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Discourse Analysis and the Environment: Ecolinguistic Perspectives

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To mum and dad

Introduction

The ever-increasing environmental crisis has stimulated the rise and development of modern environmental discursive studies. Discourse refers to a shared way for people to understand the world, where language can be the source of knowledge. This is accomplished by how we gradually piece together our interpretations of the world around us to form a larger narrative. Our perspective on the problems we encounter and the surroundings we live in would then be shaped by this tale.

Maarten Hajer (1995) and John Dryzek (1997) contributed the most to promote the term. Hejer defines it in the following way: “Discourse is [...] defined as a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced and transformed into a set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities (1995, 44). Similarly, for Dryzek discourse is: “A shared way of apprehending the world. Embedded in language, it enables those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts. Each discourse rests on assumptions, judgements, and disareements, in the environmental area no less than elsewhere” (1997, 8).

As a consequence, environmental discourses are “the way we construct, interpret, discuss, and analyze environmental problems” (Dryzek 1997, 9). Discourses about the Earth provide frameworks for understanding the biogeophysical world and its social and natural aspects. Since the 1980s, environmental discourse has emerged to describe the social process of mediation in the formation of knowledge that not only makes the world visible and meaningful but also acts upon it. It draws on a variety of intellectual views in the humanities and social sciences. This addresses the earthly link, social and spatial situatedness of environmental knowledge, and related questions of materiality and nonhuman acting powers.

Studies have been conducted on text style, text structure, linguistic features and pragmatic function of environmental discourse (Herndl and Brown 1996; Benton and Short 1999; Heinz, Cheng, and Inuzuka 2007; Mels 2009). By now the main research paradigms of environmental dis-

course from the perspective of linguistics are: ecolinguistics (Steffensen and Fill 2014; Stibbe 2015), cognitive linguistics (Hart 2011) and critical discourse analysis (Alexander 2009; Dürr and Pascht 2017).

The aim of this publication is to verify how the concepts conveyed by the keywords *wilderness* and *wildness* have varied in recent years with respect to their original/literal meanings, as well as the effects these changes may have on discourse about the environment and protecting remaining wild lands. The words have been chosen because they thoroughly conceptualize the idea of untamed nature and can help shed light on beneficial environmental discourses.

The reference framework of this work is ecolinguistics, a complicated concept. By blending ecology and linguistics, ecolinguistics seems to convey a very clear meaning, yet defining and delimiting the resulting word is not easy. A first definition of ecolinguistics established the research field as centred on: “[...] the study of interactions between any given language and the environment” (Haugen 2001, 57). Recently, Robert Poole offered a more detailed one, writing that ecolinguistics “explores how language mediates and shapes how people think about and engage with physical spaces, nonhuman animals, and the environment generally” (Poole 2022, 1), and to this might be added that “perceptions of nature are mediated through language and that in turn such perceptions and lifestyles feed back into the structure of discourse” (Mühlhäusler 2003, 12).

From a methodological point of view, ecolinguistics attempts to determine how environmental issues are discussed and narrated, mainly using traditional tools. The rationale for this book is that of combining corpus linguistics with narrative and discursive use analyses. Association of these methods can heighten the results and offer new tools for ecolinguistics scholars. One of the problems of dealing with environmentalism is that judgement of behaviours and attitudes toward nature are influenced by the way writers linguistically connote them to guide the readers’ interpretation. In his 1990 talk, “New Ways of Meaning: The Challenge to Applied Linguistics”, M.A.K. Halliday inspired linguists to look at the ecological context and its consequences for language. His challenge was to make linguistics relevant to contemporary issues, in this case human devastation of ecosystems. The example he proposed is that of “economic growth”, which in widely used English-language texts, is always represented as a positive phenomenon, without taking into account how excessive growth can have destructive consequences for the environment (Halliday 2003). In the perspective of this work, ecolinguistics should help to recognize how discourses on the environment can

determine its perception, in particular with respect to the terms *wildness* and *wilderness*.

The first chapter introduces conceptualization of *wildness* and *wilderness* from an historical point of view in the Anglo-American world, emphasizing their crucial role in the process of defining untamed nature, and tries to identify differences between the two concepts. It also introduces the idea of restored *wilderness* and secondary nature (Shirane 2012) as re-created nature; and discusses how these notions are becoming more and more frequent in the discourse about environmental conservation. Chapter two illustrates the linguistic methods used in this research: corpus-assisted analysis; narrative analysis; and discursive use analysis. Chapter three introduces “The English language newspapers corpus” (SiBol) available on Sketch Engine that will be used for the study. SiBol is an English corpus made up of articles collected from various English language newspapers during the years 1993-2021. The chapter also presents results from the analysis of SiBol using some Sketch Engine’s primary tools: Word Sketch, Concordance, Thesaurus, Word Sketch Difference. Chapter four investigates a selection of articles from *The Guardian* (2022-2024) using narrative analysis, mainly the method proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1967), as well as discourse analysis (Brown and Yule 1983). The SiBol corpus reveals how *The Guardian* is a newspaper that – over a number of years – has dealt with the concepts of *wilderness* and *wildness* with frequency and consistency, highlighting how lexical choices and discourse can modify the way these words are interpreted.

1.

Definition and conceptualization of the keywords: *wildness* & *wilderness*

In their perfect conceptualization of the idea of untamed nature and the quality of being wild, the keywords *wildness* and *wilderness* might boost “beneficial” wild discourses “which can actively encourage people to protect the systems that support life” (Stibbe 2015, 30), and the natural inorganic world. Defining them involves studying their linguistic evolution from various scholarly sources across disciplines such as ecology, environmental science, geography, anthropology and sociology. *Wilderness* and *wildness* hold cultural and societal significance beyond ecological considerations. They evoke emotions, inspire artistic expression, and shape human identities and values, shedding light on the importance of “wild” within the human experience. American ecologist and philosopher David Abram states: “The color of sky, the rush of waves – every aspect of the earthly sensuous could draw us into a relationship fed with curiosity and spiced with danger. Every sound was a voice, every scrape or blunder was a meeting – with Thunder, with Oak, with Dragonfly. And from all of these relationships our collective sensibilities were nourished. Today we participate almost exclusively with other humans and with our own human-made technologies. It is a precarious situation, given our age-old reciprocity with the many-voiced landscape. We still need that which is other than ourselves and our own creations. [...] we are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human” (Abram 1996, ix), with what is wild.

Concerning linguistic structure, both words end with the suffix “-ness”, an inflectional suffix that is attached to adjectives to form nouns (nominalization). The suffix “-ness” can combine with a wide range of adjectives to create nouns that express the state, quality or condition of the adjective. As noted by Laurie Bauer (2001), “-ness” is one of the most productive suffixes in English, meaning it can be freely used to create words. Semantically, “-ness” adds the meaning of “the state or quality of

being [adjective]” to the base word. This transformation shifts the focus from describing a property directly to conceptualizing that property as an abstract entity. For instance: “wild” (adjective) describes a property, *wildness* (noun) refers to a state or quality. Thus, “-ness” facilitates the expression of abstract concepts, enabling speakers to discuss qualities and states in a more generalized and theoretical manner. In terms of syntax, nouns formed with “-ness” can occupy typical noun positions in a sentence, such as subject, object and complement. This flexibility in syntactic roles further emphasizes the utility of “-ness” nouns in English grammar (cfr. Bauer 2001; Booij 2005).

This chapter provides detailed definitions along with relevant sources that offer a multidisciplinary understanding of *wilderness* and *wildness*, highlighting their interconnectedness and importance in both natural and human-dominated landscapes.

1.1. “WILDNESS”

The term *wildness* has various definitions depending on context. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives – among others – the following:

1. The quality or condition of being wild, in various senses.
 - 1.a. c1440– Undomesticated state (of an animal); the untamed disposition characteristic of such state; fierceness, savageness, ferocity; also, shyness.
 - 1.b. a1616– Uncultivated state (of a plant).
2. c1374– Uncultivated state (of a place or region); the character or aspect of such a place or its scenery. Also *concrete* a wild place, a *wilderness* (now *rare* or *obsolete*).
3. 1639–
Uncivilized or uncultured state or character (of persons); savagery, barbarity; frudeness, roughness of manners (*obsolete*).
4. Unrestrained condition or quality; want of, resistance to, or freedom from restraint or control (with various shades of meaning).
 - 4.a. c1400– Disposition to take one’s own way; unruliness, insubordination; disorderly or riotous conduct; dissolute character, looseness of morals, licentiousness, wantonness; excessive liveliness or frolicsomeness.
 - 4.b. c1540– Frenzy, distraction; distracted air or aspect; extreme folly or unreasonableness, irrational or fantastic character, extravagance; violence, vehemence, passionateness (of a feeling, etc.); excitedness, extreme eagerness.

5. 1762– In reference to style or aspect, with various implications: cf. sense 4 and *wild_adj*.

“*Wildness, N., Sense 5*”. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, June 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5354343088>.

Formed within English, by derivation.

Etymons: *wild_adj.*, *ness_suffix*.

wild_adj. + *ness_suffix*. Compare Middle High German *wiltnisse*, German *wildnis*.

“*Wildness, N., Etymology*”. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, June 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7080991762>.

These definitions show that in its early use, the word was intended in its literal meaning as “c1374– Uncultivated state (of a place or region); the character or aspect of such a place or its scenery”, though it soon came to incorporate its metaphorical meaning as well. *Wildness* encompasses a broad spectrum of linguistic and cultural meanings, which are influenced by discourses, narratives and metaphors embedded in language. As *wilderness*, *wildness* defines the character of being uncultivated, undomesticated, or inhospitable of a territory. In fact, in his essay *Walking*, Henry David Thoreau used the expression “In *wildness* is the preservation of the world” (Emerson and Thoreau 1991, 95) to define a natural environment that is largely unaffected by human activity, where natural processes predominate and human intervention is minimal or absent. In this sense *wildness* is a synonym of *wilderness*.

Wildness can also refer to the quality or state of being wild, untamed or unrestrained. It encompasses characteristics such as unpredictability, spontaneity, autonomy, a lack of discipline or restraint and the quality of being uncontrolled, violent, extreme, “a primal or Paleolithic coming-to-consciousness of humankind’s naked rootedness in an absolute dependence upon nature” (Oelschlaeger 1991, 149).

In its figurative meaning, *wildness* enhances the role of artists (musicians, painters, writers, poets, etc.), as ambassadors of *wildness* within a culture; as bulwarks against its rules, its canons. Art can be heightened if associated to *wildness*. In Western culture, there is a tendency to celebrate the originality, the fresh thinking, the keen imagination, the special intuition and the unique perspective of an artist. Idiosyncrasy is celebrated as a form of *wildness*.

Applying this perspective to the visual arts, examples of *wildness* can be found in the works of American landscape painters Thomas Cole and Winslow Homer. Going further, Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch – to use a couple of examples – “wildize” natural and human forms in their

paintings, both in the sense of non-respect for traditional practices and in the somewhat grotesque images that they propose.

Regarding literature, in *Walking* Henry David Thoreau states: “In literature we are attracted only by what is wild. What is domestic bores. It is the wild thought, free from the patterns of civilization, which fascinates us in Hamlet, the Iliad, the Scriptures and the mythologies, and is not something that is learned in schools. The wild duck is faster and more beautiful than the domestic duck, and the same can be said of the free thought which, like the wild duck, rises high above the marsh when the dew falls. A truly good book is something natural, unexpectedly and inexplicably pure and perfect, like a flower grown in the prairies of the West or in the jungles of the East” (Emerson and Thoreau 1991, 102-103). According to the author, literature that simply observes conventions and traditions is boring and uninteresting. As a consequence, every form of radical originality has a wild value. He is especially attracted to that type of narrative in which setting and imagination lead outdoors, into free spaces, and bring us closer to the risk of chaos.

From a linguistic perspective, the concept can be approached as a construct that describes the natural environment’s untamed, uninhibited qualities, as well as metaphorically to convey notions of freedom, unpredictability, spontaneity, abstract concepts and experiences, i.e. human emotions, behaviours, or social phenomena, evoking notions of primal instincts, unbridled passions, or chaotic elements. Discourse analysis explores how *wildness* is constructed and represented in various contexts, such as environmental debates, literature and media narratives, as it is employed to uncover underlying ideologies, power dynamics, and socio-political implications embedded in discourses (Buell 1995, 10).

What seems quite clear is that in its discursive use, the word underwent a shift from its literal meaning of wild land to a metaphorical meaning. Metaphorization in linguistics involves using one concept to understand or describe another, often because of a perceived similarity or analogy between the two, and it plays a crucial role in how languages evolve and how speakers convey complex or abstract ideas. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), metaphorization is not just a linguistic phenomenon but a fundamental mechanism of human thought: “[...] metaphor is not just a matter of language, that is, of mere words. [...] human thought processes are largely metaphorical” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 14). Metaphors allow us to use concrete, familiar experiences to understand abstract or complex concepts. This process is pervasive in everyday language and thought, shaping the way we perceive and interact with the world.

1.2. “WILDERNESS”

In its most basic linguistic sense, *wilderness* refers to natural, undeveloped areas that are devoid of human habitation or significant human impact. It often refers to remote, undeveloped areas with limited infrastructure, a priceless treasure that needs to be “loved to death” (Nash 1982, 384).

The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides the following definitions:

1.1.a. c1200–

(Without article) Wild or uncultivated land.

Distinguished from *desert*, in that the latter denotes an uninhabitable and uncultivable region, and implies entire lack of vegetation.

1.b. c1230–

(With article or other defining word) A wild or uncultivated region or tract of land, uninhabited, or inhabited only by wild animals; ‘a tract of solitude and savageness’ (Johnson).

1.c. a1644–

A piece of ground in a large garden or park, planted with trees, and laid out in an ornamental or fantastic style, often in the form of a maze or labyrinth.

2. 1594– *Transferred* or *gen.* A waste or desolate region of any kind, e.g. of open sea, of air.

3. *figurative.* 3.a. a1340–

Something figured as a region of a wild or desolate character, or in which one wanders or loses one’s way; in religious use applied to the present world or life as contrasted with heaven or the future life.

3.b. 1842– Rhetorically applied to a place (e.g. a building or town) which one finds ‘desolate’, or in which one is lonely or ‘lost’.

3.c. 1930– In the *wilderness* (in allusion to *Numbers* xiv. 33), (*a*) Of a politician, political party, etc.: out of office; (*b*) *gen.* unrecognized, out of favour.

4. 1594– A mingled, confused, or vast assemblage or collection *of* persons or things. (Usually colored by other senses; in reference to a growth of plants, nearly coinciding with; in reference to buildings, etc., often approaching).

5.a. c1449–1667 *Wildness*, uncultivated condition. *Obsolete.*

5.b. a1616 *figurative.* *Wildness* of character, licentiousness. *Obsolete.* Apparently an isolated use.

“*Wilderness, N., Sense 5.b.*” *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, March 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7410913253>.

As for etymology the word was probably formed within English, by derivation.

Etymons: wild deer, *N.*, wildern_ *adj.*, ness_ *suffix*.

Old English **wild(d)éornes* (Sweet’s *Anglo-Saxon Dict.*) = Middle Low German, Middle Dutch *wilderness* (Dutch *wildernis*, German *wildernis*); *wilder*, *wil(d)deor* (see wild_ *adj.*, wild deer_ *n.*) or, perhaps more probably, *wilddéornes* wildern_ *adj.* + nes-ness_ *suffix* (for the concrete sense compare *héabnes* summit, *sméþnes* ‘planities’).

Notes

The other types of derivatives of *wild* meaning *wilderness* in the Germanic languages are represented by (1) Middle High German, German *wilde* (feminine) (compare wild_ *n.*), (2) Middle Low German, Middle High German *wilt(e)nisse*, German *wildnis* (compare *wildness*_ *n.* 2), (3) German (now dialect) *wilden(e)*, *wildin*, (4) Middle English wildern_ *adj.* & *n.*

“*Wilderness*, *N.*, Etymology”. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, March 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2919666151>.

Wilderness is originally meant to be a place populated by wild animals, “wild deer”. The word deer comes from “*dēor*” and “*der*”, which in old and middle English meant, simply, “animal”. The Dutch word “*dier*” still means “animal”. The sense of a deer as an animal, as opposed to a human – it has been found to have referred to ants, fish and foxes – may come from “*wilddēornes*”, the origin of *wilderness*, or *wild-animal-ness*. Deer still seem to embody this mysterious animal-ness: four-legged wildness, dainty and strong, mysterious and controlled.

According to Aldo Leopold, the word recently came to hold a cultural/spiritual meaning. It is “the raw material in which man has sculpted the work called civilization” (1949, 188). It exists independently of man: there he feels alone, isolated, empty. But it is also an emblem of absolute freedom, both physical and internal, which cannot be achieved in civil life, oppressed by restrictions and limitations. The *wilderness* condition brings the individual back to a pre-human and dangerous state, one that lowers him to a primitive stage. In this sense, *wilderness* must be fought, destroyed and subdued. And this fight against wild land has taken place in every area on the planet.

Wilderness is frequently described as a “roadless area”. The construction of roads is generally considered a useful instrument of progress, but in truth it involves the loss of wide natural areas, and hinders *wilderness* protection policies (Guignard 2005, 87). In this interpretation, *wilderness*/nature are in practical terms as utilitarian. On the other hand, for a long time – perhaps always – there has existed an impulse toward a sort of mystical or spiritual use of nature. A long tradition in Western culture and beyond portrays characters who retreat into *wilderness* to have visions and

inspirations that enrich their experience, and by extension society’s experience. Many intellectuals and writers are interested in a deeper understanding of human nature and the non-human world. These individuals represent the non-utilitarian perspective and perceive the beauty and authenticity of the non-human world. They celebrate the idea that humans cannot control nature. They are aware that human beings represent a small part of the planet, and that they cannot be separated from nature; they cannot rise above nature (Re 2008, 324-325).

In linguistic analysis, *wilderness* embraces various meanings. For example, in Western cultural discourses, *wilderness* is often portrayed as a pristine, untouched landscape, evoking notions of purity, freedom and adventure in nature (Nash 2001, 384). Differently, a figurative usage of *wilderness* in language explores how the term is employed to convey abstract concepts and experiences. For instance, *wilderness* may be used metaphorically to describe psychological states, or existential journeys. Discourse analysis examines how the term *wilderness* is deployed in various discursive contexts, such as environmental debates, policy documents, literature, and media representations. It is used to uncover the underlying ideologies, power dynamics, and socio-political implications embedded in discourses of *wilderness* (Thompson 2013).

Wilderness is a multifaceted concept that is linguistically constructed and culturally situated. By examining its linguistic connotations, it is possible to understand how language shapes perceptions and attitudes toward the natural world.

1.2.1. “Wilderness” and the United States

In the United States, the concept is strongly related to the definition of American identity. In his very famous book *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (1995), environmental historian William Cronon writes: “For many Americans *wilderness* stands as the last remaining place where civilization, that all too human disease, has not fully infected the earth. It is an island in the polluted sea of urban-industrial modernity, the one place we can turn for escape from our own too-muchness. Seen in this way, *wilderness* presents itself as the best antidote to our human selves, a refuge we must somehow recover if we hope to save the planet [...]” (69). For the average American, *wilderness* has achieved cult status. It is a sort of icon that suggests the infinite possibilities and greatness of their nation. But these are reductions in the meaning of the term. Even those who are convinced of the accuracy of these definitions may not

agree, when the concept of *wilderness* comes to identify too much with the idea of the infinite greatness and power of the country. In *Wilderness and the American Mind*, historian Roderick Nash stated that the concept of *wilderness* is essential for defining identity, the salient features of America, despite the fact that *wilderness* also exists in other countries (380-384).

In the United States, *wilderness* has also taken on divine values and has contributed to creating the mythology of the new continent. In the English translation of the Bible by John Wycliffe (1395) the place where God appears to man is defined as *wilderness*. And America, being an uncontaminated territory, was identified with a wild Eden to contrast decadent European society. It is therefore the character of original land that gives sacredness to the American *wilderness*. In such a context, which takes back to the origins of the world, the presence of God, the principle of everything, was conceivable and predictable. America therefore had a moral advantage over the old continent, where centuries of civilization had obscured the divine (Re 2008, 326).

But the meaning of the term is ambivalent and complex. *Wilderness* is also where Adam and Eve are sent when they are expelled from earthly paradise. And it is the place where Moses' people must wander for forty years before they can reach the Promised Land. Therefore, it is a place of exile, of solitude, but also a place where one can encounter the divine. The paradox has an intrinsic meaning: the sacred and the risky are always connected to each other (Re 2008, 326-327).

Americans tend to connect the concept of *wilderness* to an idea of the West, of the Promised Land, of the land of possibility, as stated by Thoreau in *Walking*: “The West of which I speak is but another name for the wild” (94). One of the crucial, central aspects of what is called the “American dream” is the possibility of obtaining freedom, the freedom to act as one wants (Castellacci 2018, 9-16). Those natural places that have not been transformed into cities, that have not been asphalted, symbolically represent that sense of freedom. Even though most Americans live in buildings along city streets, they continue to believe that there is pristine land nearby. *Wilderness* symbolizes those freedoms that many Americans aspire to in their lives. Then it is not certain that individuals use these liberties to think and speak independently. There is a difference between the mythology of the American *wilderness*, the mythology of the American dream and American reality; in the way they live and think.

The *Wilderness Act* of 1964 led to the creation of the *Wilderness Preservation System*, which includes *wilderness* areas of particular interest and environmental value with the aim of “ensuring today’s Americans and future generations the benefits derived from maintaining an endur-

ing reserve of *wilderness*” (“The United States Wilderness Act of 1964, Public Law 88-577”, COMPS-1759.pdf, <https://www.govinfo.gov>). The United States was the first nation to pass a law that allowed the definition and designation of *wilderness* areas. Many countries have followed this example.

Henry David Thoreau was a “precursor” *wilderness* lover and supporter, even though he didn’t see the deserts and mountains of the West. The wildest areas he visited were the forests of Maine. He spent most of his life in New England, the least wild region of the United States. But his statement “In *wildness* is the preservation of the world” is famous throughout the world and has become the motto of the Sierra Club, one of the leading associations for environmental protection.

It would be incorrect to think that *wilderness* is a peculiarity of America, even though it has taken on an extraordinary symbolic value there. The largest wild spaces are found in other countries: Russia, Canada, the Amazon, etc. Such statements have a negative side, which leads back to national pride and implies exclusivity. There is a historical reason that has led to this type of thinking: *wilderness* has always been central to the national imagination, an identifying symbol of the nation. But in today’s globalized world the idea that *wilderness* is the property of America alone has to be reviewed. It is not true. Neither from a physical point of view, nor even from a spiritual point of view.

1.2.2. Urban “*wilderness*”

Urban *wilderness* refers to areas within urban or peri-urban regions that retain elements of natural ecosystems, or *wilderness* amid built-up environments. Understanding the concept of urban *wilderness* involves analysing how language is used to describe and conceptualize the interface between urban environments and natural landscapes.

