happiness and unconditional love. Animals don't care what we look like or what other people think about us or even what we think of ourselves. They reciprocate our love and care and good will without negotiation; they make us laugh and play with us; they sense when we need consoling and console us. Our animals can help us navigate the world despite our medical disabilities and they can help us heal mentally and emotionally from loss and trauma. Even other people's animals can make us smile when we desperately need a reason, whether we see them on the street or on the internet. Without animals, both wild and domestic, life as a woman or a girl would be so much darker and tougher to get through.

My black cat, a female, is one of my favorite creatures, and I love her as much as I can love other human beings. She is a living thing no different than a human being: intelligent, funny, affectionate, with a unique personality. She has been my companion for many years, and I want her around for as long as possible. I dislike calling myself her "owner" almost as much as I hate the terms "cat mom" and "dog mom." She is not my possession or my child. She is my friend. I think friendship of such an unconditional nature is far more meaningful than a pseudo-parent/child relationship. I have no wish to exert power or authority over my cat beyond the basic need to protect her or interrupt her scratching up the furniture. I don't want her to be anything or anyone other than herself. And I know she feels the same way about me. It's the kind of relationship that we women dream about finding with other human beings, and with my cat, with any animal, it comes easy.

There are a lot of lonely women out here, and while animals can never quite substitute for human companionship, they can alleviate our loneliness to a significant degree. For

women who live alone or who don't get enough touch in their lives or who have been single for an extended period or who don't have a best friend or any close friends, a positive relationship with an animal can be the reason they keep their heads above water and avoid feeling crushed under the weight of loneliness, isolation, or touch starvation. Animals have contributed to female sanity and mental well-being to an extent that we'll probably never fully understand.

I think it's important for us as feminist women to recognize that we share so much of the female experience with other female animals. We are not as different or disconnected from the rest of nature as men want us to believe. We are not the only female animals who face male violence and rape. We are not the only female animals who raise our young and live with the risks and burdens of that responsibility. We are not the only female animals who love and care for each other. Some people would say that it's dehumanizing to even call women "female" and compare us to other animals, but I don't see it that way at all. Seeing the things we have in common with other female animals, especially other female mammals, and understanding that males are not only violent, cruel, and sexually predatory toward females in our species but in many others too actually makes me feel more connected to the natural world, not less human. Men hurt female animals in many of the same ways they hurt us, but male animals also hurt the females of their own species. While it's deeply distressing to think about female animals being killed, raped, or maimed by their male counterparts or even by human men, the way this knowledge increases our potential sense of connection to those female animals can be comforting. Female animals, without intending to do it, show us we have the right to defend ourselves by any means necessary and just like women, they do their best to survive and enjoy themselves despite how brutal life is for them. They are fierce and free. So maybe we can be too.

To the animals of the world, to the dogs who make women feel secure enough to run outside and who have protected women from violent men, to the cats who cuddle their crying women and girls and vibrate their tails in excitement just to be around them, to the horses and birds and rabbits and hamsters and guinea pigs and cows and sheep and chickens who have shown women their affection or helped through medical emergencies or led them out of house fires, to the female lions in Africa who protected a little girl from male sex traffickers and the deer who chased off a woman's male attacker in Ohio, to every animal who's ever saved a woman or girl in any way: thank you. We love you!

:simple kick/snare starts in, followed by bass melody, and eventually additional light percussion indicating outros:

NEAULT: Thanks for listening to WLRN's 56 edition podcast. I'm April Neault. WLRN would like to thank our guests this month for sharing their views on women and animals. Thank you so much Falcon River and Linda Conroy for sharing your views and stories about relationships women cultivate with animals.

WHITAKER: If you like what you are hearing and would like to donate to the cause of feminist community radio, please visit our wordpress site and click on the donate button. Check out our merch tab to get a nice gift in exchange for your donation as well. If you are interested in joining our team, we are always looking for new volunteers to conduct interviews, write blog posts, post to our FB and other social media pages and do other tasks to keep us moving forward as a collective of media activist women. Thanks for listening. This is Dani Whitaker, signing off for now.

SHEOWL: And I'm Sekhmet SheOwl. Thanks for listening. Next month, we will focus our program on highlights and successes from the global feminist movement in 2020. Our handcrafted podcasts always come out the first Thursday of the month so look for our next edition on Thursday, January 7th, 2021. If you'd like to receive our newsletter that notifies you when each podcast episode, music show, and interview is released, please sign-up on the WLRN wordpress site. Until next time, keep fighting male power.

Jenna DIQUARTO: This is Jenna DiQuarto signing off on another edition of WLRN's monthly handcrafted podcast. The collective at WLRN wish you all a joyous and loving holiday season. Stay safe, sisters! ...And stay tuned in January for our edition on feminist victories of 2020. You can find us on twitter, Facebook, spinster, instagram and soundcloud in addition to our wordpress site. Our monthly podcasts are always crafted with tender-loving care and in solidarity with women worldwide. Thank you for your support! We would love to hear from you so please comment, like, and share widely. See you in 2021!

:music ends with loud snare hit and big reverb decay:

:theme music - Michigan (Gender Hurts) by Thistle Pettersen:

:driving acoustic guitar fades in:

:vocal harmonies:

*"...But how will we find our way out of this?
What is the antidote for the patriarchal kiss?
How will we find what needs to be shown?
And then after that
Where is home?
Tell me
Where is my home*

*'Cuz gender hurts
It's harmful..."*

:lyrics fade out: