'Pooped in My Yard and Ate My Grass Last Night'[1]: Wild Burros and Tales of Belonging in Riverside County, California

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Abstract: Riverside County, California is home to several hundred free-roaming burros (donkeys) who frequent the open spaces surrounding and between the cities of Riverside, Moreno Valley, Loma Linda, and Redlands, as well as the public parks, private properties, residential developments and roadsides in these towns. Tales of more-than-human belonging (and not-belonging) in Riverside County render visible how multispecies places are mediated by infrastructures of consumption and infrastructures of reciprocity. Where infrastructures of consumption generate callousness, infrastructures of reciprocity sustain responsibility. We investigate these dynamics by tracing how two geographically close but infrastructurally distinctive spaces frequented by the area's wild burros are storied. The semi-rural Reche Canyon Road connects California Highway 60 and the City of Moreno Valley to Riverside and San Bernardino County communities to the north. Burros who inhabit the canyon as their home range must contend with automobiles traveling at highway speeds and are frequently injured or killed there. The road's design makes neither space nor time for the burros. In this setting, practices that support multispecies flourishing are embedded in, and curtailed by, the mundane violence of 'roadkill' and its associated narratives of victimhood and tragedy. Infrastructural violence subsides notably in residential neighbourhoods of the City of Moreno Valley frequented by the burros. How people and donkeys co-inhabit these neighbourhoods is consistent with non-dualist practices of mutual accommodation theorized in multispecies urbanism literature. Here, more reciprocal infrastructures decelerate human and nonhuman animal mobilities, making both space and time for the emergence of more convivial patterns of multispecies cohabitation.

Keywords: Wild burros, multispecies urbanism, more-than-human storying, infrastructures of reciprocity, urban wildlife

Introduction

Riverside County, California is home to several hundred free-roaming burros who frequent the open spaces surrounding and between the cities of Riverside, Moreno Valley, Loma Linda, and Redlands, as well as the public parks, private properties, residential developments and roadsides in these towns. The burros live alongside humans who love them, do not love them, sometimes hit them with cars, and often protect them. Highly visible, the burros have woven themselves into the region's fabric and are tolerated by most residents and welcomed by many. Indeed, the burros are a source of civic pride for some. In the time that burros have lived here, they have become a part of the local culture to the extent that the Moreno Valley Mall, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, had planned to incorporate them into a 2019 mall rebranding campaign that was to feature interior wall murals of the Inland Empire desert burros as well as oversized, walk-about burro mascots, 'Mo and Val Burro', to appeal to families with children ('Moreno Valley Mall Rebrands'). Riverside County businesses sometimes use the burros in their branding: Wild Donkey Brewing is a craft brewer in Redlands.

Burros are small equids, cousins to horses, and are more widely known as donkeys. Wild burros are the de-domesticated descendants of livestock closely intertwined with the history of Euro-American settler-colonialism. As such, they are one of many 'unintentional natures' (Gandy, 2016) unfolding alongside human activities that question established categories of nature and culture. The modern domesticated donkey, *Equus africanus asinus,* originated in Africa and was dispersed throughout Asia and eventually Europe over the course of several millennia, and then introduced to the Americas by Spanish conquistadors during the 16th century. Like horses, they were imported as work animals who sometimes also escaped or were intentionally turned loose, thus establishing wild populations. The link to Spanish colonization attached the term *burro* to these animals in the Americas. The Moreno Valley burros are understood to be descendants of some combination of pack animals left behind to roam free by turn-of-the-20th-century prospectors, and burros transplanted from Death Valley by a local rancher during the 1950s who were also turned loose. The burros are thus part of the Inland Empire's extractive and agricultural economic history, brought to this region to perform various types of labour and, once mines had been exhausted and/or pack animals dispensed with by

motor vehicles, left to fend for themselves. Today, unclaimed free-roaming donkeys who inhabit federal public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the National Forest Service are classified as protected wildlife by the US Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, which confers protection 'from capture, branding, harassment, or death' (Bureau of Land Management). This federal law was adopted following intensive animal welfare campaigning aimed at ending widespread unregulated killing and slaughter sale of wild horses and burros by 'mustangers'. The Riverside County burros' ranges do not overlap with federally-owned land, but they are classified as protected wildlife by a California state law that was passed in acknowledgment that the federal law left a gap in the protection of the Riverside County burros who do not live on designated federal public land. The Riverside County burros fall under the regulatory auspices of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The legal protection afforded wild burros prohibits nearly any kind of interference or management. Section 4600 of the Fish and Game Code 'makes it unlawful to kill, wound, capture, or possess an undomesticated burro. State government, local governments, or private landowners are not authorized to take any actions to manage burros' (2021 California Code). Only local animal control agencies or non-profit organizations contracted to provide services to undomesticated burros are authorized to remove burros from private land, roadways, provide medical care to burros who are seriously ill or injured, and make decisions about their releasability back into the wild (2019 California Code).

Given their protected status, the Riverside County burros largely escape the designation of expendability often applied to 'feral' free-roaming donkeys in other contexts; for example, in Australia where they are classified as feral and subject to periodic culling (Celermajer). That does not mean that North American wildlife biology and rangeland management science do not value 'native' wildlife more highly than 'feral' wild equids (Danvir; Davies and Boyd). Questions of 'nativeness' continue to haunt public and policy debates regarding wild horse and burro management (Hill). In Riverside County, however, everyday practices of interspecies care and compassion largely sidestep the ferality distraction (Bhattacharyya et al.). Inclusion of the burros in Moreno Valley's shared urban life, moreover, is remarkable not only because wild equids' ranges rarely overlap with significant human settlements, but also because the Inland

Empire is ground zero for the expansion of the warehouse and logistics industry in southern California (De Lara). In addition to expanding our knowledge about how wild equids inhabit urban spaces, attending to human-burro assemblages in this region speaks to the emergence of interspecies kinship practices under conditions of shared precarity.

We ask, in what ways are various urban and near-urban spaces in Riverside County being storied as multispecies communities? Here we draw on van Dooren and Rose's account of the capacity of more-than-human storying of places 'to provide new perspectives on the world, and in so doing to draw us into deeper and more demanding accountabilities for nonhuman others' (1-2), namely by challenging anthropocentric conceptions of the urban that position nonhuman animals as being 'out of place'. We extend this account by attending to the ways that the more-than-human storying of anthropogenic spaces is fundamentally shaped by infrastructures. Tales of more-than-human belonging (and not-belonging) in this busy part of Riverside County render visible how compassionate recognition of ecological vulnerability (Woolaston) and consideration for the conditions of a shared life (Youatt) emerge from a political struggle between infrastructures of consumption and infrastructures of reciprocity (Tănăsescu). According to Tănăsescu's typology, where infrastructures of consumption generate callousness, infrastructures of reciprocity sustain responsibility (Tănăsescu 148). We draw out some of these relations of interspecies (ir)responsibility by tracing how two geographically close but infrastructurally distinctive spaces frequented by the area's wild burros are storied. The semi-rural Reche Canyon Road connects California Highway 60 and the City of Moreno Valley to Riverside and San Bernardino County communities to the north. Burros who inhabit the canyon as their home range must contend with automobiles traveling at highway speeds and are frequently injured or killed there. The road's design makes neither space nor time for the burros. Whatever relations of more-than-human flourishing might emerge from this risky landscape are embedded in, and curtailed by, the recurring violence of 'roadkill' and its associated narratives of victimhood and tragedy (Michael).

Livelier human-burro entanglements prevail in the City of Moreno Valley. In the town's residential neighbourhoods that abut undeveloped open spaces, bands of burros routinely travel back and forth between developed and undeveloped land. Some even inhabit these

neighbourhoods all but permanently. Absent the unrelenting infrastructural violence (Rodgers and O'Neill) of Reche Canyon Road, how people and donkeys co-inhabit these neighbourhoods is consistent with non-dualist practices of mutual accommodation theorized in the multispecies urbanism literature (Houston et al.; Srinivasan; Van Patter; Wolch) that 'hold open' space for nonhuman animals (van Dooren). Here, more reciprocal infrastructures – low automobile speed limits, lush vegetation planted for human enjoyment that is also highly attractive to the burros – decelerate human and nonhuman animal mobilities, making both space and time for more convivial patterns of multispecies inhabitation that are 'co-authored by humans and animals in ways that reflect genuine mutuality and relational agency' (Blattner et al. 2). Following a description of the research setting, theoretical framework, and methodology, we discuss how interspecies relations are storied and mediated by infrastructures in these two spatially distinctive areas of Riverside County.

Fig. 1 Young jacks playing in view of the homes of the Hidden Springs section of Moreno Valley. © Jennifer Britton

Research setting, theoretical framework, and methodology

Wild Burros in Riverside County

Moreno Valley is a city of approximately 210,000 residents in western Riverside County. It is flanked by the cities of Riverside, Loma Linda, Redlands, and Perris, and bisected by the east-to-west California Highway 60. The city includes various land uses, notably a booming warehouse and logistics industry, big box retail, and a mix of single-family homes, townhouses, apartment buildings, and condominiums. Agriculture is declining and persists primarily as semi-rural farmettes around the edges of the incorporated city. The city's average household income of $69,610 ('About Moreno Valley') obscures significant wealth disparities. Economic and population growth coexist here with a poverty level above the national average and with skyrocketing asthma rates attributed to diesel exhaust particles emitted by thousands of trucks traveling to and from the ports of Long Beach every day (Merchant). These environmental burdens disproportionately harm the region's Hispanic and Black communities. At the same time, labour, community, and environmental organizations persist in publicizing experiences of harsh working conditions and economic precariousness as well as exposure to air pollutants exacting a toll on many residents' health (De Lara).

Reche Canyon lies to the north of Moreno Valley, cutting through rugged hills and unincorporated lands, with a number of agricultural, industrial, and residential properties scattered along the canyon road, and open space extending up the sides of the canyon to the hills above. Reche Canyon Road winds for six miles through the canyon, from the north border of Moreno Valley to the cities of Loma Linda and San Bernardino, connecting those towns to Highway 60 via Perris Boulevard in Moreno Valley. The road is used by commuting workers and is often congested during peak travel times. Drivers traveling at highway speeds and donkeys crossing the road pose a mutual hazard here.

Adult burros range in size from 180 to 270 kg and roughly 100-120 cm tall. They blend in well with arid environments, with coats ranging from dark brown to grey to a light cream colour (Fig. 1). Burros are herbivores, consuming grasses and other available forage like the leaves and twigs of wild shrubs but also the grassy lawns and decorative plantings of Moreno Valley front yards. Burros are not ruminants like sheep and cattle; after food passes through

their single stomach, it emerges as semi-solid manure with undigested seeds that aids in the dispersal of plants. Free-roaming burros' social arrangements take the form of small family bands that may include a jack (adult male), jennies (adult females) and any young foals. Young jacks may form bachelor bands together, sometimes with older jacks who are no longer strong enough to hold a family band. Young jennies are somewhat more likely to remain with their family of origin but as with horses there is much fluidity to family band membership. Like free-roaming horses, burros inhabit home ranges but are not territorial. As grazing animals, they are constantly in motion, moving slowly through their ranges as they eat. Drinking time is coordinated within bands, with daily routines that determine when and where the band will go to find water. In places occupied by many bands, it is common for several bands to show up for water at the same time; after burros take turns drinking, they may spend social time in the company of other bands before dispersing again.

The wild burros of Riverside County (and to some extent of San Bernardino County), occur primarily in the northwest corner of the county, being found in the cities of Riverside, Moreno Valley, Loma Linda, Redlands, and in the unincorporated areas and open spaces surrounding these municipalities, including Box Springs Mountain Reserve (BSMR), which sits just to the northwest of Moreno Valley. There are a number of bands who identify BSMR as their primary range, remaining mostly on the mountain. In Moreno Valley proper, burros frequent the neighbourhoods closest to the open spaces flanking the city to the west, north, and east, including BSMR. They appear in public parks, back yards, front yards, and city streets. Burros graze mostly on grasses, but in their urban habitats in Riverside County they have learned to scavenge residential trash on municipal trash collection days, and they are frequently seen consuming decorative plantings. Minus the trash raids, the burros occupy an ecological niche comparable to that of suburban white-tailed deer. Unlike deer, burros are extremely well adapted to semi-arid conditions, and are known to dig wells in places like the Sonoran Desert (Lundgren et al.). Despite ongoing drought in southern California there is a substantial amount of lawn watering in the region, and the burros clearly find the abundance of green lawns to be an irresistible grazing resource. They find water at a handful of springs located in open spaces, and at creeks located in town parks; during severe drought, many residents provide them with water

buckets, tanks, and troughs (Hurt). There is also a volunteer-maintained water tank set up for the BSMR bands at the recreational-use parking area near the top of the mountain. The burros who call the area in and around Moreno Valley home are generally acclimated to humans and, while some individuals prefer to keep their distance from humans, they do not scare easily and as such are highly visible.

We are mindful that despite robust public approval of the burros' presence – they are California's only wild burros not confined to a state or national park or a Bureau of Land Management herd area – capacities and vulnerabilities are not distributed equitably. In addition to facing the usual risks of burro life, including some predation of vulnerable individuals by mountain lions and coyotes, outbreaks of infectious disease such as equine influenza (Escobar), and drought-related dehydration and malnutrition, burros are also regularly injured or killed in encounters with humans, primarily in vehicle collisions. Deliberate violence against the burros – though not unheard of – is rare. The burros' legal status as wildlife offers some protection, but Moreno Valley is a bustling city, not a nature preserve focused on protecting wild animals from human wrongdoing. Human residents, for their part, endure (often annoying, sometimes dangerous) inconveniences associated with the burros, who rummage through trash, pose road hazards for drivers, browse on garden plants, and leave copious droppings of manure in their wake. Notwithstanding the myriad everyday practices of interspecies care and compassion we have observed, however, we do not claim that these efforts at accommodating some nonhuman needs amount to a coherent political movement, let alone one capable of decolonizing the capitalist structuring of time and space in Riverside County. The dynamics of 'Amazon capitalism' – creation of warehouse-driven environmental sacrifice zones, particularly in blue-collar communities of colour, alongside barely regulated real estate development and urban sprawl benefiting a managerial and investor class – have defied democratic control here as anywhere else along the global capitalist value chain (Alimahomed-Wilson and Reese). For example, we have not come across any proposals, beyond individual expressions of nostalgia for a more rural past, that advocate for halting development in favour of preserving burro habitat in undeveloped sections of Riverside County. Thus, our political objectives, though normatively ambitious, remain self-consciously pragmatist. In the short term, we believe, the storying of

some spaces in Riverside County as successfully multispecies renders visible some of the learned invisibilities regarding settler-colonial ecological violence (Bacon, 2019) routinely inflicted on nonhuman others. This is not nothing. As one of us has argued elsewhere, such a *politics of sight* that helps cultivate imaginaries of the urban as more inclusive of wild animals is an important step in questioning structural patterns of multispecies injustice (Hunold).

