

# The Sofa as a Habitat: Daisy

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The love story of an unlikely couple begins on a day in July 2023, the month in which a new record is set for average global temperatures. A partridge chick, that has almost died of thirst, and a human meet on the asphalt of a supermarket parking lot in southern Germany. Based on the human protagonist's stories about "Daisy", as the partridge chick will be called from now on, and the photographic and videographic views of their everyday life together, I was invited to develop a piece of multispecies storytelling.<sup>1</sup> The story consists of 13 drawings. They tell of changes in the everyday life of the Anthropocene: the disappearance of species that were taken for granted, such as the partridge (*Perdix perdix*).

Drawing, just one of the diverse methods of visualization in ethnography, is a process of discovery (Hall 2020: 60–61). It is a particularly concentrated way of engaging with what has been told and seen. It takes place in an interplay of repeated viewing, finding details, and drawing lines again and again. This intensive observation, perception and the preoccupation with the partridge's way of life opens up a dialogue with the animal (see also Hasegawa 2020: 169–170). The habitat of partridges has been disappearing for decades.<sup>2</sup> Among other things, this can be attributed to the effects of the economic practices of modern agriculture, which is part of what Anna Tsing calls the "new ecologies of proliferation" (2020: 52).

What can drawings of a partridge defending a sofa as its habitat convey to a better understanding of today's polycrisis?

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1 The idea of narrating Daisy's life goes back to Michaela Fenske, who first introduced it in her opening lecture on 3 August 2023 at the "Narrating Multispecies World" conference in Würzburg. Fenske encouraged more multispecies storytelling to make the challenges of the Anthropocene, such as species extinction or the effects of climate change, in our everyday more understandable. The story was first published under the title "Der Daisy"/ "Daisy" on the website of the Chair of European Ethnology/Cultural Analysis of the University of Würzburg: <<https://www.phil.uni-wuerzburg.de/eevk/forschung-projekte/multispecies-conference/anthropozoen-erzaehlen/>> [Accessed 4 May 2024].

2 See German Wildlife Foundation. Rebhuhn. Hochbedrohter Charaktervogel unserer Feldflur. <<https://www.deutschwildtierstiftung.de/wildtiere/rebhuhn>> [Accessed 5 March 2024].

These drawings are less precise descriptions than fragmentary translations of observations recorded in the research diary beyond the field. And yet, in their vagueness, they represent a descriptive reference to what was experienced and happened. The process of drawing makes it possible to get close to the partridge species and give it a voice. Drawings have the potential to generalize. They are, thus, representative of many and open a way to develop further and different ideas and stories: both at the moment of drawing and receiving.

As a method of ethnography, drawings offer “the possibility of opening up concrete unknown areas of knowledge and working out new interpretations of our present world in narratives” (Hasegawa 2020: 169, my translation).

Some of the drawings are collages that contain photographic materials. The photographs are drawing pads and, thus, tools that, with their characteristic richness of detail, quote from the meadows, the asphalt, or the partridge’s plumage and gaze. The already large scope for interpretation, which is given by the ontology of photographs (Overdick 2002), expands once again in combination with what is drawn. The recipients ultimately decide which aspects are viewed and how. Therein lies the potential of this drawn narration.

The ambivalence of the Daisy picture story raises the question of how to interpret the current crises of our everyday lives, as we can encounter them here, using the example of species extinction, right in the neighbourhood. On the one hand, it is about a real perception of the other lives around us, for which the Daisy story stands. On the other hand, as a disturbing and, at the same time, positively hopeful story, it points to the necessary “experimental space” (Horn 2020: 123), which strengthens our imagination of the future and allows us to remain capable of acting. Only in this way can we develop ideas for the future coexistence of different species, which is indispensable for all life (Tsing 2020). The drawn line has a special power in this sense, because it “is something that not only traces how things have been, but also points to paths they might take. Drawing a line is speculative and experimental” (Ingold 2020: 8, my translation).



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