

Learning from Animals:
Reconsidering Speciesism in post 3.11 Japan

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Media reports have put the number of fatalities due to the Fukushima disaster at 15, 894, while 2,562 have been reported missing (as of February 10, 2016). Those figures are unprecedented in Japan's modern history, outside of World War II. However, we have not been shown images of the dead in the media, whether in cinema, on television, or on the Internet. Instead, it is the image of dead animals that has appeared repeatedly, and quite overwhelmingly, in various media: residual cows and pigs; abandoned pets—dogs, cats, snakes, ostriches, you name it; swallows covered in white dots that suggest radiation contamination; roaming wild animals – boars, weasels, field mice, and so on. We see these creatures strewn across the Fukushima restricted zones, some of them having already starved to death. In Japanese visual media, human casualties, in Fukushima and other Tohoku areas, have been replaced by those of animals. In other words, the images of those dead animals serve as an apparatus of speciesism—the idea that being human is a good enough reason for human animals to have greater moral rights than non-human animals. In my presentation, I would investigate what and how we could learn from these victimized animals and their corpses, as presented in Japanese documentary films. My discussion would focus on the documentary series, *The Record of Fukushima's Livings* (dir. Masanori Iwasaki, 2013-2016) among other documentaries.