

TENDING SANCTUARY

MULTISPECIES ENTANGLEMENTS
AT VINE SANCTUARY

Rebecca Shen

TENDING SANCTUARY

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A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and lines, representing the name Rebecca Shen.

Rebecca Shen



INTRODUCTION

*“Human nature is an interspecies relationship.”*¹ -Anna Tsing

Farmed animal sanctuaries are landscapes that emerged and materialized from the animal rights movement. They are places where refugees of the animal agriculture industry live for the rest of their lives, thereby eluding their fates as mere industrial commodities, laborers, or objects of entertainment. Countless studies emphasize the profoundly complex cognition, sentience, and social lives of farmed animals, revealing that it is insufficient to simply provide them the bare necessities for survival, let alone subject them to suffering in the first place. What might it look like to allow animals to exercise rights? What can farmed animals acting in free will show us about relating with the land and with each other in more just ways? A farmed animal sanctuary is a unique place to begin exploring these questions.

Farmed animals are typically raised in agricultural settings for the purposes of producing commodities or providing labor.

Currently, these animals tread on the fringes of ethical obligations to their wellbeing, and their cruel experiences often fall under legally acceptable definitions of standard industry practice. Despite their plight, farmed animals often show that they want to flourish in complex ways. To fully flourish, they may desire access to land upon which bodily sovereignty can be exercised and enriching social relationships can be forged on their own terms. Allowing and observing how they engage with the rights to flourish, to community, and to the land might provide new opportunities for understanding and modeling new ways to cohabitate with them in our shared landscapes. The abstract concept of giving rights to previously farmed animals has the potential to be materialized at sanctuary landscapes by looking at the ways in which animals *want to* engage with the physical landscape once when they no longer have the status as profit-generating commodities and are recognized as individuals who are teleological centers of their own lives.

The industrialized mass domestication of animals has historically known no bounds and inflicted harm upon natural systems and wildlife with far-reaching consequences: loss of biodiversity, deforestation, pollution, disease, ethics. The plight of domesticated animals and their entanglement in extractive land practices are often invisibilized in the discussions of these environmental issues. Both animal ethics and land ethics should be considered in the venture toward fostering more just relationships with the land without ignoring the unique experiences of domesticated animals upon it. A farmed animal sanctuary sited within natural communities can provide an opening to model what these relationships might look like, thereby also creating an opportunity to bridge the disparate narratives of domesticated animals and wild ecologies.

I had long known I wanted to investigate the landscape of a farmed animal sanctuary, where more ethical relationships between humans and animals are intentionally designed and

practiced. In search of a sanctuary to explore, I came across “Animal Agency in Community: A Political Multispecies Ethnography of VINE Sanctuary,” which introduced me to a site and the methodologies of multispecies ethnography. Multispecies ethnography, a more recent branch of cultural anthropology, explores the interspecies relationships between humans and animals and how they engage in and shape political, economic, cultural, and ecological systems *together*. Its unique application in a study of VINE Sanctuary, conducted by legal and political scholars, sought to uncover the “animal agency in a sanctuary for formerly farmed animals, considering how a careful exploration of dimensions of agency in this setting might inform ideas of interspecies ethics and politics.”²² This place-based study made me curious about how the physicality of a landscape influences the interspecies relationships discussed. It also motivated me to adopt the lens of multispecies ethnography for my own fieldwork focusing on the landscape of the same sanctuary.

It is my hope that designers from all walks of life who want to reimagine more just and habitable ways for humans to engage with their environment can reference and build upon the myriad of hopeful stories found in sanctuary landscapes. This aspiration, which drives the idea that “human nature is an interspecies relationship,”²³ served as a philosophical foundation for this project that aims to provide a thick description of the landscape of VINE Sanctuary, highlighting how its design, history, and experiences of agency are forged by complex multispecies assemblages.

THE PROJECT

Tending Sanctuary is a multispecies ethnography of VINE Sanctuary that illuminates a perspective on landscape as an assemblage of multispecies relationships with domesticated nonhuman residents as protagonists. VINE Sanctuary is a 100-acre farmed animal sanctuary in the forested mountains of Vermont. The sanctuary's rugged, biodiverse landscape is home to over 700 rescued, formerly farmed animals who exercise their newfound agency to form complex social and ecological relationships with humans, wild animal and plant species, and the material landscape. This book consists of the following chapters:

1. **The Sanctuary**, which describes the context of VINE Sanctuary as the selected site of investigation,
2. **The Landscape Architect**, which describes the research itinerary, methodologies, and my own embodied integration into the sanctuary community,
3. **The Forest**, which describes the meaning of the forest as a place of recovery and rewilding,
4. **The Soil**, which describes the regenerating ground emerging from the sanctuary's activities and material cycles,
5. **The Residents**, which describes the acts of individual and collective agency exercised by the sanctuary's residents in the following subchapters:
 - a. **The Commons**, a multispecies area where sheep, goats, cows, chickens, ducks, emus, alpacas, and one pig live,
 - b. **The Cows on the Hills**, where nearly 50 cows live semi-ferally in the forest and pastures,
 - c. **The Birds in the Valley**, a botanical garden where most of the sanctuary's bird residents live,
6. **The Stewards**, which describes interviews with

sanctuary staff members about their stewardship of animals and the land.

This project contributes to a growing body of research in the rising genre of multispecies ethnography⁴ and incorporates its framework into ethnographic landscape research. Methodologically, this project draws upon ethnographic fieldwork methods of thorough, integrated observation. The description of the landscape relies on first-hand accounts of living on the site, participating in daily and weekly routines, and engaging with the members of the multispecies community. Visual representations of the landscape and practices of co-creating spaces are generated through mappings of residents' path-making patterns, photographs, aerial photographs, and topographical mappings.

This book builds understanding across scales, time, and geographies, recognizing that the sanctuary is inseparable from the landscapes around it. Together, the chapters illustrate the physical attributes of the landscape and how residents exercise embodied agency within the biophysical environment, co-create spaces, and affect material and ecological cycles. Using the sanctuary's direct landscape as a window, the broader animal geographies and their fraught histories and practices are uncovered. In this way, we foreground the multispecies community at VINE Sanctuary as an opening to understand and compare the landscapes they came from and the landscape they now find refuge in.

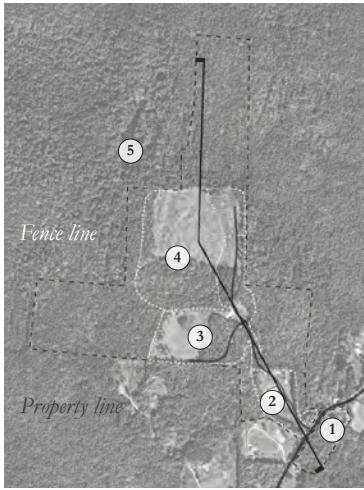
This work hopes to highlight the landscape of VINE Sanctuary as a model for designing landscapes that foster individual and collective agency and healing of both animals and the land, a step toward realizing interspecies justice.



June 18, 2022 | 11 am

View eastward toward the mountains from the Back Pasture.

CHAPTER 1
THE SANCTUARY



Total VINE Sanctuary property: ~115 acres
 Within fence (resident limits): ~50 acres
 Wildlife preserve (beyond fence): ~65 acres

①

THE VALLEY

- 300+ chicken residents
- 1 turkey resident
- 30+ pigeon residents
- 2 dog residents
- 1 human resident

0.6 acres garden

②

THE COMMONS

- 11 sheep residents
- 11 goat residents
- 100+ chicken residents
- 50+ duck residents
- 30+ pigeon residents
- 5 cow residents
- 2 alpaca residents
- 2 emus
- 1 pig resident
- 1 goose resident
- 2 human residents

5.5 acres total
1.5 acres forest
4 acres pasture

③

THE MIDDLE PASTURE & FORESTS

- 9 cow residents

13 acres total
7 acres forest
6 acres pasture

④

THE BACK PASTURE & FORESTS

- 29 cow residents

32 acres total
16 acres forest
16 acres pasture

⑤

Property line

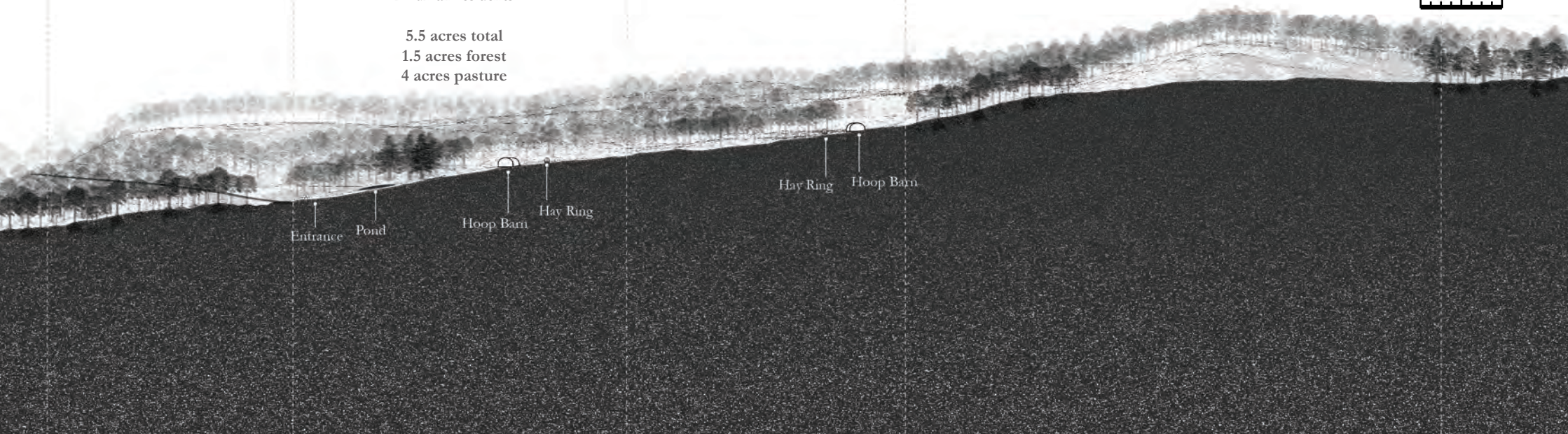
Property line



Entrance Pond

Hoop Barn Hay Ring

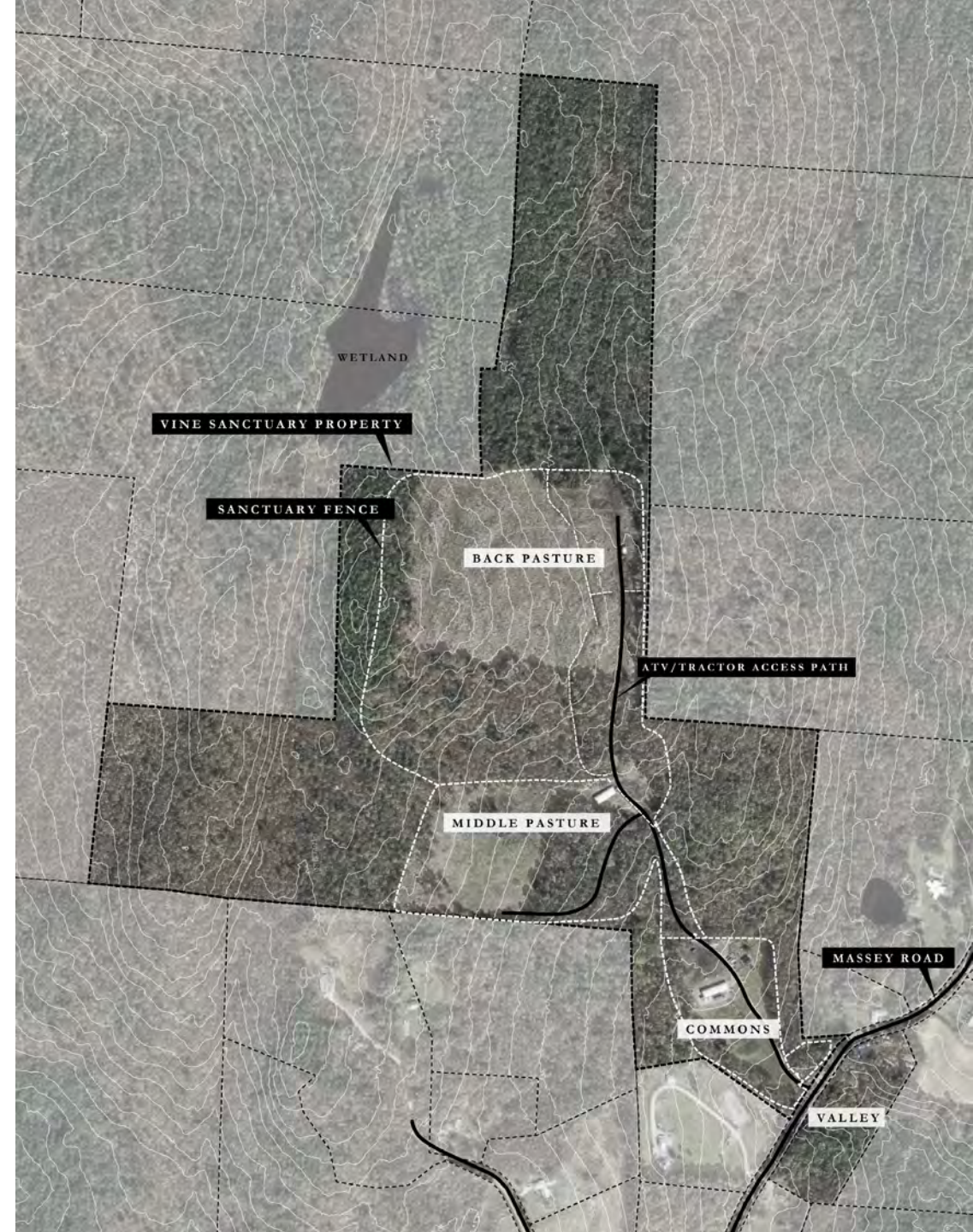
Hay Ring Hoop Barn



VINE Sanctuary, an LGBTQ-led refuge for farmed animals, is a real-life Hundred Acre Wood. It is home to over 700 rescued, rehabilitated, or rehomed farmed animals. As of January 2022, the residents comprise of 470 chickens, 38 cows, 63 ducks, 17 goats and sheep, 11 turkeys, and 148 others, including geese, pigeons, alpacas, doves, emus, peacocks, guinea fowl, and one pig.⁵ The sanctuary is a place where human staff members nonchalantly refer to the animal residents as “people,” which reinforces each animal’s individuality and personhood.

VINE Sanctuary is in Springfield, a small rural town in Windsor County, Vermont of about 9400 residents, 94% of them white. The closest neighboring farmed animal sanctuary is located approximately 40 miles southeast. VINE Sanctuary consists of a total of 100 acres of land, with roughly half of the fenced-in land accessible to its farmed animal residents. The property lies on the southern-facing side of a mountainous terrain, where the soil is rocky and loose, and the trees are predominantly birches, beeches, and maples. Walking across the entire sanctuary, one will experience a net increase in elevation of almost 400 feet. Topographical variations and a multitude of microenvironments are owed to the geological foundation of the mountains. Everything beyond the fences acts as a wildlife preserve, where wild animals seek sanctuary during Vermont’s hunting season.

The plan of the sanctuary shows areas delineated by its fence boundaries and gates, within which there are four general resident communities: **The Valley, the Commons, the Middle Pasture, and the Back Pasture.** Members within each of these communities are fenced off from migrating to other areas, for purposes of safety, monitoring health, and conducting head counts. The creation of these boundaries is one of the ways in which spatial design decisions dictated by humans are made for the well-being of the whole community. While these physical boundaries indicate that residents’ mobilities are not entirely unbound, they do not create serious obstructions to their ability



Map of VINE Sanctuary’s general areas, fences, contours, property bounds, and vehicular paths.





Chicken residents in the foliage of the Valley.

to exercise social agency and engage with a diverse and expansive physical environment.

The Valley is comprised of a four-acre of forest and botanic garden for domesticated birds. Rehabilitated and rescued hens, fighting roosters, turkeys, and pigeons are amongst the residents in the Valley. Most resident birds in the Valley roam freely within fence boundaries and are returned by staff members to coops at night. Sanctuary cofounder, Patrice Jones, lives in a house in the Valley. Trixie and Lily are two dogs who roam the Valley by day and keep the birds safe from wild predators.

The Commons, across the street from the Valley, is the bustling center of the sanctuary. Here, VINE Sanctuary's multispecies community is expressed at its fullest; it is home to chickens, ducks, alpacas, emus, cows, sheep, goats, pigeons, and one exceptional pig, most of whom are not segregated by species.⁶ Individuals interact with each other across species lines and share the same spaces, thereby collectively forming an intermingled multispecies community. This is one aspect of VINE Sanctuary



The hay ring in the Commons.

that sets it apart from many other farmed animal sanctuaries, where animals are segregated by species, breeds, or sex to a higher degree.⁷ A large hoop barn with attached coops is the Commons' home base, where residents take naps during the day or rest from foraging and playing. At night, it is where the birds sleep in coops and other smaller animals, such as some sheep and goats, are enclosed. Cheryl, the on-site animal care coordinator, and her wife also live in the Commons across the barn. The Commons is also where I stayed in an Airstream trailer during my three weeks of research, volunteering, and immersion.

The two pastures, the **Middle Pasture** and **Back Pasture**, are situated up the hill from the Commons, at the highest elevations of the sanctuary where one can experience panoramic views outward toward the mountainous region. Approximately 40 cows live semi-ferally in this area. The pastures are surrounded by expansive forest cover, in which the cows often seek shade, explore, and forage. They live free of human interference through most of the day: medical checks, head counts, and hay bale drop-

offs are the routine human interactions that occur. One large hoop barn offers a place of rest or congregation.

FARMED ANIMAL SANCTUARIES

Sanctuaries have become emblematic of the modern animal rights movement. Farmed animal sanctuaries, which give refuge to animals who commonly belong in the agriculture sector, have served as places where animal advocacy can occur through various practices, most of which involve rescue, refuge, and public education. For their animal residents, sanctuaries are places that provide lifelong refuge safe enough from the deliberate harms of systems that seek to exploit them. Donaldson and Kymlicka also compared them to “total institutions” because of their characteristics as places where individuals with similar situations share an “enclosed, formally administered round of life.”⁸ Currently, there is no formal designation or governmental regulation of farmed animal sanctuaries, but informal mutual aid networks and coalitions have formed with the growing number of places self-described as farmed animal sanctuaries.



Map of farm animal sanctuaries in the United States.

Many farmed animal sanctuaries operate on large swaths of land, most often in rural areas where the ideal infrastructure, land availability, and local resources—such as animal feed, hay, and bedding—are readily available. These sanctuaries often find themselves situated within a region where animal agriculture is tradition. Oftentimes, the work of an animal sanctuary seems to be in direct conflict with long-established beliefs about the role of animals and the land, both of which are often regarded as holding no inherent value unless they generate profit. Receiving consistent funding is a challenge for VINE Sanctuary as its continued operation depends heavily upon grants, direct donations, and crowdfunding. Unlike many other farmed animal sanctuaries that are open to public visitation (which generates additional funding through tours), VINE Sanctuary does not conduct tours as a testament to seriously the role of providing a safe and secure refuge *for the animals*.

From a landscape design point of view, farmed animal sanctuaries offer important ideas about spatial, planting, ecological, infrastructural, and financial decisions that must go into creating a place that promotes novel forms of engagement between humans and farmed animals. VINE Sanctuary is a window into how to design a landscape of reconciliation. Additionally, farmed animal sanctuaries can offer unique insights into another mode of using and connecting with the land. In the case of VINE Sanctuary, the land is respected as a place that needs to flourish for itself as well as for the residents. Sanctuaries are landscapes of multidimensional care, for individual residents, the community, and the land.

FOUNDING VINE SANCTUARY

“Vines both enact and represent the power of nature and the interconnectedness of all things. Vines pull down walls and snake through windows. They feed birds and serve as bridges between trees.” – pattrice jones

VINE Sanctuary’s ethos focuses on the connections across social issues, places, and people. Pattrice and Miriam Jones, a couple who met at a disabilities rights event, founded the sanctuary in 2000 during a time when only a few other farmed animal sanctuaries existed across the United States. Pattrice, from whom I have learned much about the ethos and history of VINE Sanctuary, marks the sanctuary’s beginnings from the moment she and Miriam rescued a lost chicken on the side of the road on the Delmarva Peninsula. On this eastern shore peninsula, there exists a deluge of poultry factory farm operations, some with up to 40,000 birds per facility. Per day, approximately one million chickens are killed in this region alone. Relations are tense between Delmarva’s community members and Big Poultry, an industry that continues to infringe upon the health of community members and the environment while evading serious welfare and environmental regulation.

Since the roadside rescue, the pattrice and Miriam began taking in more “egg factory refugees” and “escapees of the poultry industry,” as well as a group of ducks rescued from a foie gras factory. In 2010, they decided to move the sanctuary to a 100-acre piece of land in the rural town of Springfield, Vermont, where it remains today. Springfield is in dairy country, and the sanctuary took in new cow residents. With more land, the sanctuary offered refuge to more and more animals, and the presence and impact of the sanctuary’s efforts expanded. The staff also grew, starting with Cheryl, who still lives on-site and has extensive expertise in animal care.

A new geography presents new challenges and



Shiloh (previously known as “Skinny” at a previous farm) and Shasta, both of whom arrived in weak conditions, are foraging the mountaintop of the Back Pasture.

opportunities. Historically, Vermont’s agricultural and cultural landscape has been largely defined by family farms with small herds of dairy cows. However, this landscape has been shifting as market and governmental pressures many to upscale, a process that has led to the industrialization of dairy and worsening conditions in terms of animal welfare. In 2022, the state counted 564 dairy farms that rear cattle, sheep, and goats. Each year, the number of dairy farms decreases. In 2012, there were 973 farms, a decrease of 42%. Small farms sold quotas to larger facilities or land to developers as pressures to upscale ensued. While Vermont farmers are facing their own problems in the changes to this working landscape, environmental and animal rights activists are



Residents at the forest edge in the Back Pasture.

concerned about issues like the nitrification of watersheds by agricultural runoff and animal welfare violations. Environmental and animal activists combatting such issues may feel ostracized in a community that is already struggling with economic decline. In this type of scenario observed across rural communities in the United States, no one besides agribusiness wins. While many family farmers may wish to practice ethical land use and animal practices, continual struggles with maintaining profits in competition with agribusiness have further pushed farmers to leave their working land behind.¹⁰

Recognizing and directly engaging the local context in which VINE Sanctuary is working is essential to its holistic ethos. VINE Sanctuary's praxis of activism works at the intersections of other social justice issues and speciesism. Patrice Jones, who has worked for decades as a social justice activist, writer, and educator, has emphasized that becoming an engaged, empathetic member of the Springfield community is integral to the broader work of VINE Sanctuary.¹¹ Some staff members are part of Springfield's library board (a grounds for local politics), host local and virtual events, and participate in events and popups downtown. VINE Sanctuary's outreach actions comprise of participation in, promotion of, or leadership in various grassroots projects such as the Food Empowerment Project, Sistah Vegan, Healthy School Lunches project, and more.

The sanctuary's practice of community is broadening to take on a more heterogeneous, spatially encompassing approach, one that has the potential to expand from the insularity of the "total institution" and concept of refuge. Simultaneously, the original pillar of refuge on which the sanctuary was founded since the roadside rescue of one chicken remains its fundamental *raison d'être*: to save individuals and offer them sanctuary.



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CHAPTER 2

THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Mapping during fieldwork.



View from the window of my on-site accommodation, the Airstream trailer.

WHERE I LIVED

I owe my ethnographical understanding of the site to the embodied experience of living at the sanctuary. During the research period, I lived on-site in the Commons where I could observe the happenings of the sanctuary throughout the day. I slept in an Airstream trailer across from the hay ring. I saw the days ebb and flow as the sanctuary woke up at sunrise and settled into the evening. I heard the rise and fall in intensity of the animal residents' vocalizations. Staff members shared with me a sentiment that I experienced first-hand: while every day we do the same tasks, every day is different and unpredictable.



A resident hen is curious about some maps I left on the ground.






DAY-BY-DAY ETHNOGRAPHY FIELDWORK LOG

Day Date Activities Documentation throughout the day

1 June 8 Arrival and initial tour     






Site Investigation

2 June 9 Trees identification     

3 June 10 Groudcover identification and observation of topography     

4 June 11 Structures identification     

5 June 12 Edge conditions & fences     

*6 June 13 Volunteer: cleaning & painting     

*7 June 14 Volunteer: cleaning & painting     

Deep observation and mapping in the Back Pasture

8 June 15 Observation Day 1     

9 June 16 Observation Day 2     

10 June 17 Observation Day 3     

11 June 18 Observation Day 4     

* indicates days I volunteered in sanctuary activities by cleaning, painting, and/or distributing food to residents

12 July 6 **Deep observation and mapping in the Middle Pasture** Observation Day 1     

13 July 7 Observation Day 2     

14 July 8 Observation Day 3     

Deep observation and mapping in the Commons

*15 July 9 Observation Day 1     

*16 July 10 Observation Day 2     

17 July 11 Observation Day 3     

Formal interviews:
Anna and pattrice

Deep observation and mapping in the Valley

*18 July 12 Observation Day 1     

*19 July 13 Observation Day 2     

*20 July 14 Observation Day 3     

21 July 15 **Formal interview:** Rachel     

22 July 16 **Formal interviews:** Cheryl & Pomme     

23 July 17 **Farewells and departure**     

WHAT I DID

During the first week of research, I sought to gain a thorough understanding of the elements comprising the sanctuary's physical environment. No maps of the site existed prior to my visit. I conducted a site investigation by identifying common tree and groundcover species and subsequently researching what they indicate about the ecological community. I located the site's fences, edge conditions, and structures to determine how the site has been spatially divided. Each area within these spatial divisions has its own community with residents that interact with each other, albeit the sanctuary itself is referenced in this project as one whole community. The staff members also had names for the individual communities, and they will also be how I refer to them throughout this project: The Valley, the Commons, the Middle Pasture, and the Back Pasture.

In the following week, I began to observe each community. In **The Residents** chapter, I will delve into the methodologies, maps, and ethnographic findings of the different resident communities: The Commons, The Cows on the Hill, and The Birds in the Valley.