Storying multispecies place-making through an infrastructural lens

Human-burro entanglements in Riverside County unfold against a backdrop of traditional conceptions of urban life that often entrap visible free-roaming animals in contradictory discourses of belonging and invasiveness (Houston et al.; Van Patter). Encoded in stark binaries such as pest or victim (McKiernan and Instone), stray or friend (Steele et al.), feral or wild (Notzke), wild animals alternately become targets of violence or objects of care. Though their choices about where to feed, sleep, and engage in social activities often defy habitat boundaries as imagined by humans, animals' spatial decision making does not entirely override persistent human understandings of urban nature as being divided into natural areas where nonhuman animals belong and the built environment where they do not. Such ontological boundaries between 'animal spaces' – where humans think animals belong – and 'beastly places' – where animals decide they do – (Philo and Wilbert) remain deeply contested even as they are becoming unmoored (Hunold and Lloro).

In light of such tensions, normatively demanding conceptions of multispecies flourishing argue for a transformational recognition and integration of human and nonhuman practices (Altrudi and Kelty; Boonman-Berson et al.; Hinchliffe and Whatmore; Houston et al.; Meijer; Narayanan and Bindumadhav; Rigby; Steele et al.). All such proposals operate with some version of what Michelfelder has termed 'thin' and 'thick' conceptions of human-animal coexistence. Thin conceptions consign humans and nonhuman animals to distinctive material and symbolic spheres, to 'parallel planes' of existence. Thick conceptions, in contrast, invoke a 'single-plane' community founded upon a more robust sense of belonging than mere toleration or just getting along (Michelfelder). Writing about Australian white ibis thriving in urban

habitats, McKiernan and Instone ask: '[H]ow do we relate to the ibis outside a dualistic frame of either pest or victim? How do we transform the usual narrative of eradication to a story of entangled human-nonhuman neighbourliness?' (10). Because the Riverside County burros are highly visible and regularly cross boundaries separating parks from streets from yards from driveways with little hope – or care – of evading detection by human observers, the region's human-burro entanglements provide us with an opportunity to investigate under what conditions narratives of eradication yield to narratives of neighbourliness (Gruen; Srinivasan; Steele et al.).

Our empirical discussion is guided by a theoretical framework of multispecies place-making (Aisher and Damodoran; van Dooren and Rose; York and Longo). This framework provides two important insights. Its insistence that places are not *given*, but actively *made* by enlisting place-specific meanings, local knowledge, and social-ecological dynamics (Aisher and Damodoran 294) reminds us that places are, above all, *storied*. '[P]laces contain human and also nonhuman stories, meanings and significance. A place is not simply materially carved out of space. […] places are also remembered, experienced, felt, discussed and imagined' (294, 299). However, storying cannot be *reduced* to affective relations. Rather, how a place can be storied, and by whom, is determined, at least in part, by encounters of living bodies with infrastructures that are rarely indifferent to life. By infrastructures we mean, following Barua, technological systems that forge worlds by accelerating/decelerating the mobilities of humans and nonhumans in ways that shape patterns of interspecies relations. Infrastructures enable some ways of life while precluding others, for all species: 'infrastructures are not only background substrates subtending human life but become the very medium of non-human inhabitation' (Barua 3), shaping both human and nonhuman metabolisms and mobilities, and their interactions. Thus, the quality of multispecies life in anthropogenic landscapes depends on their capacity to support 'resilient infrastructures of reciprocity' (Tănăsescu 45). In practical terms, reciprocity is often predicated on 'relative speeds of movement, which ultimately determine the breadth of social inclusion' in multispecies settings (Lulka 1138). How, we ask, are multispecies relationalities storied in the context of the neighbourhood and the highway?

Fig. 2 Wild burros feeding on ornamental garden plants in Sunnymead Ranch, Moreno Valley. © Jennifer Britton

Data collection and analysis: fieldwork, social media, and local news

Jennifer Britton spent a day observing and photographing burros in Moreno Valley, BSMR, and Reche Canyon in April 2019, and returned for four days of field observations in October 2022. In 2019 she encountered the burros as part of a photography trip through southern California and spent a day observing and photographing them in the Box Springs Mountain Reserve, around Moreno Valley, and along Reche Canyon Road, aiming for a basic understanding of the habitats and the burros' place in them. The 2022 trip, delayed by the pandemic, allowed for more in-depth observation. Over the course of four days, she hiked after the burros in Box Springs Mountain Reserve, as well as in the Moreno Valley neighbourhoods of Sunnymead Ranch and Hidden Springs, taking notes about the burros' practices and habits following significant encounters (Fig 2). A car tour to find burros around the city of Moreno Valley, Reche

Canyon, Loma Linda, and the San Timoteo Canyon areas generated a more robust understanding of the burros' ranges through the region. Decades of experience with domestic horses and burros as well as countless hours logged observing North American wild horses and burros in their home ranges enabled recognition of social and behavioural patterns.

