

Through the Eyes of a Swallow: A Holistic Analysis of Humans' Connection to the Natural World

Take a trip through the creative process

Main question: How can empathy for the natural world be fostered through arts integration into scientific research?

Introduction

This project was inspired by a group of individuals who had the pursuit of reviving the connection between the human race and the natural world. The Side by Side group inspired me to look outside of the truths that I thought were universal and solidified within our society. As soon as they took me under their wing, I realized that I had to help them expand their capabilities. I decided that I would take my movement expertise and use it to help shape the art pieces that this group was creating. I thought that my contribution to this project would be limited, but soon came to realize that it would be bigger than I had ever imagined.

Quickly after I began my work with the Side by Side program, I realized that the connections I had, that we all have had, with the natural world ran much deeper than I ever thought they did. As a result of this, I took time to focus on the connection that I have with one species of bird: the Barn Swallow. I never knew how much the Barn Swallows relied on us and vice versa, but this interdependence made me realize that our natural world is much more unified than most think it is. I wanted to explore this unity and find a way to promote others to explore it as well.

My hope with this project is to try and cultivate a greater sense of empathy for the natural world and the Earth through the examination of the bond between humans and Barn Swallows. By investigating the behaviors that Barn Swallows exhibit and how these behaviors can be translated onto the human form, I am hoping to highlight how we are all a part of one collective planet. Overall, I wanted to create a product that would reinforce how important it is for our race to have empathy for the natural world and the animals that inhabit it.



Beginning Steps

- Movement Ideas
- Isolations
 - 1. Head and shoulders
 - 2. Legs and feet
 - 3. Hips
 - 4. Back and spine

Side by Side Second Movement Exploration Day

- Goals
1. Stay on top of time management
 2. Give each individual more individualized attention
 3. Foster more collaboration
- Preliminary Research
1. Violet-green Swallow
 1. Overall movement is similar to that of Barn Swallows
 2. They fly distinctly in circular motions
 3. They are very observant of their surroundings
 2. Towhee
 1. Lead with their breast
 2. Puffs up feathers fairly often
 3. Reels back head to chirp
 3. Goldfinch
 1. Hops up and down on plant stems
 2. Pecks at the grain on plants
 3. Fast and intentional flying

- Day 2 Reflection
- Movement workshops with eyes open seemed a little bit easier to follow
 - Members may be more self-conscious with their eyes open
 - Working with eyes closed definitely eases tension and creates a loose level of judgement
 - Mini Workshops
 - Asking about shots for filming and their specifics helped us focus on what each individual wanted to create
 - Taking time to work through repeated forms of movement helped refine them
 - Working side-by-side allowed for some collaboration with the members

- Ideas For Tomorrow
1. Try asking Side by Side members if they want to work with their eyes opened or closed
 1. Maybe demonstrate with eyes open then close them to work through the exercise
 2. Allow members to come up with filming ideas and then workshop the ideas from there
 1. Provide suggestions only after initial ideas are presented
 3. Find a sense of wonder and curiosity in the process
 1. It is all about being inspired, taking risks, and making new connections
 4. Allow yourself to make mistakes and learn from them

Side by Side Second Day of Filming



- Intentions
- Fostering a sense of wonder in the filming
 - Being more patient with the creative process
 - Giving yourself space to breath and time to take breaks
- Reflection
- Creation was a little bit stifled because we were on a time crunch due to stormy weather conditions
 - The group seemed to listen to one another better than they had the day prior
 - Everyone felt a little bit more relaxed when working on the filming
 - Had fallen into a process that made us all feel comfortable
 - We knew what to expect from one another

- Further Notes
- This process was exhausting but extremely life changing
 - Given me new ideas of plans for the future
 - Provided me with a better understanding of myself
 - I now know that I am capable of much more than I originally thought I was
 - I am so grateful for this opportunity and I hope to continue this work in the future
 - I allowed myself to surrender to the creative process, which allowed the process to flow more congruently

Discussion

While this project was wildly successful, there were plenty of other objectives that I was hoping to finish before the summer was over. My next steps were to create a choreographed art piece that explored the Barn Swallows' movement in a human facility with the attempt to demonstrate how similar movements can be seen within different species. Unfortunately, I overscheduled myself in a short amount of time and was unable to finish all of the parts of my project that I had originally planned to complete. Even so, I am proud of all that I was able to accomplish this summer. This project has given me the time and space to understand what my strengths and weaknesses are, and how I can apply them in a scientific setting. Moving forward, I am really excited to see what other kinds of arts integration work I will be able to participate in as I continue my collegiate education.

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