

# **The swarming life of pastures: living with vole outbreaks in the French Jura uplands**

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## ***ABSTRACT ORIGINAL***

This paper addresses the joint becoming of landscapes, agricultural tasks and prairie rodents in the French Jura uplands, where the development of hay monoculture triggered outbreaks of water voles that reduce pastures to dust. I explore links between processual landscape anthropology and contemporary scholarship on more-than-human entanglements in order to follow how ecological disruptions called for the development of new arts of noticing towards multispecies life. I first describe the relationships between Jura farmers, voles, fields and agricultural modernisation programmes, and suggest that vole outbreaks bring these together around shared tasks. I then consider how disputes over how to control voles led to changes in farmers' ways of caring for their cows and tending the fields. I argue that these underlined changes in their ways of understanding and responding to the rhythms of the landscape's more-than-human activities. Finally, I draw on the example of conflicts between farmers over whether cows or pastures should be more central to their work. I make the case that to be attentive to fields as a landscape in the Jura is ultimately to define the (in)appropriateness of certain actions and tasks. It becomes constitutive of what 'good farming' should be, and precipitates new identities. © 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists