1\_LHBN\_17\_**Abstract**\_Ecologagical understanding of transformative experience

The genesis of this paper lies within a research project investigating attitudes towards biodiversity, with particular focus on the re-introduction of two species of carnivores (lynx and pine marten) native to the British Isles. The research process involved focus group interviews alongside which my role was to collect a small number of more detailed individual narratives. Despite, what may seem like an incongruous area of research, it was the content of and my response to these narratives that maneuvered my thinking towards speculating on the nature of transformative learning experiences. Therefore, the purpose of this paper will be to curate the route from investigating attitudes towards reintroducing wild carnivores, to thinking about transformative learning. I shall do so initially by taking time to explore the narratives provided by two participants, David and Tracey, who both described significant changes in their understanding of the relationship between humans and the natural non-human world.

This paper initially draws on the particularities of David and Tracey’s narratives, specifically examining how these can be used to provide a general understanding of what it means to experience transformational learning. Ultimately a conception of human learning is offered informed by transformational experiences, that conceives pedagogy and the educational structures that surround it from a larger, pre-historical, ecological perspective. This in turn will then lead into a more theoretical discussion of human learning that steers the reader away from the familiarity of more readily accepted pedagogies into the curious world of psychedelic experience, mental health and deep connections with the non-human world. As an adjunct, I provide the neologism ‘*ecolagogy’ -* which aims to represent the nexus between *ecolo*gy and peda*gogy.*

One assumption central to the stories and analysis that follows is that humans are capable of more meaningful relationships with, and as such, a deeper understanding, of the natural non-human world. It will be argued that a disconnection with the nature has, over a significant period of history, given rise to problems such as mental illness as well as the fundamental human ability to act reflexively and to change frames of reference (Mezirow, 2000). The case will be made that modern humans are increasingly separated from their ecological ancestry, prompting a search for meaning, that includes the development of particular niches such as educational settings. An act, which may also represent an unconscious desire to manage the anxiety associated with being separated from complex ancestral ecological relationships. It will also be suggested that the difficult work of ‘learning’, framed within an ecological context, is often defended against and that certain mental health conditions and the clinical use of psychedelic drugs can highlight fundamental processes inherent in transformational learning.