The term came into use at the end of the nineteenth century, and referred to those parts of cities inhabited by the lower and rebellious classes, i.e. people who could not be controlled. In Victorian England, this found a correspondence with the jungles of Africa, or other dark places, the dark places of the empire, the ones Joseph Conrad wrote about in *The Heart of Darkness* (1899). Thus, the concept of urban *wilderness* was originally codified at the level of class and race (Eddee 2008).

From another point of view, the city is an example of urban *wilderness*, often governed by a violent wild order. A city should maintain and promote human life, not make living more complicated. Men created

cities to protect themselves from the *wilderness*, but this artificially created environment is still somehow wild. Big cities are becoming a sort of artificial *wilderness*, where human life is increasingly challenging. They are dangerous for the mind in the same way that life in natural *wilderness* is risky for the survival of our species. The truth is that when a lot of people are concentrated in one area, troubles can easily emerge. People that live too close to one another within certain cultures, realities that are not historically accustomed to close contact and have not had sufficient time to adapt, can produce a form of violent energy or conflict. Cities in the American West, like Los Angeles, or certain Chinese or South American megalopolises, where there is a lot of vehicle traffic, can produce a phenomenon known as “road rage” (American Psychological Association – APA, “Road Rage”, n.d., <https://www.apa.org/topics/anger/road-rage>, last updated: 16 May 2024). Road rage happens when motorists become nervous and agitated; hostile to the point of fighting each other on the street. Crowds can, on certain occasions, become a source of frustration and psychological problems for individuals. In this sense, urban life can be alienating.

Returning to the idea that natural *wilderness* is a place where it is difficult for man to survive, it must be said that in certain cases wild areas favour the life of man, at least the lives of that small number of people who are familiar with those places. One of the effects of cramming many people into cities, generation after generation, is that individuals lose the knowledge and ability to live in contact with nature. It is very common, in fact, that people who spend their entire lives in small or large cities in developed countries know nothing about the natural environment around them and are unable to survive in *wilderness* areas.

An ecolinguistic analysis of the expression will verify how “urban *wilderness*” is used in discourse to convey notions of nature, biodiversity and ecological value within urban contexts. It will also examine how the concept is framed, negotiated and contested in newspapers and media representations (Wolch *et al.* 2014; Hansen and Cox 2015). The analysis will explore figurative extensions of urban *wilderness* in language, where the expression may be used metaphorically to evoke ideas of untamed or unexplored territories within urban landscapes. This usage often reflects cultural values, aspirations and anxieties regarding the relationship between urbanization and nature. By analysing metaphorical expressions and linguistic tropes associated with urban *wilderness*, it is possible to uncover deeper meanings and symbolic representations embedded in language (Wolch *et al.* 2014, 234-244). Moreover, discourse analysis may help to examine how language constructs and mediates perceptions of

urban nature, including urban *wilderness* areas, and investigate the discursive strategies, narratives and rhetorical framings used to represent urban *wilderness* in public discourse and policy debates. This approach reveals the discursive construction of urban nature as a contested space shaped by competing interests, ideologies and socio-environmental dynamics (Steiner and Butler 2006). Additionally, the cultural and social significance of urban *wilderness* expresses a linguistic category and conceptual framework that involves studying how language shapes perceptions of urban nature, influences environmental attitudes and behaviours, and informs urban planning and design practices.

Linguistic representations of urban *wilderness* can contribute to our understanding of the role of language in mediating human-environment interactions in urbanized landscapes (Busse and Warnke 2022).

1.2.3. Restored “wilderness”

The increasing loss of *wilderness* involves the necessity to restore it, or to reflect on how *wilderness* has been altered. Restored *wilderness* typically refers to areas of land that have undergone deliberate efforts to rehabilitate or recreate natural ecosystems and habitats that have been degraded or disturbed by human activity. This involves ecological restoration practices aimed at recovering or reconstructing the wild state, including the reintroduction of native plant and animal species, the removal of invasive species, habitat restoration, and ecosystem management techniques to promote ecological resilience and biodiversity (Clewell and Aronson 2006). Restoring *wilderness* involves ecological restoration efforts aimed at reversing or mitigating the impacts of human activities like deforestation, urbanization and pollution.

The expression is rooted in principles of conservation biology, restoration ecology and landscape management. It recognizes the importance of preserving and rebuild natural areas to maintain ecosystem functions, conserve biodiversity and provide essential ecosystem services (Hobbs *et al.* 2009). Restored *wilderness* areas may vary in scale and complexity, ranging from small-scale restoration projects in urban parks to large-scale ecosystem restoration initiatives in protected natural areas. The effectiveness of these efforts in achieving ecological goals often depends on factors such as site conditions, ecological processes, stakeholder engagement, and long-term monitoring and adaptive management. Insights from these fields can contribute to the development of effective restoration strategies and the sustainable management of restored *wilderness* areas.

A deeper understanding of the concept can be gained by examining the language used to describe it, its historical context, and its implications for society and the environment. The expression “restored *wilderness*” implies a return to an original/primitive state or condition, while *wilderness* typically denotes an area largely untouched by human development. Together, they suggest the rejuvenation or rehabilitation of natural environments to a state resembling their original, untamed condition.

The idea of restoring *wilderness* is linked to various conservation acts throughout history, such as the establishment of national parks and protected areas. John Muir, often regarded as the father of modern conservationism, advocated for the preservation of *wilderness* areas in their natural state. His writings, including *The Yosemite* (1912) and *Our National Parks* (1901), highlight the intrinsic value of *wilderness* and the importance of its safeguarding.

Discussions around restored *wilderness* also intersect with social and cultural dimensions. Indigenous communities often have longstanding relationships with *wilderness* areas and advocate for their protection and restoration based on traditional knowledge and cultural significance. For example, the concept of Indigenous stewardship emphasizes holistic approaches to land management that prioritize the interconnectedness of ecosystems and human communities (Hager and Mawopiyané 2021).

1.3. SECONDARY NATURE

Secondary nature is discussed by researchers in various fields, including environmental studies, geography and cultural studies. It refers to environments that have been significantly altered or transformed by human activities, resulting in landscapes that are shaped, managed or modified from their original or “primary” natural state (Cronon 1996). This concept emerged as scholars sought to understand the complex interactions between human societies and the natural environment, particularly in the context of urbanization, industrialization and globalization. Many studies highlight the role of human intervention in the creation of secondary nature, emphasizing processes such as urban development, agriculture, deforestation, and infrastructure construction. These activities result in the alteration of ecosystems, the loss of biodiversity, and the transformation of natural landscapes into anthropogenic environments (Grove 1992). Secondary nature is deeply influenced by cultural and social factors, reflecting human values, beliefs and practices. Scholars examine

how cultural landscapes, such as parks, gardens and agricultural terrains, embody secondary nature and reflect societal preferences, aesthetics, and land management practices (Cosgrove 1984). The ecological implications of secondary nature include habitat fragmentation, species extinction and ecosystem degradation. Understanding the ecological dynamics of secondary nature is crucial for developing strategies for biodiversity conservation, sustainable land use planning, and ecosystem restoration. Secondary nature is dynamic and context-dependent, evolving over time and space in response to changing societal needs, environmental conditions, and technological advancements. Historical and contemporary case studies can elucidate the socio-environmental processes that shape it and its implications for future sustainability (Gandy 2002).

The concept of secondary nature has been differently understood by Haruo Shirane in his book *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts*, in which he notes that “harmony” with nature is not a relationship with wild and primitive nature, but rather with secondary nature (Shirane 2012, 18). According to the author, secondary nature is a recreated version of nature, frequently seen in poetry, painting and gardening. He makes three arguments to support this claim: first, that harmony with nature is a concept primarily held by the upper classes in cities; second, that *waka* poetry, a popular form of expressing this closeness to nature, has some clear differences from the reality of Japan’s environment; and third, that harmony, in traditional belief, is dependent on the relationship with secondary nature by examining *satoyama*, a specific example of it found in rural areas.

By creating secondary nature, Japanese people have turned nature into a foundation upon which to build their society and philosophy. This is because their relationship with nature is based on the exploitation of natural resources in rural areas, while their emphasis on order is evident in urban areas. Besides, harmony with nature is an essential belief associated with secondary nature, and not with wild nature (Shirane 2012, 19).

In this work, the concept of secondary nature will be approached by examining its linguistic usage, historical context, and theoretical underpinnings, drawing from relevant sources to elucidate its meaning and significance. The pre-modifier “secondary” implies a derivative or secondary state, indicating a departure from an original or natural condition. Authors like Raymond Williams in his book *The Country and the City* (1973), and William Cronon in *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (1983) explored the historical processes that shaped secondary nature. From a theoretical standpoint, the notion of secondary nature challenges traditional dichotomies between nature

and culture by emphasizing the inseparability of human and natural systems. Scholars such as Bruno Latour in *Politics of Nature* (2004) and Donna Haraway in *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016) critiqued the idea of a pristine, untouched nature, arguing for a more nuanced understanding of human-environment relationships that acknowledges the entanglements of social, cultural and ecological factors.

The existence of secondary nature has significant implications for environmental conservation and management. It underscores the importance of understanding and engaging with human-altered landscapes in efforts to address pressing environmental challenges such as biodiversity loss, climate change and habitat degradation. Restoration ecology, for example, seeks to restore degraded ecosystems to a functional state, thereby transforming secondary nature back toward a more ecologically resilient condition (Gobster and Hull 2000).

2.

Methods

This work combines various linguistic methods in order to propose valuable approaches for (eco)linguistic research. The first part of the work is based on a corpus-assisted analysis of “The English language newspapers corpus” (SiBol) 1993-2021, available on Sketch Engine. It is an effort to identify how the representation of the two key words *wilderness* and *wildness* has evolved.

The second part of the work focuses on an analysis of a sub corpus from *The Guardian* (2022-2023-2024 through the end of May). The study takes advantage of narrative analysis by Labov and Waletzky (1967), as well as a discursive use analysis (Brown and Yule 1983). Ecolinguistics needs reliable and objective tools to examine and present environmental issues, because texts on these themes are almost always biased and divisive. In particular, speaking about the concepts of *wilderness* and *wildness*, I would like to understand how they enhance the protection of wild land and in what ways they are beneficial in the development of environmental discourses. Moreover, I will try to identify the best narrative strategies for achieving this purpose.

2.1. ECOLINGUISTICS AND THE SEARCH OF A METHOD

Ecolinguistics (Fill and Penz 2022, 11-12) was born in the 1990s as a new paradigm of linguistic research, extending beyond sociolinguistics to analyse not only the social context in which the language is located, but also its ecological context, including the various species and the environment. Michael Halliday’s 1990 talk, “New Ways of Meaning: The Challenge to Applied Linguistics”, encourage linguists to investigate the ecological context and its consequences for language. Halliday’s challenge was to make linguistics relevant to contemporary issues, in this case the environ-

mental crisis. An example is the concept of “economic growth”, widely used in English-language texts, that is inevitably represented as a positive phenomenon, without considering the destructive consequences uncontrolled growth can have for the environment. From here, ecolinguistics developed in different directions, using various linguistic tools to investigate language in an ecological context.

The International Ecolinguistics Association (I.E.A.), a university network that connects 800 researchers worldwide, states that ecolinguistics must explore the role of language in interactions between humans, other species and the physical environment. The first aim is to develop linguistic theories that define humans not only as part of society, but also as part of ecosystems. The second objective is to demonstrate that linguistics can be useful in addressing the ecological crisis. Linguistic ecology was started by the American linguist Einar Haugen. He uses the ecosystem metaphor to represent the relationship between the languages of the world and the people who speak them. A healthy linguistic ecology, which imagines diversity of language forms, is fundamental for conserving ecosystems, in fact local ecological knowledge is produced by local linguistic varieties (Fill and Penz 2022, 1-7).

Another field of ecolinguistic research concerns the loss of cultural diversity due to the disappearance of many languages and/or the loss of their communicative function. The *UNESCO Red Book of Endangered Languages* has inspired researchers to examine this phenomenon. Linguistic ecology proposes possible solutions and responses, studying disappearing languages and protecting the communication tools that are at risk, leaving humanity with a few predominant idioms (Fill and Penz 2022, 9).

Furthermore, ecolinguistics, as proposed by Arran Stibbe (2015), is an interdisciplinary field that explores the relationships between language, ecology and sustainability. Stibbe’s ecolinguistic approach offers a method for analysing how language shapes and reflects our perceptions of the natural world, as well as how linguistic patterns influence our attitudes and behaviours toward environmental issues.

He explains that the task of ecolinguistic analysis is to reveal the “stories” we live (Stibbe 2015), arguing that stories play a significant role in constructing our environmental beliefs, values and practices. The author suggests that stories about nature and our interactions with it can either reinforce unsustainable behaviours, or promote ecological awareness and stewardship.

Stibbe defines “stories” within ecolinguistics not only as traditional narratives like myths or folktales, but also as the discourses, metaphors and linguistic patterns that frame our understanding of the environment.

These stories can be found in a variety of sources, including media representations, political rhetoric, advertising, educational materials, and everyday conversations. Analysing these stories, we can uncover the underlying ideologies and power dynamics that shape our environmental attitudes and behaviours (Stibbe 2015, 3-5).

According to Stibbe, stories can be told in eight different ways. Ideologies are mental models that are shared by a community; metaphors are a type of frame that is concrete at first and obviously distinct from the target domain; framing is the use of a bundle of knowledge about the world (a source frame) to tell a story about a particular aspect of life; evaluations are stories that help us assess what is good or bad; beliefs are stories that contribute to the decision of whether a given reality is true, uncertain or false; identities are stories about what it means to be a particular kind of person; and salience and cancellation judge if a particular aspect of life is significant and deserving of attention. By investigating stories from an ecological point of view, and not merely from a theoretical perspective, Stibbe wants to alert us to narratives that damage the natural environment, and to identify and create new ones with a saving value (Stibbe 2015, 17).

One of the key concepts in Stibbe's ecolinguistic framework is the notion of "ecological discourse analysis", which involves critically examining the language used in environmental narratives to uncover hidden assumptions, values and ideologies (Stibbe 2015, 9). He proposes a cognitive framework that integrates the idea of "stories we live in" deriving from human ecology with several theories: "Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 2003); frame theory (Lakoff and Wehling 2012); metaphor theory (Müller 2008); appraisal theory (Martin and White 2005); identity theory (Benweel and Stokoe 2006)" (Stibbe 2015, 9). In this framework: "stories are cognitive structures in the minds of individuals which influence how they perceive the world. Stories-we-live-by are stories in the minds of multiple individuals across a culture" (Stibbe 2015, 6).

Stibbe proposes to examine stories according to a personal reference ecosophy: "Each ecolinguist will have their own set of philosophical principles they use to judge stories against, reflecting their own values and priorities, but all will have in common a consideration of the interrelationships of humans with other organisms and the physical environment" (Stibbe 2015, 11-12). The ecosophy he uses focuses on the protection and defence of every living being (Stibbe 2015, 14-15), it is indeed entitled "Living!". According to the author, ecosophies fall into two categories: ecocentric (believing that humans and other creatures have inherent value) and anthropocentric (focusing primarily on human wellbeing).

He refers to classical ecosophy (Naess 1989), but new theories introduced by ecocriticism, in particular by material ecocriticism¹, by the notion of “transversal subjectivity”², and by the concept of *décroissance* (Latouche 2006) multiply the number of meanings that can be ascribed to ecosophy. Compared to Naess (1989) and Stibbe (Stibbe 2015, 14-15), they advocate distancing from the idea of preserving only human and non-human life, expanding care to all natural, organic and inorganic kingdoms. Even the perspective is no longer just human, but opens up to the possibility of the existence of other awarenesses that humans are unable to recognize and interpret. Thus, the problem with a reference ecosophy is that the ideological recommendations can be numerous and very personal, limiting the scientific nature of the method. Furthermore, applying an ecosophy to story analysis requires the use of tools from a discipline other than linguistics – philosophy – that employs methods that do not concern linguistics research. Mixing the two disciplines could compromise and considerably complicate the analysis.

2.2. CORPUS-ASSISTED ECOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

While corpus linguistics involves the systematic analysis of language using large collections of text known as corpora, ecolinguistics explores the specific relationship between language and the environment, including how language shapes our perceptions and interactions with the natural world.

Corpus ecolinguistics is an emerging interdisciplinary field that explores the relationship between language and the environment. It combines principles from corpus linguistics, which focuses on the analysis of

¹ “The conceptual argument of Material Ecocriticism is simple in its outlines: the world’s material phenomena are knots in a vast network of agencies, which can be ‘read’ and interpreted as forming narratives, stories. Developing in bodily forms and in discursive formulations, and arising in coevolutionary landscapes of natures and signs, the stories of matter are everywhere: in the air we breathe, the food we eat, in the things and beings of this world, within and beyond the human realm. All matter, in other words, are ‘storied matter’” (Iovino and Oppermann 2014, 1).

² “The construction of new forms of transversal subjectivity [...] must look to the ways in which entities, living and non-living, enter into contact with each other [...]. That is to say, that the research findings of material sciences, physics, chemistry, engineering, geology, to name but a selected number of disciplines, in their investigations of the properties and forms of development and communication of non-living entities would become a standard part of the exploration of the tradosphere” (Cronin 2017, 90-91; cfr. Braidotti 2013).

large collections of text (corpora), with ecological principles, in order to investigate how language reflects and shapes attitudes, behaviours, and policies related to the environment.

Corpus-assisted ecolinguistics analyses linguistic data from various sources, such as environmental texts, policy documents, media coverage, and social media conversations, to understand how language is used to discuss ecological issues, environmental attitudes, and sustainability practices. This analysis can uncover patterns of representation, framing, and discourse surrounding environmental topics, providing insights into public perceptions and societal responses to environmental challenges.

From a methodological point of view, corpus-assisted ecolinguistics involves quantitative analysis of linguistic features in environmental texts. Statistical methods measure the occurrences of certain words or phrases, track changes in language use over time, or compare language across different genres or discourse communities. For instance, it is possible to examine how the language of environmental policy documents differs from that of popular media coverage on the same issue.

It can also use corpus linguistic techniques to identify linguistic patterns, such as specific vocabulary, collocations, syntactic structures, and discourse markers, within texts related to environmental topics. For example, it is possible to analyse how different terms are used to refer to the same environmental concept, for example “global warming” *vs.* “climate change”, and how these choices reflect underlying attitudes or ideological positions (Fill and Penz 2022, 277-292). Corpus-assisted ecolinguistics involve a particular focus on studying language use in climate change communication, in other words analysing the linguistic strategies employed by different stakeholders (e.g., scientists, policymakers, activists) to communicate climate-related information, engage the public, and shape public opinion and policy responses to climate change (Poole 2022).

Corpus-assisted ecolinguistics can also uncover metaphors and framing devices used in environmental communication. Recurring metaphors and frames shape how people perceive and understand environmental issues. For example, the metaphors of nature as a resource (e.g., “natural capital”) or as a fragile ecosystem (e.g., “balance of nature”) convey different implications for environmental policy and advocacy (Stefanowitsch 2005).

Moreover, it grants cross-linguistic and cross-cultural comparisons of environmental discourse. Multilingual corpora make it possible to investigate how environmental concepts are expressed and framed differently across languages and cultures. This comparative approach helps uncover

cultural-specific attitudes, values and discursive practices related to the environment (Taylor and Del Fante 2020).

Corpus-assisted ecolinguistics offers valuable insights into the complex interplay between language, culture, and the environment, contributing to our understanding of how language shapes environmental perceptions, policies and practices.

This study uses the SiBol corpus available on Sketch Engine to examine language use related to environmental issues, in particular conceptualization of the two keywords *wilderness* and *wildness*. By analysing linguistic patterns within this corpus, I aim to uncover how language reflects and influences attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours toward wild land and the quality conveyed by *wildness*. Sketch Engine allows users to analyse large collections of text data to study language patterns, usage and variation. It provides tools for generating frequency lists, concordances, collocation analysis, and keyword analysis, enabling researchers to explore linguistic phenomena in context (Kilgariff *et al.* 2004).

The main key components and steps involved in a corpus-assisted ecolinguistic analysis are:

- *Corpus Compilation*: the choice between the composition of a corpus and that of a previously compiled corpus.
- *Corpus Querying and Search*: Sketch Engine makes it possible to input search queries using various linguistic features such as words, phrases, part-of-speech tags and syntactic patterns. The system then returns concordance lines showing instances of these search terms within the corpus. This tool is fundamental for linguistic research, enabling investigations into language usage and variation.
- *Text Annotation*: texts within the corpus are annotated to identify linguistic features of interest, such as keywords, metaphors, framing devices, rhetorical strategies, and discursive patterns related to the environment.
- *Quantitative Analysis*: corpus linguistics techniques are used to conduct quantitative analyses of the annotated texts. This involves examining word occurrences, collocations, concordance lines, and other statistical measures to identify prevalent linguistic patterns and recurring themes related to environmental discourse.
- *Qualitative Analysis*: delves deeper into the linguistic structures and meanings present in the corpus. This will involve close reading of selected texts, identifying metaphorical expressions, analysing rhetorical strategies, and interpreting the discursive construction of the selected environmental issues.
- *Interpretation and Insights*: based on findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses, linguistic representations within the corpus

can be discussed, i.e. the ways in which language constructs and shapes perceptions.

- *Implications and Applications*: the insights gained from corpus-assisted ecolinguistic analysis can inform various stakeholders, including policy-makers, educators, environmental activists and communicators, about effective strategies for promoting sustainability, fostering environmental awareness, and facilitating constructive dialogue and action.

This investigation utilizes Sketch Engine tools that facilitate a wide range of linguistic analyses and support research in various subfields of linguistics, including computational linguistics, corpus linguistics, and language teaching (Kilgarriff and Grefenstette 2003).

The following tools will be used to conduct research:

- *Word Sketch*: a key feature of Sketch Engine is the generation of word sketches, which provide comprehensive lexical profiles of individual words. Word sketches display information about a word's grammatical properties, collocates, typical contexts, and semantic relations, helping provide insight into word usage and meaning (Kilgarriff and Rundell 2002). More in detail, the Word Sketch tool offers a summary of a word's grammatical and collocational behaviour; and the Word Sketch Difference tool compares word sketches of two similar words to see how their usage differs.
- *Thesaurus*: this tool is able to automatically generate synonyms based on word co-occurrence data.
- *Concordance*: Sketch Engine provides concordance tools for generating concordance lines, which display instances of a specified word or phrase within context. Concordances facilitate the analysis of language patterns, discourse structures, and semantic relationships to explore linguistic phenomena in detail (McEnery and Wilson 2001).

