

CONSCIOUS BEINGS

Rethinking Animality and Awareness

ANTHROZOOLOGY SYMPOSIUM

THE 8TH EDITION

I ORGANIZERS

- Institute of Economic and Social Research Gheorghe Zane (Romanian Academy – Iași Branch)
- Faculty of Animal Sciences and Biotechnology (University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj-Napoca)
- Faculty of Veterinary Medicine („Ion Ionescu de la Brad” University for Agricultural Studies and Veterinarian Medicine of Iași)
- AEDC Anthrozology Education Dogs Canines
- TIES Interspecies Hub
- Moldavia’s History Museum (“Moldova” National Museum Complex)

Anthrozoology Symposium

Eighth Edition – 6-8 November 2025 – Iași, Romania / Online

Conscious Beings: Rethinking Animality and Awareness

Book of Abstracts

Gheorghe Zane Institute for Economic and Social Research,

Romanian Academy, Iași Branch

Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

“Ion Ionescu de la Brad” Iasi University of Life Sciences

Faculty of Animal Science and Biotechnologies

University of Agricultural Studies and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca

History Museum of Moldavia

“Moldova” National Museum Complex

AEDC Anthrozoology Education Dogs Canines

TIES Interspecies Hub

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PROGRAMME

DAY 1 – 6th of November

Welcoming of the participants and opening of the Symposium

7:00 – 7:30 UTC / 9:00 – 9:30 EET

SESSION 1

7:30 – 10:00 UTC / 9:30 – 12:00 EET

João Miguel Alves Ferreira

Rethinking Consciousness and Animality: A Narrative Review on Human-Animal Interactions

Joshua de Paiva

The Philosophical Interest and Promises of the Concept of Attentionality in Thinking about the Diversity of Body-perspectives and Their Relationships, beyond the Human

Aleksandra Chlebda

From Rats to Elephants: The Emotional World of Animals and Their Decisions

Marcin Urbaniak

Does Phenomenology Need the Principle of Parsimony? A Critique of the Notion of Pre-reflective Self-awareness in Nonhuman Animals

Sarah Oxley Heaney, Cristina Zenato

Listening to Pain: Shark Subjectivity, Corporeal Compassion, and Posthuman Inquiry

Session chair: **Ionuț Alexandru Bârliba**

Coffee break

10:00 – 10:30 UTC / 12:00 – 12:30 EET

SESSION 2

10:30 – 12:00 UTC / 12:30 – 14:00 EET

Martin Ullrich

Human-Animal Studies and Interdisciplinary Music Research: A Novel Approach in Higher Education

Katarina Radaljac

Cross-species Motherhood under Oppression: Education through Sound Communication

Mehves Aydin

Birdsongs in Piano Education: A Creative Exploration

Abigail Sanders

Sounding Whales Archival Recording Project

Session chair: **Martin Ullrich**

Lunch break

12:00 – 13:00 UTC / 14:00 – 15:00 EET

SESSION 3

13:00 – 15:00 UTC / 15:00 – 17:00 EET

Vasile Stănescu

Loved to Death: “Humane” Meat and the Logic of the “Species Contract”

Rimona Afana

Corporate Profit Rests on Torture: Animals Pay the Price

Eveline Baptistella

Let the Self-domestication Come? As in the Cities, So in the Wild. The Case of Brazilian Midwest Jaguars and their Cultures

Isabella Clarke

Thought Fox: the Fox in the Country, the City and Our Imagination

Session chair: **Jessica Ullrich**

Coffee break

15:00 – 15:30 UTC / 17:00 – 17:30 EET

SESSION 4

15:30 – 18:00 UTC / 17:30 – 20:00 EET

Gary Shapiro

Conscious Persons of the Forest: Ethical Reflections on Teaching Sign Language to Orangutans

Lilian Sander Hoffmann, Olavo Marques, Matheus Montanari, Caetano Sordi, Rafael Devos, Viviane Vedan

