

Visual culture, particularly nature documentary films, plays a pivotal role in shaping our attitudes towards nature, defining our perception of what is wild versus tame, and establishing our unique identity as human beings distinct from the rest of the natural world. This project aims to investigate how these attitudes were manifested in the history of Polish nature films from 1945 to 2005, providing insights into the cultural evolution of Polish nature filmmaking. By delving into this domain, we can not only describe this cinematic realm but also elucidate the influence of film as a medium on human-environment interactions within Poland.

The primary research question revolves around the discourses on nature and animals that were generated and perpetuated by Polish nature films produced at esteemed institutions such as Wytwórnia Filmów Oświatowych in Łódź and TVP. This study will explore the constant interplay between the paradigms of natural, agricultural, and forestry disciplines and the artistic and avant-garde elements of cinema.

An illustrative historical example of the intersection between language, nature, and film can be found in the works of Włodzimierz Puchalski, a pioneering figure in Polish nature filmmaking. Puchalski introduced the term "bloodless hunting," drawing from hunting terminology, to depict the paradoxical manner in which nature is captured on film—a simultaneous rejection of violence while embracing the colonizing logic associated with hunting.

Despite the production of numerous films during the aforementioned period, many of them have been forgotten by researchers. Thus far, scholarly reflection has been limited to isolated articles or fragmented within larger research areas such as the history of documentary cinema or the history of Wytwórnia Filmów Oświatowych. Moreover, the exploration of the connection between film as a medium and nature itself remains underdeveloped in Poland, occupying peripheral positions within both film studies and critical animal studies. Conversely, in Anglo-Saxon traditions, extensive research exists on the historical aspects of wildlife films and the critical application of film theory as a tool for comprehending animals and nature.

This project intends to showcase how changing attitudes towards nature were reflected in wildlife films and how films themselves played an active role in shaping these attitudes. It will delve into the influence of cinema on the relationship between forest management and the concept of nature's "nationality," as well as its impact on attempts to define politically motivated criteria for determining what is deserving of protection, thereby reinforcing the principles underlying the establishment of national parks. Furthermore, the study will analyze the evolution of the language and techniques employed in nature films, investigating how the film medium operates on an ideological level. For instance, the concept of "voyeurism," already evident in Puchalski's early films such as "Bird Island" (1947), has endured in nature films for decades, but the scientific and naturalistic approach adopted by Puchalski, K. Marczak, and A. Jaskólska has gradually given way to narrative storytelling, aestheticization, and metaphorization exemplified in films like "Dziobem i pazurem" (2002) by K. Matysek.

This interdisciplinary research project draws from contemporary posthumanist thought, particularly critical animal studies and environmental humanities, as well as traditional film historical methodologies and archival inquiries.

Ultimately, this study will illuminate how Polish nature films have shaped our perceptions of animals and plants, and how the production of specific discourses and perceptions has influenced our ambivalent attitudes towards nature—simultaneously viewing it as a resource while recognizing the imperative to protect it. This comprehensive investigation represents the first concerted effort to examine the nature cinema of this period, significantly enriching our knowledge of Polish films and their impact on societal attitudes towards nature. Furthermore, it has the potential to garner international recognition and contribute to the broader discourse on the relationship between film and nature.