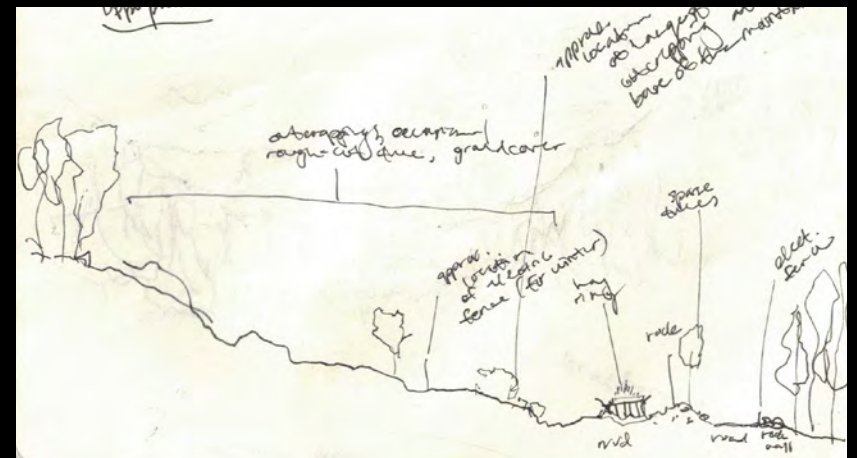
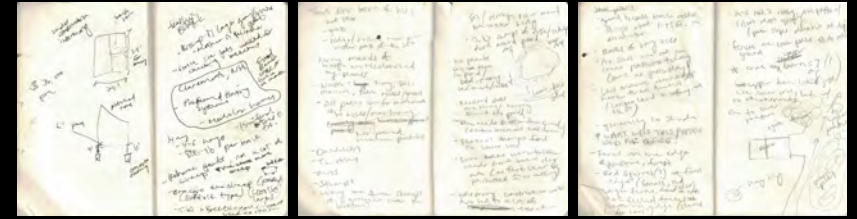
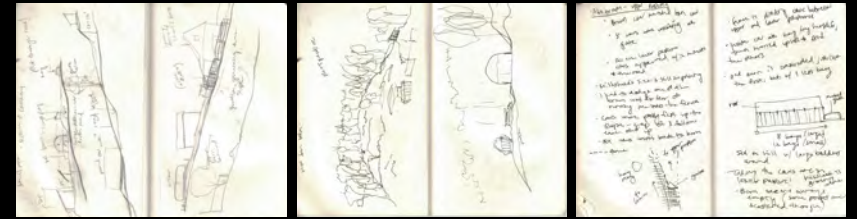
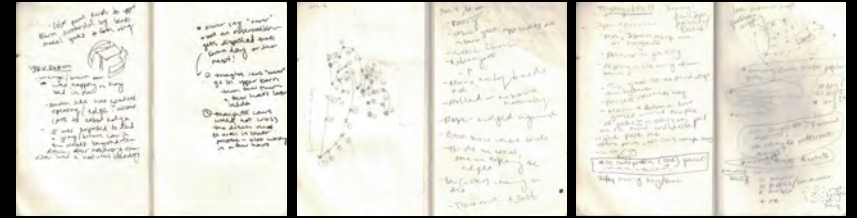
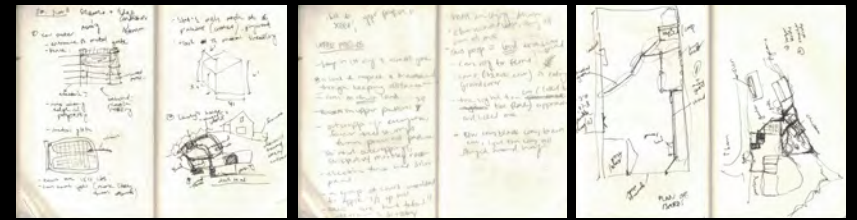
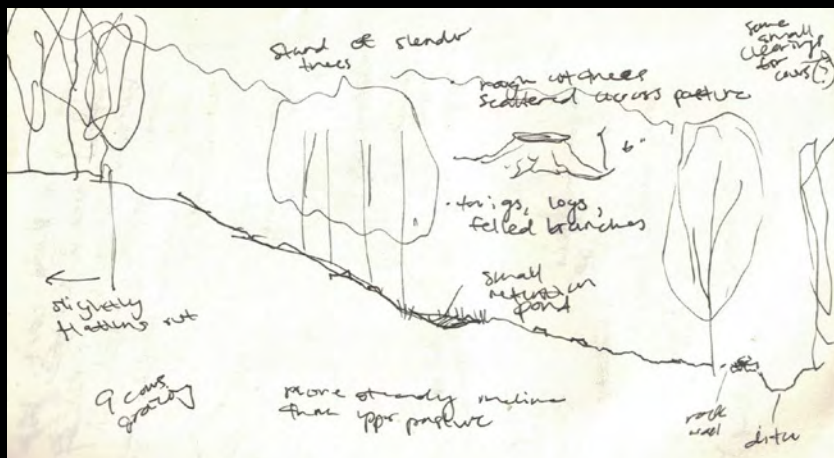
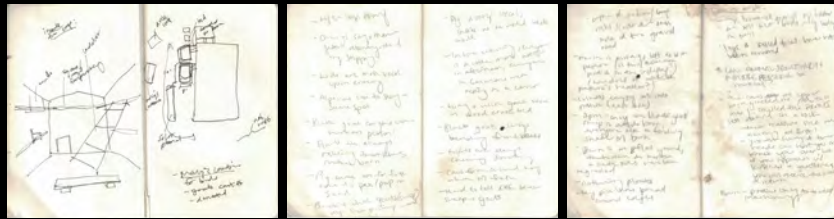
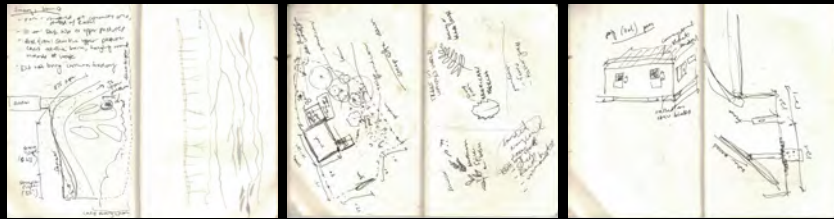
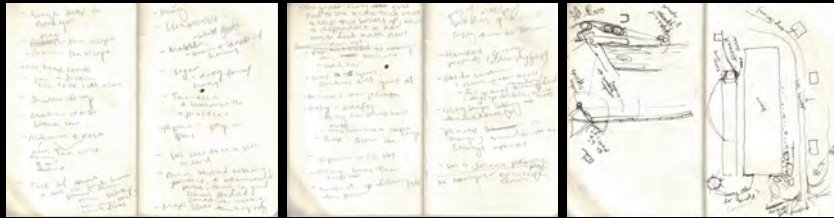
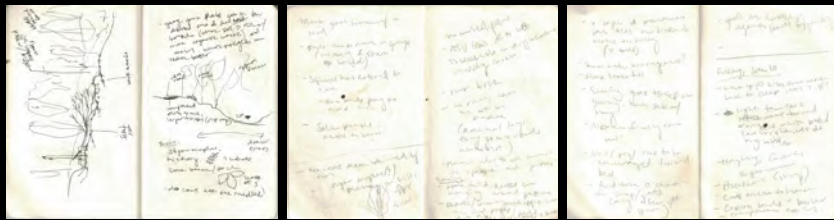
To summarize, I observed each community for three to four days in a row for about five uninterrupted hours each day. I began each observation period at a relatively similar time each day. I selected a few residents in each community to follow over those few days, recording and mapping their locations, movements, and activities at regular time intervals. I noticed that those individual animal residents engaged with materials, trees, plants, and each other in different ways. There were clear social relationships based on their unique histories and who they preferred to graze and rest with from day to day. They also maximized the expanse of the landscape as they covered almost every corner of the space they were bounded by. I observed that there were places and times that they preferred to rest. I read all these observations as social and

material forms of animal agency enabled by the landscape.

Integrating myself into the sanctuary community through participation was another aspect of the research scope. This allowed me to experience the community *with* the residents, not as an outsider conducting research. This took two main forms: volunteering with staff members and forming relationships with both the human staff members and nonhuman animal residents. For volunteering, I took on mostly project- or cleaning-related tasks rather than animal caretaking tasks for which I do not have the expertise. I helped staff members paint bird coop walls, replace shavings and straw in the bird infirmary, and apply stain to the new barn. I also distributed three large bins of produce to the animals in the Commons in a twice-weekly routine. The produce, which otherwise would have become food waste, is donated by a local grocery store called Hannaford.

Throughout my stay, I aided in the daily "opening" routines and opportunistically conversed about their personal experiences at the sanctuary and the personalities of the residents. I engaged with the animal residents with a conscious awareness of practicing respect and reading whether they wanted to engage with me. Their ontological individualities were taken seriously, which aligns with the ethos of VINE Sanctuary. I formed some particularly special friendships with some residents, namely Marble the goat, Prosecco the sheep, and Ozzy the cow.

In the final days of the research period, I conducted interviews with the staff members about their roles and experiences. Each conversation focused on a different theme and was relatively free-flowing. These conversations comprise the final chapter of this project, **The Stewards**.



Daily pocket fieldnotes.

CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN A NONHUMAN-CENTRIC LANDSCAPE

In adopting a multispecies ethnography framework to conduct research, biases about how we ought to value and engage with animals and the land may begin to be dispelled. The anthropological machine,¹² the process by which humans have divided the definitions of the human subject from more-than-human forms of sentience, sociality, intelligence, and communication, denies us from looking beyond a flawed, narrow lens of formulating meaning from our landscapes.

The design of VINE Sanctuary makes it clear that it is a place *for* the animals. Some fallen trees from storms were repurposed as perches or scratching posts for the animals. The design of the spaces or structures was not aesthetically motivated. I also noticed immediately that there are no public visitor paths. Paths are made for vehicular and machinery access and serve secondarily for human walking. Places to sit for notetaking are rocks, patches of moss under the shade of a tree, or atop the seat of the tractor; in many cases, these spots were susceptible to the curiosity of animal residents (Marble the goat once tore the title page out of my copy of Field Guide to Nature of New England, and Ozzy the cow interrupted my interview with a staff member). There are also no indoor spaces for human visitors.

The sanctuary's design represents a direct challenge to anthropocentrism. The view of the landscape by the staff at VINE Sanctuary is that it serves the animal community first and foremost. Each resident has a chance to live in refuge and community upon the land apart from human utility. This simple ethos presents a way of approaching design that is nonhuman-centric, in which formerly-exploited animals are subjects of design and worthy of considerations that maximize opportunities for self-actualization.

Nonhuman-centric landscapes do not come at the expense

of fostering relationships and opportunities for humans to experience and find meaning in the landscape. As a researcher, being aware of inherent anthropogenic biases and being open to alternative forms of knowledge possessed by the staff members and the animal residents were essential to interpreting the research of the multispecies landscape.



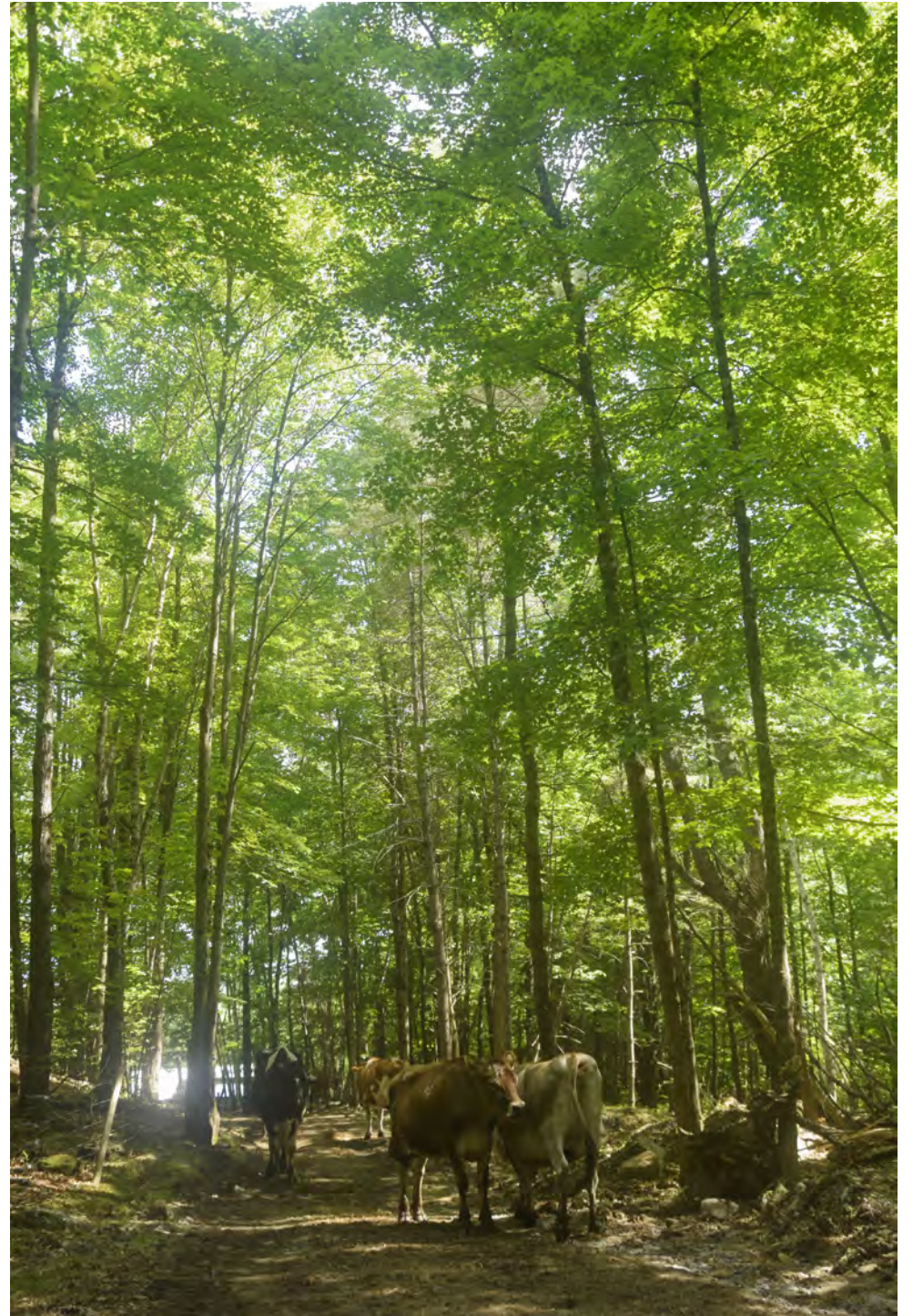
CHAPTER 3
THE FOREST

July 6, 2022 | 1 pm

Magnolia (front) and Splash (back) foraging around the logs in the forest.



Aerial photograph of the sanctuary up the hill: Middle Pasture, Back Pasture, and forests.





The first time I encountered cows in the forest was on my first day at VINE Sanctuary. Their presence in the wild context of the forest was uncanny; the forest is not where most people imagine cows wandering, foraging, and resting. Growing up near a rural area, I am used to cows dotted amongst bucolic agricultural landscapes in my casual roadside passings. However, cows grazing contentedly in the countryside is a staged façade. Most cows in the United States (an estimated 70% as of 2019) are raised on concrete, highly concentrated feedlots or factory farms, an intentionally invisibilized landscape that comes into conflict with pastoral associations of cattle geographies. I was taken aback by the rare scene at the sanctuary: here, cows are inhabitants of a forest habitat. From the entrance into the forest, I saw their tan, brown, or spotted bodies in the distance, blended with the earthen colors and multicolored textures of the forest's shrub layer, their large bellies a canvas for the dappled light. They take after their aurochs ancestors, who were last known to have inhabited Poland's Jaktówow Forest in the early 17th century.

As I approached, the individual features of each cow resident came to view. With the help of sanctuary staff members, I began to learn their names and stories of abandonment, abuse, and recovery. Learning names is how humans begin knowing one another. Over the next few weeks, the cows learned who I am through my appearance and actions, and I did the same to get to know them. I observed the surprising nimbleness of the cows as they navigated through the forests' soft, rocky, and root-covered ground. I witnessed the pair of troublemakers, Faith and Splash, stick together in their mischievous day-to-day excursions. Adoptive moms and daughters graze side by side, following the paths the cows forged overtime on the forest floor. Each day, the herd ventured into different corners of the forest, but they also returned to the same enclaves to gather and rest collectively. Spending hours in the forest with them during the research period allowed me to learn about their social tendencies and the

community they collectively created in the forest. These findings will be delved into further detail in the chapter, the **Cows on the Hills**.

The boundary between the sanctuary and the forest is nonexistent: the sanctuary is born of and belongs to the forest. The forest, which comprises roughly three-quarters of VINE Sanctuary, is where the animals find solace and exercise tremendous agency. The forest acts as an intermediary in which we occupy and understand how the sanctuary is relational with the entire natural community beyond its fences and pasture boundaries. The sanctuary's dry red oak-white pine forest, in its predominantly southern facing slopes, consists of red maple, sugar maple, red oaks, paper birch, and white pine, many of which behave as early successional species,¹³ an indication of Vermont's history of deforestation.

The sanctuary's residents can flourish from the forest's abundance. The forest lures residents with its diverse understory plants to feed on, rough textures to scratch and rub against, soft earth to dig or rest in, and shade to seek respite under. Cows up the hill are free to roam in and out of the forest and are not brought back in at night. They are essentially semi-feral, living in semi-isolation from human society with the wild forest as their home.

The forest sheds light on the history of the land and the memory of the cows' evolution from the wild. At the sanctuary, new stories of recovery, community, and self-actualization are created that allow us to see its possibilities for multispecies worlding. This chapter will unveil the story of the forest of VINE Sanctuary through three parts: Vermont's forest evolution, the spatial footprint of the sanctuary, and the entangled rewilding of the forest and resident cows. Taken together, the sanctuary is a place to reclaim and re-nurture a historically severed belonging between cow and forest.

CLEARING FORESTS AND GRAZING ANIMALS: VERMONT'S FOREST EVOLUTION

The task of looking at VINE Sanctuary's forest today begins with tracing its evolution. VINE Sanctuary's exact land use history is unconfirmed, but it is suspected by the staff members that the site was once used for logging and sheep grazing, two major industries that boomed and fell in Vermont's history. Vermont's history of deforestation and domestic animals are entangled. The residents, especially the cows and sheep of VINE Sanctuary have lineages rooted in this history of changes in the land.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Vermont's ecological community suffered like never before with the increase in human population, animal agriculture, mining, logging, industry, and new transportation infrastructure. National and international market forces pushed the land further to its limits. The timber industry decimated forests for logging and moved on without any reforestation, leaving behind barren land unable to regenerate on its own.¹⁴

Paralleling the transformation of the forest into a profit-generating resource was the transformation of sustenance animals into commercial commodities. By the mid-1800s, agriculture began to shift focus from sustenance and crops to livestock, specifically cattle for dairy and beef and sheep for wool. Fodder for the animals (hay) became the primary crop.¹⁵ Sheep, who fared well for the farmers on Vermont's soils, superseded Vermont's human population sixfold in the 1840s.¹⁶ By 1870, about three-quarters of the state of Vermont was classified as farmland, completely inverting the ratio between forest and agricultural land from just a century before.

The old-growth forests have nearly disappeared. Little remains of the pre-settlement old-growth forests, which once covered most of Vermont: fewer than two thousand acres are identified in Vermont.¹⁷ VINE Sanctuary's forests are at the beginning stages of succession, populated predominantly with

birches, maples, hemlock, oaks, and white pines, compared to beech and spruce which take longer to establish or were favored more by the timber industry.

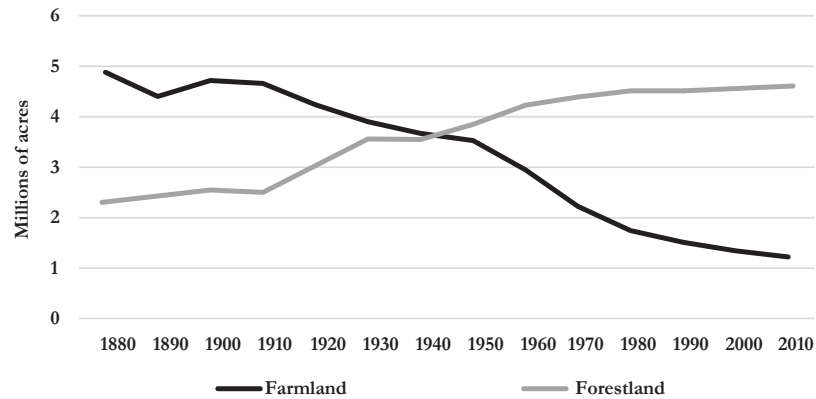
Fortunately, the forest began to slowly return at the turn of the century. “The Story of Vermont” describes how a period of population and industrial *degrowth* became an opportunity for forest *regrowth*:

“...it was a time of recovery. Much of the land cleared by settlers slowly returned to forest. The conservation movement began, leading to the establishment of programs to manage uses of the state’s forests, waters, and wildlife, to restore populations of some species, and to the purchase of lands by governments at all levels for a variety of conservation purposes. The Vermont landscape remained dynamic, but during this period the general trend of change was itself altered: humans went from clearing the forest to actively and passively aiding its return.”¹⁸

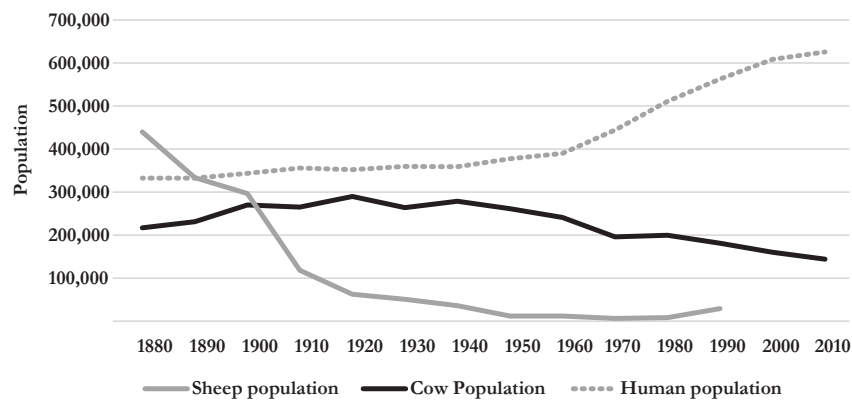
As the United States expanded with dreams of the West—with all its flatter, vaster, and more suitable agricultural lands—almost all sectors of agriculture in Vermont declined. Between 1900 and 1930, sheep farming declined by 83% alongside other falling crops. Wheat fell by 88%, corn fell by 90%, and oats fell by 60%.¹⁹ Windsor, the county where VINE Sanctuary is located, was amongst the counties with the highest farm abandonment. On the contrary, dairy was the one agricultural industry that saw an increase as it became specialized. Dairy farming became the emerging trend that continued to define what is the modern working landscape of Vermont.²⁰

By the 2000s, the forests have generally stabilized. Today, the forest of Vermont remains a working forest in the realms of stewardship, management, and conservation. In contrast to its lowest point in history, the forests now account for 78% of the state’s forest cover, 80% of which is owned privately by individuals and families. These forest owners are diverse in the way they use the forest and are integral to the “Buy Local” movement through

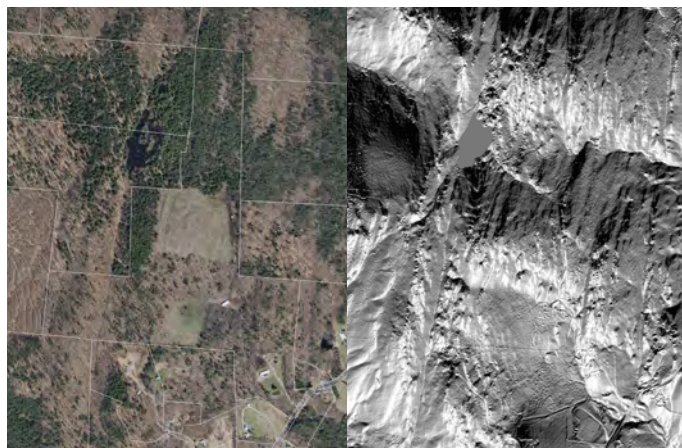
Vermont Farmland and Forestland Acreage (1880-2010)



Vermont Sheep, Cow, and Human Populations (1880-2010)



Data from *The Story of Vermont*.



Left: Google satellite image showing VINE Sanctuary in autumn, making evergreen trees visible on northern facing slopes. Right: Aspect map of VINE Sanctuary.



the exchange of lumber, biomass, firewood, recreation, and tourism.

While the reforestation and change of attitude create a hopeful story of regrowth, there is still work to be done. The evolution of the forest has shown that the landscape is shaped by climatic, market, and cultural forces, all of which are rapidly shifting today. While farmed animal sanctuaries tend to the immediate needs of abused, abandoned, or injured farmed animals who need rescue and refuge, some are also working toward making meaningful, higher-level changes in the socio-cultural and agricultural landscape.

When VINE Sanctuary moved from the Delmarva Peninsula to central Vermont in 2010, the sanctuary focused more on taking in dairy industry refugees and advocated for them through education about the intersectional oppressions

that the dairy industry perpetuates,²¹ especially as larger and more concentrated operations become more commonplace than smaller, family-owned farms. It is a sensitive area to navigate, as tradition and pride in dairy are enfolded into the DNA of Vermont's land. To advocate for the animals' inherent rights to not be exploited for human use is often taken to be an attack on dairy farming and even the locavore movement themselves.

In the recovery of the forests, it took tremendous efforts from local communities and the federal government in addition to market shifts to protect the forests' rights to exist in responsible relationships with humans. Perhaps a near-future in which the shifts in land use and imaginations of more just economies will have a common ground for all who deeply care about the land and the wellbeing and rights of the animals and humans upon it.



CARVING THE PASTURES FROM THE FOREST: THE SPATIAL FOOTPRINT OF THE SANCTUARY

The act of removing trees at the sanctuary for the pastures was an act of design. In 2010, the Middle Pasture up the hill and the Commons were carved out, and in 2013, the Back Pasture was carved out. Altogether about 20 acres of trees were removed, creating large areas for grazing, a spatial organization for sanctuary sub-communities, and physically varied conditions for the residents. From a practical standpoint, clearings provide higher visibility for searching for cow residents and overseeing their health.

VINE Sanctuary's founder patrice jones told me of how she wrestled with the idea of cutting trees for pasture. Cofounder Miriam also mentioned that she regrets clearing some of the trees, once she observed just how much the cows love being in the forest. Roughcutting is a tree removal process that leaves behind the trees' roots and about one to two feet of above-ground trunk. In holding the roots and leaving the stumps visible, the remaining surface condition doesn't hide what was done to the forest. These pastures are now a field of protruding stumps with nascent pasture grass around them. The choice of roughcutting the trees, rather than clearcutting, was intended to be honest about the decision to clear forest for pasture. It is a humbling reminder that no place or philosophy is free from making difficult sacrifices.

Ever since the rough-cutting events, most of the forest has been preserved. More than half of the sanctuary's forest is reserved for its wild members beyond the fence. During my time at the sanctuary, I've seen eastern gray squirrels, wild turkeys, white-tailed deer, white-footed deer mice, mallard ducks, hawks, and ospreys passing through and above the forest. Some staff members have reportedly seen wolves and black bears, although the electric fence generally keeps them from coming too close to the sanctuary residents. Both wild and domesticated animal inhabitants of the sanctuary live in relative peace, partly owed to a



Nina grazing in the Middle Pasture, where stumps of rough-cut trees remain.



The pasture is a field of protruding stumps, each marking a piece of the forest's history.

degree of separation enabled by the fence.

No trees have been intentionally cut down since the creation of the pastures, although tumultuous weather often knocks over weaker trees at the edges of the forest. These fallen trees are often repurposed around the sanctuary as play or scratching structures. This is just one example of many of VINE Sanctuary's upcycling efforts, by which material life cycles are extended and their purposes are renewed. Many structures around the sanctuary are made of reused palette boards, metal sheeting, wood planks, truck hoods, bowling lockers, and old metal gates.

WILDNESS

As I walked with a staff member, Pomme, the echos of a flock of wild birds flying overhead rang through the forest. Pomme wondered, "The birds have been very vocal lately...are they telling us something? Are they seeing something we cannot?"

Wild birds do not see property lines or constructed boundaries between wild and domesticated landscapes. From their vantage points, they experience the continuum between geographically distant landscapes and remind us that all landscapes are relational. They show the importance of unhindered movement and agency. In the treetops, they also do not differentiate the cows from their wild neighbors, such as the deer, in the forest.

In Sand County Almanac, Aldo Leopold enthusiastically



Ivory and Orchid at the edge of the forest.

marveled at behaviors of wild animals, such as pigeons and deer. In the chapter, “On a Monument to the Pigeon,” Leopold describes how “the pigeon loved his land: he lived by the intensity of his desire for clustered grape and bursting beechnut, and by his contempt of miles and seasons...his love was for present things, and these things were present somewhere; to find them required only the free sky, and the will to ply his wings.”²² These descriptions demonstrate that he believed these animals are joyous, free, and self-determining agents in the land. Leopold then defined a land ethic, referring to human’s ethical responsibility to the land community which is interconnected between the animals, plants, soils, and water upon the land.²³ He emphasized the role of humans in conserving the integrity of the ecological community, noting, “The farmer who clears the woods off a 75 per cent slope, turns his cows into the clearing, and dumps its rainfall, rocks,

and soil into the community creek, is still (if otherwise decent) a respected member of society.”²⁴ Here, the character of the farmer represents human obligations, the creek represents the wild, and the society represents the land. The cows are conflated with the human; they are objects and resources to support human utility. The land ethic privileges the status of wild animals and does not consider how farmed animals too may “strive for safety, prosperity, comfort, long life, and dullness.”²⁵

The forest is where we can observe two notions of “community.” The first is the ecological sense of community, reflected as part of Leopold’s definition of a land community. This community refers to populations of multiple species sharing a common habitat that “highlights a particular territorial claim, the antisociality of focusing on individual creatures, and changes over time in who lives where and how.”²⁶ The focus on the collective well-being of the group is often concerned with saving some species while sacrificing others, with little regard for individual beings and their social well-being. The sense of community as a territorial claim is used in forest recovery and land management, which may deem that if activities of the sanctuary’s cows are harmful to the forest, they ought to be controlled or sacrificed. This view is anthropocentric because it is ultimately up to humans to determine what and who has more value.

The second meaning of community is the social sense of community, in which practices of mutual support, kinship, and common identity and interests are formed. This second definition pertains to the mission of VINE Sanctuary to foster a refuge for a community of farmed animals who would otherwise be exploited or harmed in various ways. VINE Sanctuary is a community that practices empathy by providing a home for those who need it at any moment. It is deemed a healthy community when its individuals are flourishing.

When I see the sanctuary’s cow society in the forests, an uncommon setting for such domesticated animals, the notions

of community and wildness are brought into a new light. The cows have undoubtedly become part of the ecological community in many ways. They affect the survival of certain plant species through the manure they produce, the plant palettes they eat, and their physical bodily immersion into the environment. They are intertwined with the cyclical exchange of resources within the forest's ecological community, which intersects with regional exchanges of resources. Their life spans are no longer dictated by an economically determined timeline. At the same time, the cows have formed a social community, a complex herd of individuals with rights to the land. They experience individual joys, kinship, and safety. Their contentment and access to the land contribute to the collective flourishing of the community.

The division formed by the prioritization of wild animals over domesticated animals is theoretically frequented by animal rights activists and conservationists standing at opposite ends. The former advocates for individual bodies and the latter advocates for saving species and communities over individuals.²⁷ Domesticated animals, removed from their wildness, are treated as machines, an early concept rooted in Descartes' philosophy on the distinction between man and animal, and by extension, domestic and wild.

