

FLIGHT OF THE SEA EAGLE

Susanna Bellini's NLP and energy-work with animals
by Caitlin Collins

We humans are paradoxical creatures. Our longing for security leads us to build up our self-identity and self-importance to the extent that people commonly speak in dualistic terms of Humans and the Environment, or Humans and Nature, conveying a sense of separation from the rest of the world and also from our fellow sentient beings (who are apparently part of the Environment, along with rocks and rainforests). According to students of deep ecology, it's this fundamental illusion of human disconnection that underpins the pathology of our exploiting whatever is perceived as 'other' – including not only the non-human beings with whom we share the world, but also the environment upon which we all depend for our survival. Thus our attempts to seek security are actually threatening our lives.

As continuing the current policy of exploitation won't be an option for much longer – at least not on this planet – addressing this phenomenon of human disconnection is becoming a priority of the utmost urgency.

Of course, there is already a longstanding tradition of understanding our place alongside our fellow beings in our global home. Traditional shamanic knowledge and practices have taken a trampling under the boots of Western civilisation's march of progress; however there is now a resurgence of interest in these areas. The past 10 years have also seen a rapid growth of interest in connecting deeply with animals in non-exploitative ways that honour animals and recognise them as sentient beings in their own right.

NLP and shamanism

Some promising links between shamanic wisdom and NLP are emerging. Susanna Bellini is one of the pioneering bridge-builders here in the UK. An NLP Trainer who has modelled the extended sensory perception skills and energy healing methods of shamans and other energy workers, she is developing her abilities to work on energetic levels with humans and animals alike.

Susanna explains that a shaman can function as a link between worlds, for example between the spiritual and the mundane, or plants and humans, or different levels of consciousness. The shaman is able to visit different realms in order to gain knowledge and to bring about changes that will affect our own day-to-day reality.

Susanna had been unclear about how to bring her NLP practice and her shamanic work together until she spent a year training as an apprentice with Richard Bandler, one of the founders of NLP. 'Dr Bandler is working on deep levels and making use of lots of stuff he

doesn't overtly teach, including energy work,' she says. 'And, as with many great teachers and healers, he's tapping into something greater than himself. Training with him helped me to model my shamanic teachers, and also helped me learn to keep track of and operate on different levels of consciousness simultaneously.'

The bird who was frightened of flying

Susanna describes a case history in which she used a combination of NLP and shamanic methods to help a bird with a fear of flying – or, more accurately, a fear of flying under certain conditions.

A young sea eagle, kept with other birds of prey by a falconer, had been flying in displays in front of large crowds. Following an incident in which some children threw gravel at him the bird, very sensibly, had become reluctant to fly in displays if children were present.

Two immediate problems were obvious: Susanna couldn't communicate with the eagle in words, and he was too fierce to approach or touch. She needed methods she could use from a safe distance!

'If he were a human, I'd simply ask him to think of whatever was bothering him,' says Susanna. 'Then I'd look for where the thought was spatially located – perhaps by observing a change in the energy or aura around him, or feeling temperature changes in the aura with my hands, or sensing something in my own body that might correlate with his