2.3. NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

In the second part of this work, I use some narrative analysis tools to examine relevant “wild stories” in *The Guardian*, a newspaper that – as we will see – shows ongoing interest in the discussion of the two keywords: *wilderness* and *wildness*. The analysis conducted using Sketch Engine underlined that *The Guardian* is an appropriate source to use when discussing these two concepts.

Narrative analysis is a qualitative research method used to examine the structure, content, and context of stories or narratives told by individuals

or groups as linguistic phenomena. It focuses on understanding the ways in which people construct meaning through storytelling, and how narratives shape and are shaped by social, cultural, and historical factors in our understanding of the world. Moreover, “narrative study must analyse two basic components: the tale and the teller. But as much could be said of every speech event: there is always inherently a speaker, separable from what is spoken” (Toolan 2001, 1).

Narrative analysis has developed many perspectives linked to the socio-cultural context considering that narratives are situated within socio-cultural contexts, so that linguistic analysis often extends to examining the cultural, ideological, and identificatory dimensions of narratives. Narratives reflect and negotiate social norms, values and power relations, as well as how they contribute to the construction of individual and collective identities (Bamberg and Andrews 2004). De Fina and Georgakopoulou’s article “Analysing Narratives as Practices” (2008) emphasizes the understanding of narratives as social practices rather than as texts. The two scholars argue that narratives are not static entities, but rather dynamic processes that are co-constructed and shaped by social interactions and contexts.

This study does not employ methods that include social and cultural analysis, because the ideological context of the articles is easy to identify given that *The Guardian* is well known for its liberal, progressive orientation. The main reference for the investigation will be Labov and Waletzky’s method, detailed in the article, “Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience” (1967), a seminal work in the field of narrative analysis that focuses on the structure and function of personal experience narratives. Their “hypothesis is that fundamental narrative structures are to be found in the oral version of personal experience – the ordinary narratives of ordinary speakers. [Labov and Waletzky] wish, by looking at many narratives, to identify and relate formal linguistic properties of narrative to their functions. And like all structuralists, their analysis is based on the perception of a delimited set of recurrent patterns and the setting aside of what they take to be local differences in the pursuit of the deeper structural similarities” (Toolan 2001, 143). Thus, the two scholars propose a framework for analysing narratives based on their structure: “We will be relying upon the basic techniques of linguistic analysis, isolating the invariant structural units which are represented by a variety of superficial forms” (Labov and Waletzky 1967, 12). They identify six key elements of narrative structure: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda. These elements represent the different stages through which a narrative unfolds, from

setting the scene to resolving the plot and providing closure (Labov and Waletzky 1967, 27-37)³.

For this analysis, I am going to search and investigate evaluation sections which – according to Labov and Waletzky (1967) – play a crucial role in shaping narrative and conveying the narrator’s perspective on events (Toolan 2001, 148, 151, 152, 153).

2.4. DISCURSIVE USE ANALYSIS

The methodological structure of this study concludes with a discursive use analysis of the “colors” of the terms *wilderness* and *wildness* within the context of the articles. The many modifiers and the context in which the two keywords are used combine to give them different shades of meaning.

In this analysis, “discourse” is intended as a linguistic unit, i.e. “a connected series of utterances by which meaning is communicated, *esp.* one forming a unit for analysis; spoken or written communication regarded as consisting of such utterances” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “discourse *N.*”, July 2023). And discourse analysis is here understood as “the analysis of language in use” in the “context” (Brown and Yule 1983, 1) in which texts are produced and interpreted. I am not going to investigate how language practices contribute to the maintenance and challenge of power relations and ideologies, or how discourse can reinforce or resist dominant social norms and power structures (Fairclough 1995). This because the environmental and political values of *The Guardian* are very clear, and it is not my intention to critically evaluate them. I am more interested in exploring ways in which the selected narratives communicate and represent the natural environment, especially with regard to the two keywords *wilderness* and *wildness*.

³ Worth mentioning in this context is the use of Labov’s structural approach in the recently published book *Exploring Ecolinguistics: Ecological Principles and Narrative* by Douglas Mark Ponton who explores the role of language in mediating and determining our relationship with nature and in shaping attitudes and social practices in environmental areas (cfr. 45-48, 78-89).

3.

An ecolinguistic corpus-assisted and discourse analysis of the SiBol corpus (1993-2021)

Sketch Engine is a widely-used corpus query system and text analysis tool in linguistics and natural language processing, and as such provides a range of features and tools for linguistic analysis. These will be used to analyse the two keywords – *wilderness* and *wildness* – in “The English language newspapers corpus” (SiBol).

SiBol is made up of articles collected from various English language newspapers over the years 1993 to 2021. It contains roughly 850 million words in two million articles drawn from eighteen newspapers. An initial version of the corpus, containing UK broadsheets, was created in 2011, and was subsequently extended in 2017 and 2021 to include newspapers from other countries including India, USA, Hong Kong, Nigeria and the Arab world, as well as UK tabloids.

3.1. “THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS CORPUS” AND THE TOOLS USED IN THE ANALYSIS (WORD SKETCH, WORD SKETCH DIFFERENCE, THESAURUS, CONCORDANCE)

In the following pages, the two keywords will be analysed using the Word Sketch tool as for collocations and word combinations; Word Sketch Difference to compare collocations of the two words, and with the lemmas “conservation” and “biodiversity”; Thesaurus to identify synonyms and similar words; and Concordance to find examples of use in context.

The Word Sketch tool serves as a one-page synopsis of the grammatical and collocational behaviour of the word. The results are classified into

groups known as grammatical relations, which include terms that alter the word, act as the verb's object, or act as its subject. Instead of collocates, certain grammatical relations may show usage data.

The Thesaurus tool, on the other hand, offers a list of synonyms that are automatically generated and fall into the same category (semantic field) as the two keywords. Synonyms are routinely recognized by taking into account their context. This is based on the theory of distributional semantics (Lenci and Sahlgren 2023), which essentially states that words have comparable meanings when they appear in the same context. As a result of automatic processing, there may be words in the synonym list that shouldn't be there. Sketch Engine can only compare collocates; it is unable to ascertain a direct similarity in meaning. Even though two words don't have the same meaning, they will be classed as synonyms if they have similar collocates.

A last tool used in this study is Concordance, which offers numerous search options, looking for terms, phrases, tags, documents, text formats or corpus structures. The results are shown contextually.

Concerning the order of the collocations in the tables, in most of them the words are listed by strong collocations (and not by the hits – weak collocations). The collocation's typicality (strong collocation) is ascertained using the logDice score. A high score indicates that the collocate and node are frequently found together, but that the collocate does not combine with the other nodes very frequently or at all. Strong collocation results from a strong relationship between the node and the collocate. A low score indicates the preference of a given collocate for word combinations with lots of other words. A weak collocation results from a weak relationship between the node and the collocate. Given that every word behaves differently, it is impossible to establish a common threshold between weak and powerful collocations.

3.2. “WILDNESS” & “WILDERNESS” COLLOCATIONS

The rationale of this section is to verify the representation and evolution of the keywords in the corpus. I am testing the theory that there has been a shift in the meaning of *wildness* from literal to metaphorical/figurative, whereas *wilderness* has maintained its literal meaning, increasingly engaging environmental issues. I will also be taking a closer look at valuable *wildness* and *wilderness* discourses in order to better understand collocations within their contexts.

The analysis starts with a survey of the frequency of the two terms in the corpus. The hits of *wildness* and *wilderness*, as well as those by year

and/or by newspaper, were identified using the Word Sketch tool. The word sketch is built upon and establishes a valuable analysis based on absolute frequency of the term, not the size of the corpus *per se*. It must occur at least a few dozen times, however a workable word sketch requires at least a few hundred occurrences. Here the numbers:

- *wildness* hits: 500;
- *wilderness* hits: 5999¹.

Occurrences of the two terms differ enormously within the corpus. In the period running from 1993 to 2021, the keyword *wilderness* appears approximately twelve times more often than *wildness*. Not all years are included in the corpus. The reason some years were chosen at the expense of others is never specified, but this fact does not weaken the seriousness of the SiBol corpus, which is considered one of the most thoughtful and complete of those offered by Sketch Engine, and in any case provides a significant chronological evolution.

Table 1 splits occurrences by years. Discrepancies with respect to the years express an oscillating variation in term frequency. Analysis of the collocations in their context shows no specific reasons to explain the variation of occurrences. Even the more in-depth research conducted over the years, as well as possible correlations with relevant events associated with the keywords failed to provide a more satisfactory explanation for the incongruity of these numbers.

Table 1. – Hits per year.

Years	<i>wilderness</i> hits	<i>wildness</i> hits
1993	741	54
2005	1271	120
2010	907	0
2011	0	0
2012	1	0
2013	1903	154
2014	0	0
2021	1175	92

¹ In this context, it is worth mentioning the book chapter: “A Corpus-Assisted Diachronic Analysis of Representations of *Wilderness*”, in the volume *Corpus-Assisted Ecolinguistics* written by Robert Poole (2002). Within the chapter, the author presents a diachronic corpus-assisted analysis of the evolving evaluation of *wilderness* in American English from 1810 to 2010, arguing that diachronic CADS can reveal shifting attitudes and unsettle assumptions about language representing an objective reality.

Concerning occurrences in newspapers, the numbers are very clear. *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Times* most frequently use the term *wilderness*, and proportionally the term *wildness* as well. All three are British newspapers; newspapers from America and other parts of the world registered only minor occurrences. This can be determined by the cultural orientation of the newspapers analysed newspapers, but this remains hypothetical. It seems strange that *The New York Times*, generally attentive to environmental issues, shows so few hits. Furthermore, considering the fact that in the United States, the term *wilderness* is also associated with recreational areas and the country's historical and cultural heritage, one would expect to find more occurrences in American newspapers (Tab. 2).

Table 2. – Occurrences in newspapers.

Newspapers	<i>wilderness</i> hits	<i>wildness</i> hits
<i>Daily Mail</i>	131	7
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	150	5
<i>Daily News Egypt</i>	2	1
<i>Gulf News</i>	8	0
<i>Metro</i>	39	1
<i>New York Times</i>	509	54
<i>South China Morning Post</i>	23	2
<i>Sunday Times</i>	438	49
<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	1385	108
<i>The Evening Standard</i>	24	0
<i>The Express</i>	51	2
<i>The Guardian</i>	1515	121
<i>The Sun</i>	112	2
<i>The Sunday Telegraph</i>	138	12
<i>The Times</i>	1221	132
<i>The Day Lagos</i>	32	0
<i>Times of India</i>	144	3

A comparison between the collocations of *wildness* and *wilderness* was conducted in order to dig deeper into the analysis, identifying and selecting the most important occurrences. The tool Word Sketch Difference was used, since it allows for comparisons through the contrast of collocations of two distinct lemmas using their collocates. Furthermore, the tool displays the two keywords in various grammatical relations. For example, Table 3 shows verb occurrences that define the concepts. Strangely enough, the number of hits with *wildness* totaled 0 (Fig. 1).

Table 3. – X as “wilderness/wildness”.

... as wilderness/wildness	wilderness hits	wildness hits	wilderness typicality score	wildness typicality score
preserve ²	2	0	8.1	—
designate	4	0	7.5	—
describe	3	0	3.2	—
know	3	0	0.9	—



Figure 1. – Preserve as “wilderness”.

A closer investigation reveals that the first collocation is taken from an article in the *New York Times* (September 2013) in which the author talks about how certain areas of Adirondack Park should be protected, as well as the fact that Mr. Cuomo (Governor of New York from 2011 to 2021), was aware of the value of these wild areas:

But most of the area would be preserved as *wilderness* where people can hike and canoe. The Adirondack Park Agency is expected in the next few weeks to recommend how this area should be used. But the real decision rests with Mr. Cuomo, who has vacationed in the Adirondacks since he was a young man. **He knows the value of this wilderness, and he should give it the strong protections it deserves.**

The next collocation, in *The Daily Telegraph* (3 April 2010), describes the birth of a new national park in Great Britain. *Wilderness* is associated with the concept of “preservation” and “national park”, and is defined by the combination of nouns and adjectives which convey very positive connotations: “beautiful countryside” and “lovely landscape”. We read:

Almost unnoticed, Britain gained a new national park this week, and it is the most controversial of them all. The South Downs will provide the greatest test yet of our ability to reconcile conserving **beautiful countryside** with the interests of those who live and work in it. Just about everywhere else in

² In the tables the words are shown in uppercase or lowercase respecting the form in which they were found in the corpus under analysis.

the world, **national parks are preserved as pristine wildernesses**: indeed people are often kept out. We don't have the space or wild lands for that, and have pioneered a different approach – protecting our **lovely but inhabited, farmed, and working landscapes**.

Table 4 lists nouns that are related to *wilderness* (hits with *wildness* are absent) along with the preposition “on”. Again in this case *wilderness* is described as a valuable environmental resource.

Table 4. – “Wilderness/wildness” on X.

wilderness/wildness on ...	wilderness hits	wildness hits	wilderness typicality score	wildness typicality score
Earth	4	0	5.2	—
earth	3	0	4.2	—
planet	3	0	4.0	—
night	2	0	0.5	—

The concordances of *wilderness* with “planet” echo the idea of precious wild natural areas that inhabit the earth, i.e. the ocean and the dark part of fauna (Fig. 2).

CONCORDANCE English Broadsheet Newspapers 1993-2021 (SiBol)

CCJ: planet + wilderness • 3
less than 0.01 • 3e-7%

Details

sentence

- 13 July 2013 ... <s>The deep ocean constitutes the largest wilderness on our planet.</s>
- 13 September 20... <s>Environmentalists, of course, regard the exploitation of one of the last remaining areas of pristine wilderness on the planet with horror, and up in Baffin Bay, there has been an ongoing physical confrontation between a Greenpeace ship, Esperanza, and the Danish navy as it defends the Cairn Energy rig from marauding protesters.</s>
- 13 September 20... <s>Zoologists have combed every wilderness on the planet to examine obscure fauna.</s>

Figure 2. – “Wilderness” on planet.

The first collocation of the table is from an article in *The Guardian* (13 September 2010), and discusses the *wilderness* of the oceans. This *wilderness* is constantly violated by an oil industry that “has thrived on breaking open new energy frontiers – and there is no greater challenge than the Arctic, particularly in the wake of BP’s Gulf of Mexico nightmare”. The ocean is also defined as one of the last “pristine” *wilderness* areas, underlining its connection to original, untouched nature. In this example, the *wilderness* discourse is not limited to protection of the ocean; it is also linked to another core theme of concern for contemporary environmentalism: global warming. This underlines how protection of *wilderness* and the climate crisis are interconnected:

Environmentalists, of course, regard the exploitation of one of **the last remaining areas of pristine wilderness** on the planet with horror, and up in Baffin Bay, there has been an ongoing physical confrontation between a Greenpeace ship, Esperanza, and the Danish navy as it defends the Cairn Energy rig from marauding protesters. The setting could not be more symbolic: around them, **glaciers and icebergs melt as a direct result of global warming**, a phenomenon that will only be exacerbated should the Arctic be allowed to give up its oil and gas reserves.

Table 5 shows the main occurrences of *wildness* and/or *wilderness*, distinguishing between weak and strong collocations. Weak collocations – occurrences or hits – refer to predictable word combinations. Looking at the lists, it’s clear that most of the words are the ones you would expect to find. For example, “forest” and “nature” for *wilderness*; “recklessness” and “weirdness” for *wildness*. On the other hand, the typicality score (strong collocations) focuses on collocations which are not (completely) expected and are “typical” in that case. Sometimes, the highest occurrences and typical collocations coincide in the collocations analysed. Here the hits.

Table 5. – “Wilderness/wildness” and/or X.

<i>wilderness/wildness</i> and/or ...	<i>wilderness</i> hits	<i>wildness</i> hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	<i>wildness</i> typicality score
bandit	9	0	8.1	—
<i>wildness</i>	3	0	7.0	—
Manaus	3	0	6.9	—
Magic	4	0	6.8	—
solitude	4	0	6.8	—
Bog	3	0	6.6	—
shoreline	2	0	6.3	—
coastline	4	0	6.2	—
crag	2	0	6.1	—
onset	2	0	6.1	—
bramble	2	0	6.0	—
civilisation	3	0	5.9	—
Reserve	4	0	5.9	—
realisation	2	0	5.8	—
weed	3	0	5.8	—
wildlife	7	0	5.7	—
cove	2	0	5.7	—

<i>wilderness/wildness</i> and/or ...	<i>wilderness</i> hits	<i>wildness</i> hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	<i>wildness</i> typicality score
Sun	10	0	5.7	—
refuge	2	0	5.7	—
woodland	4	0	5.6	—
biodiversity	2	0	5.4	—
forest	9	0	5.2	—
desert	2	0	4.9	—
Ho	2	0	4.8	—
countryside	3	0	4.8	—
ocean	2	0	4.8	—
mountain	5	0	4.8	—
habitat	2	0	4.7	—
Hilton	2	0	4.7	—
survival	2	0	4.6	—
nature	10	3	5.0	3.4
<i>wilderness</i>	4	3	6.7	7.0
beauty	3	4	3.3	3.8
energy	0	2	—	1.5
drug	0	2	—	1.7
control	0	2	—	1.9
fear	0	2	—	2.1
imagination	0	2	—	3.9
wisdom	0	2	—	4.3
mystery	0	2	—	4.5
individuality	0	2	—	6.5
whimsy	0	2	—	7.1
formality	0	4	—	7.5
recklessness	0	3	—	7.6
weirdness	0	2	—	7.8
construct	0	2	—	7.8

Going more into detail, the table displays many collocations of *wilderness* associated with the meaning of nature – often as something to be protected – while *wildness* largely maintains its metaphorical meaning. In this sense, significant words related to *wilderness* include: “reserve”, “biodiversity”, and “forest”. A thorough examination of the collocations in context enables us to confirm this interpretation (Fig. 3).

CONCORDANCE English Broadsheet Newspapers 1993-2021 (SiBol)

QOL Reserve + wilderness • 4
less than 0.01 • 4e-7%

Details

sentence

<input type="checkbox"/>	1	🕒	16 October 2005...	<s>The Eastern Cape has several family-friendly, malaria-free game reserves, including Kwandwe Private Game Reserve , a 20,000-hectrare wilderness just north of Grahamstown.</s>	📄
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	🕒	23 January 2010...	<s>On its seaward side runs a line of sand hills bristling with marram grass, and the land behind it is a National Nature Reserve , a wilderness of rabbit-cropped turf with a golf course in the middle.</s>	📄
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	🕒	20 September 20...	<s>The manhunt for Laundrie continued for a second day yesterday in the T Mabry Carlton Jr Memorial Reserve , a 24,565-acre wilderness a few miles from his family home.</s>	📄
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	🕒	23 September 20...	<s>They said his parents believed he had gone for a hike on the Carlton Reserve , a 25,000-acre wilderness of woods and swampland.</s>	📄

Figure 3. – “Wilderness” reserve.

In the first example from the *Sunday Times* (16 October 2005), William Gray takes readers to South Africa for an Eastern Cape Safari. In this case, the *wilderness* “reserve” is a fun, pleasurable place:

EASTERN CAPE SAFARI If you had to single out one reason why the Cape makes such a unique family holiday location, it would have to be its game **reserves** – where you get all the thrill of tracking the big five without the worry of the kids catching malaria. The Eastern Cape has several family-friendly, malaria-free game reserves, including **Kwandwe Private Game Reserve, a 20,000-hectrare wilderness just north of Grahamstown.** The CC Africa conservation and tourism group, which manages Kwandwe, has a reputation for catering to children, and we weren’t disappointed.

Differently, in the following collocation from *The Times* dated 20 September 2021, the *wilderness* “reserve” maintains its meaning as a natural place, but is considered a place of danger, not fun. The article recounts the disappearance of a young woman in the *wilderness* of the Carlton reserve:

Laundrie, 23, arrived alone at his parents’ house in Florida, in the van that had been registered in Petito’s name. On September 11 her parents reported her missing, saying they had not heard from her since late August. Laundrie was refusing to explain why he had returned without her, they said. Police in Florida who were trying to reach him later said he had disappeared too, on September 14. They said his parents believed he had gone for a hike on **the Carlton Reserve, a 25,000-acre wilderness of woods** and swampland. Interest in the case has been fed by a series of discoveries that shed light on the couple’s relationship in their final days. Last week police in Utah released body-camera video of the couple speaking to officers after they were stopped in Moab on August 12. Petito sobbed as she described quarrelling with Laundrie, telling officers she had slapped him.

Here, natural *wilderness* is the stage of an unpleasant event, a representation that is quite common in news articles (see chapter 4), but in truth remains an exception. In the two subsequent collocations we return to a positive conceptualization of *wilderness*, linked to “biodiversity” via a

comma in the first case, and the conjunction “and” in the second. Both are fundamental for environmental protection. Put together, they enrich the *wilderness* discourse. For example (Fig. 4):

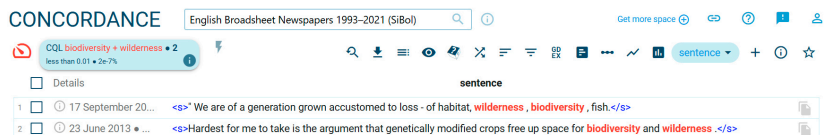


Figure 4. – “Wilderness” and “biodiversity”.

In the first collocation from *The Guardian* on 17 September 2005, Lionel Shriver includes the concept of loss of *wilderness* and “biodiversity” as part of a broader discussion on the loss of languages occurring around the world, underlining the importance of the protection of both:

Though she has many cousins, the loss of the combined heritage of her particular parents is “a sadness”. As for perpetuating her ethnicity, her parents both taught Irish, and she has “a mother tongue that is under threat. But in the wide scheme of things, I am conscious that languages disappear every year”. We are of a generation grown accustomed to loss – of habitat, **wilderness, biodiversity**, fish. Why not Irish, too?

The second example with “biodiversity” dates 23 June 2013, and comes from the *Sunday Times*. Its author, Charles Clover, is writing about genetically modified crops which, by guaranteeing less land use, may leave room for the development of *wilderness* and “biodiversity”. The author doubts that this can happen and wonders what could convince farmers to “re-wild” lands freed from cultivation. The use of the word “re-wilding” is quite valuable in the contemporary evolution of the concept of *wilderness*. That is, where *wilderness* no longer exists, there is hope that humans might be able to reintroduce and recreate wild places there. Linguistically, this idea can be conveyed with the prefix “re-”. The excerpt:

Paterson is hopelessly simplistic about this. GM crops may bring benefits for the environment, as he argues – fewer sprays, for instance – but not always. There is evidence that pesticide use has gone up in North America, while European non-GM crops have yielded more with less. The decline of the monarch butterfly in the US is correlated with the use of GM crops. **Hardest for me to take is the argument that genetically modified crops free up space for biodiversity and wilderness.** We have an ancient countryside where wildlife, hedges, woods and farming are all jumbled up, and intensive farming methods have had huge wildlife impacts. Even if we could grow

more on less land, in an environmentally friendly way, who would make farmers rewild the ‘surplus’ land, and how would this be funded? We cannot even agree on how to manage our verges for wildflowers. I suspect the chancellor would quickly plan to build on any wasted space.