The sanctuary's forests offer reconciliation for this divide. This landscape of sanctuary has the potential to bridge the disparate narratives of domesticated animals and wild ecologies. It presents a chance for cows to experience a form of wild and to become part of the ecological community by inhabiting within it. Their entanglement with the natural community is visible and inseparable. Henry David Thoreau, before the industrial animal agricultural era, even knew that wildness in domesticated animals is a form of dignity:

"I love to see the domestic animals reassert their native rights—any evidence that they have not wholly lost their original wild habits and vigor; as when my neighbor's cow breaks out of her pasture early in the spring and boldly swims the river, a cold, gray tide, twenty-five feet

*or thirty rods wide, swollen by melted snow. It is the buffalo crossing the Mississippi. This exploit confers some dignity on the herd in my eyes,—already dignified. The seeds of instinct are preserved under the thick hides of cattle and horses, like seeds in the bowels of the earth, an indefinite period."*²⁸

In the forest, the multiple conceptions of wildness are in relation to the residents' individual journeys that brought them to the sanctuary. Rewilding denotes a return to historical normalcy, bodily autonomy, and collective sovereignty. The new-growth forest is on its journey to rewild, after retiring from the logging and animal agriculture industries. The forest and multispecies community of animals and plants are rediscovering their agency and growing old together.





The Back Pasture cows in the “Summertime Bedroom,” a well-frequented area with turned over soil for rest and congregation.



Sumo, a laid back Hereford cow with a past of jumping over fences when confined for too long, is emerging out of the forest.



CHAPTER 4
THE SOIL

June 16, 2022 | 9am

Ivory



Mounds of waste in the Back Pasture, becoming new foraging grounds after new plant growth takes over.



Cow manure droppings dot the sanctuary's landscape, left to be disintegrated back into the earth. However, in one area up the hills, large mounds of waste—composed predominantly of cow manure, hay, straw, and other waste products—pile up throughout the year. These waste mounds enlarge with each daily barn cleanup. Occasionally, staff members form a new mound with a bulldozer. Each year, the mounds aggregate, forming a waste landscape that becomes new grounds for plant growth, enticing residents who eagerly climb the mounds to enjoy the bounty.

These mounds are a visual analog of the time that has passed and the regenerative cycles that mediums become entangled in. Over time, they become covered with vegetation whose roots meld with the sanctuary's native vegetation. The cows who graze upon the new mounds form new earthen paths on the vegetative surfaces. I too have trodden over this new terrain with them, taking note of the new plant species that have taken root in these very disturbed soils.

This area functions as a dumping ground for animal waste, a place that may seem comparable to the on-site dumping grounds at farms, where manure accumulates before being trucked off to other fields to be sprayed or directly applied to the soil as nutrient-rich fertilizer. At Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), which are classified as an operation with over 1000 animal units (although Large CAFOs have at least 10,000 animal units), purple and green cesspools contain manure and wastewater. CAFOs are also classified by the methods by which they discharge waste into the water supply. The classification of CAFOs was a direct result of the 1972 Clean Water Act. While regulations have improved, the sheer concentration of animals continues to cause low standards of living and poses serious environmental risks with the contamination of surface and groundwater and overloading the soil with macronutrients.

At the sanctuary, the manure remains on-site and becomes a medium for new plant growth, with roots retaining



what would otherwise contaminate waterways. The amount of cows at the sanctuary, which is low compared to a farm, means that the application of manure on the land does not overload it. The manure aids the soil in the production of new vegetation, increasing soil organic matter and biological activity.

However, the presence of manure does affect the plant species that grow upon it, oftentimes favoring species that fare well in disturbed soils. Most evidently, the waste mounds are populated with a plant called the stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*), commonly identified as an invasive weed that spreads vigorously. They are efficient biodynamic accumulators, gathering the nutrients from the rich soil and storing them in their tissues. Nettles are often used medicinally and for food. It is a common forage crop for the sanctuary's residents, nonhuman and human alike. A staff member at the sanctuary who enjoys foraging on raw stinging nettles

showed me a clever way to eat the plant without allowing my skin to encounter the irritating “stinging” chemicals underneath their leaves.

Anna Tsing has described foraging as an opening to a discovery: “mushroom collecting brings us somewhere else—to the unruly edges and seams of imperial space, where we cannot ignore the interspecies interdependencies that give us life on earth.”²⁹ Amongst other weeds of the sanctuary—such as clover, goutweed, garlic mustard, wild strawberry, sensitive fern, and johnsongrass—the stinging nettle's abundance bring foraging sanctuary residents much joy while shedding light on such interspecies interdependencies between all biotic members of the sanctuary. Carrying their giant bodies over soft mounds of soil and waste, cow residents wander along the unruly edges, where newly emerging gardens of weedy forest crops grow.

EVERYONE WILL RETURN TO THE SOIL

A fundamental aspect of farmed animal sanctuaries is that residents live the rest of their lives there. Their bodies belong to themselves, not for human use. The time will come when old age, health issues from being selectively bred, or other foreseen and unforeseen illness will take their lives. These are moments that staff members must be emotionally prepared for, but it does not mean that losing a community member ever becomes easy. A loss in the community is often followed by periods of grief and memorializing for various sanctuary residents, human and nonhuman alike, especially if they shared powerful relationships with the deceased. I was fortunate to not have experienced such moments during the time I spent there, but staff members have shared with me their experiences with these profoundly heavy moments in the sanctuary's twenty-plus years of existence.

There is a hole in the Commons called the “just in case” hole. This hole gaping in the middle of the pasture is a burial ground “just in case” of a death of a sanctuary animal resident, particularly for a larger animal such as a cow. This excavated void in the earth is a reminder of both the fraught reality and the eternity of sanctuary life. Sanctuary life is fraught in the sense that residents are often still dealing with lifelong ailments or chronic issues because of their pre-sanctuary histories in the animal agriculture industry, which has engineered their bodies to become efficient and profitable. These painful histories are embedded in their genetically altered DNA, holding trauma that is multiplied through every rapidly reproduced generation.

The hole marks the completion of a fulfilled life of flourishing at the sanctuary. For the body to belong to the sanctuary for eternity represents the final transition to self-actualization. In this sense, living in sanctuary means residents are safe enough to return to the soil—their first and final healing grounds—with dignity, regenerating for life anew.



The “just in case” hole (right).

CHAPTER 4

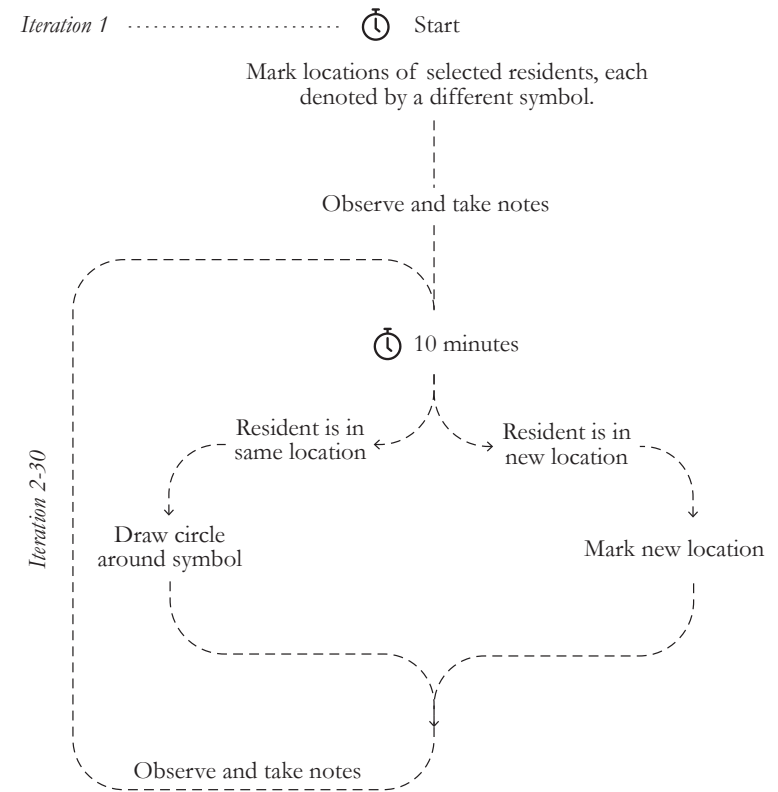
THE RESIDENTS

METHODOLOGY

I was inspired to create my own ethnographic methodology when the animal residents gave me clues about how to traverse and understand the landscape. In my first few days of observation, I discovered ways to better maneuver around the woods by following the narrow paths that the cows have paved over time. I was entranced by the nimbleness of the sheep, goats, and alpacas as they climbed over mounds, fallen branches, and boulders. I saw how chickens were actively shaping the ground through their hole-digging and path-paving within the Valley's dense vegetation.

The movement mapping method was conducted as follows: I traced and mapped the movements and locations of a few selected residents at regular time intervals (such as every 10 minutes) for a total about five contiguous hours per day. At each time interval, I marked the location of the resident, each denoted by a different symbol, along with the number of which iteration I was at. If the resident has not changed location, I drew a circle around their symbol. I repeated these steps for 30 iterations. I would do this starting at approximately the same time for three to four days in a row. This allowed me to observe movement and behavior over time while physically and even socially integrating with the communities I was observing, an important aspect of conducting any ethnography.

Diagram of movement mapping method:



Through this active observation and immersion, I began to understand dimensions of agency that included individual social tendencies, collectivity, engaging physically with spaces, and practiced routines over the course of multiple days of observation. These social dimensions of agency across the dynamic landscape uncovered the residents' embodied day-to-day experiences and demonstrate the individual and collective ways they have physically and socially recovered wfrom their fraught pasts and found refuge within the unique setting of the sanctuary.

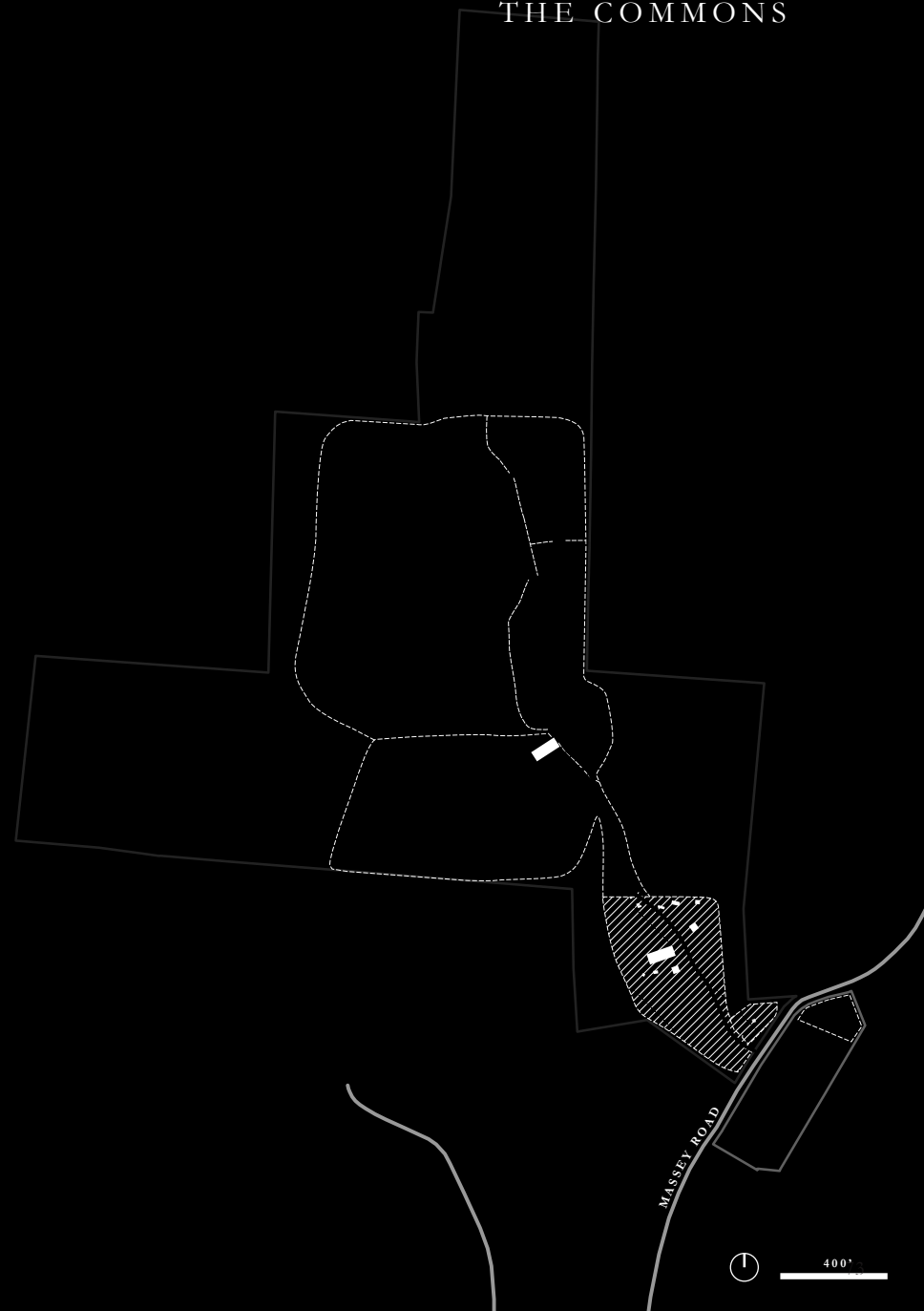


June 8, 2022 | 1:00pm

Autumn, Rose, Princess, and Prosecco at the hay ring in the Commons.

CHAPTER 4A

THE COMMONS















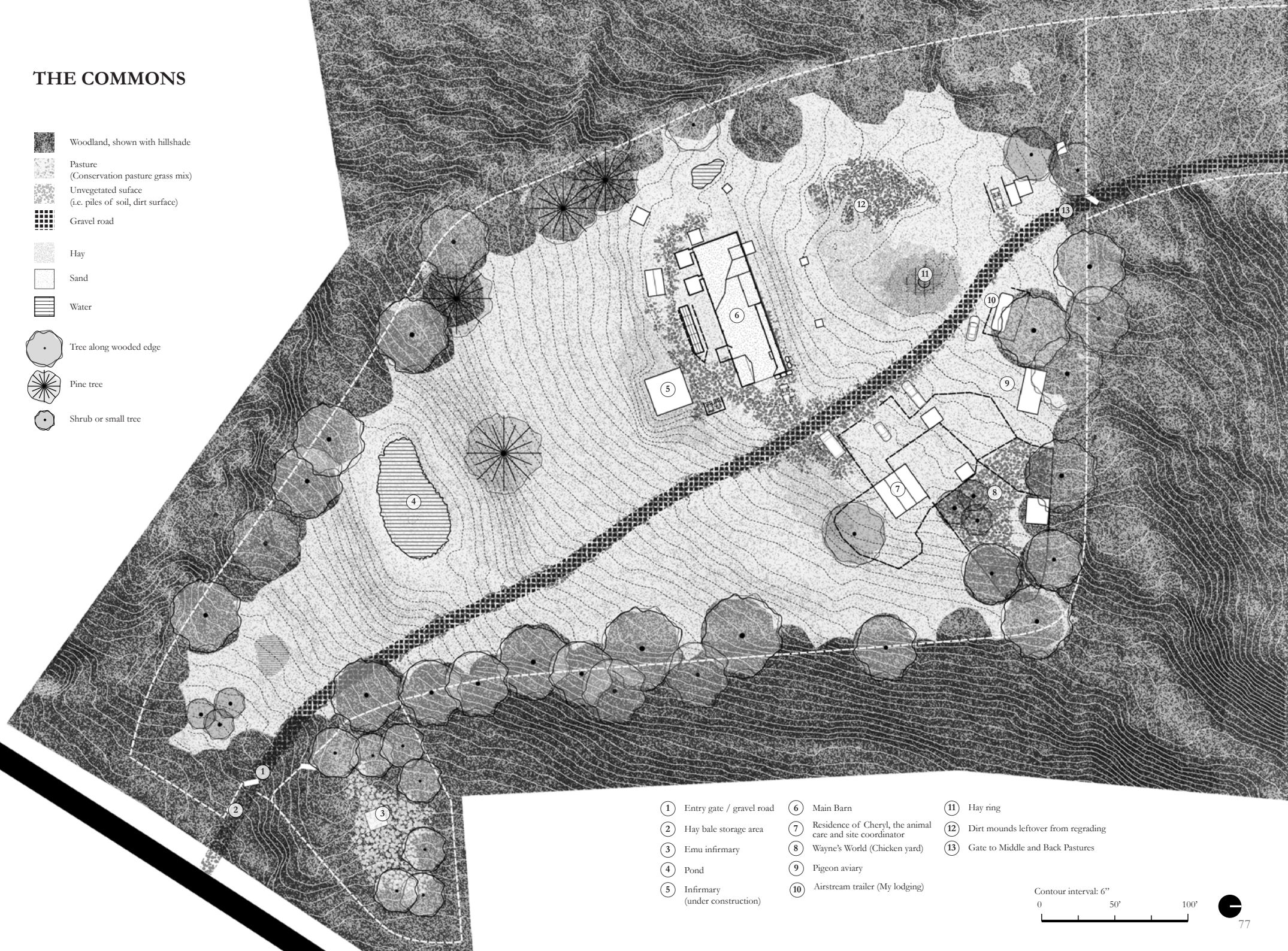
Aerial view of the Commons.



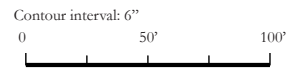
View of the inside of the barn when many residents congregate for a nap together.

THE COMMONS

-  Woodland, shown with hillshade
-  Pasture
(Conservation pasture grass mix)
-  Unvegetated surface
(i.e. piles of soil, dirt surface)
-  Gravel road
-  Hay
-  Sand
-  Water
-  Tree along wooded edge
-  Pine tree
-  Shrub or small tree




- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| ① Entry gate / gravel road | ⑥ Main Barn | ⑪ Hay ring |
| ② Hay bale storage area | ⑦ Residence of Cheryl, the animal care and site coordinator | ⑫ Dirt mounds leftover from regrading |
| ③ Emu infirmary | ⑧ Wayne's World (Chicken yard) | ⑬ Gate to Middle and Back Pastures |
| ④ Pond | ⑨ Pigeon aviary | |
| ⑤ Infirmary (under construction) | ⑩ Airstream trailer (My lodging) | |



FIELDNOTES AND MOVEMENT MAPPING IN THE COMMONS

Day 1



Legend:

- OTTY (cat)
- Friends
- X Marks (goat)
- ★ PROCEED (goat)
- PROCEED (goat)
- ✦ Marks (paper)

Notes:

1. Starts 12-30 pm Temp 71°
 - in lower down points (barn)
 - at 1st case
 - around etc in the commons (up to in case)
2. Summary
 - Many dropped off; only stayed at 1st but others are said to have had a sniffing my papers and getting into
3. People scratching at playground
4. OTTY proceeds to barn
5. PROCEED - moved to different corner of barn
6. Markle grazing outside barn with PROCEED (some spots) (both go to grass by her family)
7. Markle approached margin
8. Markle (barn) and PROCEED (barn) are visible
9. (Markle) PROCEED (barn) with other
10. Summary
 - PROCEED (barn) and PROCEED (barn)
 - PROCEED (barn) and PROCEED (barn)
 - PROCEED (barn) and PROCEED (barn)
11. PROCEED (barn) and PROCEED (barn)
12. PROCEED (barn) and PROCEED (barn)
13. PROCEED (barn) and PROCEED (barn)
14. PROCEED (barn) and PROCEED (barn)
15. PROCEED (barn) and PROCEED (barn)
16. PROCEED (barn) and PROCEED (barn)
17. PROCEED (barn) and PROCEED (barn)
18. PROCEED (barn) and PROCEED (barn)
19. PROCEED (barn) and PROCEED (barn)
20. PROCEED (barn) and PROCEED (barn)

Day 2



Legend:

- OTTY
- Friends
- X Marks
- ★ PROCEED
- PROCEED
- ✦ Marks

Notes:

1. Summary
2. Summary
3. Summary
4. Summary
5. Summary
6. Summary
7. Summary
8. Summary
9. Summary
10. Summary
11. Summary
12. Summary
13. Summary
14. Summary
15. Summary
16. Summary
17. Summary
18. Summary
19. Summary
20. Summary

Day 3



Legend:

- OTTY
- Friends
- X Marks
- ★ PROCEED
- PROCEED
- ✦ Marks

Notes:

1. Summary
2. Summary
3. Summary
4. Summary
5. Summary
6. Summary
7. Summary
8. Summary
9. Summary
10. Summary
11. Summary
12. Summary
13. Summary
14. Summary
15. Summary
16. Summary
17. Summary
18. Summary
19. Summary
20. Summary

PATHMAKING IN THE COMMONS

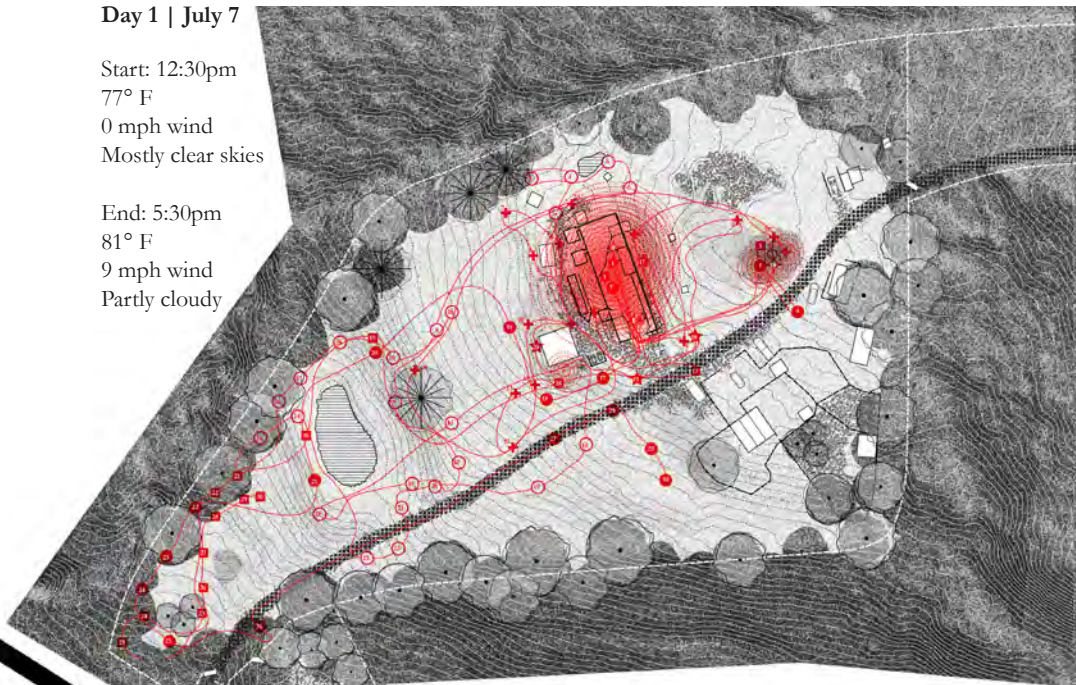
Selected residents for tracing:



Day 1 | July 7

Start: 12:30pm
77° F
0 mph wind
Mostly clear skies

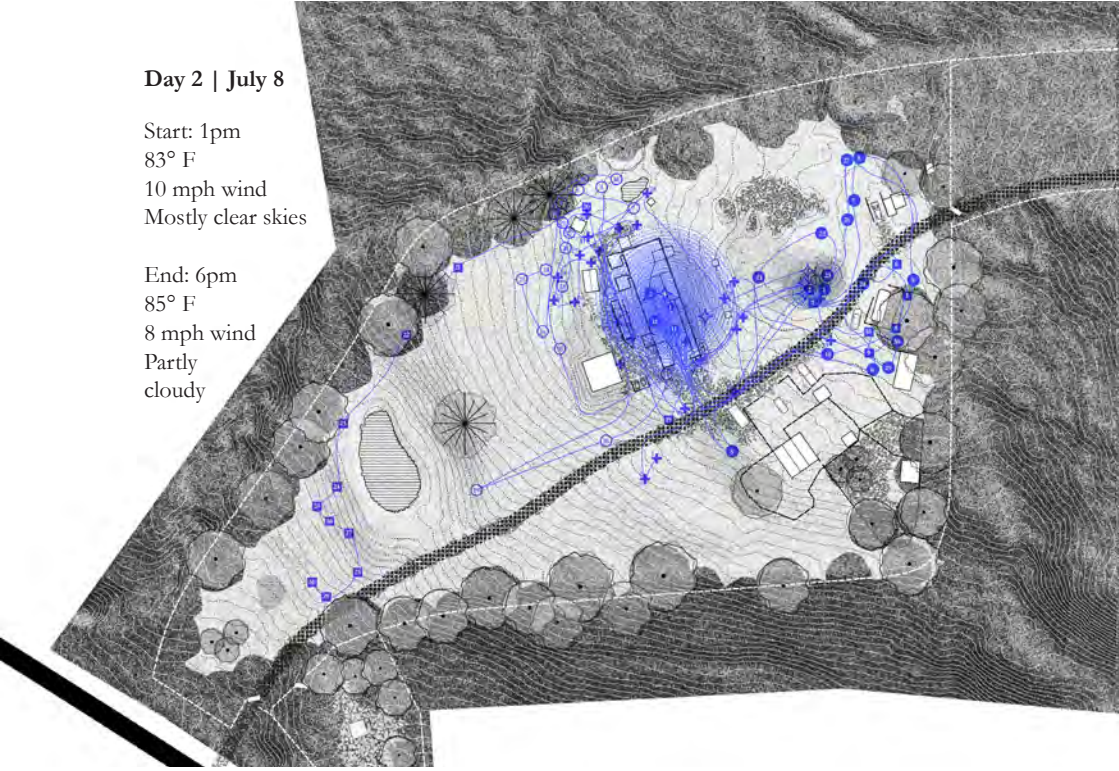
End: 5:30pm
81° F
9 mph wind
Partly cloudy



Day 2 | July 8

Start: 1pm
83° F
10 mph wind
Mostly clear skies

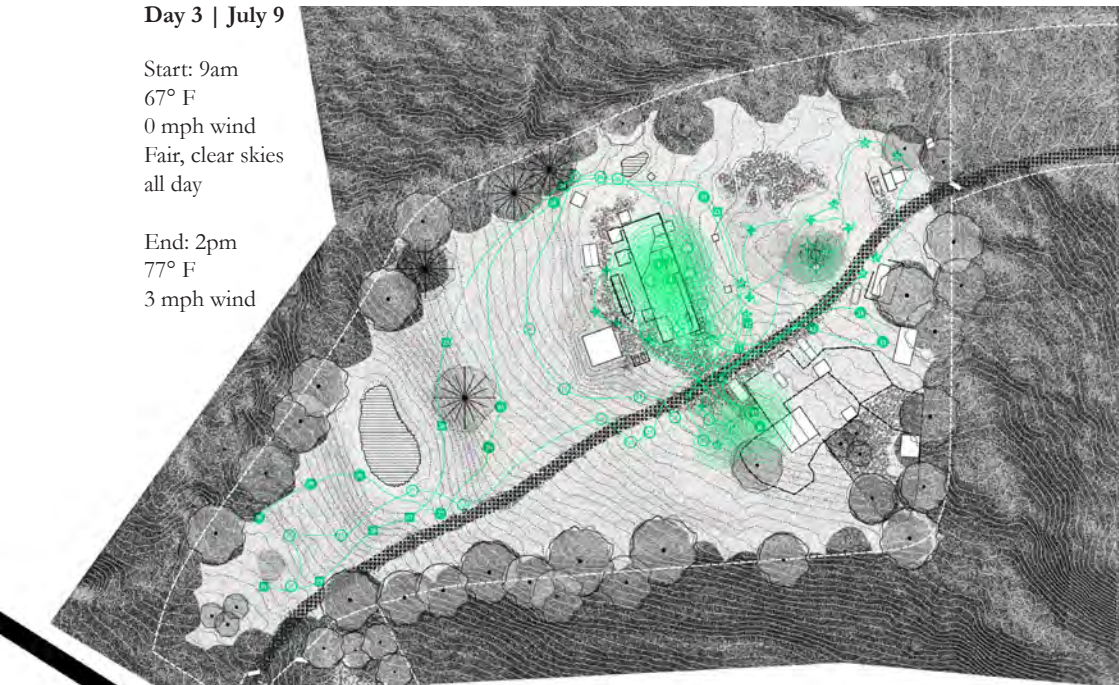
End: 6pm
85° F
8 mph wind
Partly cloudy



Day 3 | July 9

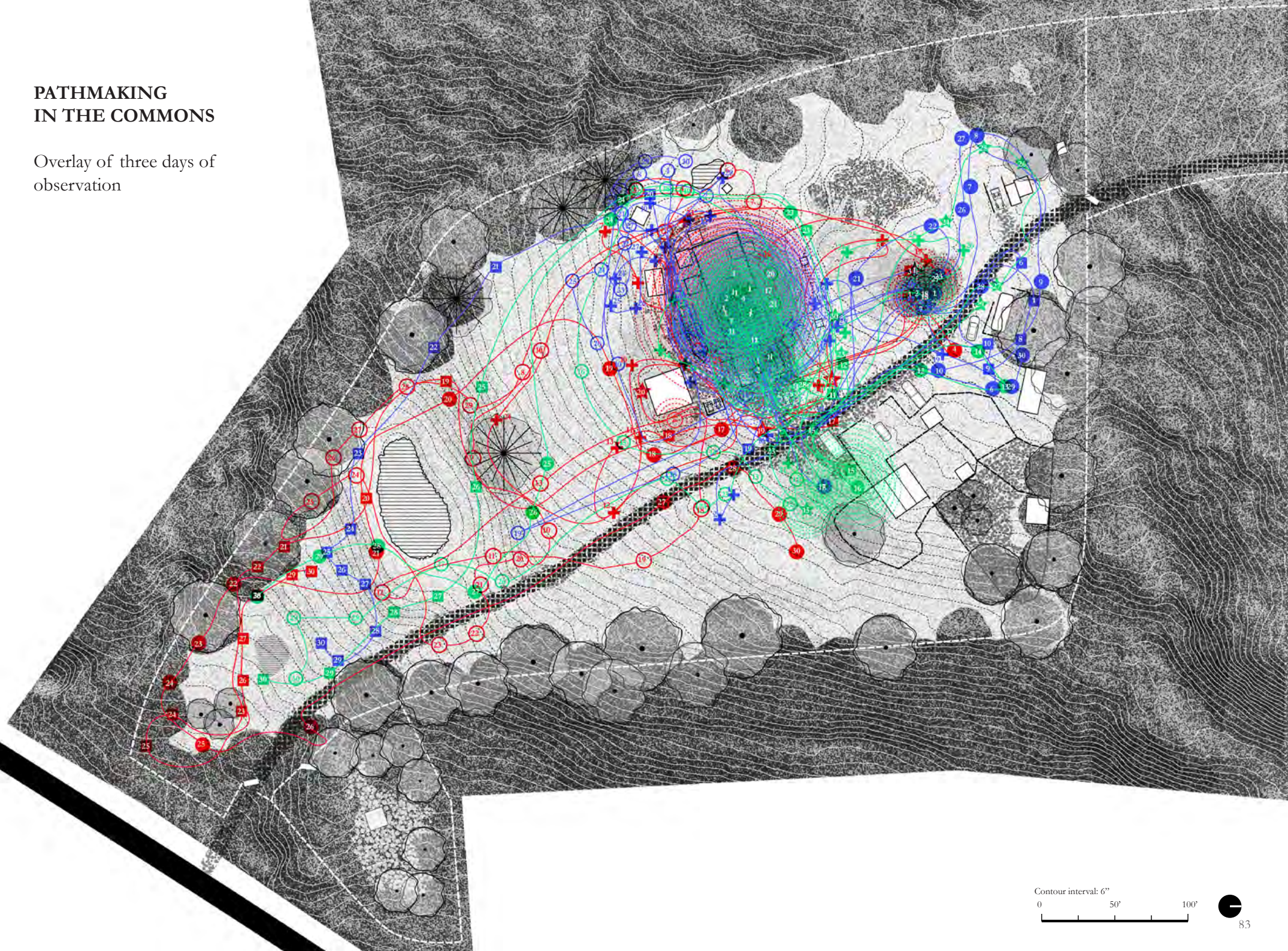
Start: 9am
67° F
0 mph wind
Fair, clear skies
all day

