

# An Abstract of the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies Thesis of:

Janice M. Boyer

Accepted on June 4, 2006

## Humankind's Interconnectedness with Nature

This thesis answers the question: what is the nature and value of rewilding in North America? In this thesis we explain that rewilding is a conservation strategy that creates and promotes large contiguous wildlife habitat for the purpose of preserving biodiversity to prevent further species extinction. This thesis provides a scientific understanding of rewilding, the role of the Wildlands Project, and presents feasibility arguments, for and against, successful rewilding.

The scope and size of rewilding is not constant. It can occur on many levels. Four case studies of rewilding projects at the local level are presented. These studies describe how local conservation organizations protect, restore and connect natural areas.

Because this thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach, it will explore the value of nature as viewed through a variety of disciplines. We look at the lives and writings of three historical conservation heroes: John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt and Aldo Leopold and discuss how these men influenced Americans and environmental public policy. We look at the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Endangered Species Act of 1973 because this legislation provided legal authority to preserve wilderness lands and the endangered species that live on them. Deep Ecology and the Transactional Approach were discussed because these philosophies hold that behavior toward nature is changed through experience and reflection.

Chapter Three discusses how connectivity can be applied to bring people together as well as elements of wildlife habitat. I propose a plan to connect wildlands and private lands in the north-northwest region of Portland, Oregon. I also explore ongoing rewilding efforts of various local conservation programs and make several proposals regarding program expansion.