The quote also refers to the need for political involvement to support environmental causes, an idea that can also be found in the following collocation, which associates *wilderness* and “wildlife” (Fig. 5).

CONCORDANCE English Broadsheet Newspapers 1993–2021 (SiBoI)

QCL wildlife + wilderness • 7
0.01 per million tokens • 6.9e7%

Details sentence

1	22 December 2005	<S>Most Senate Democrats and some moderate Republicans said the frigid wilderness and its wildlife should be protected.</S>
2	22 December 2005	<S>Most Senate Democrats and some moderate Republicans believe the icy wilderness and its wildlife , which includes polar bears, caribou and peregrine falcons, should be protected.</S>
3	22 December 2005	<S>Most Senate Democrats and some moderate Republicans said that the wilderness and its wildlife , including polar bears and peregrine falcons, should be protected.</S>
4	11 September 2005	<S>Mark Chipperfield discovers wilderness , wildlife , wineries and a buzzing Ashes vibe in the city of Perth AUSTRALIA WESTERN AUSTRALIA</S>
5	26 January 2013	<S> Wildlife and Wilderness (0845 004 4599 wildlife.wilderness.com) has an eight-day "The Hunter" holiday from A€1,665 per person, including return flight, car hire and accommodation.</S>
6	10 April 2013	<S>Hidden treasures of Albion; There's no need to travel to the other side of the world for abundant wildlife and beautiful wilderness , says Amy Watkins</S>
7	4 May 2021	<S>With a dramatic landscape to rival that of New Zealand, swathes of unspoilt wilderness , abundant wildlife and, of course, haggis and the finest single malts - it pretty much covers all bases for a well-needed escape from the city.</S>

Figure 5. – “Wilderness” and “wildlife”.

In particular, Jamie Wilson’s article published in *The Guardian* on 22 December 2005 deals with the possibility of drilling in Alaskan regions. Republicans are in favour, while Democrats oppose the idea, stating that “the frigid *wilderness* and its wildlife should be protected”, thus conveying a classic environmentalist message that progressive parties tend to support. The discourse in the extract testifies to these positions:

Republicans had hoped to win passage by making the oil drilling issue part of a defence spending bill that has earmarked money for troops in Iraq and relief for Hurricane Katrina victims. Because of the vote, Senate leaders are expected to rework the bill to eliminate the oil-drilling proposal. The refuge, which sprawls along Alaska’s northern coast and may hold 10bn barrels of oil, has been the focus of bitter wrangling in Congress for more than two decades. **Most Senate Democrats and some moderate Republicans said the frigid *wilderness* and its wildlife should be protected.** But the Bush administration has said the refuge must be opened up to drilling to halt a steady slide in US crude production and reduce America’s dependence on foreign oil. Ted Stevens, a Republican of Alaska, attached the measure to the \$453bn (pounds 260bn) spending bill – which not only has money for troops in Iraq and hurricane relief but help for low-income families to pay energy bills – in the hope that opponents would find it hard to vote against it.

In the next collocations, we see frequent concordances of *wilderness* and “forest”. Three significant extracts from *The Guardian* demonstrate how attentive the newspaper is to the *wilderness* narrative (Fig. 6).

The screenshot shows a concordance search interface. At the top, it says "CONCORDANCE" and "English Broadsheet Newspapers 1993–2021 (SiBol)". Below that, there are search filters: "CQI: forest + wilderness • 9" and "0.01 per million tokens • 8.9%7%". There are also icons for search, download, print, and other functions. The main part of the image is a table of concordance results. The table has two columns: "Details" and "sentence". The "Details" column shows the date and a small icon. The "sentence" column shows the text of the concordance, with the words "forest" and "wilderness" highlighted in red. The first result is from 20 August 1993, the second from 26 November 1993, and the third from 23 August 2005. The second result is the one that is expanded in the detailed view below.

Details	sentence
1 <input type="checkbox"/> 20 August 1993...	<S>He oversees the largest acreage of parkland, forest and wilderness owned by an British city, and the last time he drove down Harrogate Road, it wasn't to go and admire the spa.</S>
2 <input type="checkbox"/> 26 November 1993...	<S>Here is an ethical imperative that commands respect: thou shalt not pollute, thou shalt not damage, corrupt, despoil, or render impure the places, mountains, oceans, wildernesses and forests of the earth.</S>
3 <input type="checkbox"/> 23 August 2005...	<S>Until the 60s the favoured strategy was putting more land under the plough, resulting in the loss of much of the world's wilderness and native forest .</S>
4 <input type="checkbox"/> 03 July 2005 • ...	<S>But poachers seek their skins, quack doctors - feeding myths to sick Chinese - crave their bones, while logging and development mafias threaten the forests and wildernesses they depend on.</S>
5 <input type="checkbox"/> 12 February 200...	<S>One day, Mama says, they will cross the wilderness and forests and ice to find the other city where the sun always shines...</S>
6 <input type="checkbox"/> 24 May 2010 • 3...	<S>The Earth and its thin surface is our only home, and there's a lot that comes to us from biodiversity and ecosystems: we get food, fuel, fibre, we get the ability to have clean air and fresh water, we get a stable microclimate where we live; if we wander into forests and wildernesses we get enjoyment, we get recreation, we get spiritual sustenance; all kinds of things - which in many cases are received free, and I think that's perhaps the nub of the problem," said Sukhdev, who visited the UK as a guest of the science research and education charity the Earthwatch Institute.</S>
7 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 February 2010...	<S>Isle of Bute Residents are bidding for the right to buy a swathe of forest and wilderness that has been put on the market by Lord Attenborough, the film director (Mike Wade writes).</S>
8 <input type="checkbox"/> 22 May 2010 • 2	<S>Wildlife reserves, seawall paths, an ancient forest , a flowery limestone wilderness .</S>
9 <input type="checkbox"/> 18 January 2021...	<S>In my imagination, at least, these steep, snowbound woods and the rime-encrusted Millstone Grit outcrops that dot the escarpment in this corner of West Yorkshire could be part of an Alpine forest , or a boreal wilderness somewhere in Scandinavia or North America.</S>

Figure 6. – “Wilderness” and “forest/s”.

In the first piece in *The Guardian* published 26 November 1993, Joan Bakewell examines very divisive contemporary ethical dilemmas, including ethical environmental questions: she states that “places, mountains, oceans, *wildernesses* and forests of the earth” should be respected for moral reasons. The author develops her position in several subsequent sentences, writing:

[... Should we] surrogate mothers to carry a child in her womb for another childless woman? Is it right to persist in efforts to keep alive at all costs the young lives born critically deformed? What is right or wrong must be decided and is being decided by individual doctors daily. Secondly, I find secular spirituality among those concerned for the ecology of the planet. **Here is an ethical imperative that commands respect: thou shalt not pollute, thou shalt not damage, corrupt, despoil, or render impure the places, mountains, oceans, wildernesses and forests of the earth.** Humanity has always been in awe of the great spaces. Now Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth have harnessed such feelings into a global crusade. There is also a new and changing relationship between human life and the animal kingdom. In my King James Bible, the Book of Genesis reads that God gave man dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. In more recent translation, Genesis speaks of man’s guardianship.

In the quote, “*wildernesses* and forests” are interestingly presented as synonyms, drawing from an early interpretation of the term as pristine forests of Northern Europe. The same thing happens in the second collocation from *The Guardian* (23 August 2005), where the phrase “the world’s *wilderness* and native forest” is included in the discussion on the need for greater food production due to an ever-increasing world population. Note the expression “increasing yields” which connects to “GM crops”, a term analysed earlier. Both refer to the need to concentrate space devoted to farming; to leave room for *wilderness*. The meaning of *wilderness* here is determined through what it is not, through words that act as antonyms. In other words, *wilderness* is not “land under cultivation”:

It is estimated that rice production will have to increase by about 30% in the next 20 years to keep pace with population growth and economic development. Where is all the food going to come from? There are two principal ways to boost food production: increasing the amount of **land under cultivation** or increasing yields. Until the 60s the favoured strategy was putting **more land under the plough, resulting in the loss of much of the world’s *wilderness* and native forest**. But in the 60s plant breeders such as Norman Borlaug pioneered a new strategy, increasing crop yields through a mixture of seed improvement and technological inputs: the green revolution. As crops of the new varieties were planted, first in Mexico and then throughout the world, particularly in Asia, harvests soared and have continued to rise at a rate of about 2% a year. But the green revolution is grinding to a halt. There have been only small yield increases in recent years [...].

The third case, taken once again from *The Guardian* (24 May 2010), from an article by Juliette Jowitz, addresses the content of a conversation with the owner of an eco-tourism project in Australia. The selection below is significant with respect to the *wilderness* discourse. “Forest” and *wilderness* appear one more time, as synonyms. Moreover, in the same extract, a few lines earlier, we find the words “biodiversity” and “ecosystem” which, from both their semantic meaning and their grammatical structure, subordinate the subsequent phrases. For example, “forests” and *wilderness* are sub-components of “biodiversity” and of the “ecosystem”:

[...] the destruction of the natural world was “a landscape of market failures”, because the services of nature were nearly always provided for free, and so not valued until they were gone. “The Earth and its thin surface is our only home, and there’s a lot that comes to us from **biodiversity and ecosystems**: we get food, fuel, fibre; we get the ability to have clean air and fresh water; we get a stable microclimate where we live; **if we wander into forests and *wildernesses* we get enjoyment, we get recreation, we get spiritual sus-**

tenance; all kinds of things – which in many cases are received free, and I think that’s perhaps the nub of the problem”, said Sukhdev, who visited the UK as a guest of the science research and education charity the Earthwatch Institute. Sukhdev is a senior banker at Deutsche Bank, adviser to the UN Environment Programme. He owns a rainforest restoration and eco-tourism project in Australia and an organic farm in India.

The next collocation adds a nuance of meaning to *wilderness*, in the concordance of *wilderness* and “beauty”. This “beauty” is described as “amazing”, “pristine”, “scenic”, and is embodied in nature, as highlighted in the following two collocations (Fig. 7).

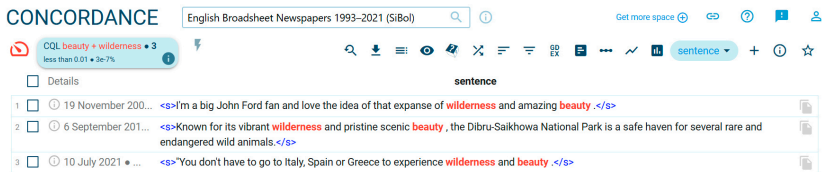


Figure 7. – “Wilderness” and “beauty”.

In the detail from the first article (*The Guardian*, 19 November 2005), Sally Shalam associates the Arizona *wilderness* with an “amazing and special beauty”:

Where would you rather be? Arizona. I’m a big John Ford fan and **love the idea of that expanse of wilderness and amazing beauty**. What’s so special about it? The beauty of it all and the fact that you would probably not meet your standard tourist there. In fact you probably wouldn’t meet anyone at all.

The naturalness and beauty of *wilderness* is a concept that can also be found in the second collocation from the *Times of India* (6 September 2013), in an article that describes the *wilderness* of the Dibru-Saikhowa National Park in India with very redundant adjectives, such as “vibrant”, “pristine” and “scenic”, emphasizing its grandeur as a landscape:

Known for **its vibrant wilderness and pristine scenic beauty**, the Dibru-Saikhowa National Park is a safe haven for several rare and endangered wild animals. Some of the exotic mammalian and avian species found in the park include the clouded leopard, rhesus macaque, slow loris, Royal Bengal Tiger, Gangetic dolphin, hoolock gibbon, capped langur, spot-billed pelican, whistling teal, magpie, greater spotted eagle, crested serpent eagle, greater adjutant stork and common pintail.

A similar message is conveyed by the last example from *The Sun* (10 July 2021), where the experience of *wilderness* is beautiful and pleasant:

“As we’re not British, our reactions are honest because we were not prepared for seeing it all in real life”, explains Bruno. “In Cornwall, there are Druid stones everywhere. There are fascinating stories about the history of this country that are visible – you go to these places and there is a story attached to each”. “And it’s in everybody’s back yard”, adds Craig. **“You don’t have to go to Italy, Spain or Greece to experience *wilderness* and beauty. All these great places are on your doorstep.** I found the whole thing fascinating. And there were challenges, like wild swimming – normally we go out to the theatre and for dinner at The Ivy, darling!”.

The high frequency of *wilderness* with words associated with nature is interrupted by the term “bandit” which scores the highest in table five. The data is interesting and misleading at the same time. The reference is to an exhibition dedicated to a flamboyant 17th-century Neapolitan painter and etcher, entitled: “Salvator Rosa, Bandits, *Wilderness* and Magic”. The exhibition was held in 2010 at the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London, a vibrant cultural hub hosting some of the UK’s leading exhibitions. *Wilderness* is collocated between “bandits” and “magic”. These words add a metaphorical meaning to *wilderness* as something dangerous, outside the box, but also extraordinary and superhuman. In *Table 6*, on the other hand, we find *wildness* intended in its original meaning of wild nature associated with the term “preservation”.

Table 6. – “Wilderness/wildness” is a ...

<i>wilderness/wildness</i> is a ...	<i>wilderness</i> hits	<i>wildness</i> hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	<i>wildness</i> typicality score
festival	2	0	6.9	—
place	8	0	4.4	—
home	2	0	3.4	—
preservation	0	3	—	10.9

Figure 8 details the collocation “*wildness* is... preservation ...” with a very high score. The three occurrences are in *The Times*, all in the same article, published in different editions of the newspaper. The reference is to Henry David Thoreau and his famous statement “In *wildness* is the preservation of the world”, from *Walking* (1851) published in *The Atlantic* in June 1862. The sentence was used by the Sierra Club as an unofficial motto and launched into the cultural stratosphere starting in the 1960s.

The line was cherry-picked from its original context. It conflates *wildness* with *wilderness*. *Wildness* is an attitude, but in this case, it is also a place. Thoreau wrote: “In *Wildness* is the preservation of the World. Every tree sends its fibers forth in search of the Wild... From the forest and *wilderness* come the tonics and barks which brace mankind” (Thoreau 1862, 95). Nowadays, the sentence would be articulated differently. We would more likely write: “In *wilderness* is the conservation of the world”.

CONCORDANCE English Broadsheet Newspapers 1993-2021 (SiBol)

CCQL wildness + preservation • 3
less than 0.01 • 3e-7%

	Details	sentence
1	6 April 2021 • ...	<S>In wildness is the preservation of the world.</S>
2	6 April 2021 • ...	<S>In wildness is the preservation of the world.</S>
3	6 April 2021 • ...	<S>In wildness is the preservation of the world.</S>

Figure 8. – “Wildness” is X.

The concepts Thoreau wanted to convey, or perhaps we infer he wanted to convey, are those of “conservation” and not “preservation”, and of *wilderness* as a natural environment and not of *wildness* which can carry a broader meaning. “Conservation” (see chapter 4) is a scientific term used to define the protection of plants and animals, natural areas, and nowadays *wilderness* is the most commonly-used term to define wild landscapes. The American writer could not have been aware of this at the time he wrote, when environmentalism did not yet exist, either as an ideology or as a scientific discipline. He could only have intuited the beneficial value of the wild world, which he associated not only with the natural environment, but also with the qualities of being wild. As noted in the first chapter, it is no coincidence that Thoreau linked positive feelings to wild art and literature. The wild, in this sense, is also in the human being and in her/his creations, and carries a beneficial and rewarding value.

In *Tables 7 and 8*, very generic adjective predicates – “vast”, “great”, “more”, “good” – give *wilderness* a positive connotation. “Vast” is high in both hits and score, because it typically designates a quality of natural *wilderness*, as opposed to the words “great” and “good” which are very predictable and exemplify how a weak collocation works, in fact the typicality score is relatively low. On the contrary, in the table “... is a”, the word “prairie” is typically associated with *wilderness*, because it reflects some distinctive characteristics of this type of territory, as in the case of “vast”. “Garden” and “park” are two other words usually associated with *wilderness* in its meaning of natural wonder.

Table 7. – Adjective predicates of “wilderness/wildness”.

adjective predicates	wilderness hits	wildness hits	wilderness typicality score	wildness typicality score
vast	2	0	5.9	—
like	2	0	3.8	—
great	2	0	1.8	—
more	2	0	0.3	—
good	2	0	< 0.1	—

Table 8. – ... is a “wilderness/wildness”.

... is a wilderness/wildness	wilderness hits	wildness hits	wilderness typicality score	wildness typicality score
prairie	2	0	9.8	—
cloud	2	0	8.3	—
garden	5	0	7.2	—
park	2	0	6.5	—
land	2	0	6.4	—
site	2	0	5.6	—
place	2	0	4.7	—
area	2	0	4.7	—

By analysing the “modifiers of *wilderness/wildness*”, and the “nouns modified by *wilderness/wildness*”, we can infer an updated definition of the two terms. Where *wilderness* is strongly related to its literal meaning, *wildness* is more featured metaphorically (Tab. 9).

The concept of *wilderness* is frequent in this table and typically associated with cold places situated in the north of the world, as reinforced by the modifiers: “Alaskan/Alaska”, “Montana”, “Canadian”, “Siberian”, “icy”, “snowy”, “frozen”, “mountain”. It is less frequently linked to other kinds of landscapes, i.e. the desert, the oceans, woods and forests (apart from the adjective “verdant”, which has a high score and rate of occurrences), even though the definition of *wilderness* covers a wide range of territories. The association of *wilderness* to the United States is quite common: the “Alaskan/Alaska”, “Montana”, “Colorado”, “Utah”, “Oregon”, “Wyoming” *wilderness* assumes a mythical and cultural value strongly related to that of primordial land. Words like “pristine”, “untamed”, “unspoilt”, “untouched” and “uninhabited” – score very high for both strong and weak collocations. Yet the combination “pristine *wilderness*” is concen-

trated in *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, two British newspapers that discuss the word more frequently than others.

Table 9. – Modifiers of “wilderness/wildness”.

modifiers of <i>wilderness/wildness</i>	<i>wilderness</i> hits	<i>wildness</i> hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	<i>wildness</i> typicality score
Alaskan	32	0	8.5	—
pristine	51	0	8.4	—
untamed	15	0	7.6	—
unspoilt	17	0	7.4	—
untouched	10	0	7.0	—
verdant	11	0	6.9	—
bandit	9	0	6.8	—
Montana	10	0	6.7	—
Siberian	11	0	6.7	—
weed-ridden	6	0	6.5	—
icy	18	0	6.5	—
desolate	9	0	6.4	—
snowy	11	0	6.4	—
Arctic	21	0	6.4	—
frozen	26	0	6.3	—
Colorado	12	0	6.3	—
Utah	7	0	6.2	—
barren	9	0	6.1	—
Canadian	35	0	6.1	—
Tasmanian	6	0	6.0	—
arid	6	0	6.0	—
rugged	10	0	5.9	—
trackless	4	0	5.9	—
Gila	4	0	5.9	—
Oregon	6	0	5.8	—
artificial	21	0	5.8	—
arctic	4	0	5.6	—
high-altitude	4	0	5.6	—
uninhabited	4	0	5.5	—
forested	4	0	5.5	—
remote	29	2	5.4	1.7
true	26	3	4.2	1.2

modifiers of <i>wilderness/wildness</i>	<i>wilderness</i> hits	<i>wildness</i> hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	<i>wildness</i> typicality score
island	3	2	3.4	3.1
exotic	2	2	2.5	2.7
volcanic	2	2	3.4	4.0
chaotic	2	3	3.1	4.1
certain	0	4	—	0.8
emotional	0	2	—	1.0
sheer	0	2	—	1.9
wet	0	2	—	2.5
theatrical	0	3	—	3.7
Gothic	0	3	—	4.6
artful	0	2	—	5.9
extra-curricular	0	2	—	6.4
animalistic	0	4	—	9.2

Likewise, *Table 10* characterizes *wilderness* as a natural environment, introducing concepts that have come to feature the experience in wild nature not only as far as the *wilderness* discourse is concerned, but also as for new uses of *wilderness* as a modifier of a noun. For example: “*wilderness* safari”, “*wilderness* lodge”, “*wilderness* camp”, “*wilderness* designation”, “*wilderness* retreat”, “*wilderness* reserve”, “*wilderness* trail”, “*wilderness* explorer”, “*wilderness* survival”, “*wilderness* adventure”, “*wilderness* therapy”, “*wilderness* society”, “*wilderness* sanctuary”, “*wilderness* camping”, “*wilderness* cabin” and “*wilderness* festival”.

Table 10. – Nouns modified by “wilderness/wildness”.

nouns modified by <i>wilderness/wildness</i>	<i>wilderness</i> hits	<i>wildness</i> hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	<i>wildness</i> typicality score
safari	42	0	8.2	—
lodge	28	0	7.5	—
firefighter	14	0	7.2	—
bushcraft	4	0	6.5	—
Camp	15	0	6.2	—
designation	5	0	6.1	—
retreat	22	0	6.1	—
Manaus	3	0	6.1	—
Scotland	48	0	5.9	—

nouns modified by <i>wilderness/wildness</i>	<i>wilderness</i> hits	<i>wildness</i> hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	<i>wildness</i> typicality score
Lodge	12	0	5.8	—
Reserve	21	0	5.6	—
trail	15	0	5.4	—
preserve	3	0	5.3	—
explorer	8	0	5.2	—
survival	5	0	5.0	—
fleece	2	0	4.9	—
Aid	4	0	4.9	—
clearing	2	0	4.8	—
adventure	15	0	4.8	—
therapy	15	0	4.8	—
Society	44	0	4.7	—
sanctuary	6	0	4.7	—
camping	2	0	4.6	—
wildlife	3	0	4.5	—
cabin	5	0	4.5	—
Festival	32	0	4.5	—
continent	3	0	4.5	—
playground	3	0	4.4	—
Heart	3	0	4.4	—
reserve	15	0	4.4	—
fear	0	2	—	1.6

Among these, one of the most significant is *wilderness* “therapy”, which will be extensively discussed in chapter 4 (Fig. 9).

As for frequency and the typicality score of the keywords in Table 10, the most recurrent nouns are linked to wild imagery: “safari”, “lodge”, “firefighter”, “bushcraft”, “camp”, “retreat”, “camping”, “reserve” and most of the collocations are – again – in *The Daily Telegraph* and in *The Guardian*.

On the other hand, the collocation “society” with *wilderness* is a classic example of typicality. It refers to The *Wilderness Society*, a non-profit land conservation group based in the United States that is committed to preserving federal public lands and natural regions. They support the creation of national monuments and other protected designations like federal *wilderness* areas. They encourage lawmakers at the federal level to implement various land conservation and balanced land use initiatives, and they

support the responsible use of public lands. The word “Society” conveys a predictable meaning, in this case exhibiting a typicality in reference to a specific environmental organization.