End: 2pm
77° F
3 mph wind



PATHMAKING IN THE COMMONS

Overlay of three days of
observation



Contour interval: 6"
0 50' 100'



INTERPRETING THE MOVEMENT MAPS

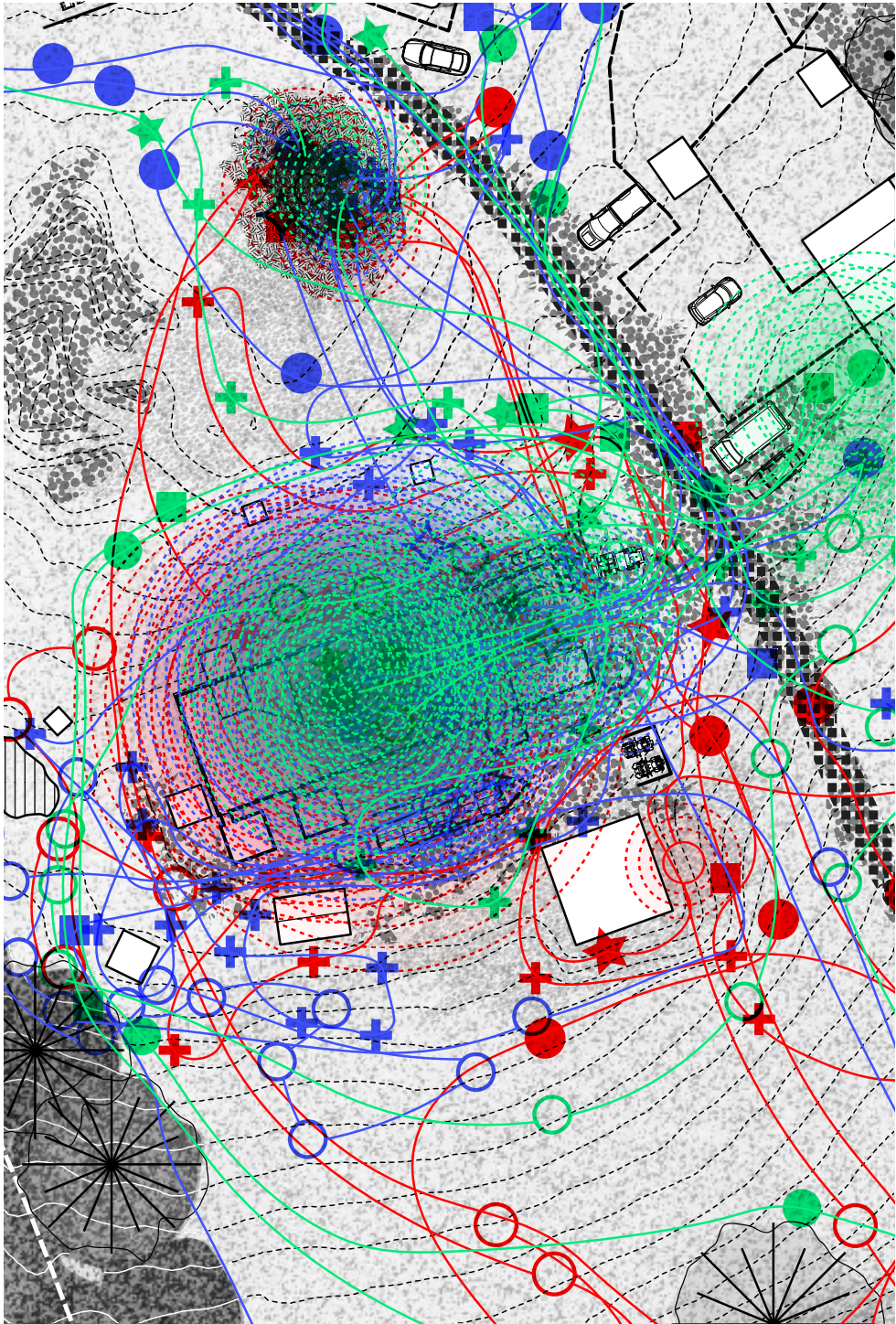
In the Commons, the patterns of movement were often rapid and dispersed spatially, reflecting this area as a bustling center of activity within the sanctuary. The Commons has the most diversity in species within its resident makeup than any other area of the sanctuary. This is reflected by the dynamic array of interactions with the landscape and between fellow residents that were documented.

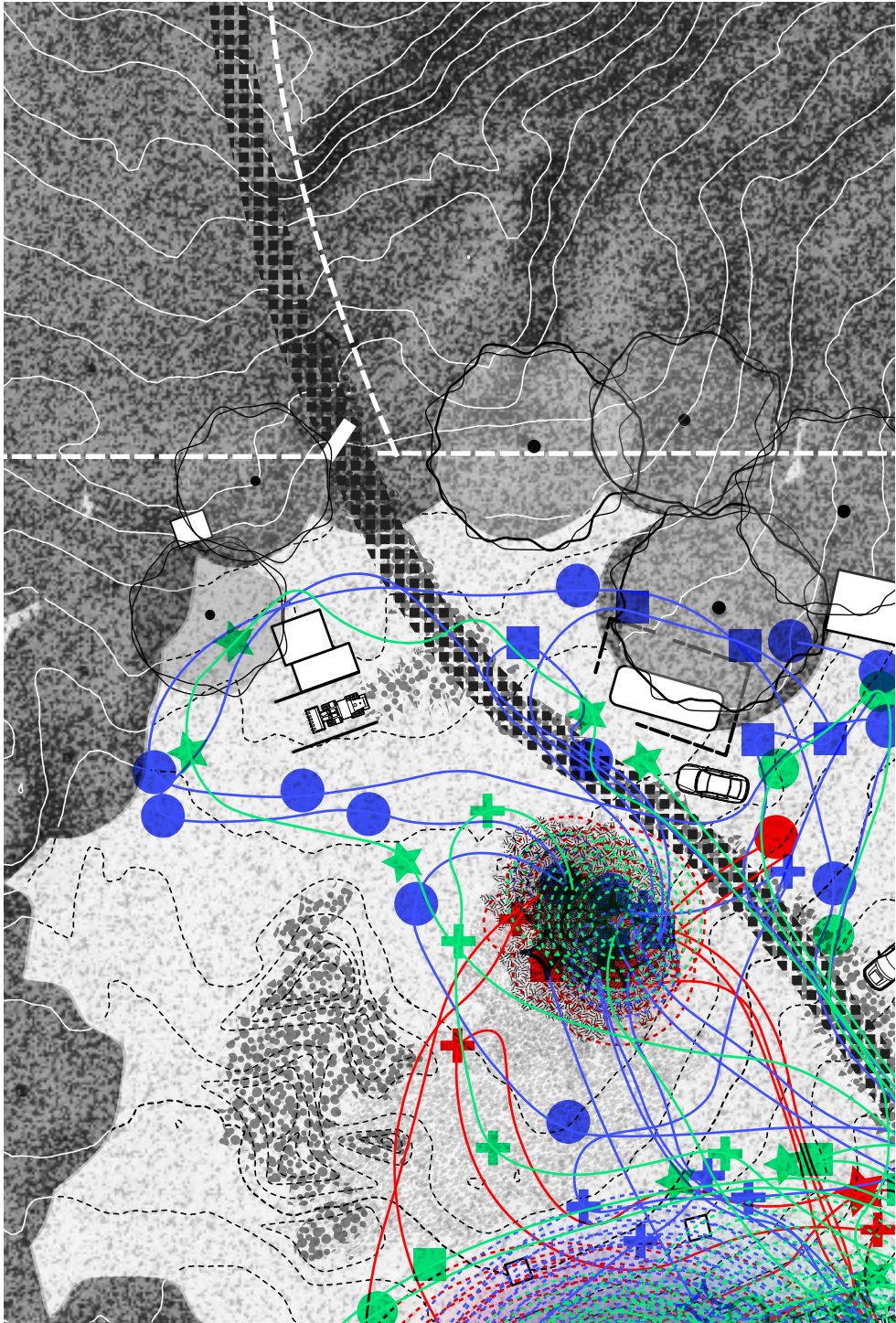
The maps show that residents formed areas of congregation, indicated on the maps by many large rings that depict residents resting or staying in place (to feed on hay, for example). Over the three days, I saw that each observed resident spent a great deal of resting time in the hoop barn, especially during the hottest portions of the day. Most of the residents also had their preferred spots to rest in the barn. Marble, for example, almost exclusively rests in a wooden bed structure filled with straw attached to one of the walls of the barn's interior. Max and Avalon, the two alpacas, rest together, most often in the back of the barn. Prosecco, who recently hurt his knee, rested longer than many of the others, which was surprising to me as I have an impression of Prosecco as being very rambunctious. Lucky and his family were the residents who spent the least time in the barn, opting to find shade under the large solar panel just south of the barn. These preferences indicate that the residents exercised personal placemaking tactics.

The barn acted as an intermediate stopping point between broader movements across the sanctuary. The barn is also where sound volume and diversity are most concentrated in the Commons. While residents moved in and out of the barn at various times of the observation period, there was a general pattern of when they would be exploring the landscape versus when they would be inside the barn. Generally, residents congregated in the middle-upper part of the Commons during the middle of the day. Later in the afternoon and evening, many residents migrated toward the lower half of the Commons'

pasture where they actively foraged and grazed, oftentimes together. This is a very generalized pattern, as every individual varied in preferences and day-to-day routines. In comparison to the movements mapped for the Cows on the Hills, collective gathering in the Commons was centered more on the hoop barn rather than enclaves in the forest.

Still, the residents maximized their exploration of the landscape across the days of observation, indicating that they were exercising their agency and designating certain areas for particular routines and activities with other members of their community, altogether comprising acts of placemaking. The hoop barn acted as a forum for collectivity in between these activities. Their tendencies to rest together in the barn and subsequently forage together on the terrain of the Commons reflect a social gravitation toward other residents of the community.





DAILY ROUTINE: “OPENING”

Each day begins with “opening.” At 6 am every summer morning, a staff member opens the Hills and another opens the Valley. The Commons in the Hills is where many of the opening activities occur. Birds are released from their overnight coops, water bowls are replaced, and those who need meds or special feed are tended to. Many of the residents, such as the cows and goats, who roam freely or sleep around the sanctuary overnight are counted. From my trailer, I could hear the sanctuary “opening” up as the sounds diversify and grow. Opening is the process of setting up a fresh new day for the residents, reserved just for them; it is not an invitation for outside visitors to enter this community.



Val, the only pig resident at the sanctuary, is receiving belly rubs from a staff member.

Pomme recalled the daily opening experience in an interview: “I try to consciously enjoy and appreciate everything. I really love the scent of fresh air in the morning, there’s just something about the morning air that’s different than during any other time.”³⁰ For the sanctuary’s human members, opening is a routine that is rewarding even in an atmospheric way as the sky transitions from night to day, and the energy of the landscape is enlivened by the residents who are ready to start another day.

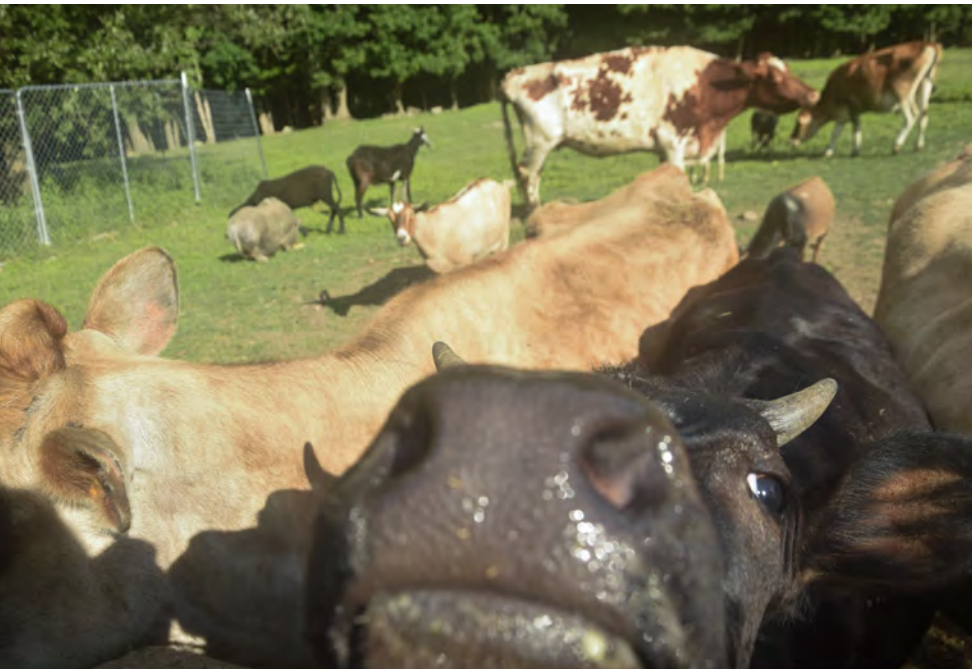


Many residents eating the last scraps of fresh hay at the hay ring. The trailer I stayed in during the research period is in view on the right.

WEEKLY RITUAL

Hannaford, an American supermarket chain, has a store in Springfield that gives its spoiled produce to VINE Sanctuary free of charge in about three to four 50-gallon containers each week. This exchange benefits both parties. The sanctuary's residents enjoy what is in their eyes fresh, diverse, and juicy produce. Hannaford managers reduce the weight of the unsold groceries that go to waste, thereby accommodating the governmental waste regulations. Just as it is some of the residents' favorite time of the week, distributing the food routinely was a highlight of my time at VINE Sanctuary.

The weekly Hannaford food distribution ritual shed light on residents' individual joy and attention to routine. In preparation



Mokka waiting for me to hand him Hannaford food directly.

for the distribution, I opened tin trash cans that would later contain the packaging that some produce was wrapped in. At the first sounds of the metal clanging, residents who are particularly keen on eating Hannaford food came rushing over, vocalizing to their fellow residents to join. Princess, the 17-year old Ayrshire cow, was often the first to skip down the hill toward the spot near the gate at which I stood with the produce in hand. Prosecco, the sanctuary's loudest and most fearless sheep, did the same.

While the hoarding around the food appeared chaotic, signs of order and routine were evident. Little fighting over food occurred. Certain cows like Princess and Mokka stood front stage, taking food directly into their mouths from my hand. Smaller residents, like the goats and sheep, stayed further back, waiting



Marble during the Hannaford ritual.

for the next melon to be chucked onto the ground. Lucky and her family of babydoll sheep are new members of the sanctuary and did not pay much attention—they might have more preoccupied with exploring their new home. Val, the sole pig at the sanctuary, often came out midway through the routine, picking up scraps. Many other residents—such as Josephine and Shadow the sheep and Avalon and Max the father and son alpaca duo—tended to merely spectate and mind their own business.

The Hannaford ritual displayed aspects of each resident's personalities and abilities to exercise choice that goes beyond their genetic scripts or assumed species behaviors. Their relationships with the ritual varied as they displayed different preferences, food motivations, and attitudes toward socialization.



Autumn during the Hannaford ritual.



Princess, Val, and Rose picking the last scraps of produce on the ground.

SOCIALIZING AND PLAYING

Lucky, a babydoll Southdown sheep and newest member of VINE Sanctuary, spent much more time exploring across more acreage than the other observed residents. She primarily stuck to her mom and sibling, skipping around the sanctuary from one grazing area to the next. I noticed that she was more often with her family than the rest of the residents. She also didn't rest inside the barn as often as the other residents, perhaps indicating that she is still in the process of integrating with the community as a newer member.

A similar family dynamic was observed with Max the alpaca, who often stayed by his father, Avalon. The pair were often seen napping and eating hay side by side. Marble and Pumpkinickel the goats arrived at the sanctuary together in January 2022, and while they are not related by blood, their companionship remained strong as they were often seen exploring the landscape together. Even with the new, distracting environment of the sanctuary, these members showed attachment to the companions and family they spent the most time with before becoming residents of the sanctuary.



Tiki and Breeze, two emu residents, are inseparable as they wander around the sanctuary.



Father and son duo, Max and Avalon, exploring a pile of tree branches and logs, remnants of a tree fallen after a storm.



Max the alpaca bending down to greet Tuktuk the sheep.



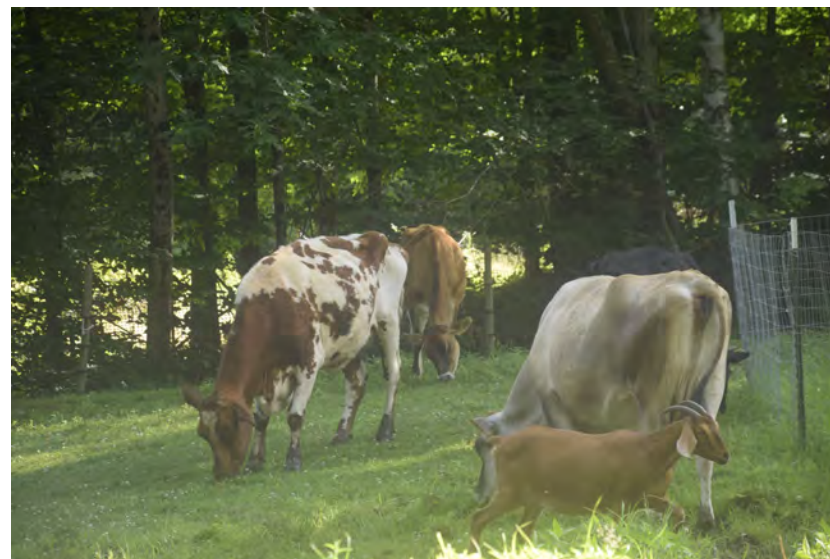
Limoncello and Tuk Tuk grazing side by side.

Bonds and relationships also transcend family and species kin. In the observation period, I watched as residents foraged and climbed mountains of soil in the same pairings or groups day after day.

One philosophy of agency hinges on the idea that to act in a group, which inherently has behavioral norms and standards, is to act in moral ways (to be moral is often argued as a prerequisite to having agency).³¹ Play behaviors also exhibit the agencies of animals individually and collectively.³² In these senses, the landscape of the sanctuary maximizes these forms of agency through its bounty of opportunities for collective and individual play.



Rose and Bishop sharing a meal.



Many residents grazing the Commons pasture at sunset.



Pumpernickel, Marble, and Mirana scratching at the play structures.



Marble skipping in and out of the upcycled tire.



Pumpnickel climbing and foraging nascent vegetation growing on a large mound of excavated soil.



Mirana foraging in mounds colonized by leafy weeds.



Autumn, an elderly 20-year-old resident, likes to rest under the shade of the trees while many other Commons residents prefer resting in the barn.



Father and son pair, Avalon and Max, at the hay ring.



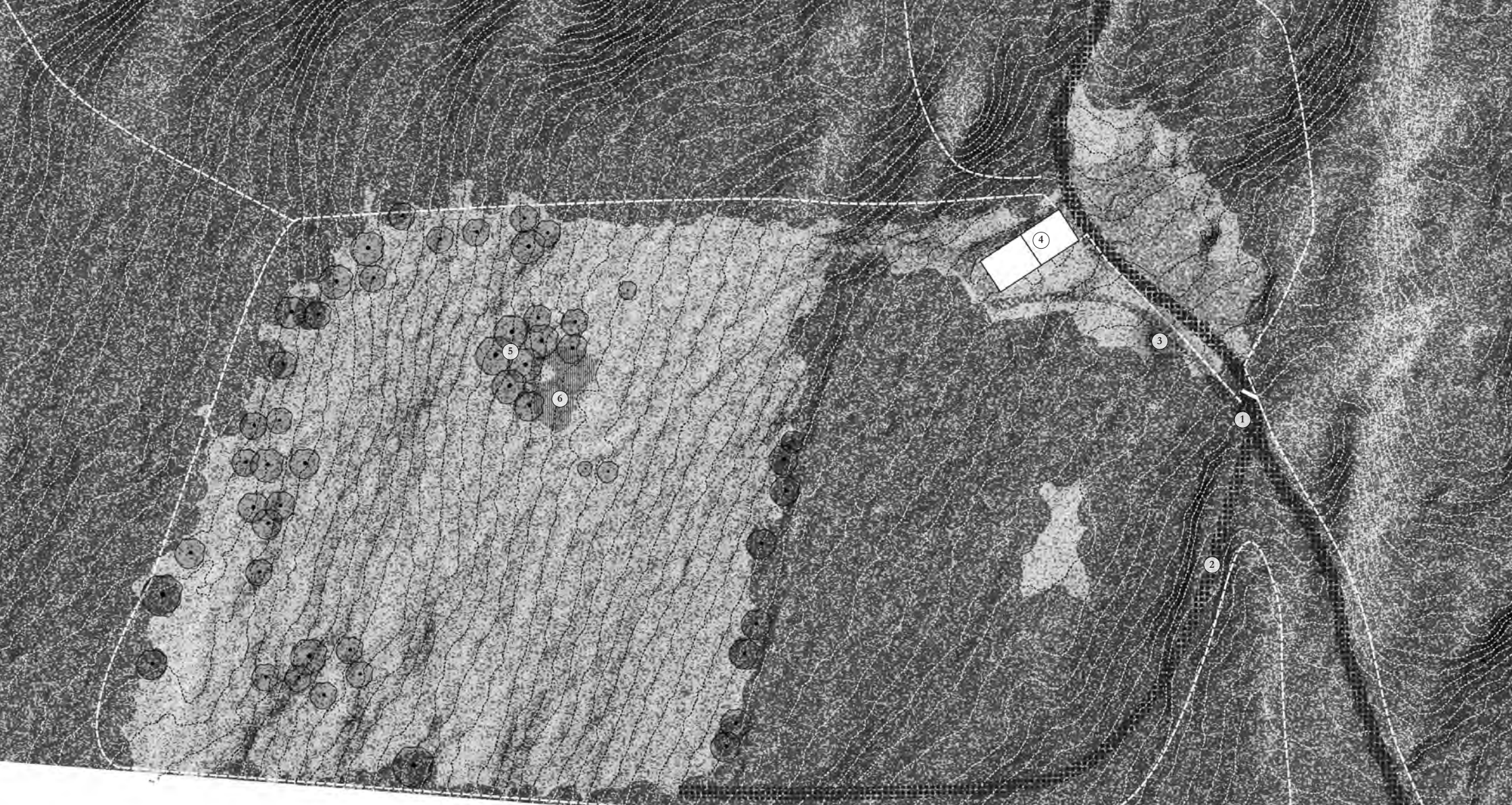
Chickens in “Wayne’s World,” a sub-community of the Commons. The chickens are quarantined during this time because of the prevailing Avian Flu. Normally, chicken residents join the rest of the multispecies members of VINE Sanctuary.

THE COMMUNITY UP THE HILLS









July 18, 2022 | 8:00 am

Aerial photograph of the Middle Pasture community in a patch of trees.




