

# Reconnecting to the natural world -Through animals and nature-based activities

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The international master's program, Outdoor Environments for Health and Well-Being, leads to a Master of Science degree specializing in environmental psychology. The program covers health-promoting outdoor environments throughout the lifespan, evidence-based health design, occupational aspects, and the One Health concept. One of the courses offered is *Nature and Animal-Assisted Interventions* (MP0009), which focuses on occupations, occupational performance, and values performed with natural elements and/or animals in indoor or outdoor settings, i.e., a place independent occupational performance for health promotion. This fact sheet is a final assignment of the student's work, presented at the NAAI course conference in 2024.

*Keywords: NAAI, AAE, health, place attachment, oxytocin, education, animal rescue, farm animals, nighttime activities.*

## ABSTRACT

*H.E.A.* is a natural location where farm and wild rescued animals are kept and provided for. It offers programs for visitors with the purpose of Health and well-being, Education and sustainability, and Animal welfare (H.E.A). Our H.E.A. site has multiple areas so everyone can experience nature and animals.

## HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

*Oxytocin and anti-stress effect:* H.E.A. offers exposure to natural elements. Animals can create a safe, calm, and attractive environment that stimulates oxytocin release, leading to anti-stress effects and facilitating healing processes. We offer activities like walking, lying down in green areas, animal care, and animal-assisted activities.

*Place attachment and feeling of belonging:* Through activities, H.E.A. aims to provide the main components of place attachment: The place, the individuals involved, and how the environment becomes meaningful through familiarity and active engagement.

## EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

*Education:* We offer tailored programs for schools to meet pedagogical needs. Visitors can learn about the importance of maintaining a sustainable environment through encounters with animals in natural surroundings, giving new generations opportunities to form positive relationships with nature. Animal-Assisted Education (AAE) involves the participation of animals in educational settings to promote learning and development.

*Place preservation:* Through activities, children and adults can become part of the place and learn to respect it, possibly contributing to making the world greener in the long run.

*Night-time activities:* This can lead to feelings of nature connectedness due to dimmed noise pollution. Encountering nocturnal wild animals in their natural habitat can create impressive nature experiences. Place attachment and social connections can be reinforced through shared experiences of different weather phenomena and star observation. Guided nighttime tours can enhance understanding of species, raise environmental awareness and contribute to feelings of safety through gaining confidence in the dark.

## ANIMAL WELFARE

*Farm animals:* Animals can provide emotional and social support. We cater to the needs of both visitors and animals. Caring for animals can stimulate flow experiences and make people take on more responsibilities.

*Rescued animals:* We collaborate with organisations and the local government to provide care for wild rescued animals. Human influences, like traffic or robotic lawnmowers, can leave wild animals injured or orphaned. We regard it as our responsibility to care for them until they can be released back into the wild or given a second chance at life at our institution.

*Animal knowledge and ethics:* We are a team of trained wildlife caretakers and veterinarians. With our background knowledge on animals' needs, diet and behavior, we provide adequate care for recovery and reintegration within nature, by recreating conditions that allow animals in captivity to mimic wild natural behaviors. Visitors are required to follow guidelines to ensure animal protection.

## CONCLUSION

Our vision is to educate the public about the wonders of nature and teach them responsibility regarding our actions in and towards it, as nature connectedness can contribute to change. We regard it as our responsibility to care for them until they can be released back into the wild or give them a second chance at life at our institution.



SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION & FEES!

# Reconnecting to the natural world at H.E.A

## Through animals and nature based activities



### THE SITE

Located in between the forest and the town and it's a natural place that offers a home to farm animals and wild rescued animals.



### FUNDING

Organisations and government supports us so that we can provide the required care for all animals.



### TARGET GROUPS

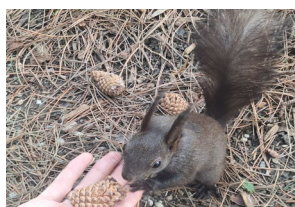
Children  
Adults & Senior citizens  
Individuals in transitional periods  
*Accessible & inclusive for all visitors!*

## WHAT WE OFFER

### FARM ANIMALS



### RESCUED ANIMALS



### NATURE TRAILS



Photos by our researchers and from Creative commons

## SUMMARY OF BENEFITS

### ✓ HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- Oxytocin and stress-reduction
- Place attachment through activities and knowledge about local nature and animals

### ✓ EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Collaboration with schools and organisations
- Place preservation through activities & collaboration
- Day-time and night-time organised activities

### ANIMAL WELFARE

- Learn how to take care of them
- Learn their behaviour and what they like
- Learn how to interact with them... let them come to you!



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SCIENCE AND EDUCATION **FOR SUSTAINABLE LIFE**



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