Our thematic analysis draws on a combination of field notes and human-burro interactions reported in local media and on social media. Thematic analysis is an interpretive methodology wherein researchers immerse themselves in the data to familiarize themselves with their depth and breadth while actively searching for patterns and meanings (Braun and Clarke, 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology'; Guest et al. 11). This process is reflexive in that it involves moving from reviewing unstructured data to developing ideas about what is going on in the data. Thematic analysis aims to uncover participants' lived experiences, perspectives and practices; the social processes that influence and shape particular phenomena; the explicit and implicit norms governing particular practices; as well as the social construction of meaning and the representation of social objects in particular texts and contexts (Braun and Clarke, *Thematic Analysis*). In doing so, we looked for material conveying the experiences of humans and burros in these Riverside County locations in the discussions by users of two public local-interest Facebook community pages: 'Moreno Valley Matters' and 'Reche Canyon Road emergency and general information'. Using search terms such as 'burro' and 'donkey', we identified approximately a dozen discussion threads focused on some aspect of human-burro interactions. A typical post included someone who would post a cell phone image of burros doing something, such as grazing alongside the canyon road or sleeping in a front yard, which yielded anywhere from a handful to dozens of responses. We read and discussed these Facebook threads with a view to identifying material relevant to our interest in storying the setting of the highway and the neighbourhood as multispecies places. In addition, we conducted online searches to locate news reporting about the burros published by southern California newspapers and by radio and television stations from the late 2000s to the present.

Reche Canyon Road: Infrastructural violence and narratives of victimhood

Motor vehicle collisions on Reche Canyon Road involving burros are newsworthy. Sometimes, burros even precede humans in media headlines: 'Moreno Valley: Donkey Dies, Motorcyclist Hurt in Traffic Collision' along Reche Canyon Road ('Moreno Valley: Donkey Dies').

> I headed to Reche Canyon road. The speed limit is 50 mph and it seems way too high for a winding road with burro hazards. About 4-5 small burro bands were visible from the road along the 6 mile stretch from Reche Vista Road to where Reche Canyon Rd. bumps into East Washington St in the city of Loma Linda at the base of the hill. Mid-morning they were mostly sleeping in available shade – one next to a shipping container, others under trees or in the shade of natural or human-constructed embankments. (Britton, Field Notes)

Frequent collisions spurred efforts to make traffic on this road less hazardous. In the early 2000s, residents observed a burro-vehicle collision about once every other month. The vehicles usually sustained little substantial damage, humans were mostly unhurt or not severely injured, and the burros involved experienced serious injury or death. In 2005, however, a young woman was killed when her car struck a burro. In 2008, two residents, acting on their own initiative, began creating reflective collars and putting them on burros as a way of reducing vehicle collisions ('Accident-Prone Donkeys Get Reflective Collars'). In 2010, Riverside County Animal Services began capturing and castrating burro jacks as a way of stabilizing population numbers and thus reducing the number of animals crossing the road ('Burro Deaths'). Animal Services staff lured burros into hay and water corral traps, then sedated, castrated, microchipped, and vaccinated them. In order for management practices that required touching the burros to be performed without violating the Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, two Animal Services staffers in 2007 successfully lobbied the State of California for legislation that granted the organization legal authority to more closely manage the burros. (As explained above, state law otherwise prohibits both governments and private citizens from interfering with undomesticated burros.) DonkeyLand, a Riverside County burro sanctuary and advocacy organization, has lobbied for more donkey crossing signs and for reduced speed limits on Reche Canyon Road.

Canyon residents, rather than wildlife officers, brought public attention to the traffic collisions and deaths. One resident, who nicknamed Reche Canyon the 'Canyon of Death,' started documenting dead burros on the side of the road before the inception of the castration program, in hopes of shocking someone into taking action: 'Seeing that the animals are dying unnecessarily and they are suffering is brutal. Their deaths are pretty gruesome' ('Burro Deaths'). Residents understand these deaths to be caused primarily by human actions, specifically by speeding. Residents point to aggressive driving, such as when 'drivers don't slow down at dips and turns, or how they use turn lanes to zoom around slower vehicles' ('Burro Deaths'). Given most burros' greyish brown colouring, moreover, the otherwise highly visible animals blend into the landscape and are hard to detect by inattentive drivers travelling at highway speeds, even in the daytime (Reche Canyon Road, 'Here's the 4th Accident'). However, residents also understand the burros to behave unpredictably, and to be capable of surprising even drivers who moderate their speed. 'I drove through Reche Canyon to work for over 20 years. Yes, there are a LOT of IDIOTS on the road. There are also careful drivers who hit donkeys through no fault of their own. I've seen it happen several times. The donkeys do just seem to run out into the street out of nowhere' (Reche Canyon Road, 'Here's the 4th Accident'). While slowing down is believed to reduce the number of collisions, residents appear sensitized to this fundamental incommensurability between the spatial practices – and relative speeds – of burros and cars: 'Animals can do a lot of damage, even at reasonable speeds' (Reche Canyon Road, 'Here's the 4th Accident'). Says another driver: 'I'm always looking around for donkeys cause they don't know any better' (Reche Canyon Road, 'Burro Hit and Run').