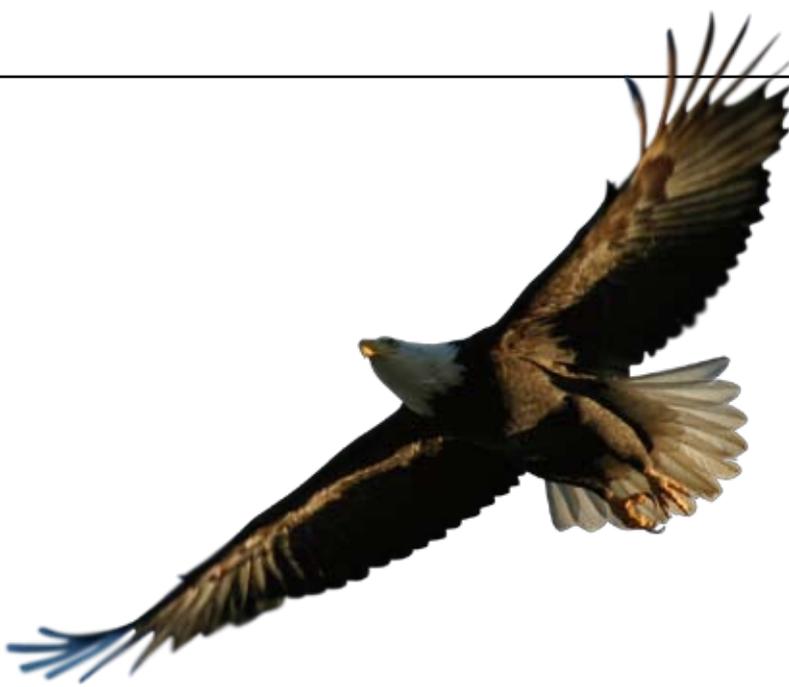
experience. I could clear the negative thought form in various ways, for example by directing healing energy through my hands to heal it. Then of course I could ask him to notice the changes, and he might straighten up, or smile, and say, "It's gone". But I couldn't very well verbally ask the eagle to "think of the problem"! I had to do it differently. So I drew on my knowledge of shape-shifting.'

Shape-shifting, Susanna explains, is a bit like the NLP method of deep trance identification (DTI). Using DTI, you might think of someone from whom you'd like to learn, imagine that person to be in front of you, and, after requesting and receiving permission, imagine yourself somehow merging, temporarily, with him or her. DTI can thus enable you to gain insights from experiencing being 'as if' you were that person.

In this instance of shape-shifting with the eagle, Susanna was sensitive to his response as she asked his permission to enter his space and slowly began to extend her energy to where she felt his energy field begin.

'He noticed this,' she reports. 'I was respectful and gentle and he kept still and let me get on with the process.' Susanna gradually merged part of her energy field and sensory awareness with the bird's, while keeping

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some of her awareness back in her own body. 'I experienced changes in my senses. My vision became sharper, clearer, aware of the slightest movement. I became hyper-alert – relaxed, but poised for action. My impressions were fast, with a straight visual to action pattern. I could see some children in the distance and I tried to nudge the eagle into the emotional state he had associated with them by intensifying the visual images of children and gravel in his mind.'

Next, moving her awareness back to her own position, outside the eagle, Susanna noticed where the energy form for the distressing experience was located in his energy field. Sight being the strongest sense for an eagle, she cleared the thought-form by visualisation. Lastly, she checked out her work by shifting back into the bird and looking at the children again. This time the eagle seemed to be more relaxed about them.

The final step was to test results in a 'live' situation.

'When the time came for the next flying display,' Susanna recalls, 'the falconer strode into the arena, checked the crowd, checked the wind and weather and looked over his birds of prey, who were ranged on perches behind the audience seating. There were some school children present, and, he told me later, he had already decided not to fly the sea eagle when something about the state of the bird attracted his attention. He looked at the bird, then at the children, who were sitting quietly – and decided to fly the eagle after all. The eagle flew beautifully! The falconer said that he just had a feeling it was time to try flying him again!'

