



IT'S ONLY NATURAL THE HUMAN/NATURE CONNECTION

1 x 50 min. Written and produced by **Susanne Lummer**

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Humans have a fascinating and occasionally somewhat surreal relationship with the animals and even plants that surround us. It is a connection like no other and can be both mutually beneficial and mutually destructive.

For thousands of years humans have felt superior to the Earth's plants and animals. The concept of dominating and exploiting our environment runs through many cultures. These days, however, there is an increasing awareness that most of the other life-forms on the planet have existed far longer than we have. What are we able to learn from nature? For example, bats use ultrasound to navigate in the dark. Their echolocation system is both incredibly fast and exact. Scientists have now managed to apply the bat navigation system to a walking stick that allows visually impaired people to use echolocation to navigate their surroundings.

Some of the closest relationships humans have with other life-forms occur on and in our bodies. The human body is the foundation of existence for billions of mites, micro-organisms and fungi. Many would not be able to survive anywhere else—and, indeed, we would not survive without them. Despite its importance, we are rarely aware of the microbe zoo we carry with us throughout our lives. We pay far more attention to other, far more impressive species such as lions—or even to flowers.

A very different passion for nature caused turmoil in an entire country hundreds of years ago. A single flower, rather than crops such as wheat, corn or sugar, was responsible for bringing the Netherlands to its knees. In 1637, the country was rich and trade flourished. The Dutch put their wealth on display in their gardens and the tulip became an important status symbol. Growing and selling tulips boomed and took on strange forms: bulbs became worth their weight in gold. Then the bubble suddenly burst and the Netherlands was left to pick up the pieces of its economy.

Our love for nature can have dramatic consequences. The beluga sturgeon is a prime example of this destructive love. The large sturgeon spent 200 million years swimming peacefully in European waters, until humans decided to harvest their eggs. Beluga caviar is now one of the world's most expensive delicacies, but the Beluga sturgeon faces extinction.

However, human influence on the natural world is not only malign. Sometimes we have positive effects on our surroundings: for example, shipwrecks create new habitats for fish and corals. These old ships are soon reclaimed by nature, become overgrown and develop into entire ecosystems.

'The Human/Nature Connection' exists throughout our lives, although we are often unaware of it. In fact, this relationship deserves far greater attention.



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