Provisioning – mostly in the form of visitors handing out treats for the burros from their cars – is regarded by residents and by wildlife officers as contributing to collisions along Reche Canyon Road. Wildlife officers disapprove of provisioning on principle, fearing that burros' attraction to desirable foods not available to them 'in the wild' will increase collisions by drawing more animals to the area. A Riverside County Animal Services director explains: 'In the wild, burros eat mostly grass or vegetation and fear people and vehicles. However, due to easy access to foods not generally found in the wild, burros' behaviour has adapted. Instead of normal

grazing, the burros now seek out populated areas, roadways and people in order to obtain the treats provided' (Miller, qtd. in City News Service, 'Don't Feed the Wild Donkeys'). In this view, provisioning along with undue proximity to human society endangers not only the burros' physical integrity but also degrades their behavioural repertoire. These exhortations to avoid 'attractants' is taken straight from the toolbox of urban wildlife management (Adams), which defends a 'parallel planes' conception of coexistence wherein humans and free-roaming animals share space while inhabiting separate lifeworlds (Frank and Glikman). This perspective finds its clearest expression in Riverside County Ordinance No. 934, the Prohibiting the Harassment and Feeding of Undomesticated Burros Act, which makes it an infraction to interact with untamed donkeys. The ordinance, passed in 2017, mandates fines for violators, ranging from $100 to $500, depending on the number of offenses (City News Service, 'Don't Feed the Wild Donkeys').

The public debate suggests, however, that some residents evaluate matters of risk and safety more pragmatically, attuned as they are to the donkeys' movements around the canyon; in doing so, these residents articulate a (now illegal) notion of provisioning that clashes with wildlife managers' commitment to upholding firm interspecies boundaries. For example, some canyon residents believe that visitors carelessly feeding burros by the roadside causes harm while maintaining that spatially mindful provisioning might actually protect burros. One resident interviewed before the ban on feeding went into effect explained that she had for years provided burros on her property with water troughs as well as lettuce, carrots, oranges, and bananas in order to entice them to stay north of the dangerous road ('Burro Deaths'). Arguably, however, neither the county government's efforts to establish firm boundaries nor residents' practices of protective provisioning entirely face up to the fundamental clash between the burros' agency and the canyon road's automobility. Since the road bisects the burros' range, they will keep crossing it.

Burros moving through Reche Canyon are alternately victims of violence and objects of care. Notable incidents of caretaking have included a jack with an arrow lodged in his head in July 2018. Volunteers hoping to capture him to treat his injury scoured the area but were unable to locate him before the arrow dislodged on its own (Rokos). In January 2019, Animal Services

officers managed to remove an orange traffic cone stuck on a burro's hoof. An officer speculated the jack had stepped into the cone while playing with it (City News Service, 'Animal Services Worker Aids "Coney the Burro"'). In May 2019, a retiree found a days-old foal standing alone in the middle of the road. He noticed a gash on her hindquarters and, finding no other burros nearby, gently led her to his home where his wife called Animal Services. As the couple waited for an officer to arrive, they kept talking to the foal, assuring her she was going to be fine (Valenzuela, 2019).

Though their right to inhabit this section of Riverside County is rarely questioned – indeed, often affirmed – the car-centric geography of the arterial road cannot help but foreground a paternalistic narrative of burros as victims. All but inevitably, perhaps, the canyon road's looming presence bends human-burro relations toward control rather than reciprocity. How could infrastructures of control not cast burros primarily as the figure of the stray, 'an exile, an outsider living in a liminal shadow' (Steele et al.), subject to surveillance and perhaps even removal, ostensibly for their own good? Remarkably, however, narratives of victimhood have not erased all traces of reciprocity along the highway. The deadly road has not kept residents from storying the donkeys as neighbours, deserving of consideration and care. Surely, outfitting burros with reflective collars, provisioning, treating injuries, and advocating for improved road signage and lowered speed limits to narrow the gap between automobile and equid mobilities all reinforce a shared sense of responsibility toward vulnerable nonhuman others. Even if such efforts fall short of politicizing the fundamental harms of automobility (Urry), they nonetheless signal that infrastructural violence (Rodgers and O'Neill) is the result of design decisions and policy choices and, as such, in principle not immutable. Despite the agency-denying shortcomings of relating to burros as victims, moreover, there is some transformative potential in the wider cultural shift that has moved road-killed burros from the category of the unmourned to the category of the grievable (Desmond; Gillespie). The recognition that the way things are is not inevitable is necessarily the first step in politicizing asymmetries of power that negatively affect nonhuman (and human) lives. It may be difficult to imagine Riverside County without a Reche Canyon Road; however, a Reche Canyon Road with a lowered speed limit seems less impossible.