The screenshot shows a concordance tool interface. At the top, it says "CONCORDANCE" and "English Broadsheet Newspapers 1993–2021 (SiBoI)". Below that, there's a search bar with "CQL therapy + wilderness • 15" and "0.01 per million tokens • 0.000015%". There are several icons for search and navigation. Below the search bar, there's a table with columns for "Details" and "sentence". The table contains 12 rows of search results, each with a checkbox, a date, and a snippet of text containing the search term "wilderness therapy".

Details	sentence
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	02 February 200... <S>G2: Parents: Way out west Wilderness therapy , as seen in Channel 4's Brat Camp, is now big business in America.</S>
<input type="checkbox"/> 2	02 February 200... <S>This is the second series of Brat Camp; the first, last year, won a bagful of awards and provided a new term for the great British cure-all of fresh air and exercise: wilderness therapy .</S>
<input type="checkbox"/> 3	02 February 200... <S> Wilderness therapy comes in many forms. It transpires.</S>
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	02 February 200... <S>The 12,000 American children who are packed off to Turn-About or one of the other 100 or so US brat camps every year tend to be from similar backgrounds, largely because wilderness therapy does not come cheap. a place at Turn-About costs \$329 (pounds 175) per day.</S>
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	02 February 200... <S>Children who have been made wards of state do sometimes end up in wilderness therapy , but the state in question will then try to recoup its costs from the child's parents - which may come as a rather nasty shock.</S>
<input type="checkbox"/> 6	02 February 200... <S>The research is in its infancy, but according to Stephen Schultz, a spokesman for RedCliff Ascent, wilderness therapy , when done properly, is roughly twice as effective in the short term as outpatient treatment or hospitalisation.</S>
<input type="checkbox"/> 7	02 February 200... <S>Dr Keith Russell, an expert in wilderness therapy at the University of New Hampshire, says wilderness therapy started in the 1920s and its popularity boomed in the 1980s as an alternative to troubled kids being placed in mental hospitals.</S>
<input type="checkbox"/> 8	02 February 200... <S>Dr Keith Russell, an expert in wilderness therapy at the University of New Hampshire, says wilderness therapy started in the 1920s and its popularity boomed in the 1980s as an alternative to troubled kids being placed in mental hospitals.</S>
<input type="checkbox"/> 9	02 February 200... <S> Wilderness therapy is different to military-style boot camps, which rely on humiliation and barked orders.</S>
<input type="checkbox"/> 10	02 February 200... <S>For a start, wilderness therapy generally involves daily sessions of group counselling.</S>
<input type="checkbox"/> 11	02 February 200... <S>Russell adds that wilderness therapy is no 'magic fix' and that it is not suitable for all troubled teens.</S>
<input type="checkbox"/> 12	02 February 200... <S>Each of the British kids in the current series went to the camp willingly - Joe says he volunteered after watching the first series and thinking "it would be a laugh" - but almost half of US kids in wilderness therapy are sent against their will.</S>

Figure 9. – “Wilderness” therapy.

The word “year” shows a high and unusual frequency (particularly in 1993) that does not generate a typicality score because the term often occurs in the corpus. The numerous collocations are generated by the many references to the bestseller, *The Wilderness Years* (1993), the fourth book in the Adrian Mole series, written by Sue Townsend, that focuses on the concerns of the book’s protagonist, the adult Mole. The term *wilderness* takes on a metaphorical meaning in the context of *The Wilderness Years*, referring to a period in someone’s life or career marked by exclusion, lack of direction, or significant struggle, often following a period of prominence or success. This phase is characterized by isolation, introspection, and a quest for resurgence. The phrase is used in political and historical narratives to describe times when influential figures or groups are out of power or favour. For instance, in British political history, the expression “The *Wilderness Years*” refers to periods when a politician or party are not in office, often focusing on their efforts to regain influence.

The term also draws an analogy to the Biblical story of the Israelites wandering for forty years through the *wilderness*, symbolizing a time of trial and searching for the Promised Land (see chapter 1). The metaphor captures the essence of personal or professional exile, and the subsequent journey toward redemption or renewed purpose.

Returning to the hits, the single occurrence of *wildness* takes place with “fear” and does not reveal any significant novelties, since the word maintains its figurative meaning and doesn’t suggest further comments and interpretations.

Table 11. – Possessors of “wilderness/wildness”.

possessors of <i>wilderness/wildness</i>	<i>wilderness</i> hits	<i>wildness</i> hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	<i>wildness</i> typicality score
Kit	6	0	9.8	—
Youth	2	0	8.2	—
Fogle	2	0	8.1	—
Alaska	3	0	7.7	—
Pilgrim	2	0	7.4	—
pilgrim	2	0	7.3	—
planet	4	0	6.5	—
Earth	2	0	6.1	—
Iceland	2	0	5.6	—
football	4	0	4.6	—
Europe	13	0	4.5	—
island	3	0	4.3	—
Africa	4	0	3.9	—
region	2	0	3.8	—
America	7	0	3.2	—
world	15	0	2.8	—
England	10	0	2.5	—
Scotland	3	0	2.4	—
nation	3	0	2.0	—
Britain	9	0	1.8	—
country	4	0	1.1	—
man	2	0	0.7	—
work	0	2	—	5.8

Table 11 features the possessors of *wilderness* and *wildness*. The majority of the occurrences are with *wilderness*; *wildness* scores only one occurrence. The list starts with an unusual hit: “Kit”. The reference is to *Kit’s Wilderness*, a very successful children’s book written by David Almond and published in 1999. It was inspired by the former Tyne and Wear coal-mining communities the author knew as a boy, and is set in a fictional northeast-

ern English town. In *Kit’s Wilderness*, the concept of *wilderness* operates on multiple levels, blending literal and metaphorical interpretations that enrich the narrative and its linguistic value. It often refers to the physical landscapes that surround the characters, particularly the abandoned coal mines and the rugged, untamed environment of the small town of Stoneygate. These settings serve as backdrops for the children’s explorations and adventures, symbolizing the unknown and mysterious aspects of nature, both beautiful and dangerous. On a deeper level, *wilderness* represents the characters’ inner mental and emotional landscapes. Kit, the protagonist, navigates through personal grief, the legacy of his family’s mining past, and his complex relationships with his peers. *Wilderness* here represents the uncharted territories of their psyches, the confusion, fear, and discovery inherent in growing up and facing personal demons. It is also connected to the historical and cultural backdrop of the mining community. The mines, once a source of livelihood for many, are now abandoned and serve as a metaphor for the lost world and its residual impact on the community and its identity. Throughout the novel there are elements that hint at a more spiritual or mystical interpretation of *wilderness*. The ancient, almost mythical presence of the land and the haunting stories associated with it suggest a connection to something beyond the tangible world. Kit’s encounters and the eerie experiences within *wilderness* areas evoke a journey not just through space, but through a more profound, existential *wilderness*. This makes the title of the book especially interesting from a linguistic point of view, since it expresses the multiple meanings the single word *wilderness* can convey (Fig. 10).

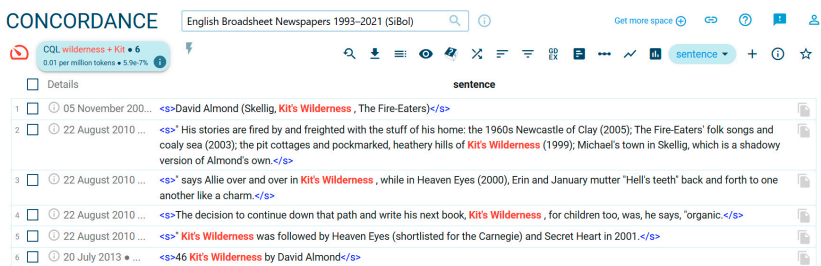


Figure 10. – Kit’s “wilderness”.

A more literal use of *wilderness* is expressed in the other collocations. *Wilderness* has to deal with Iceland, Europe, England, Scotland, Britain, more frequently than with the wilder North American and African continents, widely mentioned (directly and indirectly) in *Tables 9 and 10*, where *wil-*

wilderness is associated to words like: “safari”, “camp”, “lodge” and “Alaska”, “Montana”, “Colorado”, “Utah”, “Oregon”.

In Table 12 a couple of *wilderness* collocations score very high, for example “*wilderness* as rehab”, which echoes the previously mentioned “*wilderness* therapy” collocation (Fig. 11).

Table 12. – “Wilderness/wildness” as ...

<i>wilderness/wildness</i> as ...	<i>wilderness</i> hits	<i>wildness</i> hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	<i>wildness</i> typicality score
rehab	2	0	11.2	—
trapper	2	0	11.0	—
result	2	0	1.2	—

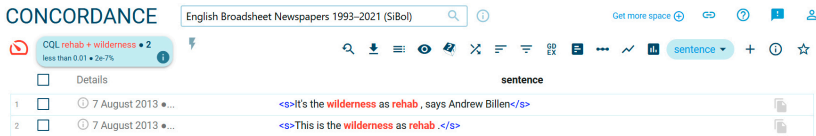


Figure 11. – “Wilderness” as rehab.

The two concordances of *wilderness* with “rehab” are found in a feature story published on 7 August 2013 in *The Times*. They confirm that connecting with natural *wilderness* can have beneficial effects on a human being’s psychological and physical wellbeing. The article refers to the famous television show “Naked and Afraid”, whose participants find themselves living in conditions that, while extreme, are nevertheless considered salvational:

No water. No food. No clothes; Naked and Afraid is America’s most extreme TV show. **It’s the *wilderness* as rehab**, says Andrew Billen. The reverberant American voiceover announces its premise in tones so freighted with importance that one might almost take the programme seriously: “One man and one woman, both experienced survivalists, have chosen to put their skills to the ultimate test.”

[...] **in their *wildernesses* are a twist on Christ’s 40 days and nights in the desert. They emerge purified.** The Serengeti and the Panamanian jungle are hostile versions of Shakespeare’s Forest of Arden. If the adventurers do not emerge coupled-up, they at least come out better versions of themselves: EJ is less certain a woman’s place is in the home; Laura will never again take food for granted. What is more – and what a modern American dream this is – the four of them end a combined 118lb lighter. This is the *wilderness* as rehab.

The collocation is worth mentioning because the idea of *wilderness* as a “rehab” or as “therapy” is gaining ground. It has even generated businesses with contrasting results, and it denotes the attractiveness of *wilderness*, not only from a recreational point of view, but also as a healthful place; a place where one might recover from physical and mental illness. (Some articles that use this expression will be further analysed in chapter four, some articles that use this expression will be analysed.)

Tables 13 deserves attention because it highlights unmentioned figurative features of *wildness*. The first occurrence of “tension” is collocated in *The New York Times* (24 August 2023) and reads: “The tension between *wildness* and control was a hallmark of Ms. Won in ‘Pradhanica’”. It comes from a dance review and refers to the dancer, whose style is defined by the “tension” between *wildness* and “control”. The distinctive combination of *wildness* and “control” expresses the dancer’s value and artistic skills. Thus *wildness* is positively configured, and highlights the exceptional, original trait of the subject. In the second article, from *The Times* (22 November 2013), the term is praised in the quote: “it felt an apt metaphor for [the city]: the tension between *wildness* of the place with the artifice and modernity”. The “natural” quality of *wildness* is opposed to “artifice” and “modernity”, enriching the concept of primordial with positive connotations.

Table 13. – “Wilderness/wildness”... between.

<i>wilderness/wildness</i> ... between	<i>wilderness</i> hits	<i>wildness</i> hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	<i>wildness</i> typicality score
tension	0	2	—	4.1

Table 14 shows the association of *wildness* with “wolf” in an article published on 12 May 2012 in *The Guardian* (in the opinion section of the newspaper’s British and American editions). We read: “Nothing embodies *wildness* like wolves, our four-legged shadow, the dogs that long ago [...]”. The “wolf” is the representation of *wildness*. Long persecuted due to its bad reputation, over time the word has acquired a good reputation as well, precisely because “wolf” represents the quintessence of *wildness*.

Table 14. – “Wilderness/wildness” like ...

<i>wilderness/wildness</i> like ...	<i>wilderness</i> hits	<i>wildness</i> hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	<i>wildness</i> typicality score
wolf	0	2	—	9.0

It is also important to consider the functions verbs assume in the corpus, where they mirror the original definitions associated with the terms. *Wilderness* as object is “curated” (typicality score 8.4 / hits 15); “drenched” (typicality score 7.6 / hits 10); “tamed” (typicality score 7 / hits 9); “inhabited” (typicality score 5.5 / hits 6); “designated” (typicality score 5.1 / hits 10); “explored” (typicality score 4.4 / hits 21); “preserved” (typicality score 3.1 / hits 4); “experienced” (typicality score 3.4 / hits 12); “protected” (typicality score 2.5 / hits 13); “loved” (typicality score 1.1 / hits 5). *Wilderness* – as a subject – “stretches” (typicality score 4.3 / hits 5); “surrounds” (typicality score 3.2 / hits 9); “lodges” (typicality score 3.0 / hits 2). *Wildness* as an object is tamed (typicality score 6.2 / hits 4); embodied (typicality score 4.1 / hits 2); crushed (typicality score 2.6 / hits 2); experienced (typicality score 0.9 / hits 12); loved (typicality score 0.3 / hits 3). *Wildness* as a subject “survives” (typicality score 1.4 / hits 2); drives (typicality score 0.6 / hits 2); lies (typicality score 0.6 / hits 2). The verbs convey the expected suggestions, and even when their typicality score is high, they fail to offer insight significant enough to detect original interpretations of the keywords. Still, many hits support the idea that wilderness is more and more engaged with environmental discourse, for example in verbs like “curated”, “designed”, “explored”, “experienced”, “protected” and “loved”.

3.3. “WILDNESS/WILDERNESS” SYNONYMS

Using the Thesaurus to analyse the synonyms allows us to further highlight how the corpus conceptualizes the terms. In linguistics, a synonym is a word or phrase that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another word or phrase in the same language. In some contexts, synonyms can be used interchangeably without changing the meaning of the sentence. However, they often have nuances or connotations that make them more appropriate in certain contexts than others. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a synonym as “a word having the same sense as another (in the same language); but more usually, either or any of two or more words (in the same language) having the same general sense, but possessing each of them meanings which are not shared by the other or others, or having different shades of meaning or implications appropriate to different contexts” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “*Synonym*, N., Sense 4”, June 2024). While synonyms share similar meanings, they often carry different connotations or are used in different contexts. For example, “house” and “home” refer to a place where people live, but “home” often carries a connotation of warmth and

comfort. The words “start” and “begin” mean to commence, but “begin” can be considered slightly more formal than “start”. Understanding the subtleties of synonyms is important for effective communication, as choosing the right synonym conveys the precise meaning and tone intended.

In Sketch Engine, the Thesaurus is an automatically-generated list of synonyms or words belonging to the same category (semantic field). The list is based on the context in which the words appear in the corpus. *Table 15* lists the frequency (also absolute frequency) of synonyms of *wilderness* in the corpus, where “frequency” means the number of occurrences or hits.

Table 15. – “Wilderness” Thesaurus.

Lemma	Hits	Similarity score	Lemma	Hits	Similarity score
rainforest	3907	0.195	plain	4011	0.119
desert	14541	0.183	ocean	14232	0.119
jungle	10994	0.182	bush	7170	0.117
countryside	19847	0.171	habitat	9615	0.116
terrain	5514	0.161	wetland	2723	0.112
woodland	8411	0.159	meadow	4181	0.109
forest	44233	0.147	dune	3732	0.108
wasteland	1687	0.137	hinterland	1764	0.108
scenery	5426	0.136	farmland	3276	0.107
landscape	31264	0.135	moorland	1570	0.106
coastline	5175	0.131	grassland	1538	0.105
expanse	2269	0.124	wildlife	20203	0.105
wild	755	0.121	paradise	5803	0.104
valley	12789	0.121	darkness	10798	0.104
mountain	39013	0.119	vista	2153	0.104

The results show that, for example, “forest” is more frequent than “bush”, but in the similarity score, “jungle” is more similar to *wilderness* than “bush” is. Similarity score indicates what percentage of collocates the synonym has in common with the search word. The score is a percentage of the shared collocates. To establish this, the word sketch of the search word is compared to word sketches of all the other words in the corpus with the same part of speech. Each grammatical relation is compared separately.

The synonyms are all related to the literal/natural meaning of *wilderness*, even if they mostly express a single feature of natural *wilderness*, for instance: “rainforest”, “desert”, “jungle”, “countryside”, “terrain”, “woodland”, “forest”. For *wildness*, on the other hand, the figurative meaning

is enhanced by words like “exoticism”, “wistfulness”, “schadenfreude”, “magnificence” and “unpredictability” (Tab. 16).

Table 16. – “Wildness” Thesaurus.

Lemma	Hits	Similarity score	Lemma	Hits	Similarity score
exoticism	346	0.103	anti-climax	515	0.071
wistfulness	233	0.095	hubris	1664	0.071
schadenfreude	491	0.094	daring	713	0.07
magnificence	750	0.087	foreboding	556	0.069
unpredictability	1266	0.085	exhilaration	739	0.068
theatricality	631	0.085	fallibility	488	0.068
perversity	435	0.079	tranquility	553	0.067
otherness	342	0.079	nastiness	753	0.066
strangeness	963	0.078	smugness	578	0.066
craziness	585	0.078	serenity	1487	0.065
showmanship	723	0.076	minerality	88	0.065
vastness	451	0.076	irreverence	505	0.065
tranquillity	1649	0.075	anticlimax	498	0.064
vu	1292	0.074	claustrophobia	623	0.064
preciousness	151	0.073	uniqueness	872	0.063

Analysis of these synonyms further clarifies the evolution of the two terms: *wilderness* retains its literal meaning, while *wildness* deviates toward a figurative meaning.

3.4. “WILDERNESS/WILDNESS” “CONSERVATION/BIODIVERSITY” DISCOURSES

This section aims to verify how *wilderness/wildness* combined with the words “conservation” and “biodiversity” are represented as interconnected in the corpus. As Covid-19 spread across the globe, scientists laboured to understand if infectious diseases are connected to the exploitation of wild land and its inhabitants. The answer is yes, as explained in a study published on 7 April 2020 by the University of California, Davis’ One Health Institute in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* (Johnson 2020). Devastation of *wilderness* by humans through hunting, trade, habitat degradation, loss of biodiversity and urbanization facilitates close contact between humans and animals, increasing the risk of virus spillover. Moreover, a

report published on 8 August 2021 by the Scientific Task Force to Prevent Pandemics at the Source, a collaborative effort convened by Harvard Chan C-CHANGE and the Harvard Global Health Initiative, outlines recommendations for research and actions to impact *wilderness* and “biodiversity/conservation” policies, as a way to safeguard the health of the planet, the so-called One Health (Alimi *et al.* 2021). David Quammen (2012) clarified this idea impeccably in his bestseller *Spillover*, in which he wrote: “Let’s keep an eye on wild creatures. As we besiege them, as we corner them, as we exterminate them and eat them, we are getting their diseases” (44).

This meaningful correlation is almost absent in the corpus. A single occurrence – “*wilderness* conservation” – was identified and is displayed in *Figure 12*.

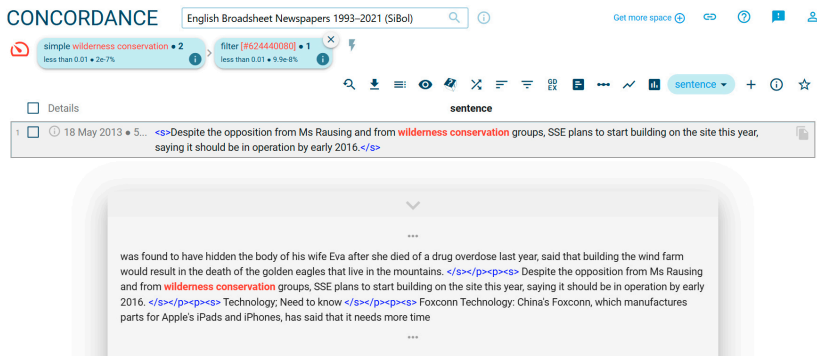


Figure 12. – “Wilderness conservation”.

In this collocation, *wilderness* takes on the literal meaning of wild land, engaging the environmental issues of nature conservation threatened by “the building of the wind farm [which] would result in the death of the golden eagles that live in the mountains”. However in SiBol, this instance is an exception.

The absence of collocations of the word combinations inspired a further line of study: words that appear both with “conservation” and *wilderness/wildness*; and both with “biodiversity” and *wilderness/wildness*. This because the words usually have comparable meanings when they appear in the same context. Distributional semantics works in this direction, developing studies, theories and methods to quantify and categorize semantic similarities between linguistic items based on their distributional properties in large samples of language data (Lenci and Sahlgren 2023).

This brief focus was developed using the Word Sketch Difference and Concordance tools and is discussed in the following two sections.

3.4.1. Conservation

The term “conservation”, in the sense of protection of nature, began to be widely used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This period was marked by a growing awareness of the impact of human activities on the environment and the need to manage natural resources sustainably.

In its modern sense, the concept is often related to the late 19th-century environmental movement in the United States. One of the key figures of this movement was George Perkins Marsh, whose 1864 book, *Man and Nature*, highlighted the impact of human actions on the environment and the need for sustainable resource management.

Conservation began to gain prominence with the establishment of the U.S. Forest Service in 1905 under the leadership of Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief Forester of the United States. Pinchot advocated a scientific management of forests and natural resources. During the Progressive Era (1890s-1920s), conservation became a significant public policy issue in the United States. President Theodore Roosevelt was a major proponent of conservation, and established numerous national parks, forests and monuments to protect natural resources and wildlife (U.S. National Park Service, “Theodore Roosevelt and Conservation”, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov>, last updated: 16 November 2017). The establishment of organizations like the National Park Service in 1916 further institutionalized the term as referring to the preservation of nature and public lands, and saw the formalization of conservation policies and practices that emphasized the sustainable use and protection of natural resources. The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers various definitions related to environmental conservation:

1.a.

a1398–

The action or process of conserving; preservation of life, health, perfection, etc.; (also) preservation from destructive influences, natural decay, or waste.

1.e.

1875–

The preservation, protection, or restoration of the natural environment and of wildlife; the practice of seeking to prevent the wasteful use of a resource in order to ensure its continuing availability.

energy, nature conservation, etc.: see the first element.

2.

1580–

Official charge and care of rivers, sewers, forests, etc.; (also) a body charged with this (rare). Cf. conservancy n. 2. Now chiefly historical, and merging with sense.

“Conservation, N.”. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, July 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5396330477>.