The Soundscape of Cooperation: Acoustic Signals between Dolphins and Fishermen

Kanna Siripurapu

Biocultural Diversity and Cultural Keystone Species of Mobile Pastoralism in India

Łucja Fijoł

Spatial Memory and Orientation in Birds

Konrad Krupnik

Vocalization in Dogs

Session chair: **Lavinia Andreea Bejan**

DAY 2 – 7th of November

SESSION 5

7:00 – 9:30 UTC / 9:00 – 11:30 EET

Dennis C. Turner

Factors Affecting Differences in Adult Attitudes toward Animals

Surabhi Baijal

Tired of Being Kind: Moral Injury, Urban Cruelty, and the Emotional Cost of Seeing Animals as Sentient

Goran Arbanas, Karla Marušić

Are Cows Considered Significant Others? PTSD-like Symptoms in a Slaughterhouse Worker – A Case Report

Maxime Garcia, Anet Spengler Neff, Pamela Staehli

Human-Animal Relationship and Communication Practices with Cattle

Anna L. Arnaudova-Otoubirova

Coping with Companion Animal Loss and Grief

Session chair: **Kris Hill**

Coffee break

9:30 – 10:00 UTC / 11:30 – 12:00 EET

SESSION 6

10:00 – 12:30 UTC / 12:00 – 14:30 EET

Mare Koiva, Elena Boganeva

Ethiologies and Thinking Animals

Aditi Basu

From Mythology to a Sustainable Future: On Hinduism's Approach towards Portraying Animals' Divinity

Adina Hulubaş

Walk the Bear/ Walk of Shame. Ethical Issues concerning a Winter Solstice Practice in Bacău, Romania

Jessica Ullrich

Soliloquy as a Cephalopod: What Is It Like to Be an Octopus?

Marco Adda

Zoosomatics and the Imaginal Bodymind: Toward a Post-Anthropocentric Practice

Session chair: Sarah Oxley Heaney

Lunch break

12:30 – 13:45 UTC / 14:30 – 15:45 EET

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

13:45 – 14:45 UTC / 15:45 – 16:45 EET

Marc Bekoff

Animal Sentience, Emotions, Perceptions, and Choices: In Conversation with Marc Bekoff

A professor emeritus of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder, Marc has published more than 30 books. He has won many awards for his research on animal behavior, animal emotions (cognitive ethology), compassionate conservation, and animal protection, worked closely with Jane Goodall as co-chair of the ethics committee of the Jane Goodall Institute, and is a former Guggenheim Fellow. He also has worked closely with inmates at the Boulder County Jail.

His books include *The Animals' Agenda: Freedom, Compassion, and Coexistence in the Human Age*, *A Dog's World: Imagining the Lives of Dogs in a World Without Humans*, *Dogs Demystified: An A to Z Guide to All Things Canine*, the second edition of *The Emotional Lives of Animals*, and *Jane Goodall at 90: Celebrating an Astonishing Lifetime of Science, Advocacy, Humanitarianism, Hope, and Peace*. Marc and Jane were writing a young kid's book. In 1986, Marc won the Master's Tour du Var, aka the age-graded Tour de France. His homepage is marcbekoff.com.