Moreno Valley: Practices of reciprocation in time and space

Infrastructural violence subsides notably in the residential neighbourhoods of Moreno Valley frequented by the burros. Neither Moreno Valley's housing developments nor Reche Canyon Road were *designed* to accommodate the needs of burros, but burro fatalities from vehicle collisions are largely confined to the canyon road; implicitly confirming, as we argue here, that infrastructures can either inhibit or facilitate more reciprocal experiences of multispecies cohabitation. Human-burro relations in Moreno Valley also reveal, moreover, that infrastructure design goes beyond merely spatial considerations. That cultivating relations of interspecies neighbourliness and belonging requires making *space* for nonhuman others is uncontroversial (Beatley; Boonman-Berson et al.; Houston et al.; Wolch). Indeed, designing *spaces* that allow for unplanned encounters between humans and nonhuman animals is critical for accommodating nonhuman subjects' agency and for eliciting nonhuman animals' preferences in the absence of a capacity for human speech (Donaldson). As Michelfelder reminds us, however, making space does not suffice without also making *time*: 'acts of hospitality need space as a pre-condition, as there is no hospitality without a space in which hospitality can be *enacted*. But creating space is not what truly matters in hospitality. What matters is "making time" for the other' (113). Making time for the other when encountering 'the raccoon or the fox or the javelina or the deer', Michelfelder writes, 'begins but does not end with recognizing their "right" to be in that same "space of time" as us [...] in order to thoughtfully discern their needs, interests, and desires' (113). Using a deliberately provocative example, she explicitly positions this conception of attentive, accommodating hospitality in opposition to the reigning narrative of infestation, eviction, and eradication:

> What though if an animal appears to be taking advantage of our hospitality by staying past its welcome, as in the case, for example, of a raccoon who takes up residency in the attic of a house? Let me suggest we need to give such a creature, whom many would call a nuisance or a pest, time to leave of its own accord. (114)

Though burros do not take up residence inside people's homes, their dwelling in residential neighbourhoods requires some forbearance. Indeed, the affective relations explored by humans and burros in residential settings are filled with examples of generous hospitality,

even love and kindness. For example, when a jenny foaled right on a Sunnymead Ranch sidewalk in July 2019, a resident shared an image of the jenny, her foal, and a blanket on the ground that somebody had laid out to offer something softer between the newborn and the concrete (DonkeyLand). Here, burros are often storied as the figure of the friend who is welcome and invited to stay rather than the stray who triggers calls for relocation and rehoming (Steele et al.). Social media posts about the burros routinely elicit positive comments like this one: 'We really enjoy watching them play, especially the small ones always running with such energy. I am so glad we have donkeys in our neighborhood' (Moreno Valley Matters, 'We Haven't Shared'). Not all residents welcome this blurring of interspecies boundaries, however. In response to an image shared on Moreno Valley Matters (MVM) of burros congregating on someone's front porch in search of shade, one resident voiced apparent discomfort: 'Wow … they are really comfortable around humans … next, they will be moving into the spare bedroom' (Moreno Valley Matters, 'Solicitors this Early?'). Residents who are wary of the burros' presence in town express concerns that range from the burros posing traffic hazards to scepticism about wildlife being invited to cross an ontological boundary into the realm of the tame and domesticated: 'The donkeys have been becoming more and more domestic with little fear or people and cars. We all love them, but not enough, I guess, to do the right thing by them and try and keep them wild. We encourage them to be friendly. We all get angry when someone hits and kills one, it's sad but true' (Moreno Valley Matters, 'Solicitors this Early?'). To the original poster, notably, the burros napping on her porch are not anonymous burros but individuals she has, in some cases, known all their lives: 'This donkey knows me. […] He runs right up to me for a little love. He probably just saw me in the house and came to me like he always does'. Other responses to images posted on MVM showing burros grazing or napping in people's yards speculate that the burros express preferences about whose properties they stop to rest in, with one neighbour noting 'They found [peace sign emoji] in the valley somewhere you didn't choose them they choose you hope nobody complains' and another offering that 'They will keep coming back cause they aren't mistreated and they feel safe' (Moreno Valley Matters, 'I Thought They Had Split Up').

Included in this ethos of caretaking towards the burros is concern for their safety; a concern that is, however, less fraught with the sense of doom prevailing along Reche Canyon Road. Reminders that 'Just everyone remember to drive cautiously' are commonplace in social media posts highlighting the presence of burros (Moreno Valley Matters, 'Solicitors this Early?'). Though residents are concerned about excessive driving speeds in town, the design of residential streets (for example, stop signs at intersections) limits how fast drivers can go – in contrast to the higher speed limit and longer uninterrupted stretches of the canyon road:

> Heading back into Moreno Valley I went into the Sunnymead Ranch suburban subdivision […]. Turned onto Lake Summit Drive to see if any burros were rummaging around the houses and there they were! A jenny and her foal were asleep in the shade along the road in a small public green space. Just a little further along, a band of about eight or so burros were absolutely wrecking the blossoming shrubberies right in front of somebody's house, next to their front door. The band was spread out over two front yards in this middle class neighborhood with 2100-220 square foot houses, driveways with multiple cars, and backyard swimming pools. […] Burros were variously eating off the flowering shrubs, eating the grass, peeing in the grass, pooping on the sidewalk. They would spend 10-15 minutes at each house, moving along to the next with the foals following their moms. There were occasional flares of temper if somebody was grazing too close to somebody else, or a youngster wanted to play with a friend who wanted to keep eating. They would use the sidewalks to shift from one house to the next, sometimes crossing back and forth across the wide two lane low-speed street.
>
> The sparse traffic going through was mostly lawn care contractors – pickups pulling trailers – and occasional residents. Sometimes somebody in a regular car, not the contractors, would stop to watch the burros working the front yards. (Britton, Field Notes)