THE MIDDLE PASTURE & FORESTS

Total cow residents: 9

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|-------------------------------|
|  | Woodland, shown with hillshade |  | Hay |
|  | Pasture
(Rough cut tree stumps, shrubs, grasses, groundcover) |  | Sand
(barn ground surface) |
|  | Waste mounds or Unvegetated surface
(i.e. dirt or gravel, manure) | | |
|  | Gravel road | | |

- ① Entry to middle pasture
- ② ATV trail
- ③ Hay ring
- ④ Hoop barn & water troughs
- ⑤ Stand of trees
- ⑥ Retention pond

Contour interval: 1'
0 75 150'

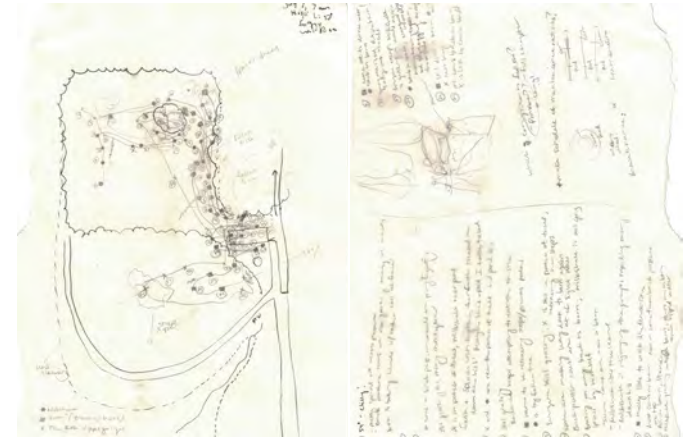



FIELDNOTES AND MOVEMENT MAPPING IN THE MIDDLE PASTURE AND FORESTS

Day 1



Day 2

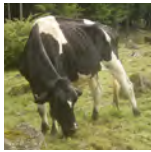


Day 3

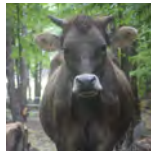


PATHMAKING IN THE MIDDLE PASTURE & FORESTS

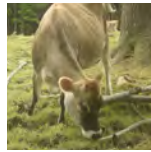
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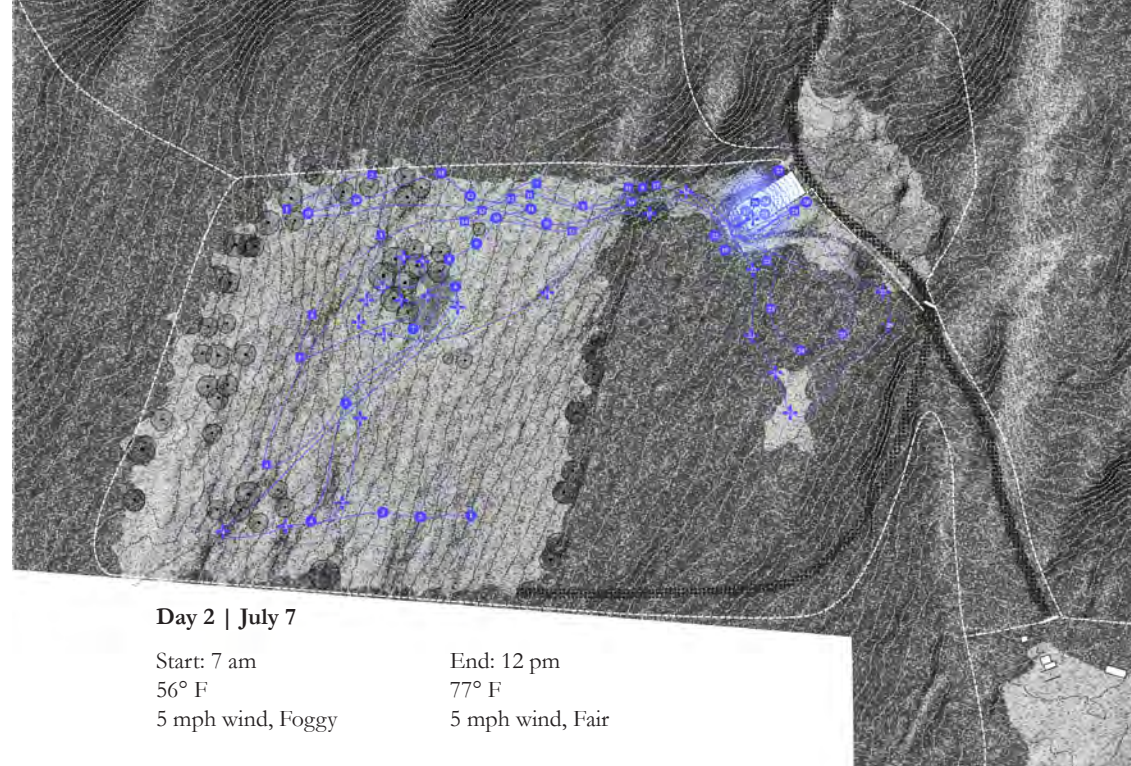
● Milkshake



+ Nina



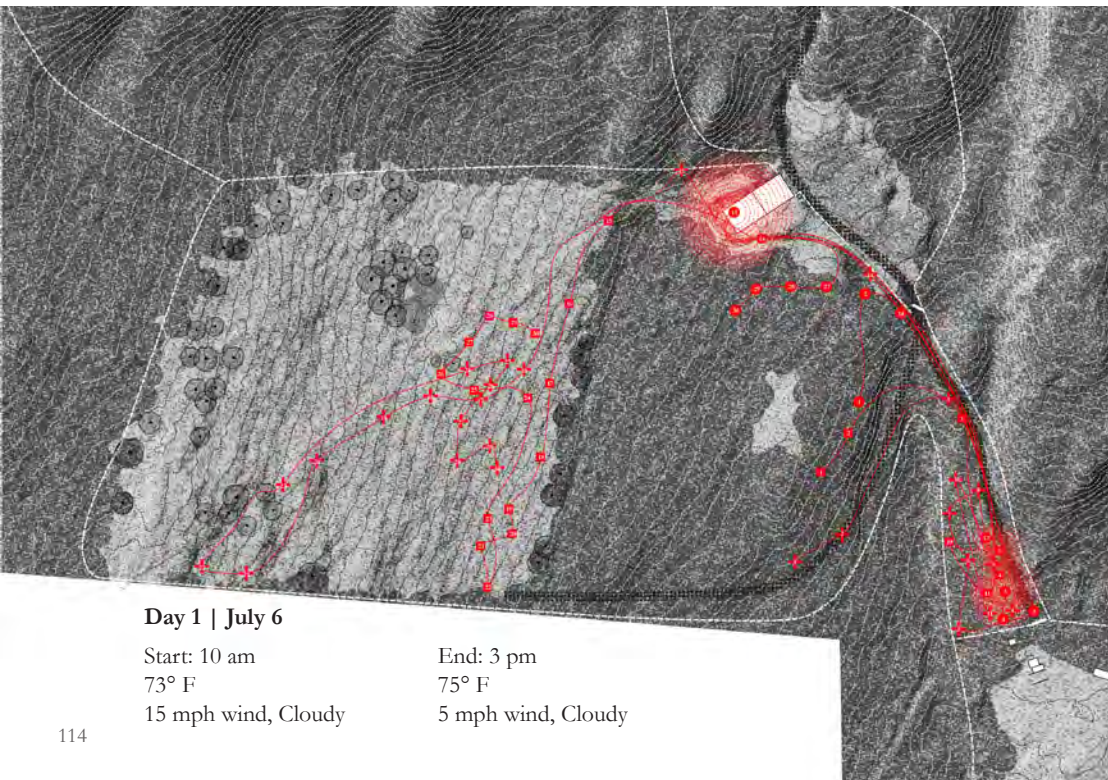
■ Magnolia



Day 2 | July 7

Start: 7 am
56° F
5 mph wind, Foggy

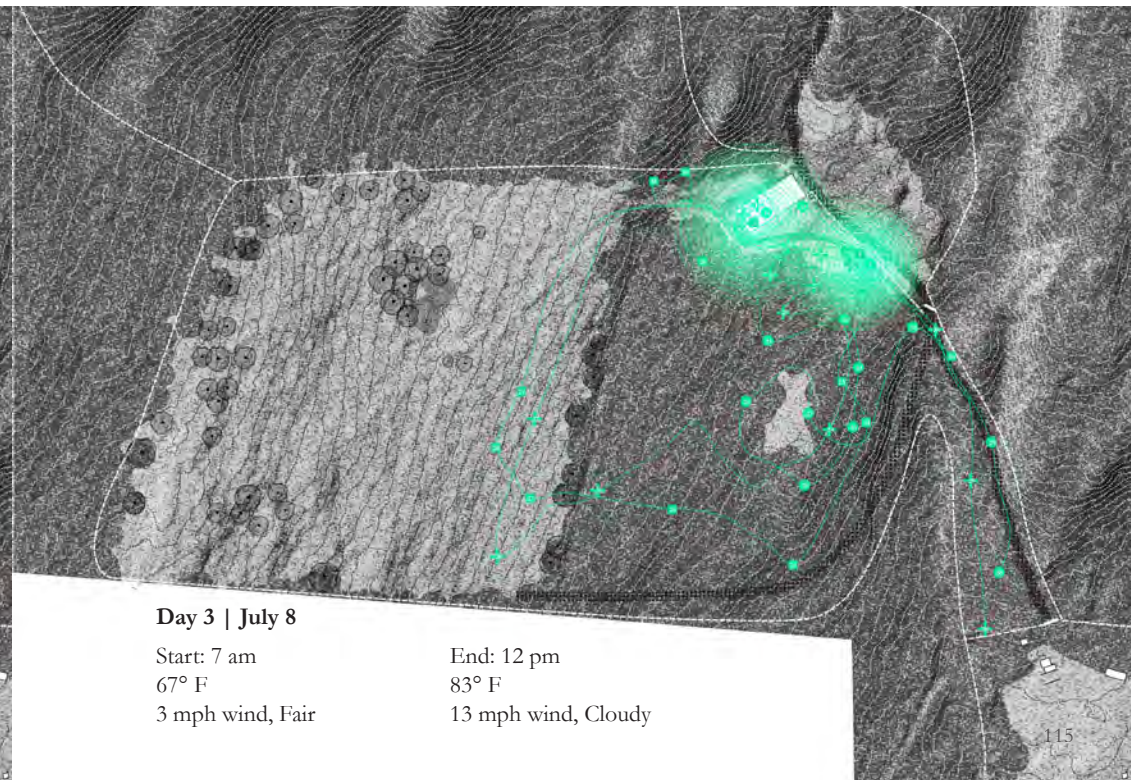
End: 12 pm
77° F
5 mph wind, Fair



Day 1 | July 6

Start: 10 am
73° F
15 mph wind, Cloudy

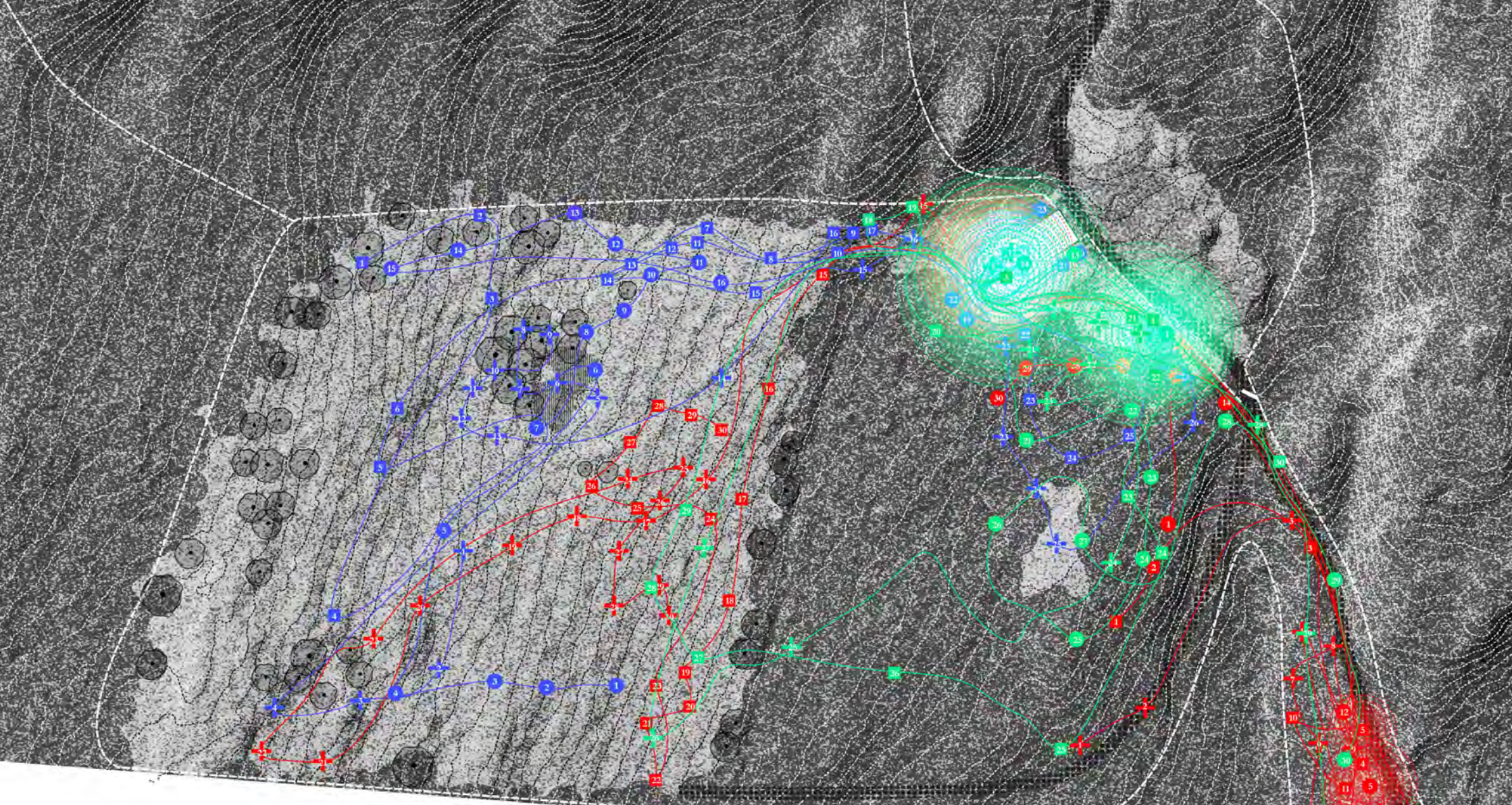
End: 3 pm
75° F
5 mph wind, Cloudy



Day 3 | July 8

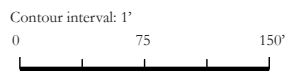
Start: 7 am
67° F
3 mph wind, Fair

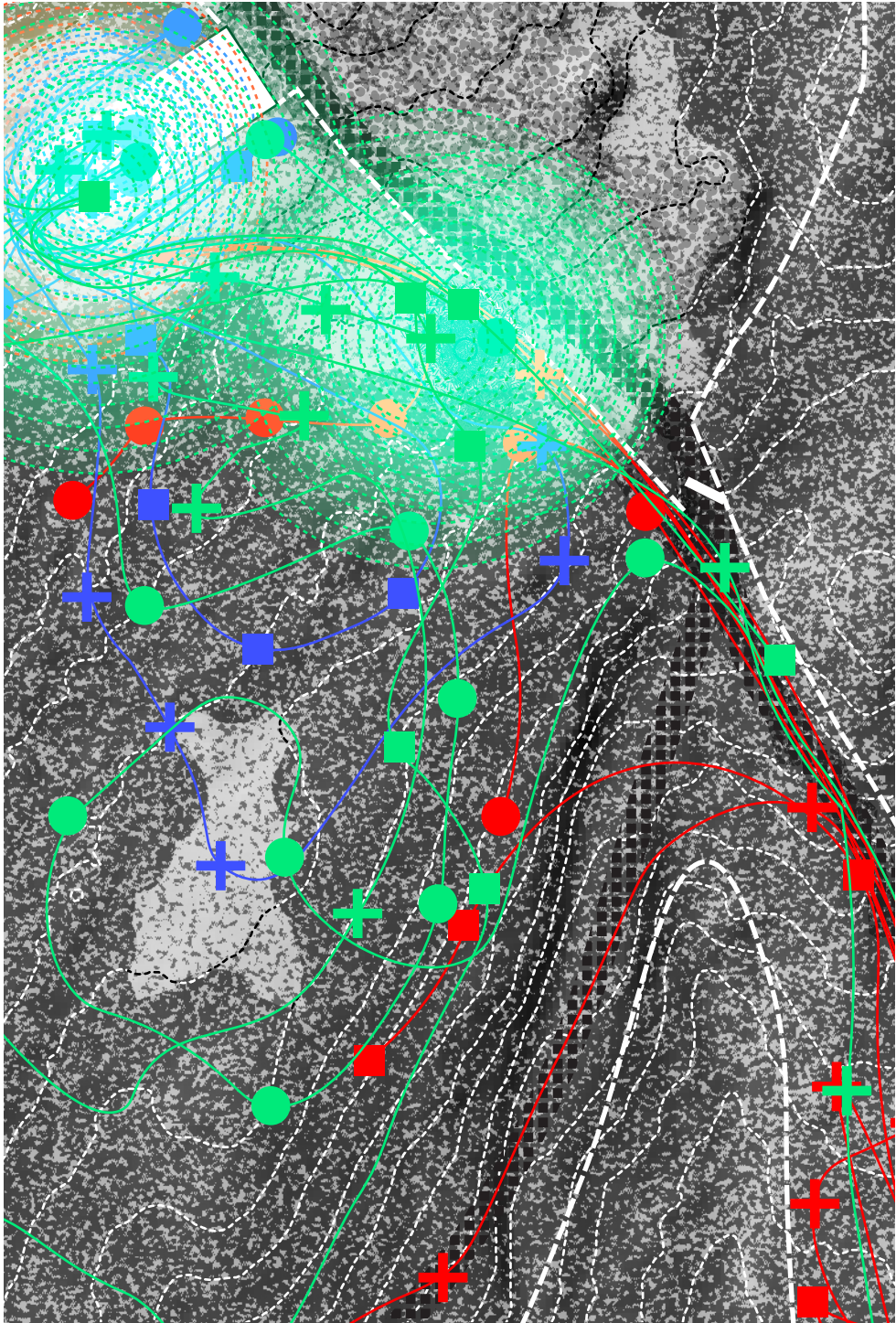
End: 12 pm
83° F
13 mph wind, Cloudy

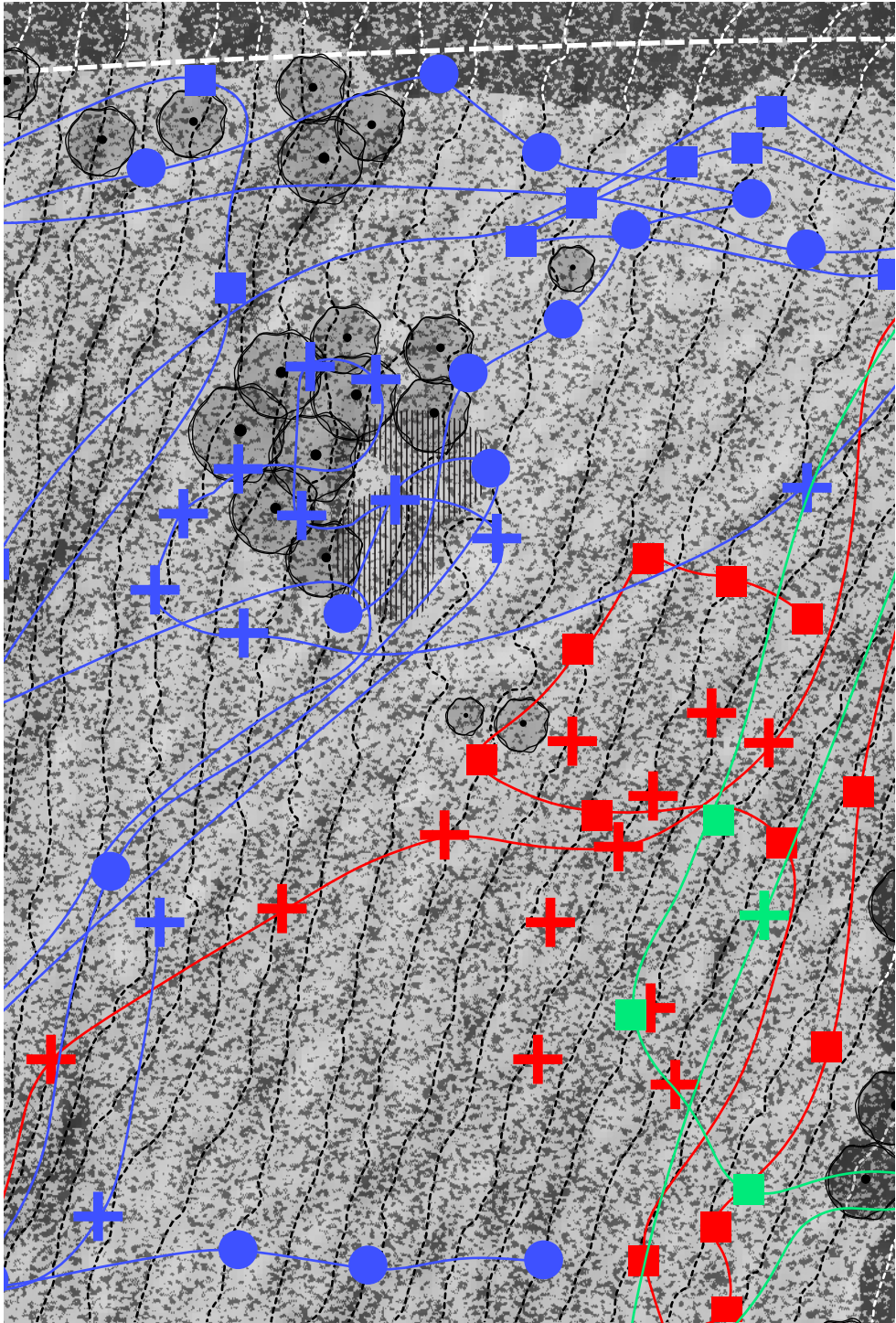


PATHMAKING IN THE MIDDLE PASTURE & FORESTS

Overlay of three days of observation



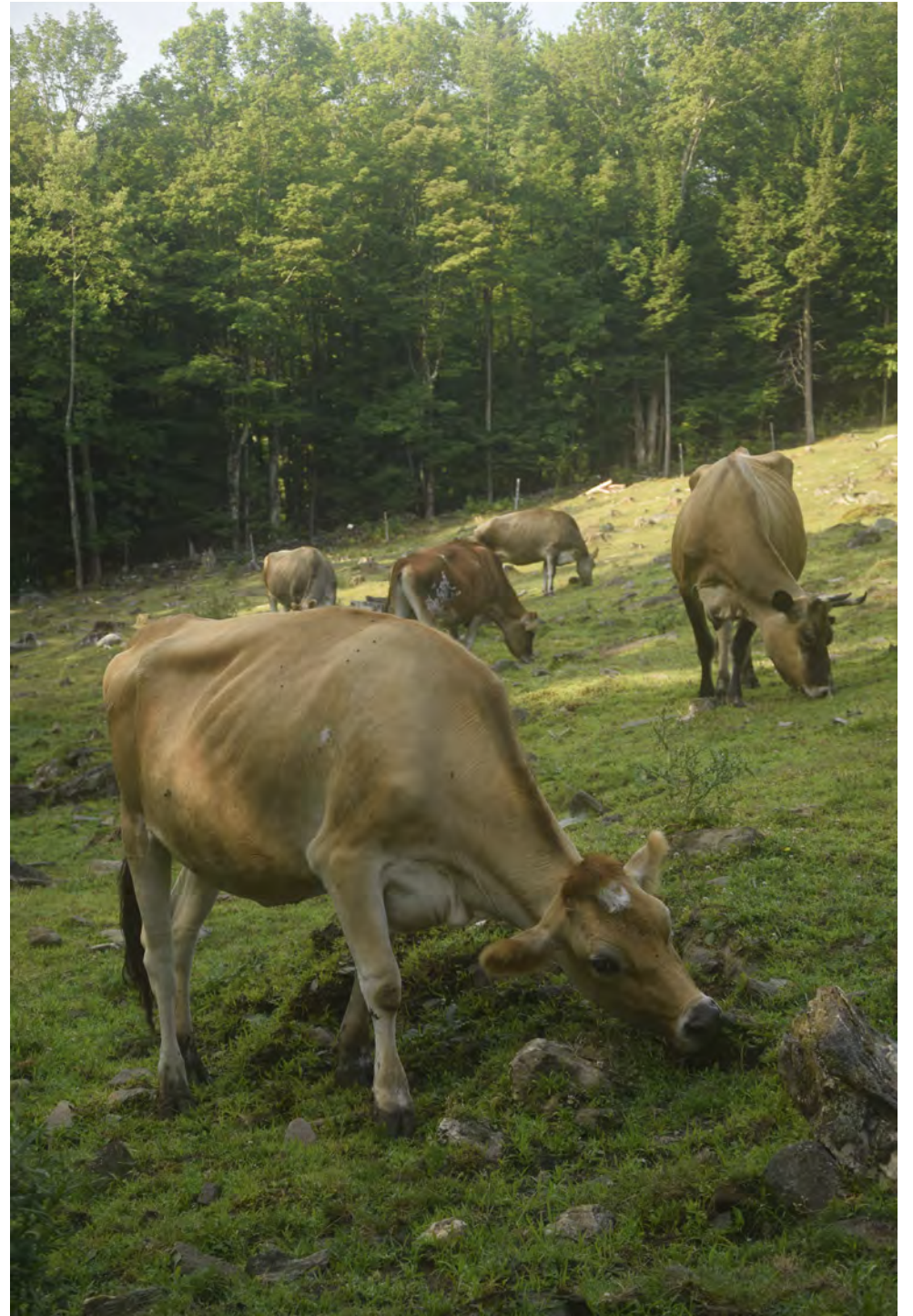






View of the back barn from the Middle Pasture.













Residents foraging in the Middle Pasture.



Sir Isaac Mooton and Equinox engaging at the fence that separates the Middle Pasture and Back Pasture cows.

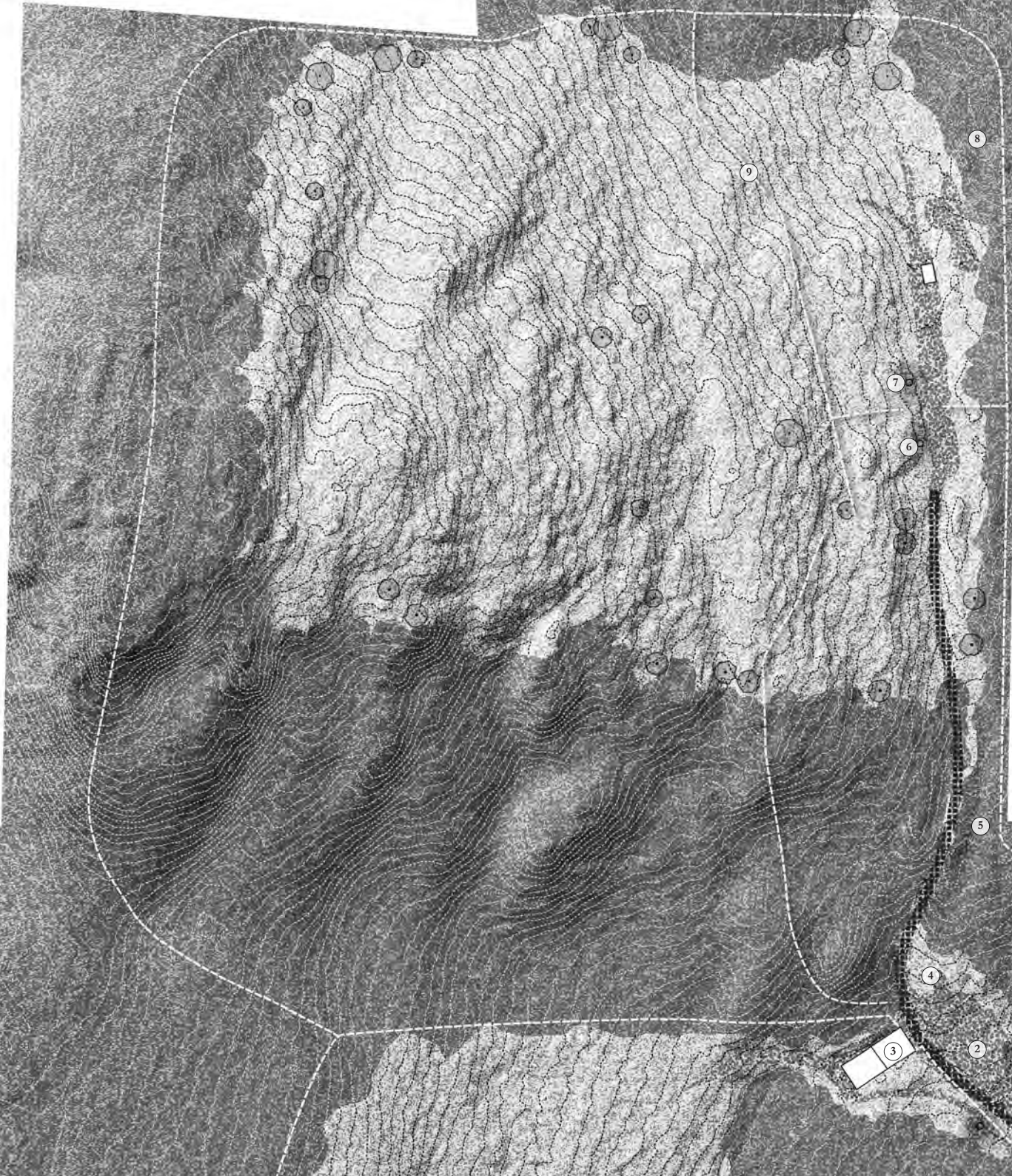
THE BACK PASTURE & FORESTS

Total cow residents: Approximately 30

-  Woodland, shown with hillshade
-  Pasture
(Rough cut tree stumps, rock outcrops, shrubs, grasses, groundcover)
-  Waste mounds or Unvegetated surface
(i.e. dirt or gravel, manure)
-  Gravel road
-  Hay
-  Sand
(barn ground surface)

- ① Entry gate to back pasture
- ② Waste mounds
- ③ Hoop barn & water troughs
- ④ Solar panel and water well
- ⑤ "Summertime bedroom"
(Common rest area for cows)
- ⑥ Hay ring #1
- ⑦ Hay ring #2
- ⑧ "Summertime bedroom"
- ⑨ Low voltage electric fence
(Blocks off dangerously icy upper pastures during winter)

Contour interval: 1'
0 100 200'



PATHMAKING IN THE BACK PASTURE & FORESTS

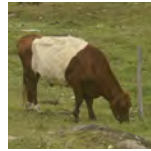
Traced subjects:



● Ivory

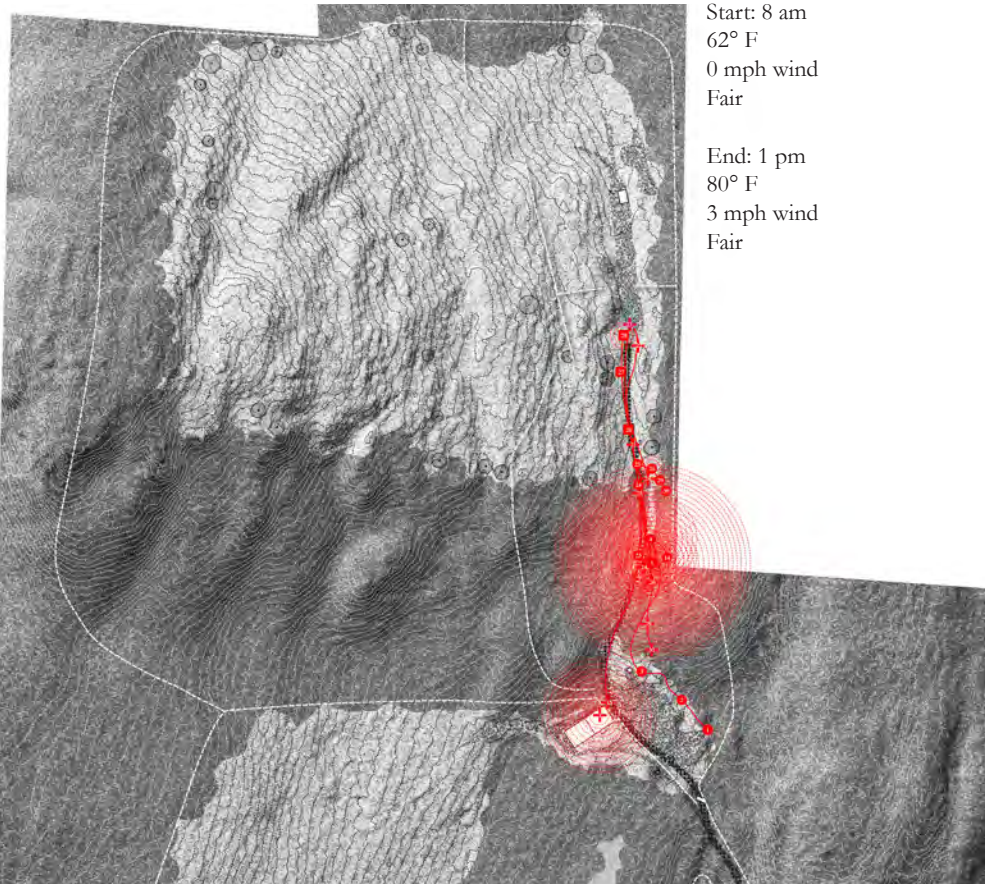


+ Luna

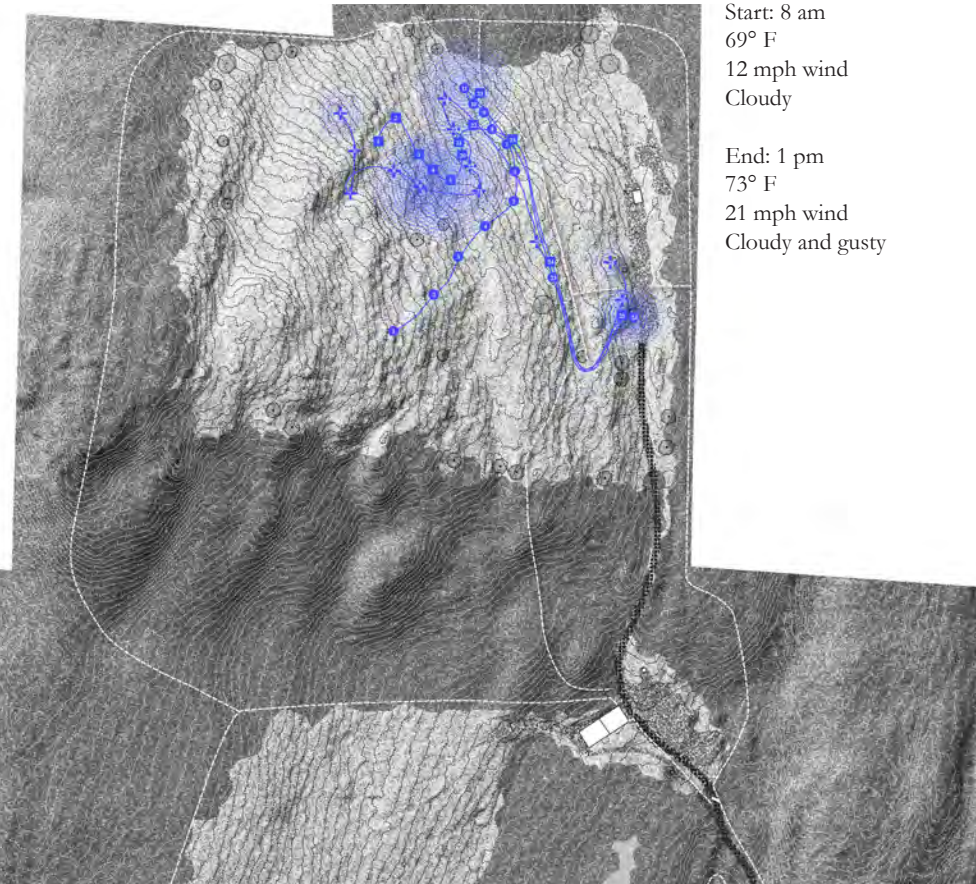


■ JJ

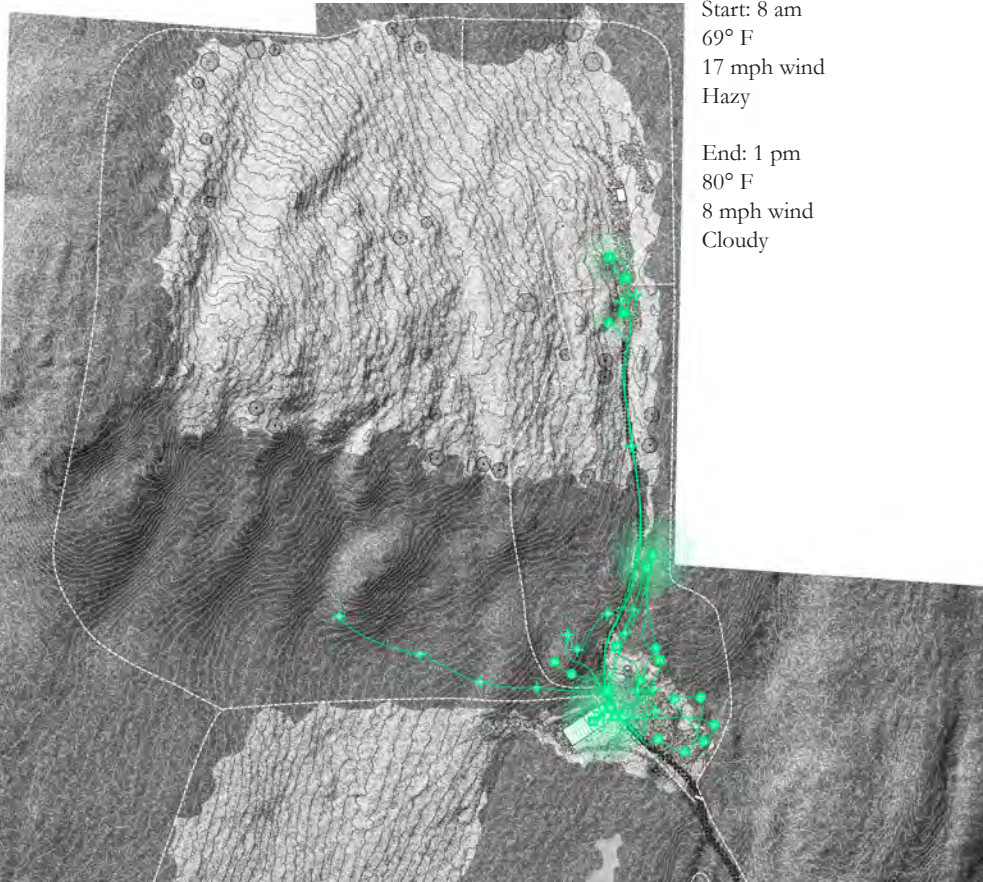
Day 1 | June 15



Day 2 | June 16



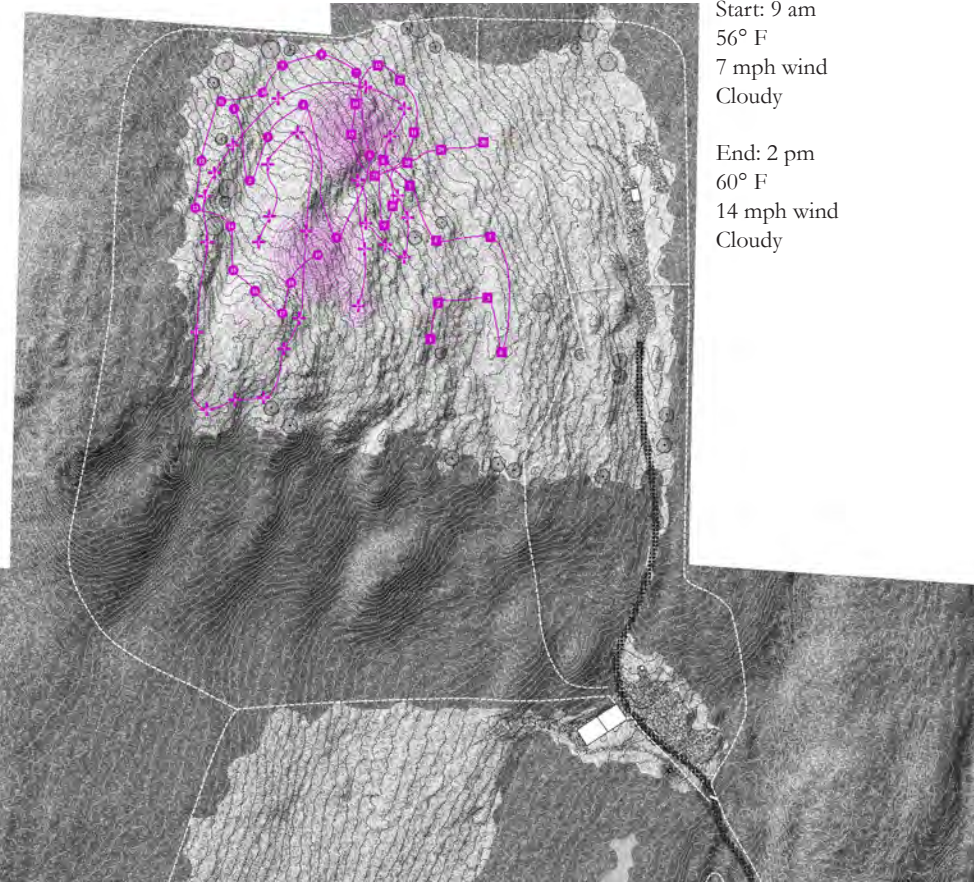
Day 3 | June 17



Start: 8 am
69° F
17 mph wind
Hazy

End: 1 pm
80° F
8 mph wind
Cloudy

Day 4 | June 18

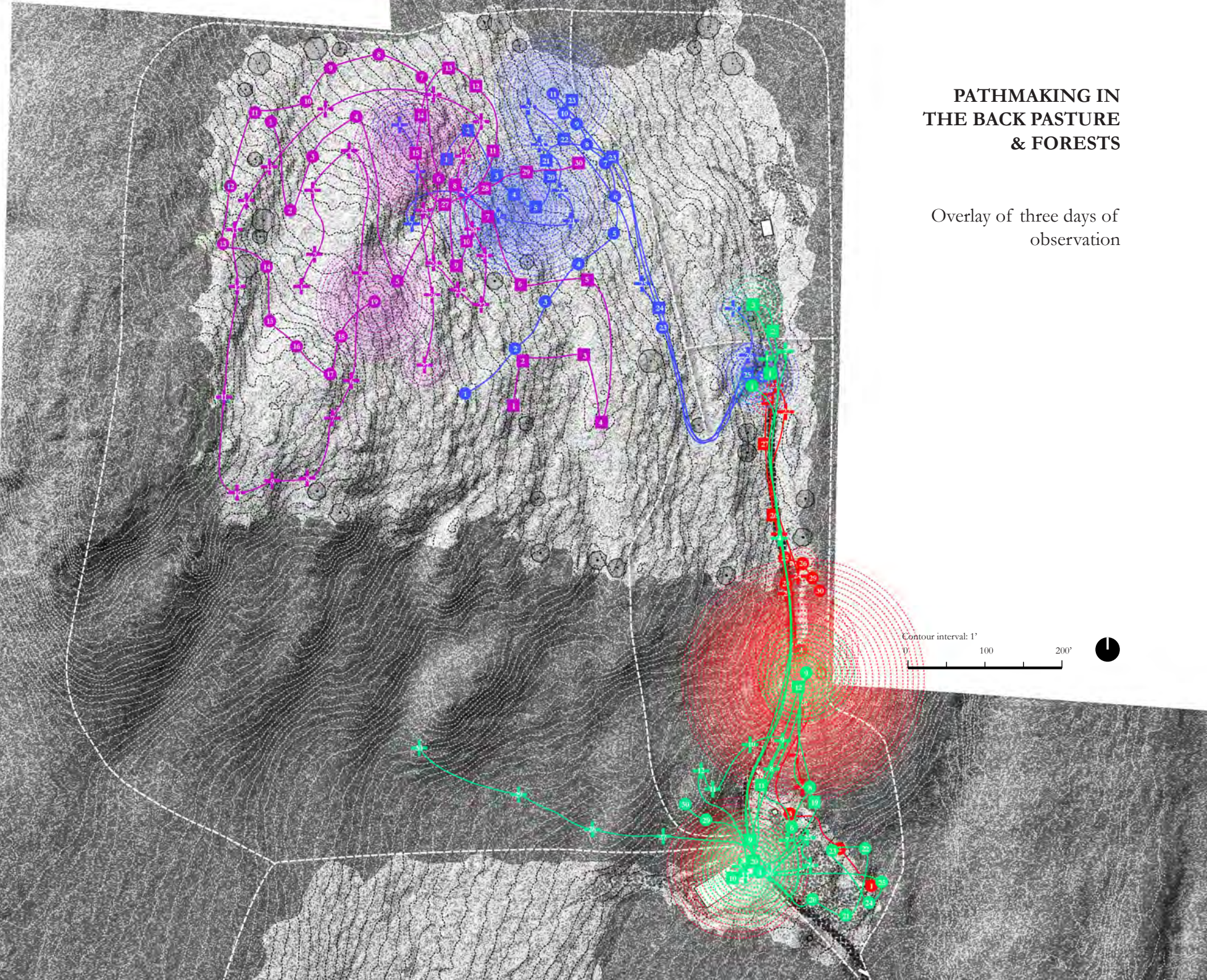


Start: 9 am
56° F
7 mph wind
Cloudy

End: 2 pm
60° F
14 mph wind
Cloudy

PATHMAKING IN THE BACK PASTURE & FORESTS

Overlay of three days of
observation





Visible pathmaking in the back pasture by cows. Paths circulate in and out of the forest's edge.



Pathmaking near the back hoop barn and waste mounds.

INTERPRETING THE MOVEMENT MAPS

The movement maps of the Cows on the Hills exhibit a very distinct pattern of movement and gathering, compared to the patterns observed in the Commons or the Valley. The combined map overlaying the four days of observation together shows the wide range of land that the cows covered together in the span of the observation days. At the start of each new day of observation, I saw the cows gathered in a different area from where they were the day before. The general clusters of active movements also varied. In the Middle Pasture, the cows foraged mostly in the lower half of the pasture on the first day, the upper half of the pasture on the second day, and the forest on the third day. In the Back Pasture, the cows foraged the forest on the first day, the lower half of the pasture on the second day, the forest and waste mounds on the third day, and the upper half of the pasture on the fourth day. It appears as though they rotationally grazed the pastures and forests over the observation days.

The maps indicate that there were areas of congregation centered around certain enclaves in the forests that were revisited frequently. These areas are marked by the concentration of circular rings showing when residents stayed put for extended periods. Staff members refer to such enclaves in the forest as their “summertime bedrooms.” While the cows seemed to enjoy the forest for resting for most of the day, they also chose to rest in the barn or the middle of the pasture on some occasions.

The combined map overlaying the four days of observation also indicates the emergence of a circulation network. The cows physically engraved the paths over time, showing that the cows shaped the land to align with functional access to the barn, the hay rings, and their most frequented forest enclaves.

The cows engaged in activities generally as a collective. For example, most members of the herd rested at the same time, or they foraged and migrated to a new area at the same time. But within this collective, individuals gravitated toward

certain companion residents, reflecting the presence of social relationships. In addition, not every individual stayed with the herd; for example, I observed Ivory foraging farther from the herd compared to other residents, and I saw JJ resting independently from the herd often.

The cows thoroughly took advantage of the broad range of open areas, shaded corners, and ground textures. They roamed or rested together at times, but they also dispersed at other times. This dispels the stereotype of cows as sleepy, monotonous creatures operating solely in adjacency with the herd. While they didn’t explore all available areas of the land at once, they covered a large range of these areas in the span of the observation days, with each day of exploration gravitating toward a general area of common routes and activities.



Equinox scratching on the fallen tree branch.



The rugged terrain of the Back Pasture.

WHAT IS A FENCE TO A COW?

In the animal rights movement, the story of the runaway cow is often upheld as a conscious act of liberation. Situations about such wayward animals make the news frequently, conjuring public discussion about the legal status of animals as property. These powerful stories often galvanize public sympathy and make visible the wayward animal as a named individual. In crossing human-erected borders of confinement and control, a cow is effectively challenging subjugation. In some cases, this visibility and buzz can help lead an escapee to a farmed animal sanctuary.

Two of the sanctuary's cow residents jumped fences to liberate themselves. In two unassociated events before arriving at the sanctuary, Jan and Ebony escaped from slaughter while pregnant, saving themselves and their unborn babies. VINE Sanctuary eventually welcomed them as residents. While they are once again within by fence boundaries, their status at the sanctuary is much different. Fences at the sanctuary serve to protect the residents from the harm that exists beyond the fences. At the sanctuary, Ebony and Ivory have the agency to roam across expansive terrains and care for each other; they have not attempted to run away since.

Fences, the physical delineation of property boundaries, are normally not breached by sanctuary residents. Rather, they often act as communication devices. According to staff members, there have been instances of cows who got moved between one pasture and the other for some given reason. On some occasions, cows would stand at gates awaiting staff members at routine food distribution times. The fence thereby is acknowledged by the residents to convey information and grab the attention of human staff members.

However, Faith has breached the low-voltage electric fence on a couple of occasions, one of which I witnessed. One day, as I walked alongside the Middle Pasture cows in the woods, I noticed that Faith was foraging nonchalantly beyond the fence, where she

should not have been; at some point, she must've snuck through the fence's cables to forage on the lush ferns on the other side. She showed no indication of wanting to wander far from her herd, as she very well could have. Nonetheless, staff members had to lure the reluctant Faith back across the fence. For Faith, the fence was a way finder that enticed and challenged her to wander where she knew the "grass was greener."



Faith (this time on the right side of the fence), enjoys the vegetation at the fence line the most.



THE STORY OF IVORY³³

Ivory, a young Holstein cross, arrived at the sanctuary after his mother, Ebony, an Angus cross, was found roaming the forests of Upstate New York in 2019. Ebony was roaming loose in the forest with another adult cow, who was later shot by a nearby resident. Ebony gave birth to Ivory as a fugitive. Ivory was born in the forest, distanced from captivity. Ebony found temporary refuge in a pasture of a small hobby farm and was eventually taken in by Farm Sanctuary, a large sanctuary in Watkins Glen, New York. Then, Ebony and Ivory found forever sanctuary after they were relocated to VINE Sanctuary, where they can belong to the forests again.

The lens through which Ivory experiences the landscape is unique compared to the other residents. Being born within the forest and free of human interaction for the first six months of his existence made him more comfortable within the natural environment and wary of human presence. When I followed his herd in the Back Pasture during the observation period, he was one of the few members who fixated his attention on me, staring back as I took photographs. Staff members noted that interactions with Ivory should be on his own terms. I got to know Ivory only from afar as I watched him be at ease in the herd and on other occasions forage independently away from the group. Ivory has no conception of what a life of confinement and commodification looks like; he exists between wild and domesticated.



Milkshake reaching up for tree leaves. At the sanctuary, his large size grants him special access to the bounty of the land.

THE STORY OF MILKSHAKE

Milkshake is easy to identify amongst the pack. He is one of the tallest members of the sanctuary. Unfortunately, his largeness is a product of the selective breeding of Holstein cattle in the dairy industry, making him predisposed to hip injuries and earlier death than his fellow cow residents. Milkshake was seized from a nearby cruelty investigation in 2011 and needed to be treated in intensive care before coming to live at VINE Sanctuary. Milkshake was about nine months old at the time of the seizure, which is just short of the typical lifespan of a male dairy calf; slaughter of male Holsteins for veal usually range between 12 to 22 months of age.

Despite his past, Milkshake commonly approached me, accepting ear rubs. I noticed that he often mooed to his herd to communicate to them that he hears the tractor with fresh hay coming. His friendly demeanor characterize him as a true gentle giant.

I also witnessed Milkshake explore the landscape in different ways from the others. His tall stature enables him to reach the leaves of trees and tops of shrubs above the typical browse line. At the sanctuary, his size grants him special access to the bounty of the land.

BECOMING NIMBLE

The collective story of the sanctuary is one of recovery. For many, this means learning how to physically exercise their newfound agency. The embodiment of their agency is enabled by the offerings of the sanctuary's landscape through the actions of traversing its ruggedness, slopes, textures, and vegetation. This requires a physical capacity that not everyone arrives at the sanctuary with. According to the staff members who oversee animal care, cows have grown muscle over time, and some may even need extra medical attention (i.e. some older animal residents take routine arthritis medication). Many residents initially arrived at the sanctuary not only nervous or scared but also physically weak or in pain. In industrial agriculture settings, many animals are not even afforded the opportunity of having room to rest; when they do, they may risk becoming what the industry calls "downed" animals, or those who are too injured or ill to stand up again to eventually walk up the ramp to the slaughter truck.

The recovery process that happens after living at the sanctuary is a holistic one, encompassing physical and mental stimulation. The landscape of the sanctuary is a play, feeding, and healing ground for the residents. The cows learned to become nimble despite their bodies weighing over a thousand pounds. Now, they climb over exposed bedrock and forge paths that trace shallower slopes within the steep terrain. Leg muscles gain strength not only through daily exercise but rest. Only when these animals are given the opportunities to display agency over their movements can the possibilities of flourishing come to light.



Shasta running down the Back Pasture hill.





Sumo in the barn.



The pair of troublemakers, Faith and Splash, who stick together in their mischievous day-to-day excursions.



Bea giving her friend Shasta a bath.



Equinox foraging on moss that grow over rock outcrops.





Magnolia foraging in the forest along an ephemeral stream.



Cows awaking from their afternoon nap on the Back Pasture.

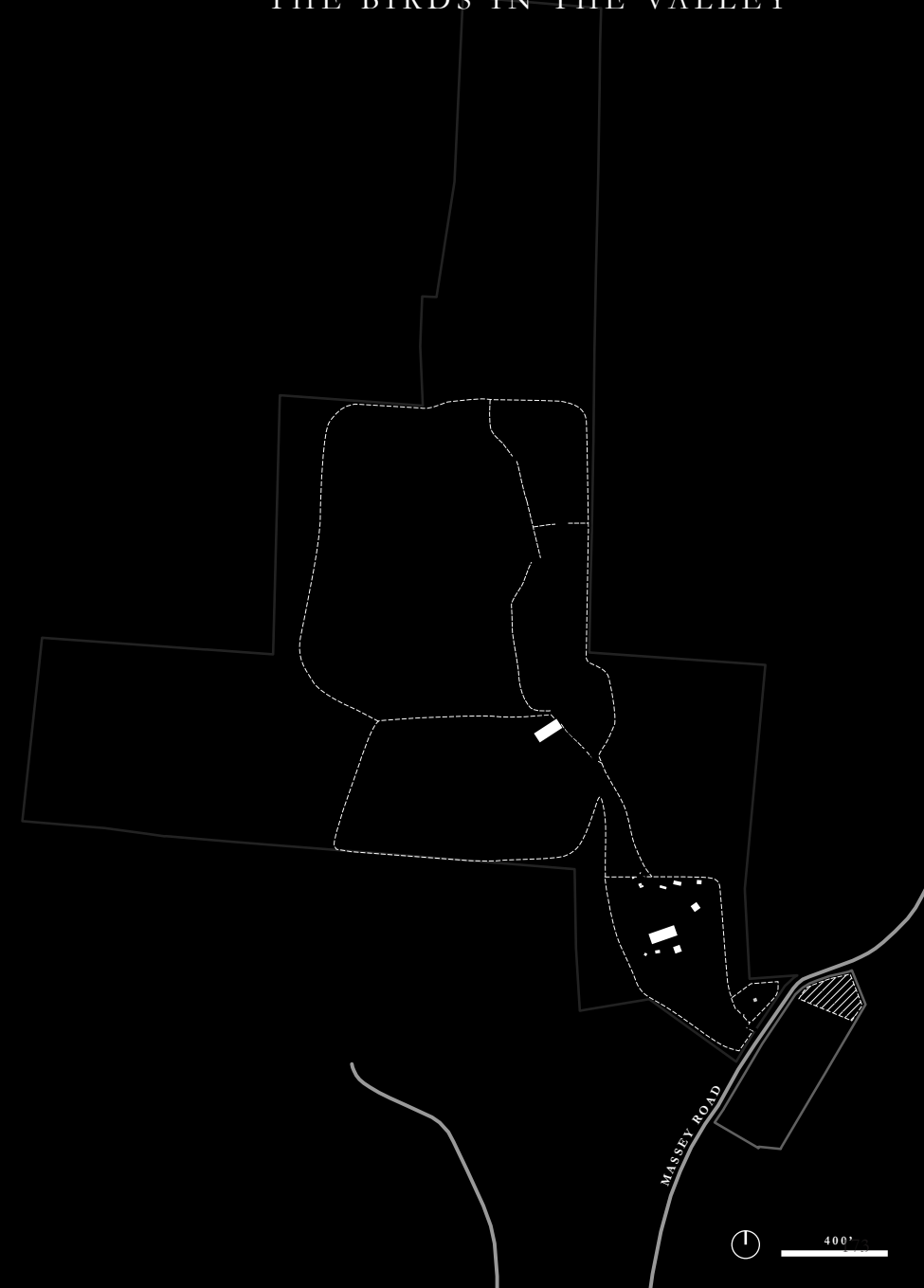


The morning fog is hanging low in the Back Pasture. A staff member has just dropped off fresh hay at the hay ring during the daily “opening” routine.



Residents emerging out of the misty forest toward the barn.

THE BIRDS IN THE VALLEY



July 13, 2022 | 9:00 am

Feather the rooster and three hen friends from his flock.



Aerial view of the Valley.










Chicken residents immersed in the vegetation.

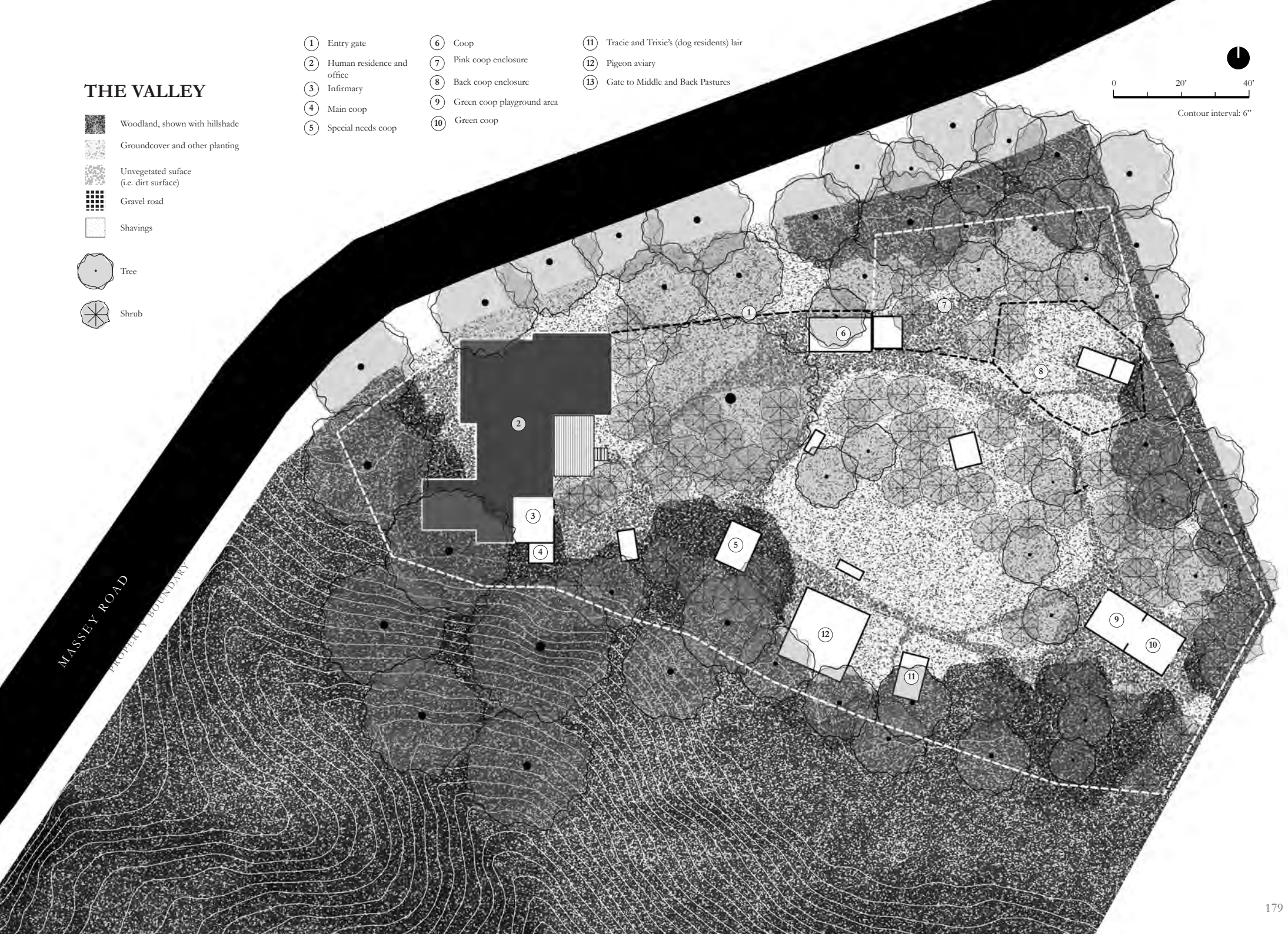
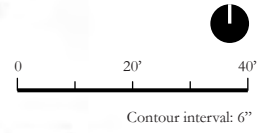


View toward the green coop area, where I traced the movements of Orange and Feather.