Session chair: Marco Adda

Coffee break

14:45 – 15:00 UTC / 16:45 – 17:00 EET

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

15:00 – 16:00 UTC / 17:00 – 18:00 EET

Michael A. Kisley

Sources and Significance of Beliefs about Animal Emotions

Michael A. Kisley, PhD, is Professor of Psychology at the University of Colorado - Colorado Springs (UCCS). Originally trained as a neuroscientist (PhD, University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A.) with post-doctoral specialization in human neurophysiology, he has spent over twenty-five years investigating how people understand, value, and regulate emotions—both their own and those of other species. Dr Kisley has authored more than forty peer-reviewed publications, including most recently psychometric work on emotion acceptance and the development of the Beliefs about Animal Emotions Scale (BAES). Over the years, his broader scholarship has spanned affective neuroscience, the social and health impacts of people's beliefs about emotion, and most recently anthrozoology research into people's beliefs about non-human animal emotions. Dr. Kisley's research has been funded by a number of organizations including the prestigious U.S. National Institutes of Health. He has earned university awards for both research and teaching. Beyond the laboratory he serves on the board of the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region in the United States and is an active member of the EU COST Action Affect-Evo. Dr. Kisley has provided research mentorship to more than 80 students, and he continues to teach university courses in Biopsychology, Social Neuroscience, Evolutionary Psychology, and Animal Psychology. He has also held several administrative roles including Associate Dean of the College of Letters, Arts & Sciences at UCCS.

Session chair: **Irina Frasin**

Coffee break

16:00 – 16:30 UTC / 18:00 – 18:30 EET

SESSION 7 – Flash Presentations

16:30 – 18:00 UTC / 18:30 – 20:00 EET

Kaisu Koski

Human-Bear Meditations: Embodied Multispecies Relationships

Cosmin Mărtinaş

Between Non-Animal and Fully Animal: A Brief History of Human Participation to Animality

Jo Hockenhull, Liz Hazell-Smith, Sarah Worth, Cara Clancy, Tamlin Watson, Laura Kubsiewicz

Assigned 'a Donkey': Dismantling the Discourse and Dogma regarding Donkeys

Laura M Kubasiewicz, Liz Hazell-Smith, Sarah Worth, Cara Clancy, Tamlin Watson, Jo Hockenhull

From Healing to Harm: Wellness, Welfare and a Vanishing Species

Pavla Bíglová

Beyond Tools: Rethinking the Awareness of Assistance Dogs as Cognitive and Emotional Help

Olivia Pamfil

Dominance as Influence of Group Behavior in Social Animals and Humans

Miruna Boitos (Stinga)

Do Horses Perceive Age Differences in Humans? A Critical Analysis of Cross-Modal Representation

Cătălina-Daniela Răducu

On Women and Other Primates: The Female Leadership Paradox

Marcela Ifrim, Luminița Bejenaru, George Bodi

Animals, Archaeology, and Theory: Archaeozoology Across Cultural-Historical, Processual, and Post-Processual Thought

Daniel Măgurianu, Liviu Adrian Măgurianu

Beyond Anthropocentrism: An Approach to Consciousness in the Plant Kingdom

Session chair: **Aurora Hrițuleac**

DAY 3 – 8th of November

SESSION 8

8:00 – 10:00 UTC / 10:00 – 12:00 EET

Kris Hill

Do [Not] Feed the Cats: Feeding as Care, Spectacle, and Conflict

Gabriela Munteanu

Beyond 'Dog-Friendly': A Canine-centered Perspective on Pet Tourism

Tudor-Tim Ionescu

Adolescent Responses to Animal Cruelty in Social Media: An Experimental Approach in a Romanian High School

Gordon Meade

A Pilgrim's Progress

Session chair: **Alina Simona Rusu**

Coffee break

10:00 – 10:30 UTC / 12:00 -12:30 EET

SESSION 9 – Flash Presentations

10:30 – 12:00 UTC / 12:30 – 14:00 EET

Alina Simona Rusu

Creating a Community of Care in Romania: Four Years of Impact of the Anthrozoology Symposium on the Master's Degree Program "Ethology & Human-Animal Interaction"

Jyoti Nagarkoti, Dhanesh Ponnu

Vessels of Memory: Animal Symbolism and Cultural Narratives in Race Canoes of Car Nicobar

Malena Mogwitz, Alyssa Stoller, Maria Glarou, Charla Jean Basran, Anna Guðrún Þórhallsdóttir

Whale-Human-Entanglements: Assessing Humpback-whale Entanglement in North-East Iceland and Situating Whale Conservation in a Wider Ethical Perspective