It is through their commonplaceness that these human-burro interactions approximate the idea of Tănăsescu's infrastructures of reciprocity, 'where certain grooves of practice are carved out such that reciprocation becomes commonplace through its ritualization' (Tănăsescu 139). Reciprocity is not the same as harmony, however. As Srinivasan notes in the context of

living alongside street dogs in Chennai, India, 'this ethos of cohabitation […] is not predicated on the absence of conflict' (385). Dogs bite, and donkeys kick. As a general matter, conflict should be understood 'as part of the experience of multi-species coexistence' (Hill 3) – in part because the potential for conflict is never absent, regardless of the species involved, and in part because conflict can be a force for change to better accommodate cohabitation; as when, for example, some Sunnymead Ranch residents replace lawn grass and garden plants with artificial turf and plastic flowers. Such xeriscaping is driven primarily by the demands of persistent drought, but one resident who is otherwise rather fond of the burros explained her choice of plastic flowers as an adjustment to the presence of burros who keep visiting her yard.

This same resident attributes the permanent presence of donkeys in town to their displacement from the surrounding hills by urban sprawl: 'I have lived here 30 years and they started coming when houses were built in Shadow Mountain. […] I love when they come but wish they still had their home' (Moreno Valley Matters, 'Solicitors this Early?'). Some burros now effectively call these Moreno Valley neighbourhoods home, and many social media posts make space for nonhuman agency. As well, we detect some self-awareness that however residents may respond to burros' spatial decision making, humans don't fully control what's going on. Moreno Valley's interspecies caretaking ethic includes a sense of resigned acceptance that as much of a source of pleasure the burros are to the town, they also bring with them some minor chaos, disruption, and manure. A video posted to MVM showing a dozen donkeys grazing on someone's front lawn is wryly titled: 'My Gardeners Showed up Today' (Moreno Valley Matters, 'My Gardeners'). Social media conversations about burros feeding on garden plants and leaving manure in their wake suggest, however, that the shared experiences of these inconveniences can generate a sense of community among the human inhabitants (Fig. 3). In one incident described on MVM, residents found themselves reduced to laughter upon discovering in the morning that the donkeys had defecated all over their block during the night.

Fig. 3 A burro foal stands in a Sunnymead Ranch front yard next to a 'Vote Wild Burro for County Super' sign that reflects the contribution of burros to local placemaking. © Jennifer Britton

Conclusion

The Moreno Valley neighbourhoods frequented by the burros are no less an instance of unsanctioned nature than Reche Canyon Road. One critical difference is that residential infrastructures are far less deadly to the donkeys, partly because design compels drivers to slow down on residential streets, and partly because leisurely encounters between humans and burros generate a more nuanced storying of place that is not overwhelmed by the urgency of protecting burros and humans from vehicle collisions. Consequently, many human-burro encounters in these neighbourhoods foreground attentiveness to burros' experiences. Decelerated mobilities

enable burros and humans to be more relaxed around one another, and burros to more safely exercise their agency in choosing where to graze, rest, and play in town and in the nearby hills. For humans too, donkey-related anxieties in these settings do not involve matters of life and death. This stands in stark contrast to the emergency measures taken along the canyon road where burros may be sterilized, moved to sanctuaries, and discouraged from approaching the road by restricting their access to food and water – measures whose impact on actually saving donkeys' lives is, at best, unclear given that reports of road-killed donkeys remain a staple on Moreno Valley social media. Less debatable is that infrastructures of control tend to restrict nonhuman agency and mobilities, largely foreclosing the emergence of more reciprocal practices. Rather, a paternalist, often helpless concern looms darkly over this risky multispecies landscape.

In Moreno Valley, by contrast, expressions of affection and (minor) irritation regarding the burros give voice to a more reciprocal ethos of cohabitation wherein '[w]ild animals are then accepted as "fellow inhabitants" that actively co-shape the space in which humans and wild animals can dwell, rather than being relegated to the role of "other entities" to be acted upon by humans' (Boonman-Berson et al. 192). Many residents accept the spatial decision making and the messiness of the burros' habits, such as feeding on garden plants and fouling sidewalks. In closing, we note once more that reciprocity does not imply harmony. Much as in human politics, multispecies 'collectives are unpredictable and challenge modes of relating that are never fully comfortable' (McKiernan and Instone 2). Incorporating respect for species difference – fostering 'intimacy by way of new forms of attentiveness, while at the same time making room for autonomy' (Rutherford) – does not depend on perfect alignment of interests. However, practices of interspecies reciprocity do require making space as well as time for 'listening' to nonhuman others (Donovan). As with McKiernan and Instone's ibis, Moreno Valley residents who affirm the burros' right to inhabit the town act as if the burros have already *spoken* about their desired habitat and food sources while also speaking *with* burros. Said one resident about her encounter with a heavily pregnant jenny: 'I just brushed her the other day and wondered when the baby was coming'.

Notes

[1] Moreno Valley Matters. 'Donkeys on the Streets. Please Have Precautions When Driving Near Them They're Just Innocent Animals.' *Facebook*, 5 Aug. 2014. Retrieved 4 Jan. 2020. https://www.facebook.com/pg/MorenoValleyMatters/posts/?ref=page_internal (inaccessible 13 May 2023).

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