

Nature watching as weltanschau

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Abstract—Nature alienation is widely perceived as one of the symptoms of the modernity syndrome. The return to nature watching in the form of a hobby has been associated with a variety of benefits in the sphere of both physical and mental health. This practice is more common in advanced economies, and has developed into a substantial economic activity in its own right. Here I focus on the practice of ‘twitching’ – or recording one’s own life list of species as a way of perceiving and understanding world’s diversity. I discuss the geographic levels at which species lists can be placed, the reality of the species concept, and the degrees of certainty one can realistically attach to a given sighting, discussing them both from a positivist perspective, and as individual constructs. I conclude that nature watching can both represent an important component of sense-making exercises, and contribute useful data to scientific projects.

Keywords—citizen science, ecotourism, nature watching, personal geographies, species distribution databases

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