Adoriana-Felicia Zdărie

Assessing Dolphin Cognition and Consciousness: A Review of Cooperative Problem-Solving Research

Ionuț Bârliba

Suffering Makes Us Equal

Irina Frasin

Symbiotic Healing. Finding Resilience in Multispecies Togetherness

George Bodi

Archaeology: Ethics, Consequences, and Animality

Aurora Hrițuleac

The Psychological Effects on Pets Owned by Narcissistic Individuals. The Social Media Case

Petrean Adina Dumitrița

Understanding of Human Given Cues by Sus Scrofa Domestica and by Other Species

Ada-Estera Rus

Critical Analysis of the Article “Unwilling or Willing but Unable: Can Horses Interpret Human Actions as goal directed?” by Milena Trosch, Emma Bertin, Ludovic Calandreau, Raymond Nowak, Lea Lansade – published May 24th, 2020

Session chair: **Cătălina-Daniela Răducu**

Closing of the Symposium

12:00 – 12:15 UTC / 14:00 – 14:15 EET



ABSTRACTS

DAY 1 – 6th of November

SESSION 1

7:30 – 10:00 UTC / 9:30 – 12:00 EET

Rethinking Consciousness and Animality: A Narrative Review on Human-Animal

João Miguel Alves Ferreira (*University of Coimbra & University of Lisbon*)

The intricate relationships between humans and animals have been a cornerstone of philosophical, cultural, and scientific discourse. This narrative review aims to explore the evolving concepts of animal consciousness, agency, and sentience while situating them within broader historical and ethical frameworks. Emphasizing interdisciplinary perspectives, the review examines key themes such as the anthropocentric paradigm, cognitive ethology, and the moral responsibilities of humans towards non-human animals. By integrating insights from literature, psychology, and animal studies, this work sheds light on emerging paradigms that challenge traditional binaries between humans and animals. The findings highlight the transformative potential of adopting empathy, animism, and corporeal compassion as frameworks for fostering equitable and respectful human-animal relationships. This review concludes by proposing avenues for future research to deepen our understanding of animal consciousness and its implications for redefining humanity's role in the natural world.

Keywords: consciousness, animality, human-animal interaction, agency, sentience

The Philosophical Interest and Promises of the Concept of Attentionality in Thinking about the Diversity of Body-perspectives and Their Relationships, beyond the Human

Joshua de Paiva (*Centre Victor Basch, Sorbonne University*)

Contemporary philosophies of mind and cognitive sciences, having moved beyond behaviourism, have readdressed the question of an attribution of forms of interiority to non-human living beings, particularly to other animals. The possibility

of expanding the attribution of interiority beyond the human – often speaking of consciousness, but also intentionality, mind, subjectivity, or more generally “experience” – seems to rest on the distinction between different degrees of conscious states, as in the Integrated Information Theory (Tononi 2008), which opened the way to attributing consciousness to non-humans (even beyond the animal realm) by redefining it in a “minimal” sense.

The problem with such propositions, beyond their gradualist and hierarchical bias, is that they use terms – especially that of “consciousness” – that come from a dualist and exceptionalist philosophical tradition, the inertia of which is difficult to escape. Concepts such as consciousness, mind, subjectivity, and intentionality are philosophically overdetermined, and therefore hard to redefine. They carry with them the legacy of the metaphysical question of the existence and interaction of body and mind, that goes back, in its modern version, to Descartes. Redefining their meaning is always costly. This produces a field in which it is difficult to navigate due to the multiplicity of competing definitions and theories: a shift in vocabulary seems necessary.