Today conservation refers to the responsible management and protection of natural resources to prevent their depletion or degradation. It encompasses a wide range of practices aimed at ensuring the sustainability of ecosystems, biodiversity and resources for coming generations. It can apply to various domains, including wildlife, forests, bodies of water, soil and cultural heritage. By understanding and implementing conservation practices, societies can protect natural resources, ensuring they remain viable and productive in the future.

This brief summary of the history and meanings of the term “conservation” enhances its relationship with the idea of wild land. With this in mind, word collocations were searched in the corpus. *Table 17* shows the shared hits of *wilderness* and “conservation”.

Table 17. – “Wildness” Thesaurus.

“wilderness/ conservation” in ...	<i>wilderness</i> hits	“conservation” hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	“conservation” typicality score
Africa	5	12	2.6	3.9
modifiers of “wilderness/ conservation”	<i>wilderness</i> hits	“conservation” hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	“conservation” typicality score
urban	10	5	3.3	2.3
African	15	8	3.5	2.6
forest	7	35	3.4	5.7
“wilderness/ conservation” and/or ...	<i>wilderness</i> hits	“conservation” hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	“conservation” typicality score
forest	9	10	5.2	5.0
nature	10	19	5.0	5.7
wildlife	7	39	5.7	7.7
“wilderness/ conservation” of ...	<i>wilderness</i> hits	“conservation” hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	“conservation” typicality score
tree	5	11	4.2	5.2
forest	6	25	5.5	7.3

In the hits displayed, all the words match the “literal” meaning of *wilderness*. The collocation contexts are similar and engage environmental discourses. Terms that appear with both *wildness* and “conservation”

however are connected with the “original” meaning of the term (“nature”, “landscape”, “countryside”) and with its metaphorical meaning (“energy”, “control”, “act”), as *Table 18* demonstrates. Therefore there are no discrepancies to highlight compared to previous results.

Table 18. – “Wildness” and “conservation”.

“wildness/ conservation” and/or ...	wildness hits	“conservation” hits	wilderness typicality score	“conservation” typicality score
nature	3	19	3.4	5.7
control	2	12	1.9	4.3
energy	2	29	1.5	5.2
... of “wildness/ conservation”	wildness hits	“conservation” hits	wildness typicality score	“conservation” typicality score
understanding	2	3	2.6	3.0
act	3	6	2.4	3.3
“wildness/ conservation” of ...	wildness hits	“conservation” hits	wildness typicality score	“conservation” typicality score
landscape	2	2	4.3	3.9
countryside	3	6	5.3	5.8
nature	2	27	2.7	6.3

3.4.2. Biodiversity

The term “biodiversity” is a portmanteau of “biological diversity”. It was coined by Walter G. Rosen in 1985, although it gained widespread usage following the National Forum on BioDiversity held in Washington (DC), in September 1986 (Sarkar 2002). The term was popularized through publication of the forum’s proceedings, edited by Edward O. Wilson in the 1988 book, *Biodiversity*. “Biodiversity” refers to the variety and variability of life on Earth. It encompasses different kinds of living organisms in all their forms, from genetic dissimilarities within species to the wide array of species themselves, and extends to the diverse ecosystems that house them (Loreau 2010, 1). The *English Oxford Dictionary* offers a concise, effective definition of the word:

1985–

Diversity of plant and animal life, esp. as represented by the number of extant species.

“Biodiversity, N.”. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, July 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4620593779>.

The same investigation that was conducted with “conservation” in association with *wilderness* and *wildness* was conducted for “biodiversity”. *Table 19* displays the shared hits of *wilderness* and “biodiversity”. All the hits concern nature: “wildlife”, “preserve”, “loss”, “forest”, “world”, “planet”.

Table 19. – “Wilderness” and “biodiversity”.

“wilderness/ biodiversity” and/or ...	<i>wilderness</i> hits	“biodiversity” hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	“biodiversity” typicality score
wildlife	7	28	5.7	7.7
verbs with “wilderness/ biodiversity” as object	<i>wilderness</i> hits	“biodiversity” hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	“biodiversity” typicality score
preserve	4	32	3.1	6.0
... of “wilderness/ biodiversity”	<i>wilderness</i> hits	“biodiversity” hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	“biodiversity” typicality score
loss	5	77	2.2	6.1
“wilderness/ biodiversity” of ...	<i>wilderness</i> hits	“biodiversity” hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	“biodiversity” typicality score
forest	6	4	5.5	4.9
possessors of “wilderness/ biodiversity”	<i>wilderness</i> hits	“biodiversity” hits	<i>wilderness</i> typicality score	“biodiversity” typicality score
world	15	16	2.8	2.9
planet	4	10	6.5	7.8

There are very few shared hits for *wildness* and “biodiversity” and these mainly refer to meanings attributable to nature: *wilderness*, “place” and “countryside” (*Tab. 20*).

The hits show that *wilderness* (and *wildness*) are rarely used in relation to “conservation” and “biodiversity” in the corpus, but that *wilderness*, “conservation” and “biodiversity” are always linked to nature issues in comparable contexts.

There is an evident lack of data to work with, despite the fact that the Covid 19 pandemic highlighted a close correlation between the concepts.

Note that the corpus includes two central years – 2020 and 2021 – with respect to the pandemic.

Table 20. – “Wildness” and “biodiversity”.

“wildness/ biodiversity” and/or ...	wildness hits	“biodiversity” hits	wildness typicality score	“biodiversity” typicality score
wilderness	3	2	7.0	5.4
“wildness/ biodiversity” of ...	wildness hits	“biodiversity” hits	wildness typicality score	“biodiversity” typicality score
place	2	4	2.0	3.0
countryside	3	7	5.3	6.5

3.5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This analysis illustrates the many occurrences of *wilderness* in the corpus as opposed to the few occurrences of *wildness*. *Wilderness* mostly maintains its literal meaning, compared to a broader meaning attributable to *wildness* that is connected with qualities that can be completely dissociated from nature. In this sense, *wildness* is clearly moving toward a figurative/metaphorical meaning.

The chronological evolution doesn’t express relevant growth in the number of occurrences of the keywords, although there is a concentration of them in British newspapers. Some newspapers (mainly British and American) deserve further analysis, since they seem to focus on environmental discourse about what remains of wild land.

As for the definition of the terms, *wilderness* is mostly associated with extreme natural environments, in particularly cold or hot ones, i.e. inhospitable environments that are difficult for humans to inhabit permanently. However, some expressions stand out, offering new interpretive perspectives. For example: “*wilderness* as rehab” and “*wilderness* therapy”, which may be functional for setting up valuable *wilderness* discourses.

It goes without saying that the words are ambivalent, conveying multiple and contrasting meanings, a feature that is best exemplified in analysis of the synonyms. Synonyms of *wildness* in the corpus include “craziness” and “tranquillity”, “hubris” and “spontaneity”. Synonyms of *wilderness* are: “forest” and “desert”; “ocean” and “bush”, i.e. words that highlight a specific feature of the word. At a linguistic level, these words

operate somehow as the metonymy, a figure of speech in which a thing or concept is referred to by the name of something closely associated with that thing or concept in a specific context. Unlike metaphor, which draws a comparison between two unrelated things, metonymy involves a direct association based on contiguity or a relevant connection. This rhetorical device is used to create more vivid, concise and effective communication. Its meaning is usually clear within the given context, leveraging the shared knowledge of the speaker and listener. It can convey complex ideas succinctly by substituting a whole concept with a related term (Radden and Kövecses 2015, 17-59). Metonymy is a powerful linguistic tool that enhances communication by using associative relationships to convey meaning efficiently. Understanding, for instance, how “forest” or “desert” work in a metonymical way to express the concept of *wilderness* allows for deeper insight into how language reflects cognitive processes and cultural knowledge.

The valuable association of the concepts of “biodiversity” and “conservation” with “natural” *wilderness*/(*wildness*) has not yet been consciously assimilated by major English-language newspapers, as they are rarely combined in the corpus.

There is room for a final comment concerning the potential of using the word *wilderness* with its literal meaning for future research in the field of ecolinguistics. The very high frequency of *wilderness* hits in the corpus, often associated with environmental issues, encourage continued research on the lemma, which seems especially stimulating with respect to these issues. Second, the varieties of meanings *wilderness* can take help enrich the environmental discourse. For example, to say that *wilderness* can be either a “paradise” or a “darkness”, can raise feelings of veneration, but also of fear. Natural *wilderness* is gorgeous and terrible. Human beings must be careful and keep their distance, not invade a place that might prove fatal. Moreover, the fact that “forests”, “oceans”, “deserts”, etc. can all be defined as *wilderness* broadens the contexts within which the word can be used and analysed.

4.

An ecolinguistic narrative and discursive practice analysis of the sub corpus from *The Guardian* (2022-2024)

The analysis on Sketch Engine showed that over time *The Guardian*¹ has used the keywords consistently, with a much higher frequency of

¹ The newspaper has a rich history that spans over two centuries: it was founded in Manchester, England, in 1821 as *The Manchester Guardian* by John Edward Taylor, a cotton merchant and liberal thinker, in response to the Peterloo Massacre and aimed at promoting liberal reform principles. It gained prominence for its advocacy of various social and political causes, including the abolition of slavery, workers' rights, and electoral reform. It then was known for its independent editorial stance and commitment to liberal values. In 1964, *The Guardian* moved its headquarters from Manchester to London, where it became a national newspaper with a broader readership. It dropped *Manchester* from its name and became known simply as *The Guardian*. Over the years, the newspaper expanded its coverage and introduced innovative journalism practices. For instance, it launched *The Observer*, a Sunday newspaper, in 1791. It also embraced digital journalism early on and was one of the first newspapers to open a website in 1996. In the 21st century, *The Guardian* continued to evolve as a leading voice in global journalism. It gained international recognition for its investigative reporting, multimedia storytelling, and commitment to progressive values. It expanded its online presence and launched digital editions in various countries. Like many traditional newspapers, it faced financial challenges in the digital age. It implemented cost-saving measures and restructuring efforts to secure its financial sustainability while maintaining its journalistic integrity. Throughout its history, *The Guardian* has remained committed to its founding principles of promoting liberal values, advocating for social justice, and providing trustworthy journalism to its readers. It is owned by The Scott Trust Limited, a British company that was originally created in 1936 to safeguard the journalistic integrity and independence of the newspaper. The Scott Trust was established following the death of C.P. Scott, a former editor of *The Guardian*, who bequeathed the newspaper to the trust. The Scott Trust's primary purpose is to ensure the financial and editorial independence of *The Guardian* and its sister publication, *The Observer*. The trust is responsible for appointing the editor of *The Guardian* and overseeing its long-term strategic direction. One of the key principles of The Scott Trust is its commitment to maintaining editorial independence and journalistic integrity. While *The Guardian* is owned by The Scott Trust, it operates as a separate entity with its own editorial staff,

wilderness in its literal meaning. This might have happened because *The Guardian* is a liberal, progressive newspaper that has consistently supported centre-left politics, either reflected by the Labour Party or the Liberal Democrats. The positions published here are consistent with left-wing ideologies that traditionally support environmental causes and deal with nature issues. In *Figure 13* a look at how the British view their newspapers.

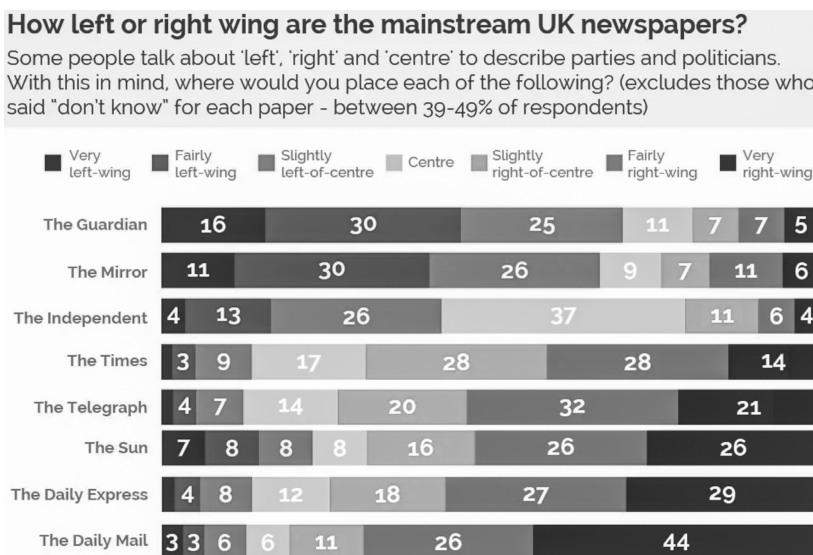


Figure 13. – How left- or right-wing are mainstream UK newspapers? 20-22 February 2017 (source: “YouGov”, <https://yougov.com>).

The data in the survey shows that *The Guardian* is seen as Britain’s most left-wing newspaper, closely followed by *The Mirror*. While Britons were equally likely to see both publications as slightly left-of-centre or fairly left-wing, a slightly higher number of Britons considered *The Guardian* “very left-wing” (16% compared to 11% for *The Mirror*). *The Guardian* does not overtly declare this political alignment. Its website claims that the newspaper has no political affiliation, stating: “Our independent ownership structure means we are entirely free from political and commercial influence. Only our *values* determine the stories we choose to

management team, and journalistic mission. The newspaper generates revenue through advertising, subscriptions, and other sources, which helps fund its operations and journalism (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Guardian-British-newspaper>).

cover – relentlessly and courageously” (<https://www.theguardian.com/about>). The set of values is detailed, and no reference is made to any ideology as inspiration:

Our values and behaviours provide the basis of how we work together, how we communicate and what we should expect from each other.

- We foster a supportive and open culture
 - We are curious and innovative, prepared to fail and willing to learn
 - We embrace diversity, champion inclusivity and **treat everyone with respect**
 - We strive for excellence to pursue the best interests of our audience and our colleagues
 - We stand up for what we believe is right, not what is easy
- (“The Guardian: Our values”, <https://workforus.theguardian.com/our-values>)

The mission statement further clarifies the newspaper’s conceptual position: “The Guardian Media Group is a global news organisation that delivers fearless, investigative journalism – giving a voice to the powerless and holding power to account” (<https://www.theguardian.com/about>). Words like “nature” or “environment” are not mentioned, however there are clues an interest in and commitment to this direction. For example, it specifies that *The Guardian* “treat[s] everyone with respect” and that it gives a “voice to the powerless”. In both cases one can imagine that these statements refer – among others – to nature as an entity that must be respected and given a voice.

The Guardian has long been recognized for its dedication to covering environmental issues in-depth (Robbins 2024). The newspaper contains sections dedicated to the climate crisis (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-crisis>), environment (<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/environment>), wildlife (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/wildlife>), energy (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/energy>), and pollution (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/pollution>). Its investigative reporting often tries to uncover environmental abuses, corporate malpractice, and government failures in environmental stewardship. The newspaper publishes opinion pieces and editorials advocating sustainable practices, environmental regulations and international cooperation on climate change. It covers innovations and solutions to environmental challenges, such as renewable energy technologies, sustainable agriculture practices, and green urban planning. It highlights grassroots movements, community-led initiatives, and local solutions to environmental problems.

Moreover, *The Guardian* provides global coverage of environmental issues, recognizing their interconnectedness across borders and continents,

and it emphasizes the impact of environmental degradation and climate change on vulnerable communities, particularly in the southern hemisphere.

Concerning the concepts of *wilderness* and *wildness*, discussion can vary. *The Guardian* frequently covers stories related to the conservation of *wilderness* areas, including efforts to establish or expand protected areas, combat illegal logging and poaching, and mitigate the impacts of climate change. But the interpretation for *wildness*, on the other hand, is broader and mainly related to the word’s figurative meaning.

These premises make it clear that the “stories” *The Guardian* publishes are ideologically characterized. Therefore, the socio-political-cultural context of reference of the selected articles will not be searched and evaluated (but only confirmed), because it is already common knowledge and inevitably biased.

What can an ecolinguistics scholar do in such a situation, when she/he has to examine ideologically framed narratives? This is a core question.

I would respond that an ecolinguist can identify and critically evaluate the environmental discourses (as in *Critical Discourse Analysis*, Fairclough 1995). Otherwise, as Stibbe suggests, she/he can judge the text according to her/his personal convictions – “ecosophy” – enlightening “beneficial discourses” and criticising “destructive discourses” (Stibbe 2015, 13-15, 30, 24).

This analysis will not focus on discussing and investigating the ideological framework, but will study those linguistic elements (structure and discourse) that are used to convey environmental issues in the narratives. To accomplish this I will utilise tools offered by Labov and Waletzky’s narrative analysis (1967), as well as discourse analysis (as intended in chapter 4).

For this specific work, the linguistic structures and discourses being studied are those that feature *wilderness/wildness* representations.

4.1. RANGE OF ARTICLES IN “THE GUARDIAN”

The Guardian publishes a diverse range of articles that cover various topics, reflecting its commitment to providing news, analysis and opinion.

A list of the most frequent:

- *News articles*: timely reporting on current events as they unfold.
- *Investigative journalism*: in-depth investigations into issues of public interest, often uncovering new information or exposing wrongdoing.
- *Feature stories*: narrative-driven pieces that explore a particular topic or issue in depth, offering context and analysis.

- *Opinion and analysis*: opinion pieces written by external contributors, offering diverse perspectives on current events, politics and culture.
- *Commentary*: analysis and commentary from *The Guardian* journalists and columnists, providing insights and interpretation of news developments.
- *Editorials*: official opinions of *The Guardian*’s editorial board on significant issues, often reflecting the newspaper’s editorial stance.
- *Arts reviews*: critiques of books, films, music, theatre, and other cultural works.
- *Restaurant and food reviews*: evaluations of restaurants, food trends, and culinary experiences.
- *Tech and product reviews*: assessments of gadgets, software, and consumer products.
- *Lifestyle articles*: articles covering health, fitness, nutrition, and mental well-being. Destination guides, travel tips, and features on global adventures. Coverage of fashion trends, designer profiles, and style advice.
- *Opinionated journalism*: long reads, lengthy articles that delve deep into complex topics, offering nuanced perspectives and analysis. Think pieces: thought-provoking articles that challenge conventional wisdom or explore unconventional ideas. Personal essays: first-person narratives that offer personal reflections or experiences related to broader societal issues.
- *Specialized content*: data journalism, articles that utilize data analysis and visualization to explore trends and patterns in society. Interactive features: multimedia content such as quizzes, interactive maps, and timelines. Podcasts and video content: audio and video content produced by *The Guardian*, including interviews, documentaries, and panel discussions.

4.2. ANALYSIS OF THE ARTICLES

Before attempting a qualitative analysis of a selection of articles from *The Guardian*, some quantitative data on the presence of the terms *wildness* and *wilderness* are provided.

This data starts from the year 2000 in order to show that there has been an ongoing growth trend in the occurrences of both words. There was also a relatively significant slowdown during the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-21, *Figs. 14* and *15*). This seemed like a reasonable starting point for the research that follows.

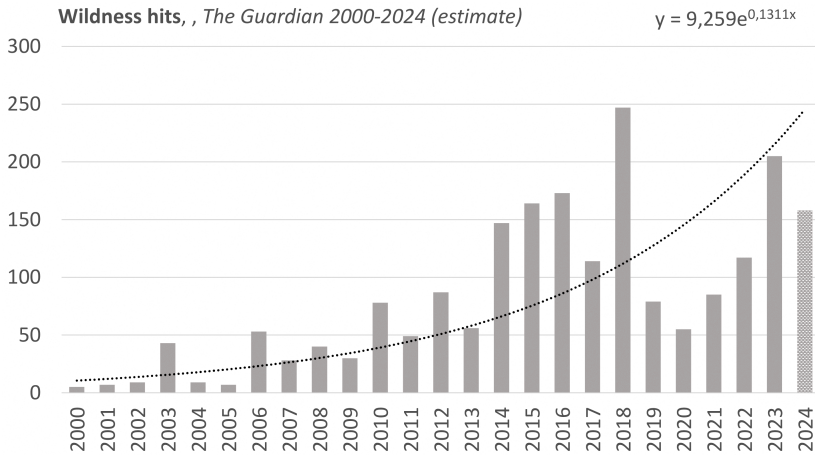


Figure 14. - “Wildness” hits.

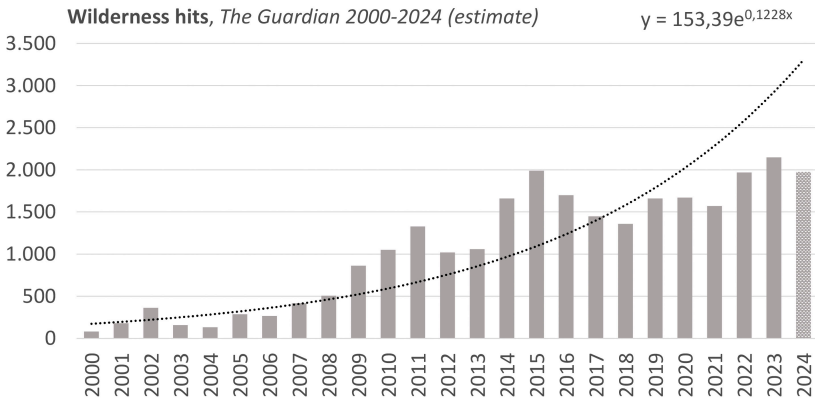


Figure 15. - “Wilderness” hits.

The qualitative investigation examines ten articles with *wildness* hits and thirty articles with *wilderness* hits (a list of the articles can be found at the end of this section), published in the years 2022, 2023 and 2024 (up to May).

The selection was based on the relevance of the articles in the reference context and the several different points of view and levels of understanding of the two terms, while maintaining a proportionality with respect to the term *wilderness*, which is much more frequent in *The Guardian* articles (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/pollution>).

The first step was to collect general data about the articles. The second step took inspiration mainly from the concept of “evaluation” elaborated by Labov and Waletzky (1967), who describe it as: “necessary for the narrator to delineate the structure of the narrative by emphasizing the point where the complication has reached a maximum: the break between the complication and the result. Most narratives contain an evaluation section that carries out this function” (30). Evaluation refers to elements within a narrative that convey the author’s attitudes, emotions and judgments about the events being told, and serves to highlight the significance of the story, indicating why it is worth telling and what it means to the narrator or the audience. Moreover, in Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) reasoning, evaluation helps provide insight into the writer’s perspective – interpretation and emotional stance regarding the events of the narrative – and can emphasize the moral or lesson of the story. This is crucial because it helps transform a mere recounting of events into a meaningful and engaging tale.

The last part of the analysis reports on the discursive use, or actual meaning in discourse, given to the words *wilderness* and *wildness* in the articles. It also focuses on significant phrases/expressions that include and/or are associated with the two keywords.

The following elements will be examined:

1. Editorial features analysis

- Year: to check if more attention was paid to the topic during a particular period.
- Author: to check if there are authors who frequently write about the topic.
- Section (Lifestyle, Travel, News, etc.) to check if there the topic is discussed more frequently in any particular section.