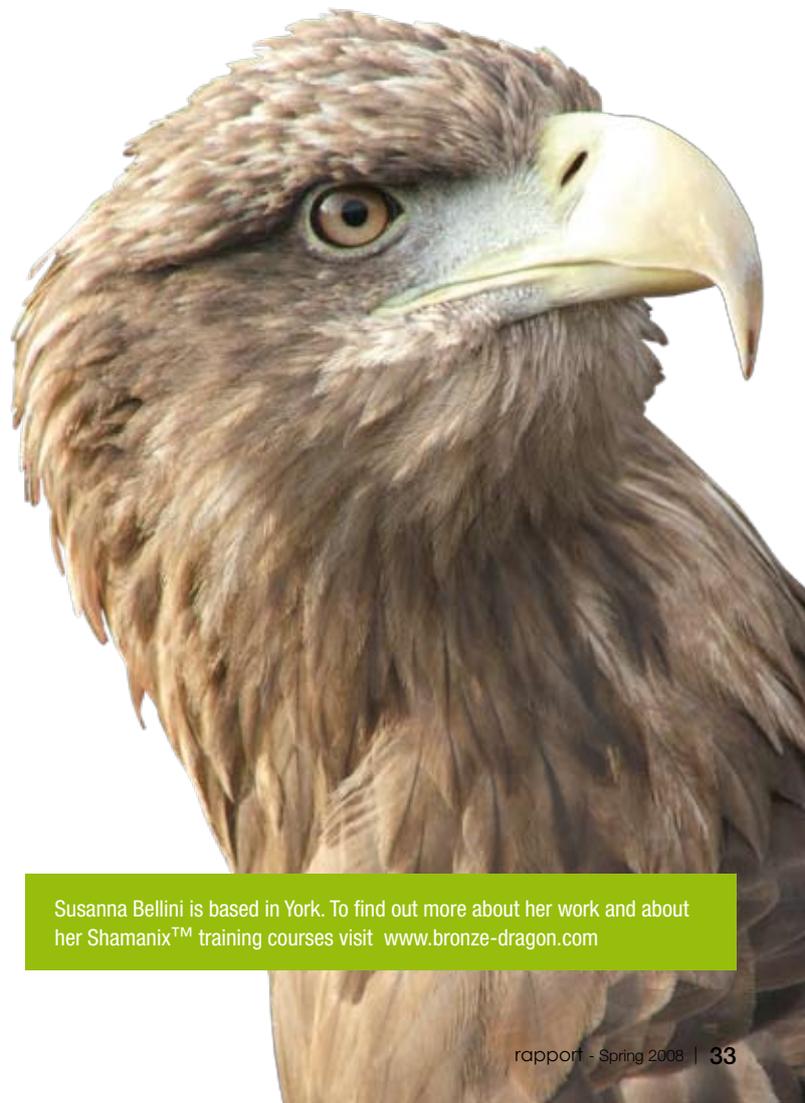
Wider awareness

Susanna believes that connecting with animals like this can bring about profound changes in the human participants of such interactions.

'Working with animals changes the way you are,' she says. 'It opens you up to a wider awareness. We all have consciousness; we're all conscious beings. And in recognising that, you realise why you shouldn't harm other beings. And as you begin to become sensitive to energy and feel it as a truth, so you realise that how you think matters! There's so much to be concerned about in the world, and while some things are getting better it's also true that some are getting worse. Those who have the tools to do something for good in the world need to be doing it. And as I say that, I also have to say that this sort of work is not about ego, and it's not really about "doing". It's about "allowing", and knowing that you're a part of a greater energy, a kind of universal consciousness. It's about moving towards authentic being. Many people now believe that this is a crucial time for raising consciousness and moving humanity to another level, and I think this sort of work is part of that movement.'

One of the strengths of NLP is its absence of rigid theoretical frameworks: this openness allows it to be flexible and adaptable and

make itself useful in many applications. Combining NLP with energy work, as Susanna is doing, seems to me to be a particularly fruitful field of endeavour. In providing effective ways to communicate beyond the restrictions of verbal language, it not only allows us to 'talk with the animals' but also to connect with humans for whom verbal language is not an option. We need connection in every way in our world today, connection at the deepest levels, to heal the wounds of severance that manifest not only internally in the inner turmoil of our own psyches, and externally in our quarrels and wars, but, crucially, in our self-imposed distancing from the rest of the universe of which each of us is really just as much a natural part as the rivers and the rocks, the stars, the trees, the oceans – and the animals. ●



Susanna Bellini is based in York. To find out more about her work and about her Shamanix™ training courses visit www.bronze-dragon.com