THE VALLEY

-  Woodland, shown with hillshade
-  Groundcover and other planting
-  Unvegetated surface (i.e. dirt surface)
-  Gravel road
-  Shavings
-  Tree
-  Shrub

- ① Entry gate
- ② Human residence and office
- ③ Infirmary
- ④ Main coop
- ⑤ Special needs coop
- ⑥ Coop
- ⑦ Pink coop enclosure
- ⑧ Back coop enclosure
- ⑨ Green coop playground area
- ⑩ Green coop
- ⑪ Tracie and Trixie's (dog residents) lair
- ⑫ Pigeon aviary
- ⑬ Gate to Middle and Back Pastures



FIELDNOTES AND MOVEMENT MAPPING IN THE VALLEY

Day 2



Day 1



Day 3



MOVEMENT IN THE VALLEY

Selected residents for tracing



● Orange



+ Feather



■ Gaia



○ Donut

Day 1 | July 12

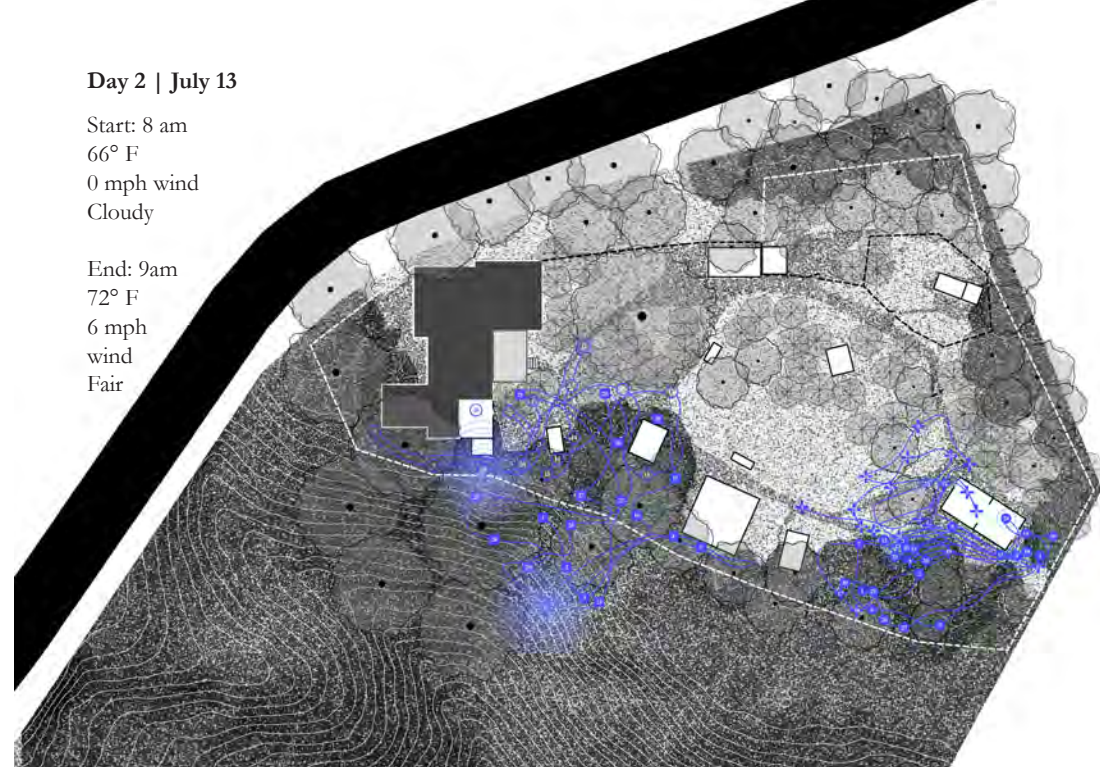
Start: 9 am End: 10 am
72° F 76° F
10 mph wind 13 mph wind
Fair Fair



Day 2 | July 13

Start: 8 am
66° F
0 mph wind
Cloudy

End: 9am
72° F
6 mph wind
Fair



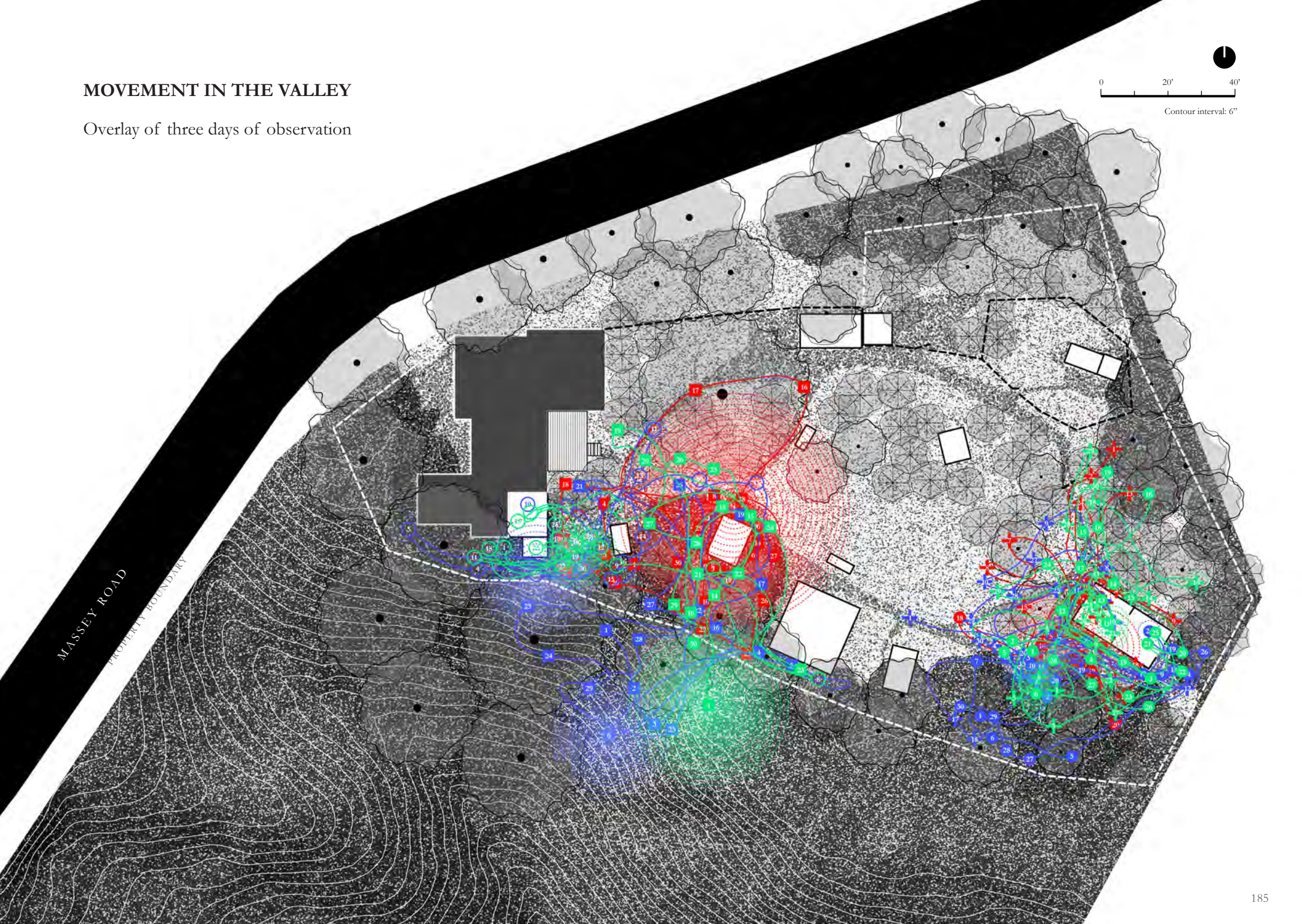
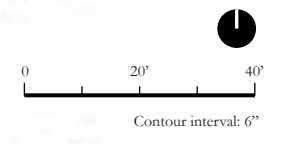
Day 3 | July 13

Start: 9 am End: 10 am
67° F 77° F
0 mph wind 3 mph wind
Fair, clear skies all day



MOVEMENT IN THE VALLEY

Overlay of three days of observation



INTERPRETING THE MOVEMENT MAPS

Tracking the movements of the Birds in the Valley was difficult as the chickens darted, ran, and moved rapidly. There are hundreds of birds all over the Valley, but I was only able to track at most two residents at a time. Instead of marking the location of a resident after every ten minutes, I marked their location every two minutes. With this shorter time interval, the patterns of the residents' movements were more readable on the maps.

I discerned movement and behavioral patterns amongst the residents I tracked, which shed light on the divergent ways they shaped and engaged with their environment. Two residents in the green coop area, whom I will refer to as Orange and Feather, are roosters that led their respective flocks. Both flocks explored the wide array of features within the area around the green coop: repurposed tree branches for perching, shrubs, a miniature



One of the Booted Bantam twins (Double or Trouble) perching.



Donut digging near a structure.

geodome climber, dense garden plantings, many piles of pine shavings, and of course, the earth to dig into. The maps indicate that Orange and Feather explored extensively, right up to the fence and gate limits, but they also did not stray past a fifty-foot radius from their green coop home, even though they could have gone farther. They remained closely attached to the frenzy and fellowship of their green coop community members.

On the other hand, Gaia and Donut of the main coop area near the house engaged with the land in divergent ways. Donut is a gray-feathered chicken with a genetic cross beak. The maps showed that he stayed in the same place ranging between six and twelve minutes, usually digging deep holes and trenches into the ground. Donut liked to pick sites of digging to be adjacent to some sort of structure, such as a coop or an object on the ground. The many rings around his location markers on the map represent his dedication to carrying out these projects. Sticking to his small clique comprised of himself and a pair of twin Booted Bantam chickens, he remained active through projects for much longer than other residents.

Gaia seemed to me the most active and swift resident in the Valley. I found it difficult to map Gaia's movements with the frequency and speeds at which she moved in and out of thick vegetation. She also surprised me by running under an opening in the fence, into the forest. The movement maps show that she did this very often. When I alerted a staff member that she breached the fence and was roaming in the nearby forest, I was told she does this often and will always return home. The maps also show that she engaged in digging projects in the forest beyond the fence. Perhaps the forest is where she unearths the most treasures.

GAIA IN THE FOREST

Gaia is infamous for roaming the nearby forest, beyond the fence. Perhaps this mightiness was learned from her past: four years ago, Gaia was one of 900 birds who were seized by authorities from a massive bird fighting operation.

While chickens can fly over the fences, the sanctuary's chickens remain in proximity to their respective home coops and their flocks within the fence boundaries. Gaia seems to be somewhat of an exception. Gaia has earned herself quite an interesting reputation at the sanctuary through her ventures of hatching eggs in secrecy, disappearing in a corner of the Valley for days before being discovered with new eggs or newly hatched babies. This has elicited discussion amongst the staff at about the rights of sanctuary residents to reproduce, viewed as an act of agency. Most resident mammals have been spayed or neutered for reasons of health, resource management, and controlling temper;



Gaia digging in the forest.

these reasons constitute the nearly unavoidable task of imposing human control. While most of the hens' eggs at the sanctuary are tossed onto the ground for other fellow chicken residents to devour, Gaia has made the effort to hide them in the vegetation, earning her the special privilege of reproducing on sanctuary grounds.



Gaia and a few of her children.



Chicken residents immersed in the vegetation.

SHAPING THE GROUND

Chickens dig holes to reach the dampened earth, cool to the touch. They bathe around in the upturned dirt, covering their feathers and kicking off pesky critters crawling over their skin and feathers. As social beings, these ground-shaping projects are often carried out together. I observed members of a flock of chickens take turns digging the same hole. Similarly, they scratch at the ground together, digging and foraging for treasures beneath the surface.

The craters in the ground dug by the chickens are scattered across the Valley. The holes are reused and dug deeper over time, dirt bath after dirt bath, bird after bird. From the birds' perspectives on the ground, they have made the Valley into a landscape of earthworks.



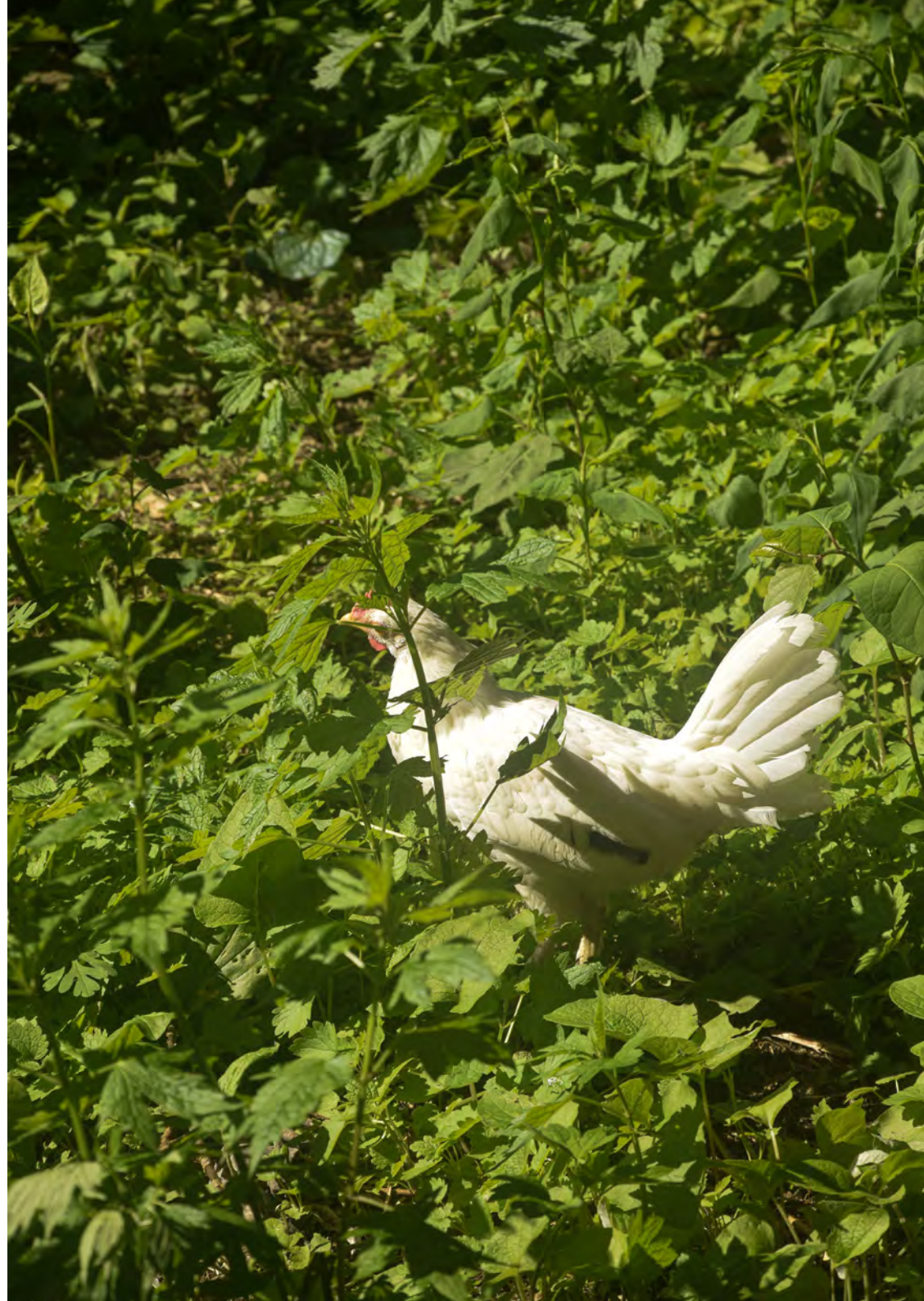


Donut digging a ditch by a fence.

Feather the rooster resting in a hole he found in the ground.

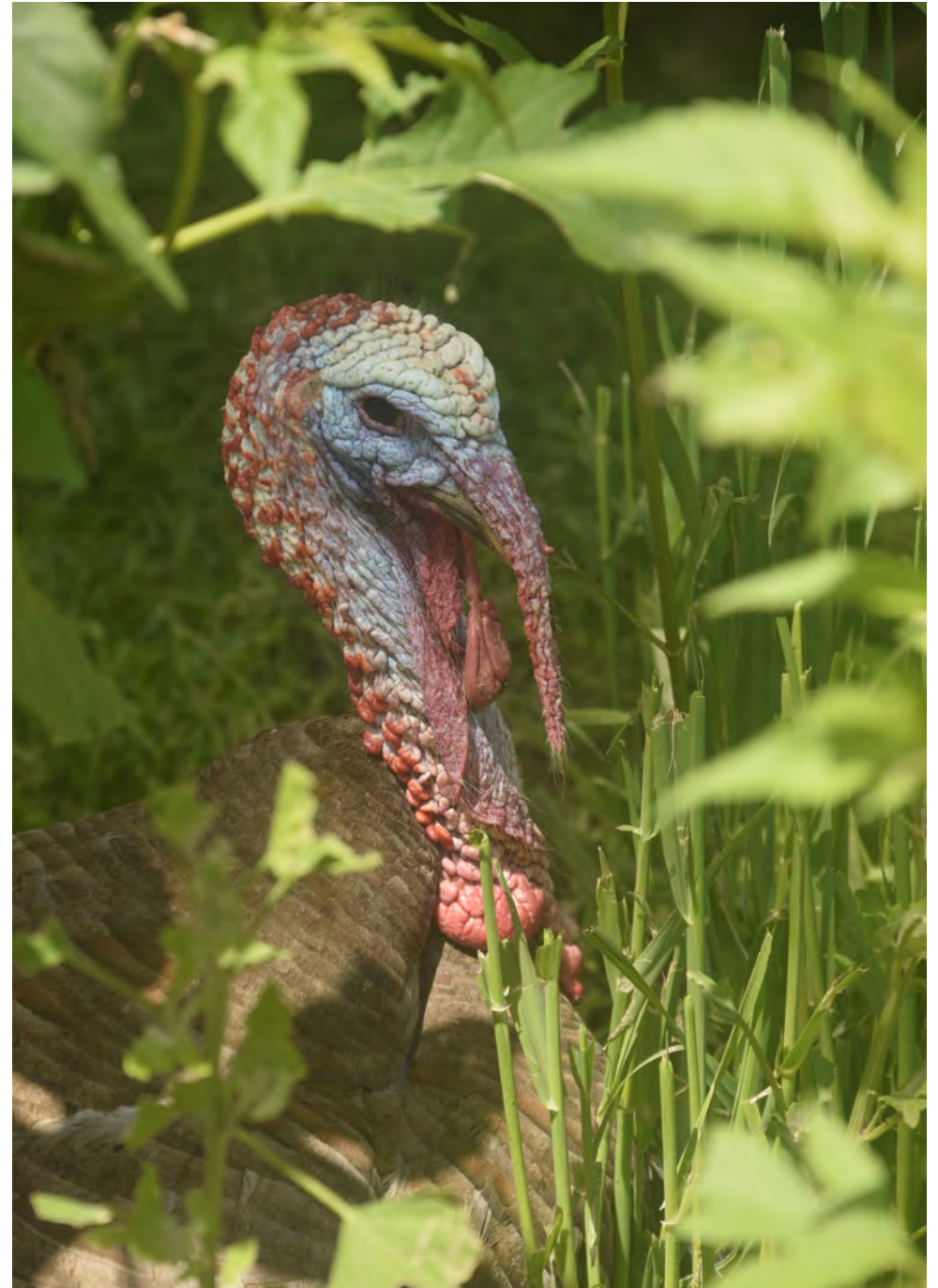


Chickens of the pink coop area seek shelter under an upcycled truck hood.





Portrait of a flashy resident of the Valley.



Portrait of Pete the turkey. He often communicates with the wild turkeys in the forest, exchanging calls that echo through the Valley.



CHAPTER 9
THE STEWARDS

A staff member is distributing bales of hay to be placed in the various hay rings across the sanctuary. This is a twice weekly routine.

A conversation with pattrice jones, cofounder of VINE Sanctuary

ON SANCTUARY

R: *What does the concept of “sanctuary” mean to you?*

p: The way that I’ve talked about it has been with the phrase, “safe enough” place, or a refuge in the broader sense. In psychology, there’s the concept of the “good enough mother.” No human can be the perfect mother, but what you want is to be the good-enough mother, who is sensitive and warm while allowing room for imperfection. When I’m teaching, I try to make my classrooms a “safe-enough” place. Is it possible to guarantee that no one will experience any harm? Definitely not, but we can make it safe-enough.

At first, what we were trying to do in terms of sanctuary is to set up what we hoped would be a safe enough place for birds hatched into captivity in terrible circumstances to not only recover from the harm and be safe from further harm, but to become themselves and the birds their bodies want to be. We first set up the visible circumstances in such a way that was consistent with the habitat that they historically evolved within, which was the jungle in Southeast Asia. We obviously cannot recreate that exact climate, but we could offer plenty of trees, foliage, and space to allow them to roam as far as they’d like. Once the rescued birds were in sanctuary, it was very clear that they were co-creating the place after we set up the basic circumstances.

Now, we have a larger place with more species who take refuge from the ongoing war against animals. We are aware that there cannot be a place that is completely safe from harm, but it can be safe from the deliberate harm of humans. A sanctuary is our way of offering at least some of what we can guess their bodies want.



Maddox and pattrice jones in the forest. Photo taken by Lori Gruen.

Then, we stand back and allow the community to emerge from a nexus of relationships.

R: *In a way, it seems like the sanctuary is also resetting the standard for what “good-enough” means for animal care. It might be “good-enough” to simply provide animals the basic needs of food, space, shelter, but the sanctuary reveals the complexities of what animals might want when given the chance to express.*

p: Yes, opportunities for flourishing are important. What I’m hoping for here is opportunities for self-actualization.

R: *You allude to the design decisions made by humans, which take inspiration from animals’ indigenous habitats. Can you elaborate more on what physical aspects of the landscape resonate with the concept of sanctuary?*

p: All chickens descended from jungle fowl of Southeast Asia. In fact, most domestic chickens are genetically indistinguishable from wild jungle fowl. So, what are their bodies going to want? To climb trees, to be in bushes, to hide. They spend their time foraging through the jungle, so we give them the space to do that here. They are also social animals, so there are opportunities to flock together and form social groupings. Those who do not want to associate with others can also have a place to go. Jungle fowl and feral chickens resolve conflicts by establishing their own areas, to be apart from each other.

People imagine cows in pastures with the sun beating down. They’re descendants of aurochs, who liked and preferred to be in the woods. Being in a pasture is a situation that humans recently created. If we had even more room here at the sanctuary, we wouldn’t even have to feed hay in the summer at all, because the cows would be perfectly happy to have all the acres just to forage. We created some pastures by clearing some of the forest to offer a

mix of experiences, but they really do seem to love the woods.

R: *I definitely observed that. There’s a part in the woods they often frequent, where the ground is turned over soil.*

p: I call that their summertime bedrooms.

R: *How has the founding of VINE been influenced by the larger farm animal sanctuary movement? Did you know there were other sanctuaries forming and did you learn from any of these other sites?*

p: We just reached over 22 years here. At the time we started, there was Farm Sanctuary in Upstate New York and Animal Place in California; United Poultry Concerns had a chicken sanctuary, and there were some others. There weren’t many, if ten. Within the past decade, social media has really fueled a growth. The degree to which these sanctuaries operate really vary widely because there are no regulations about what designates a place as a sanctuary. I’ve even seen animal farms designate themselves as sanctuaries.

R: *Have there been attempts at regulations, or creating some type of agency to designate farm animal sanctuaries?*

p: There have been efforts for regulation or agencies to approve who can call themselves sanctuaries. There is the Global Federation of Sanctuaries for wild animal refuges which until recently didn’t include farm animal sanctuaries. However, it became very clear that they didn’t know enough about farm animals and the unique circumstances of starting a sanctuary for them, compared to a wild tiger sanctuary for example.

Within the farm animal sanctuary community there have been talks to set up some sort of system of approval. In general, it is great that there more sanctuaries: there’s more space for rescued animals

to go and more advocacy that is happening. However, issues also arise. One, people start sanctuaries without a thought-out plan and run out of money and energy. Then, the animals need to be placed somewhere else. Second, there's the social media draw of sanctuaries, which makes it difficult to see what's real or not.

There is a mutual aid network that exists. We did an online conference for farm animal sanctuaries, and we also did one at Wellesley in person a few years back. We also help to moderate a coalition of farm animal sanctuaries on Facebook. We also support people who work at sanctuaries. We partake in support groups on grief and stress for people who start animal sanctuaries. As part of The Rooster Project, I went to different sanctuaries and helped others with advice on improve their chicken setups. The Open Sanctuary Project also now has guidelines online.

R: *In your book, "Oxen at the Intersection," you explain the confluence of many forces that were rendered visible in trying to save the oxen, Bill and Lou, from slaughter at a college known for its environmentally progressive pedagogy. This situation was a microcosm of the many challenges facing animal advocacy today, even in progressive circles. In the times of urgency, these contentions delay the progress that is so desperately needed. Do you see bridges being built?*

P: One thing that Angela Davis talks about when thinking about social change, and I'm paraphrasing of course, is that you make your strategy based on what you know and can see from where you are, and you do some actionable things. Doing those things changes the terrain in some way. It might include progress, some back lash. Then, you strategize again and ask: where are we now, what's the path from here? Many times, problems in rhetoric and language generate pushback. People resist giving up privileges. But oh, what you're getting when you rejoin the vibrating diversity of the larger-than-human world is so much more satisfying than illusions of superiority. We need to

come together as see our failures. We need to get real about what humans are really like and come up with strategies.

R: *There's so many avenues, and it seems like consensus is evermore unattainable. How do you work with that in this community?*

P: What I think is happening is that the social mechanisms online have created a trust issue. People can't even agree if something is indeed a problem. Tone of voice, gestures, energy, other things we need to learn whether we can trust the other or not available online. In every place, there needs to be rebuilding the feeling of community and the ability to have conversations with each other and debate. VINE Sanctuary tries to step up in the Springfield community. Anna and I are on the board of trustees at the local library. I'm also on the town's new inclusion board. VINE sponsors events at the local library, and we bring kids from the library to VINE. We're helping to plan a community vigil to have people come together. I don't know how it all adds up, but it's bout humans being more able to talk to each other.

R: *One aspect about VINE's approach is advocating for plant-based agriculture that can reinvigorate local economies without leaving farmers behind. Can you talk more about this?*

P: In many places, historically, pastoralists and agriculturalists were separate. There would be conflicts between pastoralists and agriculturalists, for example, animals trampling crops. In the U.S., the two have been completely conflated at some point in history. I think of ranching or dairying as separate from agriculture. But it gets complicated when people's identities get bound up. We want to support farmers as people. We are involved in projects with people who are working on getting the state to see the economic utility of helping dairy farmers transition into crops because of the ongoing decline in dairy demand. A healthy agricultural

economy is one that's not so vested in one commodity, which is dangerous even if it's the best commodity on earth. We want agricultural diversity, and Vermont should not be pouring money into predominantly dairy. For most of these farmers, much of their costs is sunk into animal equipment. They might not know what they can even grow in this area, what crops work well in Vermont, and what can have a high selling value. Dairy farmers here are going to need both grants and technical assistance. Sure there are some that are going to say no to a transition, but there's enough that are struggling. If someone they trusted, some old school Vermonter who looks like and talks like them, and says hey, the state is going to award all this money by helping you grow 'xyz' and put it to market. That would be huge piece of the puzzle, and we need to imagine that.

R: *What do you think is the next step for the farm animal sanctuary movement?*

p: There's a great amount of diversity amongst farm animal sanctuaries. Many other sanctuaries will talk to you about promoting veganism and have the public meet the animals and learn who they are individuals. But one of things that came up in the conference in the sessions about imagination and community. There was a real interest in trying to prefigure the world we want to exist. One very basic thing is to provide refuge to those who need it now. That by itself is a worthwhile thing to do. In a multispecies community, there is mutual care and respect. We are not saying everyone should set up a VINE, but we all can learn from this experiment in multispecies community. We can broaden our imagination about what's possible, learn more about what it's like to be a human existing within an ecosystem while setting aside human supremacy to experience pure relationships with nonhuman others. Fundamentally, it is about reimagining what it is to be human. It's about looking at where you are and asking yourself, how could I offer refuge those in need? How can I bring

myself into better relationships with the animals in my ambit?

R: *So it's not about saving as many as possible, rather, it's more about co-existing differently.*

p: Right, modeling a different type of relationship. And we learn. A sanctuary can foster imagination, and imagination is important. It can foster empathy, which is what we need more of in any type of relationship. Everyone is interacting across differences. It's something that cows, sheep, and humans are doing here all the time, and maybe we can learn about how animals do it. It's a site of learning, of knowledge creation.

A conversation with Pomme, animal caregiver

ON “OPENING”

R: *Could you please walk me through a typical day of working at VINE?*

P: Every day varies. There’s “opening” in the Valley, opening in the Hill, and then there’s closing for both. For opening in the Hill, the first thing I do is get food for the emus and make sure they have water. I come back up and prepare Wayne’s World, the chicken area in the Commons. I make sure everyone is okay, and I do meds if needed. I then go to the barn and start releasing the people (the animals) who are in the coops or behind the gates overnight. Now that everyone’s out, everyone’s having fun. Then, I do cow count, up the hill in the back.

In the Valley, I appreciate the motion of opening. I can take more time in the Valley because it’s smaller than the Hill. After I let everyone out of the coops, I enjoy stepping back and watching everyone enter the new day. There’s so much amazement in observing their happiness in starting another day.

R: *What do you enjoy most about opening?*

P: I try to consciously enjoy and appreciate everything. I really love the scent of fresh air in the morning, there’s just something about the morning air that’s different than during any other time. This is a very subjective and personal position, but that feeling when you’re opening and breathing in the air really sets you for the whole day.

In the fall, you have the mistiest days with thick fog in the morning. You spend so much time walking in the woods, just looking for and counting everyone to make sure they’re okay from

the night. Every season is unique, and it changes everything we do. It changes the length of the day and pace we do them at. There are things that you must do every day, like cleaning coops, but the way you do it will change between summer and winter. For example, in winter we use straw for coops, and we use shavings for the summer. The work day is also faster when the days are shorter. In the winter, we start at 8am and finish at 4pm.

R: *In doing the labor you’re doing, what kind of connection do you grow to the land itself?*

P: Connection to the land is something that is always growing. Like a seed, you land somewhere, get rooted and grow. So I’ve rooted myself here. It’s physical. Being here is a way of nurturing the mind and the body and connecting with the land and the people who live on it. I’ve always worked mostly outdoors. Before this, I was working at a sawmill. The only time I haven’t been working outdoors was at a metal shop.

A conversation with Cheryl, animal care and on site coordinator of VINE Sanctuary

ON ANIMAL CARE AND FARM FUTURES



Cheryl with Norman in the Commons barn. Norman was a Holstein cow who has passed. Photo provided by Cheryl.

- R: *Can you describe your role and responsibilities at VINE Sanctuary?*
- C: I'm in charge of anything having to do with medical decisions. Major medical decisions go through at least two people here. Otherwise, I oversee arranging vet visits, minor wound care, bandage changes, and anything that can be done online. I order all the medications, coordinate with the vet, order all the medical supplies, go get all the other supplies, run all the errands, do the schedules, and train the staff.
- R: *You mentioned before that you learned a lot about working with animals starting from a young age.*
- C: I grew up on a beef and grain farm in Ohio. Most of what dad did was grain. I also did 4-H and the FSA program from the time I was nine until I was 18. I learned a lot about sheep and pigs then. Birds were the only thing I really didn't know anything about, which was the one thing that obviously Miriam and patrice knew quite a bit about [from starting VINE Sanctuary as a chicken sanctuary]. Most everything else, including operating the tractor and equipment, I already knew from growing up on a farm.
- R: *How did you find yourself here at an animal sanctuary? What was that transition like?*
- C: Well, I was never fond of what I was doing with animals as a kid. My brother enjoyed tormenting me about it, but it was never something that I was like, oh yeah, this is what I want to do. You can do 4-H until you're 19. At 18 I said, I'm done, I'm not doing this again next year. I just wanted out. I then bounced around in a

couple of different moves. My first degree was actually in criminal justice. I was a security guard in a couple of different places, but I wanted to get back into working with animals in more of a medical capacity because I've always enjoyed that. My mom was a nurse, and there's two kinds of nurses: those that panic and those that don't. Mom was one that didn't. I've always liked the medical side of things, and I've always read a lot of medical books. I moved to Florida to work for a vet's office, and I started with small animals. Then, I decided to go back to school through an online business program. I got my degree in veterinary technology so I could be certified to be a vet tech. Part of that program involved doing a large-animal rotation. I found a vet for large animals, and I went from a regular small-animal practice to high volume spay and neuter clinic. It was stressful because we were doing about 100 surgeries a day.

So, we [Kathy and I] were kind of looking for a change, and someone sent us a listing. At that point, VINE Sanctuary was called Eastern Shore Sanctuary, and they said, hey, you guys want to move up here to Vermont? I kind of laughed, and then I went for it. We flew up here, and I interviewed. I moved up here in August of 2010. I rarely leave this place except for errands for this place, and it was kind of a good fit in that regard, an introvert's dream.

- R: *Choosing to be a vet tech at an animal sanctuary must've been completely different than at those other places. Did you know you wanted to help animals in this way, or was this move an unexpected opportunity?*
- C: I never particularly cared for the bad parts of what I had growing up. Part of being a vet tech is trying to do things to make animals' lives better. I had a lot of background in animal behavior because I did a lot of training. For me, it was all about communicating and dealing with animals, and reading their body language and figuring

out what they needed. I liked that about the medical side.

- R: *How did living here on the site introduce you to veganism or a new way of working with animals?*
- C: At first, I accidentally went vegetarian because it was easier. Then, I was reading and learning as about veganism as I went. Initially there was no staff here at VINE; I was staff and that was it. As we've grown and started to do more outreach, you start to see different sides of it. That's been the major changing factor, to look at different sides of it and see how everything connects.

There are a lot of things about working with animals I would not have necessarily thought about before. Even with an interaction that wasn't overtly exploitative, you start to see that maybe it wasn't an ideal situation. Thankfully, new theories about the way the dogs and other animals learn and feel are shaping change. Turns out, how the rest of the animals learn isn't that much different from how we learn as humans. There was a lot of adapting to this.

- R: *In a future of climatic uncertainty, what do you believe is the role of this sanctuary in society?*
- C: The whole goal would be to not need more sanctuaries, which would be in a scenario where we regulate and stop abusing and producing hundreds of millions of animals each year in the food chain. We know what concentrations of animals can do to the environment. On the larger scale of farming, we are adding significant greenhouse gasses and methane. We know these are all big environmental issues, and we also have to balance that with the fact that the animals didn't ask to be born into those situations. The general goal is for us to not need to be here, offering refuge to them. It would be fantastic if I could open a restaurant instead.

R: *This industrial scale you mention is also directly causing the rapid decline of small-scale farms. Is there a scenario in which you see these animal farmers and animal advocates finding common ground? What is your personal relationship with this tension, given your family farm?*

C: I think the small-scale farmers are more likely to transition toward something non-exploitative. They are the ones suffering from the large-scale industrial farm, so they may be the foot in the door toward change. We can say, look, we understand your concern about large scale farms. Let's look at other options, because your business cannot survive without government subsidies, and at the same time, these big businesses are actively trying to run you out. There are a couple of niche crops that are doing well on the market if people learn the skills to produce them. Some are more labor intensive. As an example, many have been having success with various mushroom farms depending on where they're located. If you live in a climate where ancient grains grow well, it can also sell well in the open market. It's a matter of learning that there's better options.

Tradition is huge. In farming families, like mine, farming is something that is passed down from generation to generation. My brother and I were probably huge disappointments because we didn't take over the family's farm. But I think deep down my dad wouldn't have wanted us to. There are growing issues, and he has mentioned that the weather is not what it used to be. He lives in the same house he grew up in. Many folks are seeing the writing on the wall, but are they are open to change? I don't know.

R: *What would it take to transition an animal farm to a different model or crop?*

C: It's going to depend on where farmers live and what kind of set up they already have. For the midwestern farms where they have flat land, they must farm major crops. It's about figuring out

what things might be able to grow continuously, even if there is flooding, even if they can't put it in the ground until June, which is considered late. Those are some of the challenges that would be encountered in the Midwest. Up here in Vermont, there are smaller fields, different soils, different terrains, and different equipment. That'll affect what they're doing. For example, with the growing CBD farms, you must have a facility large enough to dry that stuff out. It's really about the infrastructure that you already have set up, which will affect any transition you make. It's doable, as long as you receive the right information, get to the right people, and be willing to make the changes. I also wish the government would stop subsidizing the meat and dairy industries as much as they are. If they keep pumping money there, people are going to stick to what they already know.

R: *What about the larger industry side of the equation?*

C: I think eventually, especially if we keep messing with antibiotic resistance, there might not be much more of a sustainable future for those industries. Researchers are saying avian influenza, with the highly deadly strain, is here to stay. Right now, we're looking at millions of avian influenza bird deaths this year. We've been seeing massive deaths in the March/April time frame. Many facilities are not able to repopulate for six months. So, we're going to start seeing what happens when the poultry industry stops for a little bit. This might be a way for things to be cut way back. The insurance companies will not be able to keep paying out whenever tens of thousands to a million birds need to be killed at one contaminated facility; they'll go bankrupt. At that point we might be able to catch a glimpse of a future with less industrial animal agriculture. The turkey farms will be the most interesting one to see play out. Most of the large facilities are in Minnesota, and most of them have been decimated.

C: *You're saying avian influenza is causing major shifts in the poultry industry, but why is this not widely discussed? The situation looks serious.*

R: What you're hearing is that chicken prices are going up, but people believe it's because of inflation. Like the Covid-19 conspiracy theories, there's lots of doubt about the severity of this. Many don't understand the actual costs. It isn't like the 2014 avian influenza outbreak. It was bad, but then it died out. We were fine shortly after. But this one is here to stay. Now it's in California for the first time. It started in the UK, where they found their first birds in the wintertime. Seagulls brought it to the US, because they can take it across the ocean in a day. What we may witness soon is the collapse of the poultry industry on a factory farm scale, if this does continue like the researchers are finding.

A conversation with Rachel, animal caregiver

ON CARE

R: *Could you walk me through what a typical day looks like for you?*

Ra: At 6am most days, I open the Valley. Everybody gets food and fresh water. I place the birds with disabilities into their respective areas. Then, I start cleaning coops. This takes three to four hours depending on the degree of cleaning or whether I have other projects to do. Especially in the summer, there's activities like painting, making a roof for Tulip, and grounds care. On Sunday I'm working up the Hill, so I clean the barn and distribute hay with the tractor.

R: *Do you grow relationships with the animals and the land through doing this daily work?*

Ra: There's always a relationship with both. You see the animals every day, you see their personalities, and you see their day-to-day, which melds together with my own day-to-day routine. The animals are very much part of the land. I do have to tend the land to keep them safe. If shrubs overgrew too much, it would be impossible to find the chickens when we put them to bed.

Before I started working here, I didn't look at the animals as individuals the way I do now. It's been an eye-opening experience. Before, I saw eggs sitting in a carton in the store, or a gallon of milk in the cooler, and never thought about the individual that they come from. Now it's hard for me to see the meat case and the dairy aisles since I see the animals every day and the struggles that they had to go through to provide for human consumption.



Rachel is driving the tractor on her way to drop off hay to the back pastures. Autumn is peering from the left.

R: *For you, seeing the individual behind that reality was significant.*

Ra: There was a female cow in particular years back. She developed a condition in her udder through overmilking. Her udder started to expand as if they were full of milk, but in fact they were full of pus. It was a terrible infection. The level to which Cheryl had to remedy that couldn't have been comfortable, but it was necessary to save her life. That was an intense experience for me. I put myself in her position, as a woman. How would I feel if somebody decided to take my child away from me, hook me up to a machine, and milk me. Once I imagined myself in that situation, the concept was horrifying. We look at cows as property, not as individuals with the ability to think, to love. Take Autumn (an elder cow in the Commons) for example. The way she just welcomed young, new residents, as if saying, "I'm going to take care of you." I'm getting emotional thinking about it. Like with Gemini, Autumn took him as her own.

I'm a mother, I have three sons. Even the thought of having one of them torn from me is unbearable. Look at Gaia (a hen who lives in the Valley). One day, I just followed her after she was gone for a while, and I found some eggs she was hiding from us. Another staff member asked about pulling the eggs, but patrice said Gaia has the right to do what she feels like she needs to do. It's her right as a woman if you will. I feel that aspect of it.

R: *What initially drew you to work at an animal sanctuary?*

Ra: I went to the department of unemployment and training in town. VINE Sanctuary was hiring, and I had no idea this place even existed. I sent my resume. As soon as I stepped foot on the property, I saw everyone roaming free. It was like an intermingle, an interspecies hangout. I started the following Monday. July 12, 2016.

R: *I'm assuming you never expected your life would be changing in such a profound way by working here.*

Ra: It was completely unintentional. Here, I see a different worldview, even with how I see wild animals. Take squirrels for instance. People might think they're pesky, taking the bird food especially. They have the right to live just as we do. In fact, we are in their territory. Just because you bought that land and there's a piece of paper that says you own it, these squirrels and their ancestors have been on this land far longer. I feel the need to defend animals' existence.

A conversation with Anna, animal caregiver and outreach coordinator

ON OUTREACH, COMMUNITY, AND ACTIVISM

R: *Could you please explain your role and responsibilities at VINE Sanctuary?*

A: I have multifaceted roles here. Everybody does animal care here. I open the sanctuary, which is what we call morning chores here. During opening, I make sure that everybody's okay from overnight, do any medical care that's needed, pass out meds, let the birds out of the coops, and make sure everyone gets fed. Aside from opening, I do any other chores that come up. In the wintertime, this includes breaking ice out of the troughs, removing snow from roofs, stuff like that. All of that comprise my animal care role. Now, I'm taking more of a medical role with Cheryl because I'm currently in school to become a vet tech.

Then, my other role is kind of twofold. I do outreach with patrice, so I table at festivals, handle our donor relations, and plan our events when we have them. That's been a little bit different recently because of COVID, so we're doing more events virtually, which has less intensive planning. I'm also the education coordinator. This means I work with teachers to develop curriculum for our Pasture Pals program, an on-site program for kids. I also coordinate and write our Barnyard Buddies program, which is our yearlong virtual program with schools. Each classroom becomes buddies with one of the animals at VINE and learn about them in the sanctuary. We also talk about different social justice issues.

**Ozzy, the young cow in the Commons, disrupts our conversation at this moment. He is knocking over Anna's coffee tumbler and distracting us as we're sitting on the rocks. We moved our conversation to a different location. I want to drink this coffee. Come on, man.*

R: *What part of the educational outreach involves direct interaction with animals? Do you think that's a necessary component to having compassion for them?*

A: We live in rural Vermont, where kids are familiar with farm animals, even if they don't physically interact with them. For example, they drive by dairy farms and people keep goats as pets. So yes, I think having the direct interaction with the animals help with new relationships. Our Pasture Pals program involves kids getting direct contact with the animals, since it's on site. VINE is special in that we don't really have any indoor human spaces, and the animals are just out. There's interaction from the moment that they come, and I think it does help with compassion for animals because they're seeing them in a way that's different. However, I've also found that the digital interactions create compassion and empathy as well. They don't necessarily meet their "buddy" in person ever, but having that virtual relationship, even though it's kind of one-sided, still has an impact.

R: *Was Barnyard Buddies born because of COVID?*

A: No, that happened before COVID. Our first pilot program was with a preschool in Manhattan. 17 classrooms became buddies with 17 of the animals. From there, it developed into a program that has themes every month. To give an example, one of the things that we added last year was about where animals come from. We talk about colonization and that cows aren't natural inhabitants of the United States. Every year, it gets a little bit richer.

R: *Can you elaborate on how this intersectional ethos affects your approach to outreach?*

A: Part of our ethos that helps is that we allow the animals to be full beings, to express all aspects of their identity. I can't imagine VINE without intersections, it's just how it has been from the beginning. patrice and Miriam met at a disability rights rally and patrice was active in ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and the LGBTQ movement for decades before VINE was born. Being able to talk about these things adds to the richness. I'm encouraged to talk about colonization with little kids. I'm encouraged to bring up things like climate change, and other issues that affect each other. In the outreach with kids, we talk a lot about difference. I found that if you can get them to figure out that Sugah (a goat resident in the Commons) and I are different, but we still need the same things. We need space, food, water, and shelter. We need love, and we need to thrive. We talk a lot about how the differences is what makes our community strong. In Pasture Pals, we do talk about gender expression. We do talk about bullying, and about different family structures. It's not possible to do a VINE program without looking at other issues. Even though you might never say the word intersectionality, or you might not bring up race or gender or ethnicity, you're still kind of hitting on that. It's amazing how kids make connections. I had a four-year-old in the first year we did this put together something after being informed that Gemini (a cow who has recently passed) was adopted by Autumn (an elder cow). He asked, "Don't baby cows drink their mom's milk?" I said, "typically, yes, but Autumn adopted him. She doesn't make milk because cows only make milk after they've given birth." He put together that Gemini's milk comes from a bottle, and said, "So, am I drinking Gemini's milk?" I like to say that I talk about veganism without ever saying the word. It lets the kids be creative thinkers.

R: *With this type of educational work, have you had pushback from any parents or the community?*

A: I'm sure that kids talk about their Barnyard Buddies, because they get excited about it and their parents know. I haven't had any pushback with that. While our on-site program is attended by people who are receptive, we're trying to invite local folks to come. Many people in town think it's so cool that we're here in their community. I'm also trying to reach our local schools, but it's been difficult. So far, we partnered with two schools in New York City and a school in Burlington, Vermont. I want us to be an alternative program to an egg-hatching project or a butterfly release project, so I'm sure we'll get some pushback then.

R: *These community engagement projects bring up the idea of publicness. With the new initiatives that you mentioned, what do you think are the benefits and drawbacks of increasing public visibility to this landscape?*

A: Being in a rural area, we have to be part of the community, not alienate it. We emphasizing a different way of relating to animals. Here, you see a community in which not everyone gets along perfectly, but everyone can coexist peacefully. I think that's something that Springfield is having an issue with. I think the Springfield feels left behind. It was a thriving town at one point, and there was a lot of money and good jobs. We have a high poverty rate and a lot of folks who don't graduate from high school. We don't have as many kids going to college compared to other schools in the area. I believe you can witness a profound lack of empathy. But, I am hopeful for Springfield because I think we're in a transition point. It's going to take a lot of imagination and I think that's something that VINE can offer the community.

I believe the downsides of becoming more publicly known are that more animals get dumped here and more people might criticize

what we do. I believe it would be a good thing for folks to see that there's a way to live in a community that the land is integral to without animal agriculture. So, it's also about visibility of the land itself. We wouldn't be here if we didn't have the land, we couldn't do the things that we do without this space. While we've had to create pastures, we also allow the forest to just be the forest. If we don't have to, we don't take trees down. Sometimes, a tree blows over in a storm, but then we'll repurpose that wood into perches for chickens or scratching posts for the mammals. We try to keep the landscape as undisturbed as possible.

R: *To conclude on a more personal note, what has working here taught you?*

A: The sanctuary influences me every single day. I look at things I was and still am involved in through a new lens. Before coming to VINE, I've been directly involved with the Black Lives Matter movement and women's rights. I have been even more involved with this activism alongside animal activism since coming to VINE, although I still have trouble calling myself an activist because I feel like it's not a term I can just give to myself. I feel like I have a weird skill set that allows me handle the work, emotionally and physically. For the yearly Chicken Kaporos rescue in New York City, I don't sleep for a week. I do emergency first aid on chickens that are coming in, and in some cases, they're dying. I go from task to task. You can't let the immense emotions get to you in that moment, but that's really tough. I go to this place in my mind that tells me, "this is what I got do."

I'm also outdoors almost every single day in a way that I've never been. I feel more in sync with the seasons. With the changing weather patterns, I notice many things over time. I've observed that we didn't get as much snow like a couple years ago. Right before Christmas we got about three feet of snow and then five days later, it all melted because it was 50 degrees and raining. The

animals also teach me something every day. You know, I like to say that Okapi, one of the goats, was my ultimate teacher. When I first started working here, if I didn't close a gate, she knew and would take advantage, knowing I was a new person. Also, having patrice as a mentor is pretty cool. I learn something new every day, and I think that VINE has forced me to see the intersections in the world that I knew about. I also don't think that I ever had to reckon with my privilege in a way that working at VINE has encouraged me to.



A photo taken by Anna during a Kaporos rescue.

“Enfolding cause, condition, and consequence in thinking the fate of the planet – and of humans on it – leads us to explore different stories.....But if they are not so simple, I think we may also find more hopeful stories of how some humans have remade the planet, and of how most humans might work with other species to co-produce a planet not only more habitable – but more just.”³⁴

VINE Sanctuary serves as a place of refuge for formerly farmed animals. These liberated residents live the rest of their lives free from the deliberate harm of humans and are able to exercise their newfound agency. The residents of VINE Sanctuary often come from fraught pasts in which their bodies were only valued as commodities, entertainment, or labor. Thus, the sanctuary gives their lives new meanings. At VINE Sanctuary, the power of landscape to heal is tangible as residents’ identities shift and become entangled with the land. When given the chance, these farmed animal residents reveal their perceptions of the world around them through interactions with the biophysical environment. The residents write new narratives with humans and other species of the sanctuary’s land. Their stories speak to the relationality of all things and the preciousness of social kinships that are formed within and across species lines.

Together we have walked through the sanctuary and unveiled key relationships and encounters between the farmed animal residents and the biophysical landscape. Each chapter focused on a different set of protagonists, and together, they comprise the multispecies community of the sanctuary. The work illustrates the following concluding themes.

Multispecies ethnography is a viable and hopeful landscape research methodology. Adopting a methodology of multispecies ethnography allowed this research project to reflect the ethos of VINE Sanctuary, which emphasizes the importance of place in fostering ethical engagements between humans and nonhuman animals. This work is deeply inspired by and builds

upon the growing body of interdisciplinary knowledge in the genre of multispecies ethnography. The lens of multispecies ethnography allowed the analysis of the site and the residents to be framed in a critical and relational way. Instead of asking, “What invasive plant species are here,” the methodology pushed me to ask, “Who are these plants and who are they interacting with?”

This work brings a landscape focus to multispecies ethnography’s central questions about how encounters with other-than-human beings—including plants, animals, fungi, and microbes—have shaped and continue to transform what it means to be human. Landscapes are fundamentally characterized by multispecies entanglements. In researching the landscape of the sanctuary, it was crucial to observe how it is shaped by many species and material elements together. In addressing the social issue of animal oppression, looking toward the framework of multispecies ethnography to inform the design of spaces for interspecies placemaking may provide hopeful insights for cultural reframing.

While VINE Sanctuary centers the farmed animal residents as the protagonists of the land, it became clear that the residents enjoyed life at VINE because they had the right to interact with other species, organisms, and elements of the landscape.

The sanctuary bridges the narratives of the domesticated and the wild. The sanctuary lets domesticated animals “rewild” themselves through the opportunity to self-actualize. Residents can mostly choose who, and what, they want to engage with, adhering to Leopold’s description of the desires of wild creatures (such as deer and migrating birds): they want to “strive for safety, prosperity, comfort, long life, and dullness.”³⁵ In this sense, wildness at the sanctuary encompasses simple but enriching acts of socializing, foraging, digging, roaming, searching for resources, and resting peacefully. For example, the cows in the hills roam the landscape as they please around the clock without

being brought back indoors. As the residents experience the environment of the sanctuary akin to wild animals, the pretenses of domestication are overwritten. The farmed animals meet with the sanctuary's land community, comprised of all its wild residents—the trees, soils, flora, and fauna. The sanctuary is a place of community-building, defined by the residents' experiences upon it and relationships with each other, not their pasts as specialized domesticated animals.

Animal agency and community are co-designed by humans and animals. VINE Sanctuary's human members have initiated the design of the landscape through site selection, creating pastures, and erecting fence boundaries. After setting up the sanctuary, staff allowed animals to exercise their agency, enabling our discovery of how to design a new form of multispecies landscape, one that centers domesticated animals as subjects. The human members of the sanctuary have designated the ethical groundwork of the sanctuary by giving opportunities to the animal residents to show how they co-design spaces, follow rituals, and formulate new routines. For example, many residents physically forge paths (i.e. goats and sheep engraving paths between the barn and the hay ring with their hooves over time), designate enclaves in the forest for resting and gathering (i.e. the cows sleeping together in the forested area now called the "summertime bedroom"), and mold the very topography of the ground (i.e. chickens digging trenches and holes).

Each individual displayed immense diversity in how they engage physically with the landscape and interpersonally with other residents in the community. Individuals moved across the landscape in different ways, which were traced through the movement mappings of the **Residents chapter**. Each trace of someone's action, or lack thereof, helped to stitch an understanding of their embodied experience on the sanctuary's land.

Social practices are also designed through daily and weekly routines. This is aided by the staff members' routines, such as daily "opening" and twice-weekly Hannaford produce distribution, both of which are elements of the sanctuary's functioning systems supported by humans. Ethical social relations between humans and animal members are also fostered through various means. Humans refer to the animal residents as "people" to respect their individuality and personhoods. Public outside visitors come to the sanctuary only if they are volunteering or collaborating on projects. The land is designated as a refuge where humans may encounter animals in a new light, not as a place to simply gaze at them.

Farmed animal sanctuaries can promote a land ethic alongside animal ethics. Farmed animal sanctuaries are growing in numbers across the United States. While their formation and ethos vary greatly, they generally share a view that challenges the concept that farmed animals are commodities or property. The acts of animal care at sanctuaries come from a genuine desire to improve animals' livelihoods.

The landscape of VINE Sanctuary aligns with animal ethics broadly because it is a material way to model an ethical relationship between animals and humans. The sanctuary grants farmed animals the right to experience the land and be free from deliberate human confinement and harm. Alongside this animal ethics frame, the practices of VINE Sanctuary reveal a land ethic rooted in historical calls for private landowners to tend their lands with respect to the biotic community. VINE Sanctuary's land practices reduce the impact on the biophysical environment as much as possible while also tending to the wellbeing of its domesticated animals, reflecting a more encompassing ethos of care toward all members of the land community. The advocacy and care for individual animals at the sanctuary is part of the larger project of the sanctuary to enact change toward interspecies

justice.

It is my hope that the encounters, observations, and depictions of the community at VINE Sanctuary will shed light on new ways to model relationships with farmed animals. It is a matter of reconciling relationships with the animal characters with whom we have produced many histories and landscapes, fraught with exploitation, suffering, and violations of land and animal ethics. The landscape of the sanctuary can then become a setting stage that reveals in plain sight the rewriting of stories with animals and their existences *with* us, not *for* us.



ENDNOTES

- 1 Tsing, "Unruly Edges."
- 2 Blattner, Donaldson, and Wilcox, "Animal Agency in Community: A Political Multispecies Ethnography of VINE Sanctuary."
- 3 Tsing, "Unruly Edges."
- 4 Kirksey and Helmreich, "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography."
- 5 "Amazing Animals."
- 6 VINE Sanctuary is different from many other farmed animal sanctuaries in that many of its residents are not separated by species. In the Commons, mammals are interacting together, cows with goats, alpacas with sheep, and so on. Recently, the Avian Influenza outbreak has forced sanctuaries to quarantine their birds in areas that are safer from the spread. Before the outbreak, the birds of VINE Sanctuary intermingled with the rest of the animals in the same spaces.
- 7 Donaldson and Kymlicka, "Farmed Animal Sanctuaries," 57.
Donaldson and Kymlicka discuss the different practices of farmed animal sanctuaries and their variations based on their philosophies and design.
- 8 Donaldson and Kymlicka, 56.
Donaldson and Kymlicka are referring to Erving Goffman's definition of a total institution.
- 9 Jones, *The Oxen at the Intersection: A Collision*, 20.
- 10 Hall, "Vermont's Dairy Farms: Which Way Forward?"
- 11 See interview conducted with Patrice Jones in "The Stewards" chapter.
- 12 Cornips and Hengel, "Place-Making by Cows in An Intensive Dairy Farm: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Nonhuman Animal Agency."
- 13 Thompson, Sorenson, and Zaino, *Wetland, Woodland, Wildland: A Guide to the Natural Communities of Vermont*, 195.
- 14 McKibben, Trombulak, and Klyza, *The Story of Vermont*, 81.
- 15 McKibben, Trombulak, and Klyza, *The Story of Vermont*, 83.
- 16 McKibben, Trombulak, and Klyza, *The Story of Vermont*, 85.
- 17 McKibben, Trombulak, and Klyza, *The Story of Vermont*, 113.
- 18 McKibben, Trombulak, and Klyza, 103.
- 19 McKibben, Trombulak, and Klyza, *The Story of Vermont*, 104.
- 20 McKibben, Trombulak, and Klyza, *The Story of Vermont*, 140.
- 21 VINE Sanctuary, "About VINE Sanctuary."
- 22 Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 112.
- 23 Leopold, "The Land Ethic."
- 24 Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 209.
- 25 Leopold, 133.
- 27 Yoatt, *Interspecies Politics: Nature, Borders, States*, 147.
- 28 Thoreau, "Walking."
- 29 Tsing, "Unruly Edges."
- 30 From an interview conducted with Pomme, which can be referred to on page 208.
- 31 McFarland and Hediger, "Approaching the Agency of Other Animals," 6.
- 32 McFarland and Hediger, 7.
- 33 Retold from staff accounts and social media news coverage.
- 34 Moore, "The Rise of Cheap Nature."
- 35 Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 133.

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