2. Structure and language analysis

- Occurrences of *wilderness* and *wildness*: how often the words *wilderness* and *wildness* appear in the article.
- Narrative modes: first-person narration, third-person narration, direct speech, etc.
- Evaluation: it establishes the point of the narrative.

3. Discursive use

- Definition and connotation / actual meaning in discourse of *wilderness* and *wildness*.
- New/interesting expressions that include *wilderness* and *wildness*.

4.3. EDITORIAL FEATURES ANALYSIS

The first data analysed concerned different individual authors of articles. Recurrent writers could have directed future research, but this was not the case. As for sections, in the ten articles with hits of the lemma *wildness*, the word occurs mainly in the Culture section (4), followed by Lifestyle (3), News (2), and Opinion (1). This can be justified by the fact that *wildness* is commonly associated with a quality that can be cultural, for example an artistic, psychological or spiritual one.

As for *wilderness*, the articles are divided as follows: 17 in News, 6 in Lifestyle, 6 in Culture, and 1 in Opinion. The prevalence of *wilderness* hits in the News section is explained by the fact that the term is often associated with current events. In the Lifestyle section, the word mainly refers to travel and fun outdoor activities. In the Culture section, the articles generally describe cultural events.

4.4. STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

This section is introduced by data on the occurrences of the two keywords. *Wildness* figures in 4 articles dated 2022, 5 dated 2023, and 1 dated 2024, but only the first five months of the year were analysed. There were 63 *wilderness* occurrences in 2022, 41 in 2023, and 7 in 2024 (through the end of May). Despite the higher number of articles (30), the hits are proportionally much higher than those for *wildness* (10).

Moving to an analysis of the narrative mode, most articles are written in the first-person singular or, less commonly, in the first-person plural or third-person singular, mainly in reviews and news stories. The following example is featured by the use of the first-person singular, and comes from the article "Spring in the countryside is a wonder – but it is tinged with sadness" (20 March 2022), in which Emma Beddington talks about her life in a provincial centre in the UK. The "I" mode is particularly effective for recounting her life in the *wildness*, which she learns to appreciate and emotionally enrich with meaning after a lifetime spent living in the city:

Now, though, **I'm** perennially astonished and delighted by the evolving spectacle **a little bit of wildness offers. I'm happy, I suppose. I didn't imagine happiness could be so easy and so close:** a furred magnolia bud and a song at dusk between the MOT garage and the Spar. **I** hope it's OK to say that. It's hard to know what to do with **happiness** at the moment, when spring is unfurling east of here, too – flowers blooming, lambs being

born – and two million people are missing their bulbs coming up, or the tree they like down the street blossoming. When it's the backdrop to outrageous suffering. But **I** don't believe **happiness** makes you indifferent. It makes you aware of what it might be to lose a home, birdsong, the simple animal joy of being alive. (Article 1)

Note that in this quote, the word “happiness” is repeatedly associated with *wildness*, enhancing the positiveness of the experience and the use of the term in its literary sense, giving the narrative a nostalgic mood.

In the next quote, from the article “I've made secret discoveries on my doorstep: a year-long journey across my local OS map”, by Alastair Humphreys (17 January 2024), the narrator is struck by a revelation, realizing how close his home is to *wildness*, and use of the first-person singular highlights its beneficial value. This experience is described metaphorically as a “fascinating journey”:

I spent a year searching for *wildness* closer to home than ever before – and **it was a fascinating journey**. (Article 4)

In this instance, the figurative meaning of *wildness* characterizes the interview article “I've made secret discoveries on my doorstep: a year-long journey across my local OS map”, in which Alastair Humphreys (17 January 2024) reports a conversation with writer Cookie Mueller on the newly reissued collection of her stories, *Walking through Clear Water in a Pool Painted Black*. The importance of the practice of feeling wild is expressed in both the first-person singular and in direct speech form:

I'm not wild. **I happen to stumble on to *wildness***. It gets in my path. It's not just the stories that are exciting, it's the revelation they contain – that we might allow such ***wildness to stumble on to our own paths***, even just for an afternoon. (Article 7)

Note the way the words “stumble” and *wildness* are repeated, emphasizing the story's core message.

Concerning analysis of narrative modes with hits of the *wilderness* lemma, a significant example can be found in the article entitled “A moment that changed me: I had a heart attack at 37 – so I went to live in a cave” (25 October 2023). In this piece, author Donny Dust talks about his decision to move to the *wilderness* to recover after an illness. The story is told in the first-person, which makes it very engaging. Dust writes:

[...] **I** wanted to **heal** and thought the **Colorado *wilderness* was the best place** to do it.

[...] **I**'d been in the Marine Corps until 2011, then I became a ***wilderness and survival skills guide***.

[...] I spent around six months alternating between a conventional life and living in the **Colorado wilderness**. (Article 22)

Another example with *wilderness* hits featured by the use of first-person singular can be found in the news article "I survived a *wilderness* camp: 'It's not necessary to break a person's will'", by Ciara Fanlo (15 November 2022), who describes her stay in a *wilderness* therapy centre in Colorado at the age of 17, after years of alarming behaviour that scared her parents: truancy, self-harm and several suicide attempts. The narrative mode helps to make the narrative more credible and moving. The protagonist of the story reveals:

[...] After a week, I began to understand more about the **philosophy of wilderness therapy**: the **challenges of living in nature** were leading us to develop responsibility, adaptability and character.

[...] And the practice is ancient, many cultures sent young people into the **wilderness as a rite of passage towards adulthood**.

[...] Of the people I met in *wilderness*, I know of three who died from suicide and overdose.

[...] Occasionally, I tell people about my time in the *wilderness* – the months in the woods with only two sets of clothes and the boarding school that prescribed sleep deprivation and peer humiliation as therapy. (Article 40)

The next step of this structural narrative analysis is identification of narrative point-of-view in the articles via "evaluation" (Labov and Waletzky 1967), where the storyteller communicates the significance, or meaning of the story. This can involve expressing emotions, opinions, or attitudes that highlight why the story is worth telling. Evaluation provides the listener with insights into why the events are interesting, important, or meaningful to the speaker. Searching the texts for sentences – "multicoordinate clauses or groups of free or restricted clauses" (Labov and Waletzky 1967, 30) – that focus on the main issue enables to appropriately "evaluate" the article. Labov and Waletzky (1967) state that: "the fundamental definition of evaluation must be semantic, although its implications are structural" (32). Moreover, the two scholars differentiate: "semantically defined [...] formally defined [...] culturally defined evaluation[s] [...] judgment of a third person [evaluations]" (32-33) which can involve quite diverse findings.

The following examples of evaluations that include the words *wilderness* and *wildness* are aimed at verifying the role the two words assume to define the main message of the text.

The first five examples fall within a semantically-defined evaluation that is featured by a direct statement. The article "Keeping it wild: how

mules help preserve the last untamed places in the US”, by Jessica Reed (17 August 2022), tells the story of how mules were introduced as travel animals in the Bob Marshall *wilderness*, in Montana, thanks to the 1964 *Wilderness* Act which prohibited road construction or entrance by any geared vehicle. The core of the story provides a clear statement that enhances the way how, in this case, the environmental protection acts like a vaccine:

Preserving the west’s packing heritage, then, acts as a vaccine protecting the *wilderness*, with traditional skills as gatekeeper against modern forces (helicopters, heavy machinery) that knock the door open for more destruction. (Article 13)

In the next selection, Jack Seale reviews the TV series “*Wilderness* with Simon Reeve – a majestic journey into a natural wonderland” (21 January 2024), describing exotic wildlife, awe-inspiring landscapes in the Congo Basin, but also the terrifying rise of deforestation. This powerful tale marks the importance of conservation, and the point of story is condensed in a compelling statement made by Reeves’s guide, ranger/conservationist Adams Cassinga:

“Beauty and wonder still exists,” he says. “I’m in awe of this *wilderness* and the life it still contains. This is one of the last great strongholds for wild nature on planet Earth.” (Article 25)

The following article by Dan Collyns – “Javari Valley: the lawless primal *wilderness* where Dom Phillips went missing” (9 June 2022), reports on the largest refuge for Indigenous tribes in Amazonia – defined as *wilderness*. The refuge is also a hotspot for poachers and illegal loggers, and a major smuggling route for cocaine traffickers. The message of the narrative is expressed by Scott Wallace, author of *The Unconquered: In Search of the Amazon’s Last Uncontacted Tribes*, when he asserts:

The Javari is one of the last true bastions of primal *wilderness* in the Amazon – and in the world. (Article 27)

Moreover, the quote establishes an important point with respect to last natural *wilderness* on earth, namely its physical location in Amazonia.

Next article entitled “Conditions ‘not survivable’ in Tasmanian *wilderness* where Belgian tourist Celine Cremer is missing, police say” is a news by Australian Associated Press (29 June 2023): the point of the narrative is in a Police statement which describes extreme “not survivable” conditions in north-west Tasmania:

Tasmania police Inspector Anthea Maingay said: “Unfortunately, we have received expert medical advice that indicates the recent conditions are **not**

survivable for the length of time that Celine is thought to have been exposed in the *wilderness*". (Article 30)

In the next example we find one of the few cases in which *wilderness* takes on a metaphorical meaning. In the political commentary titled "We were a voice in the *wilderness*": the groups fighting to keep Trump off the ballot" (7 February 2024), Rachel Leingang explains how Nonprofits and individuals have challenged Trump's eligibility, citing the constitution's 14th amendment. They define themselves as a "voice in the *wilderness*", where *wilderness* stands for the mass of people who don't embrace their cause. Ben Clements, the board chair and senior legal adviser to Free Speech For People, states:

"Back in the middle of 2021, we were kind of a voice in the *wilderness*", said Ben Clements... "There wasn't a lot of support for this view, and that's obviously changed a lot". (Article 34)

The second sub-category of evaluation proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1967) is a formally defined approach that uses coordinate clauses to associate ideas of similar importance in discourse, in order to get to the point of the story.

The first example from the selection is taken from the article "The nature cure: how time outdoors transforms our memory, imagination and logic", by Sam Pyrah (27 November 2023). The author reports on new studies in the field of environmental neuroscience that purport to show that our brains cease to work well when they're denied engagement with natural environments. The scholars theorize that exposure to nature isn't a luxury, but a necessity. The point of the narrative is captured in three coordinated sentences in a quote from James Gilbert, an ecologist from Northamptonshire, during an interview in which he provides his opinion on the theory:

These touches of *wildness* freshen my **mind**, broaden my **perspective** and lift my **spirits**. (Article 10)

Formally defined evaluation can be also characterized by the use of repetition, which emphasizes the strength of the message. A news article by Nate Schweber entitled "Public lands are Americans' birthright. It's our duty to defend them against new landgrabs" (5 July 2022), describes how one couple helped save vast areas of *wilderness* in the 1940s and provided a map for protecting them today. This has all the hallmarks of a formally defined evaluation, with repetition of the verb "talking" as a way to highlight the interconnection of *wilderness* as "public land" and democracy:

He was **talking** about *wilderness*, but he could be **talking** now about its heir, democracy. (Article 12)

In the following article “Rail route of the month: rewilding, polders and Hanseatic beauty by train in the Netherlands”, by Nicky Gardner (19 December 2023), repetition of expletive constructions “there are / there is” underlines the many treasures that are likely to be encountered on a rail journey through the Netherlands. This experience culminates in the discovery of a vast, unexpected *wilderness*:

There are wistfully beautiful water meadows with long lines of poplars marching to the horizon. **There are** shining new communities such as Dronten and Lelystad, both founded in the 1960s, the latter of course named after Cornelis Lely. And **there is** also a real dash of *wilderness*, an all-too-rare commodity in the Netherlands, for some of these lands newly claimed from the sea are not yet entirely tamed. (Article 24)

The last example comes from a review by Lucy Mangan of the TV series “Wilderness” (“Jenna Coleman craves murder in a fun, fun, fun revenge thriller”, 15 September 2023), a six-episode adaptation of BE Jones’s thriller of the same name in which newlyweds Liv and Will Taylor do not get to revel in marital bliss for long. Liv discovers that Will has been cheating on her with a woman called Cara on the regular. After the initial shock, Will organises an epic trip through US national parks that Liv has always wanted to take. Once there, his wife resolves to her husband off the edge of the Grand Canyon. The point of the narrative is conveyed through the repetition of the word “fun”. The author of the review believes the actors, the story and the natural wild set are fun and generate fun in its viewers:

[...] *wilderness* is **fun**. [...] It’s not going to change the world. And that’s OK. **Fun** is fine. **Fun** is rare. **Fun** is more than enough. (Article 36)

The third form of evaluation is a cultural definition determined through third-person judgment. Here below are two examples that reference an external source to reinforce the narrative’s message. The first cites an academic paper – Yirga *et al.* 2021 – to underline the pressure that lions are living under in Ethiopia, locked in a patch of *wilderness* and threatened by increasingly rapid human population expansion:

There are about 1,100 lions clinging on in Ethiopia’s last remaining pockets of *wilderness*, according to a study published in 2021. (Article 20)

The second example is from the feature story “Space to grow: *wilderness* therapy could help abuse survivors” (20 May 2022), in which Helena

Horton uses of the results of a pilot study conducted by scientists from the University of Essex (working together with the Wilderness Foundation, a charity that offers outdoor therapy programmes), as proof that treatment in the natural world can be more effective than traditional methods:

Wilderness therapy and access to green space may help domestic abuse survivors heal while improving therapy outcomes, **a study has found.** (Article 38)

These examples encourage some considerations. Although evaluation is – according to Labov and Waletzky 1967 – based on content, it also needs structural elements to serve its ultimate goal. In the examples from *The Guardian*, the words *wilderness* and *wildness*, when included in the section, are enhanced by its structure. This means that structure can be as crucial as content to frame the point of a narrative, and that it could be strategic to concentrate environmentally-relevant content in an evaluation in order to strengthen and emphasize the story's message.

4.5. DISCURSIVE USE

The last part of this analysis aims to verify the actual meaning the terms of the selections take on in discourse. As for *wildness*, the word is largely associated with a quality that evoke intense emotions and atmospheres, as unveiled in the first quote from the article “Solitude and awful *wildness*: why you should visit Castlerigg stone circle”, by Killian Fox (25 June 2022), on a visit to one of the UKs earliest monuments in Keswick, in the Lake District, Cumbria:

There is, perhaps, not a single object in the scene that interrupts the **solemn tone of feeling** impressed by its general character of **profound solitude, greatness, and awful *wildness.*** (Article 2)

In the next example, taken from the opinion article “The American bully XL furore is a stark reminder of the uneasy bond between dogs and humans” (14 September 2023), Emma Brockes recounts a savage attack on an 11-year-old girl in Birmingham, highlighting a potential for *wildness* that dog owners are often keen to deny. *Wildness*, in this case, acquires ambivalent connotations: it is “horrifying”, but also “fascinating”.

Still, our perception of dog attacks as an unnatural breach overlooks the latent potential for *wildness*, and is what makes dog attacks so **horrifying and enduringly fascinating.** (Article 5)

The *wildness* of the Western US features in the article “Wolverines are the ‘embodiment of wilderness’. Can they make a US comeback?”, by Christine Peterson (7 July 2023), which deals with the ongoing debate surrounding wolverine recovery in a country from which the animal has all but disappeared. Here *wildness* works as a synonym of *wilderness*, which appears right in the title:

These are hopeful signs for a creature [**wolverine**] that, despite a century of challenges, remains a **symbol of *wildness* in the American west**. (Article 18)

At a linguistic level, the words “deer” and “wolverine” work as metonymies (see chapter 3), and represent a direct association based on contiguity to the word *wildness*, creating a lively and concise communicative effect (Radden and Kövecses 2015, 17-59).

In other *wildness*-themed stories, the term exhibits a more elaborated metaphorical meaning, defining a quality of human beings, of animals, of an atmosphere, or even a characteristic of politics. For example, in the article “Evangelion: 3.0+1.01 Thrice Upon a Time review – surreal visual brilliance”, by Phil Hoad (3 October 2023), the expression “artificial *wildness*” refers to a non-natural situation that creates discomfort in those who experience it:

Luckily the film displays a surreal visual brilliance, augmenting the painterly romanticism of the original series into a **gyroscopic *wildness* worthy of the digital age**. (Article 9)

A *wildness* of mind features in the review by Imogen Carter (1 May 2022) on selected *Picture books for children*. In discussing *Monkey Bedtime*, Carter gives a kindly lesson in understanding emotions, using *wildness* to define a mood the kids can experience at night:

An amusingly literal portrayal of the ***wildness* that so often overcomes children at the end of the day**, *Monkey Bedtime* demands to be read aloud. (Article 6)

Moving to *wilderness*, occurrences generally link the term to its original meaning. The word is frequently associated with nature discourses, as in the following example taken from the news article “Public lands are Americans’ birthright. It’s our duty to defend them against new landgrabs”, by Nate Schweber (5 July 2022). The author addresses the importance of taking care of and protecting wild “public lands” in the US, considered a treasure chest of the country’s values. He associates public land discourse with that surrounding *wilderness*:

The January 6 committee showed just how close that big lie came to violently destroying the American experiment, that imperfect but still precious thing whose **egalitarian ideals grew out of the American wilderness**. (Article 12)

A similar position can be found in the following example, from the article "Keeping it wild: how mules help preserve the last untamed places in the US", by Jessica Reed (17 August 2022). Once again, the setting is America and *wilderness* is associated with "freedom", one of that country's foundational values:

I'm going to make one request: just wheel me up to the edge of the **wilderness** so I can look in one more time to **a place and a time where I found true freedom**. (Article 13)

The *wilderness* discourse is again given a positive connotation in the next quote (from a travel feature on slow rail travel through historic Dutch towns and vast unexpected *wilderness* entitled "Rail route of the month: rewilding, polders and Hanseatic beauty by train in the Netherlands", by Nicky Gardner, 19 December 2023). The core of this example deals with physical places: *wilderness* is featured by "water meadows and young woodland", highlighting their intrinsic pleasantness:

Within the compass of just an hour or two, I slipped from modern, urban Europe into a **wilderness of water meadows and young woodland**. It's a place for buzzards and barnacle geese, reed bunting and sedge warbler. (Article 24)

In the next selection, however, the *wilderness* discourse is ambivalent. The piece is a review of the program "*Wilderness* with Simon Reeve review – a majestic journey into a natural wonderland", by Jack Seale (21 January 2024). Here *wilderness* is at once "hard", wonderful and precious:

His hack through the unforgiving rainforest fulfils the brief: this **wilderness is hard** to be in, but the rewards for his trek are **things worth seeing and things worth saving**. (Article 25)

Differently, *wilderness* is the site of serious or fatal accidents in a review article of the reality series "Alone", where contestants have to deal with terrifying concerns ("Alone: the amazingly dangerous survival show where you might get eaten by a bear", by Rebecca Nicholson, 5 August 2023). In a quote taken from the review, *wilderness* is defined as "inhospitable":

Here, 11 people who have an interest in the great outdoors or want to push themselves out of their everyday routines – though the sensible among us

may argue that a pottery course would be a happy medium – agree to be dropped miles apart in an **inhospitable wilderness**. (Article 31)

In at least a few cases, the *wilderness* discourse is linked with key environmental issues, such as the “climate crisis”, and the “preservation of ocean/s”. In the article “Americans learn skills to survive the climate crisis – in a *wilderness* course”, by Oliver Milman (15 September 2022), the author argues that societal breakdown has not arrived, but the contours of such a collapse aren’t too hard to imagine, and therefore it is worth participating in a *wilderness* survival camp. With reference to the current climate crisis we are experiencing, he states:

Four days before the **wilderness course**, a torrential downpour in Jackson, Mississippi, left 150,000 people without safe drinking water, a situation brought about by inadequate infrastructure in an age in which floods, **fire and extreme heat are pressing relentlessly upon weak points and systemic neglect**. (Article 14)

In the next example, we find use of the word “ocean” connected with the meaning of *wilderness*, giving it a more emphatic and redundant value in the expression “Earth’s last great *wilderness*”:

It is time to move on from this language and this mindset. What if we could look at the remains of **Earth’s last great wilderness** and have some humility in how we approach it? (Article 26)

Wilderness as an abstract quality, conveying a figurative meaning, is associated with politics and deviant human psychology, with few and isolated occurrences. For instance, in the news “‘We were a voice in the *wilderness*’: the groups fighting to keep Trump off the ballot”, by Rachel Leingang (7 February 2024), the expression “voice in the *wilderness*” refers to a group fighting against Donald Trump’s participation in the 2021 election. In this case, *wilderness* means “the majority of Americans” and has a negative connotation. In the next article entitled “After years in *wilderness*, Kevin Spacey will now seek to rebuild career”, by Emine Sinmaz (26 July 2023), *wilderness* is a negative quality of a period of Kevin Spacey’s life:

The actor, who carved out a niche as Hollywood’s favourite sinister villain, **has spent years in the wilderness** since abuse allegations first surfaced amid the growing #MeToo movement. (Article 35)

In a selection from the review “The *Accidental Ecosystem*: behind the rise of urban wildlife in US cities”, by Veronica Esposito (19 July 2022), the concept of “accidental ecosystem” is introduced and associated with natu-

ral *wilderness* and contrasts with the idea of secondary nature as defined in chapter one. In secondary nature human activities directly modify wild nature. In the Accidental Ecosystem, instead, wild animals enter urban areas and push human beings to "wildize" them. The expression is taken from the title of a book by Peter Alagona that examines the critical coexistence of wild animals with humans in urban centres, fostering a mutual adaptation by both humans and non-humans becomes a solution to the problem:

As *The Accidental Ecosystem* explains, bears have made a comeback from the verge of extinction in no small part because they've thrived **in urban areas – a tract of land in an urban area can support 40 times as many bears as the same amount of space in the wilderness.**

[...] Unaccustomed to thinking of cities as spaces where wide varieties of animals coexist alongside us, we've mostly maintained the **old-fashioned idea that these creatures live strictly in the wilderness.**

[...] Part of that is coming to see that, while **cities may not look like our idea of pristine wilderness**, that doesn't mean they're not places of nature and natural processes that we now share with wild animals, like it or not. (Article 32)

On the other hand, words and phrases featuring the prefix "re-", for example "rewilding" present an alternative perspective to a forced coexistence, and present the idea of "restored" *wilderness* as a potential tool for the conservation of wild land. In the news article "Making tracks: how linking patches of *wilderness* is saving Borneo's wildlife" (18 July 2023), Jeremy Hance discusses how palm oil plantations have fragmented Sabah's rainforest, but land corridors let pygmy elephants and orangutans roam again. Land corridors are examples of "rewilding" that encourage other, similar actions:

Making tracks: **how linking patches of wilderness is saving Borneo's wildlife | Rewilding.**

[...] Rhino and Forest Fund (RFF) also began **restoring the land** by planting native trees and grasses, clearing invasive species and creating a small lake.

[...] "[In 2022], after working in the area for a full decade, we saw for the first time orangutan, proboscis monkey, red leaf monkey and Storm's stork [considered to be the rarest of all storks, with probably fewer than 500 left worldwide] **in our restoration site**", Risch says. (Article 19)

Other examples feature the expression "*wilderness* therapy", a phrase that appears quite frequently throughout the selection. In this case, *wilderness* is a pre-modifier used to better describe another noun, as well as to provide additional information or context about the noun it is changing.

Wilderness is recurrent as a premodifier in many phrases, for example: “wilderness retreat” (art. 11); “wilderness areas” (arts. 13, 18, 19), “wilderness Complex”, “wilderness Act”, “wilderness Foundation” (arts. 13, 38); “wilderness course” (art. 14); “wilderness Wood” (art. 17); “wilderness reserve”, “wilderness camp” (arts. 21, 39, 40); “wilderness guide” (art. 22); “wilderness adventures” (art. 23); “wilderness search-and-rescue team” (art. 28); “wilderness therapy” (arts. 38, 39, 40); “wilderness facilities”, “wilderness program” (arts. 38, 39); “wilderness therapy programs” (arts. 39, 40); “wilderness therapy industry”, “wilderness setting”, and “wilderness therapy field” (art. 39).

Still, “wilderness + therapy” is the most recurrent combination in the sub corpus, and it defines healing treatments that include life in the open air, often in extreme conditions. Exposure to *wilderness* would be extremely healthy and help restore physical and psychological balance. Evidence to support this claim, which currently underpins a million-dollar business active primarily in the Western US, remains ambiguous. Although some participants appear to benefit from such treatments, there are well-documented cases of death, abuse, and other potentially traumatic situations related to or caused by *wilderness* programs (Szalavitz 2006). The last three articles deal with this theme, confirming the contradictory connotation of a discourse centred on *wilderness* therapy.

In the first example, taken from the article “Space to grow: *wilderness* therapy could help abuse survivors” Helena Horton (20 May 2022), the author investigates the usefulness of outdoor therapy programmes, claiming that they can sometimes have beneficial effects:

Liz Johnson sent her son to **wilderness therapy**, and although the program did not ultimately save his life, she believes **wilderness therapy gave him a second chance at a full and productive life before his passing**. (Article 38)

In a feature from the News section of the newspaper, “The *wilderness* ‘therapy’ that teens say feels like abuse: ‘You are on guard at all times’”, by Nicolle Okoren (14 November 2022), the effectiveness of *wilderness* therapy as experienced by teenagers struggling with mental health problems comes under fire. There are pros and cons, and all variables must be considered before deciding to undertake a therapeutic journey that can be a “vacuum for healing”, but also “lead to death”:

But the night before she was supposed to be discharged, her parents told her they were sending her to a **wilderness therapy program that promised to temper her suicidal and violent tendencies**.
[...] **Wilderness therapy is supposed to be a vacuum for healing**.

[...] The article was so shocking that **the wilderness therapy industry leaders gathered together to find ways to prevent more deaths**, which is how the Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Research Center (OBHC), the third-party monitor specific to the *wilderness* therapy field, was created.

[...] **Wilderness therapy** can cost upwards of \$50,000 per stay – and because **there is not enough data to justify that the treatment is effective and that the cost is necessary for said treatment**, insurance companies sometimes reject claims.

[...] David is right – **it is often how a child arrives at wilderness therapy that will determine their outcome**. (Article 39)

The third article on *wilderness* therapy – “It’s not necessary to break a person’s will”, by Ciara Fanlo (15 November 2022) – addresses the many US teens who enter behavioural modification programs each year, showing that not all methods are helpful:

It was the beginning of 12 weeks in a **wilderness therapy program, without a tent, a shower, or a toilet**.

[...] Ours convinced my mom that sending me to a **wilderness program would help – with time in nature, I might regulate and heal**. (Article 40)

Discursive use analysis of the sub corpus enlightens both old and new uses of the two words, in particular *wilderness*, which is a lively and recurring word that showed an ongoing increase in hits during the three-year period taken into consideration, as well as increased engagement in environmentally-concerned questions.

4.6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

A qualitative analysis of the sub corpus showed how both *wilderness* and *wildness* are used to refer to wild nature. In particular, *wildness* maintains its use as a synonym of *wilderness*, but is used less often to express its literal meaning. Moreover *wilderness*, when used with its original meaning, has to do with dynamism and action and with environmental discourse, while *wildness* remains a more abstract concept.

Concerning structure, the use of the first-person singular and direct speech helps deliver personal experience in the stories, and makes them more emotionally engaging. Evaluation analysis assesses the role the two words play in expressing the narrative’s core message. Moreover, special emphasis is placed on the importance of the linguistic structure of the evaluation narrative’s clauses (featured by statements, repetitions, coordi-

nated sentences, external points of view), though initially these seemed to be overshadowed by their semantics. This approach could be useful for setting up future ecolinguistic analyses to study narrative texts: identifying the linguistic structure and discourses that are able to present and convey environmental discourses could be a strategic tool, one that is not biased by an ideological framework.

New discursive uses of *wilderness* and *wildness* are developing as a consequence of the multiple meanings the words can take. For example, the conviction that wild lands have all but disappeared is spreading. This means recreating what has been lost from a practical, but also a linguistic point of view. Words modified by the prefix “re-”, such as “rewilding”, are becoming very common. Human beings are discovering their need for words that express the necessity of maintaining wild land on earth, and to enhance the value of what has been lost.

4.7. THE “WILDNESS” AND “WILDERNESS” ARTICLES OF THE SUB CORPUS

4.7.1. “Wildness”

1

Nature *wildness*

Spring in the countryside is a wonder – but it is tinged with sadness | Emma Beddington | The Guardian

Spring in the countryside is a wonder – but it is tinged with sadness. By Emma Beddington, 20 March 2022

Section: News: Wildlife, in *The Observer*, Spring

2

Nature *wildness*

‘Solitude and awful *wildness*’: why you should visit Castlerigg stone circle | Culture | The Guardian

‘Solitude and awful *wildness*’: why you should visit Castlerigg stone circle. By Killian Fox, 25 June 2022

Section: Culture: Hidden stories

This article was amended on 28 June 2022, removing a reference that mistakenly dated the majority of stone circles in Britain to the bronze age.

3

Nature *wildness*

A deer: famous for their antlers but why not their tails? | Helen Sullivan | The Guardian

A deer: famous for their antlers but why not their tails? By Helen Sullivan, 10 July 2023

Section: News: Environment: Wildlife: The nature of [...] environment

4

Nature *wildness* close to home

I've made secret discoveries on my doorstep: a year-long journey across my local OS map | United Kingdom holidays | The Guardian

I've made secret discoveries on my doorstep: a year-long journey across my local OS map. By Alastair Humphreys, 17 January 2024

Section: Lifestyle: Travel: UK: United Kingdom holidays

5

Animal *wildness* danger

The American bully XL furore is a stark reminder of the uneasy bond between dogs and humans | Emma Brockes | The Guardian

The American bully XL furore is a stark reminder of the uneasy bond between dogs and humans. By Emma Brockes, 14 September 2023

Section: Opinion: Dangerous dogs

6

Psychological *wildness*

Picture books for children – reviews | Picture books | The Guardian

Picture books for children – reviews. By Imogen Carter, 1 May 2022

Section: Culture: Books: Children's book reviews round-up: Picture books

7

Psychological *wildness*

Does life feel too predictable? Why not let some *wildness* in | Books | The Guardian

Does life feel too predictable? Why not let some *wildness* in? By Eva Wiseman, 26 June 2022

Section: Lifestyle: The Eva Wiseman column books: Eva Wiseman

8

Psychological political *wildness*

Naomi Klein investigates 'conspiracy theory culture' that has shaken her life | Books | The Guardian

Naomi Klein investigates 'conspiracy theory culture' that has shaken her life. By Sarah Shaffi, 17 May 2023

Section: Culture: Books: Review

9

Artificial *wildness*

Evangelion: 3.0+1.01 Thrice Upon a Time review – surreal visual brilliance | Animation in film | The Guardian

Evangelion: 3.0+1.01 Thrice Upon a Time review – surreal visual brilliance. By Phil Hoad, 3 October 2023

Section: Culture: Film: Animation in film: Review

10

Nature *wildness* therapy

The nature cure: how time outdoors transforms our memory, imagination and logic | Health & wellbeing | The Guardian

The nature cure: how time outdoors transforms our memory, imagination and logic. By Sam Pyrah, 27 November 2023

Section: Lifestyle: Health & fitness: Health & wellbeing

4.7.2. “Wilderness”

11

Nature *wilderness*

Loving a cold climate: Ireland’s Nordic-inspired *wilderness* retreat | Ireland holidays | The Guardian

Loving a cold climate: Ireland’s Nordic-inspired *wilderness* retreat. By Fergal McCarthy, 12 February 2022

Section: Lifestyle: Travel Europe: Ireland holidays

This article was amended on 22 February 2022. An earlier version identified an image as the Saltwater Sauna in Poole, but was actually a different sauna. The image has now been changed.

12

Nature *wilderness*

Public lands are Americans’ birthright. It’s our duty to defend them against new landgrabs | Public lands | The Guardian

Public lands are Americans’ birthright. It’s our duty to defend them against new landgrabs. By Nate Schweber, 5 July 2022

Section: News: Environment: Public lands

13

Nature *wilderness*

Keeping it wild: how mules help preserve the last untamed places in the US | Environment | The Guardian

Keeping it wild: how mules help preserve the last untamed places in the US. By Jessica Reed, 17 August 2022

Section: News: Environment

14

Nature *wilderness* climate crisis

Americans learn skills to survive the climate crisis – in a *wilderness* course | New York | The Guardian

Americans learn skills to survive the climate crisis – in a *wilderness* course. By Oliver Milman, 15 September 2022

Section: News: Climate crisis: New York

15

Racism and colonialism embedded in language of conservation, NGO says | Global development | The Guardian

Racism and colonialism embedded in language of conservation, NGO says. By Karen McVeigh, 12 October 2022

Section: News: Global development (supported by theguardian.org)

16

Nature *wilderness*

Country diary 1948: Bird encounters on a *wilderness* of shingle | Birds | The Guardian

Country diary 1948: Bird encounters on a *wilderness* of shingle. By John Lockett, 17 April 2023

Section: News: Environment: Country diary birds

17

Nature *wilderness*

Into the woods: a forest cabin in East Sussex where guests contribute to their stay | Glamping | The Guardian

Into the woods: a forest cabin in East Sussex where guests contribute to their stay. By Gavin McOwan, 19 April 2023

Section: Lifestyle: Travel: UK: Glamping (ad)

This article was amended on 19 April 2023 to correct the location of *wilderness* Wood. An earlier version said that it was in Uckfield "at the foot of the North Downs". It is in Hadlow Down, in the High Weald.

18

Nature *wilderness*

Wolverines are the 'embodiment of *wilderness*'. Can they make a US comeback? | Wildlife | The Guardian

Wolverines are the 'embodiment of *wilderness*'. Can they make a US comeback? By Christine Peterson, 7 July 2023

Section: News: Environment: Wildlife

19

Nature *wilderness*

Making tracks: how linking patches of *wilderness* is saving Borneo's wildlife | Rewilding | The Guardian

Making tracks: how linking patches of *wilderness* is saving Borneo's wildlife. By Jeremy Hance, 18 July 2023

Section: News: Environment: Wildlife: The age of extinction: Rewilding (The age of extinction is supported by theguardian.org)

20

Nature *wilderness*

'Humans everywhere': lions cling on in Ethiopia's last patches of *wilderness* | Global development | The Guardian

'Humans everywhere': lions cling on in Ethiopia's last patches of *wilderness*. By Fred Harter, 17 August 2023

Section: News: World: Africa: The age of extinction: Global development

21

Nature wilderness

‘A Yellowstone for Europe’: Romania’s ambition for a vast new *wilderness* reserve | Romania holidays | The Guardian

‘A Yellowstone for Europe’: Romania’s ambition for a vast new *wilderness* reserve. By Jane Dunford, 22 October 2023

Section: Lifestyle: Travel: Europe: Romania holidays (ad)

22

Nature wilderness

A moment that changed me: I had a heart attack at 37 – so I went to live in a cave | Life and style | The Guardian

A moment that changed me: I had a heart attack at 37 – so I went to live in a cave. By Donny Dust, 25 October 2023

Section: Lifestyle: Health & fitness: A moment that changed me: Life and style

23

Nature wilderness

Epic *wilderness* adventures: Lincoln Quilliam’s guide to Tasmania’s wild side | Tourism Tasmania: Tales from the island | The Guardian

Epic *wilderness* adventures: Lincoln Quilliam’s guide to Tasmania’s wild side. 4 December 2023

Section: News: Paid content (Paid for by: Tasmania, come down for air)

24

Rail route of the month: rewilding, polders and Hanseatic beauty by train in the Netherlands | Netherlands holidays | The Guardian

Rail route of the month: rewilding, polders and Hanseatic beauty by train in the Netherlands. By Nicky Gardner, 19 December 2023

Section: Lifestyle: Travel: Europe: Rail journey of the month: Netherlands holidays (ad)

25

Nature wilderness

Wilderness with Simon Reeve review – a majestic journey into a natural wonderland | Television | The Guardian

***Wilderness* with Simon Reeve review – a majestic journey into a natural wonderland. By Jack Seale, 21 January 2024**

Section: Culture: TV & radio: TV review television

26

Nature wilderness ocean

Why we need to respect Earth’s last great *wilderness* – the ocean | Oceans | The Guardian

Why we need to respect Earth’s last great *wilderness* – the ocean. By Helen Czarski, 4 June 2023

News: Climate crisis: The Observer: Oceans

27

Nature wilderness danger

Javari valley: the lawless primal *wilderness* where Dom Phillips went missing | Dom Phillips and Bruno Pereira | The Guardian

Javari valley: the lawless primal *wilderness* where Dom Phillips went missing. By Dan Collyns, 9 June 2022

Section: News

28

Nature wilderness dangerous

'I was a 17-year-old versus a 600lb grizzly bear. I was going to die': Alex Messenger's ordeal in the *wilderness* | Wildlife | The Guardian

'I was a 17-year-old versus a 600lb grizzly bear. I was going to die': Alex Messenger's ordeal in the *wilderness*. By Elle Hunt, 23 May 2023

Section: News

29

Nature wilderness danger

Missing Australian found dead in Canadian *wilderness* after 'unfortunate hiking accident' | Canada | The Guardian

Missing Australian found dead in Canadian *wilderness* after 'unfortunate hiking accident'. By Rafqa Touma, 14 June 2023

Section: News: Americas: Canada

30

Nature wilderness danger

Conditions 'not survivable' in Tasmanian *wilderness* where Belgian tourist Celine Cremer is missing, police say | Australia news | The Guardian

Conditions 'not survivable' in Tasmanian *wilderness* where Belgian tourist Celine Cremer is missing, police say. By Australian Associated Press, 29 June 2023

Section: News: World: Australia: Australia news

31

Nature wilderness danger

Alone: the amazingly dangerous survival show where you might get eaten by a bear | Television & radio | The Guardian

Alone: the amazingly dangerous survival show where you might get eaten by a bear. By Rebecca Nicholson, 5 August 2023

Section: Culture: TV & radio: The watcher: Television & radio

32

Nature wilderness in urban setting

The *Accidental Ecosystem*: behind the rise of urban wildlife in US cities | Books | The Guardian

The *Accidental Ecosystem*: behind the rise of urban wildlife in US cities. By Veronica Esposito, 19 July 2022

Section: Culture: Books

33

Political wilderness

Why was Boris Johnson cast into the *wilderness* this week? Because a populist without a tribe is nothing | Jonathan Freedland | The Guardian

Why was Boris Johnson cast into the wilderness this week? Because a populist without a tribe is nothing. By Jonathan Freedland, 24 March 2023

Section: Opinion: Boris Johnson

34

Political wilderness

‘We were a voice in the *wilderness*’: the groups fighting to keep Trump off the ballot | Donald Trump | The Guardian

‘We were a voice in the wilderness’: the groups fighting to keep Trump off the ballot. By Rachel Leingang, 7 February 2024

Section: News: Donald Trump: Explainer

35

Psychological wilderness

After years in *wilderness*, Kevin Spacey will now seek to rebuild career | Kevin Spacey | The Guardian

After years in wilderness, Kevin Spacey will now seek to rebuild career. By Emine Sinmaz, 26 July 2023

Section: Culture: Kevin Spacey

36

Psychological wilderness

Wilderness review – Jenna Coleman craves murder in a fun, fun, fun revenge thriller | Television & radio | The Guardian

***Wilderness* review – Jenna Coleman craves murder in a fun, fun, fun revenge thriller. By Lucy Mangan, 15 September 2023**

Section: Culture: TV & radio: TV review: Television & radio: Review

37

Art and wilderness

Unfinished work by Leonardo da Vinci heads ‘home’ to French chateau where he died | Leonardo da Vinci | The Guardian

Unfinished work by Leonardo da Vinci heads ‘home’ to French chateau where he died. By Kim Willsher, 11 June 2022

Section: Culture: Art & design: The Observer: Leonardo da Vinci

38

Nature wilderness as a therapy

Space to grow: *wilderness* therapy could help abuse survivors | Domestic violence | The Guardian

Space to grow: wilderness therapy could help abuse survivors. By Helena Horton, 20 May 2022

Section: Lifestyle: Health & fitness: Domestic violence

39

Nature *wilderness* therapy

The *wilderness* 'therapy' that teens say feels like abuse: 'You are on guard at all times' | US news | The Guardian

The *wilderness* 'therapy' that teens say feels like abuse: 'You are on guard at all times'. By Nicolle Okoren, 14 November 2022

Section: News

This article was amended on 16 November 2022 to remove a reference to Larry Dean's "Youth Leadership through Outdoor Survival" course as part of the Outward Bound program.

40

***wilderness* therapy**

I survived a *wilderness* camp: 'It's not necessary to break a person's will' | Mental health | The Guardian

I survived a *wilderness* camp: 'It's not necessary to break a person's will'. By Ciara Fanlo, 15 November 2022

Section: News

5.

Conclusions

This analysis displayed many occurrences of *wilderness* and very few of *wildness* that nuance various meanings in the SibBol corpus and in *The Guardian* sub corpus, reflecting differing reference contexts (Cronon 1996). *Wilderness* largely keeps its literal meaning, compared to a broader meaning associated with *wildness* and connected with qualities that can be dissociated from nature. The term is progressing toward a metaphorical meaning, as its discursive usage demonstrates.

In SiBol, articles often examine efforts to preserve *wilderness* areas, emphasizing their ecological importance and the need for conservation policies. Discussions about *wilderness* include threats such as deforestation, climate change and human encroachment. *Wilderness* areas are frequently described as vital habitats for diverse species, emphasizing the role these regions play in maintaining biodiversity. In the context of adventure and recreation, newspapers tell stories about *wilderness* tourism, focusing on the beauty and recreational opportunities available in these natural areas. Articles also cover survival stories or expeditions into *wilderness* areas, highlighting the challenges adventurers face and the experiences their adventures provide. The cultural and historical significance of *wilderness* for indigenous peoples involves discussing traditional practices and land rights. Articles in the corpuses also recount historical expeditions and the exploration of *wilderness* areas, adding historical perspective to contemporary discussions. In a few instances, *wildness* is referenced in ecological discussions, where the focus is on the untamed, unmanaged aspects of nature.

Wilderness, but more frequently *wildness*, is used metaphorically to describe untamed human behaviours, especially in opinion pieces or cultural commentary. Some articles use *wildness* to describe the unpredictable conduct of children or animals, or to convey a sense of natural, unrestrained action. In literary and artistic contexts, *wildness* often symbolizes freedom, chaos, or sublime aspects of nature and human experience. The

term appears in societal and cultural critiques, where it denotes resistance to control or conformity.

The association of the concepts of “biodiversity” and “conservation” with “natural” *wilderness/wildness* is almost absent in the corpus, even though *wilderness* conservation – preserving natural habitats, maintaining biodiversity, regulating human-wildlife interactions, reducing habitat fragmentation, promoting sustainable development – remains integral to preventing future pandemics and the spread of infectious diseases. By maintaining wilderness areas, biodiversity can flourish, ensuring the health and stability of ecosystems now and for the future. Unfortunately, the interconnectedness with *wilderness/wildness* could not be enlightened from a linguistic point of view.

Further investigation of the word *wilderness* in its literal meaning could, on the other hand, be productive for future research in the field of ecolinguistics, because the term is very frequent in the corpus and often associated with environmental issues. A thorough analysis of *wilderness* discourse in various media would give a more accurate idea of its value and role in the environmental discourse.

Analysis of the articles in *The Guardian* confirmed the definitions of the two concepts ascertained in the SiBol corpus, and proposed a methodology that is not focused on discussion and investigation of the ideological framework of the stories, but on those linguistic elements (structure and discourse) that, in a given context, are used to convey environmental topics. To accomplish this I employed tools offered by Labov and Waletzky’s narrative analysis (1967) and by discourse analysis (Brown and Yule 1983). The linguistic structures under scrutiny enhanced the message of the words *wilderness* and *wildness*. For example, use of the first-person singular and direct speech make the stories more moving and appealing, and analysis of the evaluation section (Labov and Waletzky 1967) assessed the two lemmas as able to effectively express the narrative’s core message.

Furthermore, since the term *wilderness* displays so many nuanced meanings, new discursive uses of it are emerging. Words with the prefix “re-” (for example “rewilding”), are becoming more and more popular as people realize that new words are needed to convey the importance of preserving a portion of wild territory on Earth and raise awareness around what has been lost.

The *wilderness* discourse – whether in articles, books, social media or documentaries – can play a pivotal role in *wilderness* conservation by educating the public, influencing policy, engaging communities, building emotional connections, documenting issues, and promoting sustainable

practices. The success of conservation efforts hinges on communication through various forms of written and spoken words.

Wilderness discourse can help to develop critical self-consciousness in all we do. This means remembering and acknowledging the autonomy of the other. It implies that every act of use must be accompanied by profound contemplation and respect. It entails examining the area of the natural world that we plan to utilize for our own purposes and determining whether we can use it repeatedly – sustainably – without causing it to deteriorate in the process. It involves engaging in a language of memory and appreciation, as expressing thanks is the most straightforward way to recollect the nature that have come together to make the world as we know it. If *wilderness* can stop being (just) out there and start being (also) in here, if it can start being as human as it is natural, we can get on with the everlasting task of struggling to live rightly in the world – not only in the garden, not only in the *wilderness*, but in the home that comprehends them both.

As for the linguistic method, the results of this research effort demonstrate that traditional tools can be very useful in ecolinguistic analysis. They also suggest additional investigative efforts as a reliable way of providing valid and credible study perspectives that can accurately investigate the relationship between language and environment.

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