The challenge for the life sciences today is to escape both reductionist language and assumptions on the one hand, and the risks of intentionalist and rationalist anthropomorphism on the other. In this sense, I propose the concept not of intentionality (as in Dennett’s “intentional stance” 1987), but of “attentionality”, which I believe can provide a more liberating and fertile conceptual framework for describing and thinking about phenomena that challenge our scientific and naturalistic conceptual frameworks. This concept can more easily be reclaimed outside the dualist and substantialist paradigms of naturalist ontology than those of mind, subject, subjectivity, intentionality, or consciousness. Defined at the intersection of phenomenology and cognitive science, and revisited in a perspective inspired by Dennett, attentionality can be thought at the crossroads of the lived body and the biological body and help us move beyond naturalist dualisms in thinking the relations between interiority and physicality in the living world.

Drawing on the work of Depraz (2011, 2014) and Waldenfels (2019), I will show how the concept of attention can more easily be freed from the representationalist biases of the theories of mind, and how it is more compatible with a scientific and etho-eco-evolutionary perspective on the living. Building on their notions of attention and “responsiveness,” I propose to extend them to non-human forms of life, in order to apprehend the diversity of what we might call “alter-attentionalities”. This allows us to avoid the hierarchizing temptation of gradualism:

human attention, in the specificity of its manifestations and functions, is no longer the standard of reference, but one particular form of attention among others.

It is worth noting that this concept of attentionality is close to that of “body-perspective,” recently mobilized by Baptiste Morizot (2020), who borrows it from anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998) and reinterprets it from an eco-evolutionary perspective. But attentionality has, in my view, three main advantages: (1) it avoids overdetermination by visual metaphors, which is an anthropomorphic bias, (2) it does not risk perpetuating the Cartesian dualist presupposition, even in trying to subvert it by introducing a hyphen, and (3) it better conveys a sense of agency. The notion of attentionality suggests a way of paying attention, in the active and dynamic sense of the verb, and points towards observable behaviours defined at the crossroads of phenomenology and the life sciences. With this concept, I am proposing to move beyond the modern hierarchical dualisms of sensation and cognition, body and mind, exteriority and interiority, appearance and being. It also allows us to hold together the sensible, affective, and cognitive dimensions of experience, and to move towards a relational rather than substantial ontology, informed by eco-evolutionary insights. The aim is to navigate on a different philosophical map.

Keywords: awareness, attentionality, body-perspective, consciousness, non-human animals, philosophy

From Rats to Elephants: The Emotional World of Animals and Their Decisions

Aleksandra Chlebda (*University of the National Education Commission, Krakow*)

Anthrozoology, as an interdisciplinary science, explores the complex relationships between humans and animals, challenging traditional divisions between “us” and “them.” This presentation demonstrates how emotions influence decision-making processes across various animal species, from rats to elephants, and examines the significance of these findings for our understanding of human-animal relationships.

Emotions such as joy, sadness, fear, and empathy are not exclusively human domains but constitute key elements of animal life, enabling adaptation to changing environments. Drawing on the concept of affective heuristics and recent research on cognitive biases in animals (Mendl et al., 2024; Paul et al., 2024), the presentation

reveals mechanisms through which animals make rapid decisions under emotional influence.

The analysis encompasses diverse emotional behaviours: rats forgoing immediate rewards to prolong play (delayed gratification motivated by joy), Romeo the stork remaining with his flight-incapable partner despite migratory instinct, Kuni the chimpanzee showing interspecies empathy toward an injured starling and elephants displaying complex funeral behaviours motivated by grief and sorrow.

The presentation extends beyond anecdotal case descriptions, contextualizing them within contemporary animal emotion research and their implications for anthrozoology. Practical consequences of these discoveries for animal welfare, research ethics, legislation, and fostering more empathetic interspecies relationships will be discussed.

Understanding the emotional world of animals not only deepens our scientific knowledge but also provides a foundation for building a more just world for all sentient beings—a key objective of contemporary anthrozoology.

Keywords: animal emotions, affective heuristics, anthrozoology, animal decision-making, interspecies relationships, animal welfare.

Does Phenomenology Need the Principle of Parsimony? A Critique of the Notion of Pre-reflective Self-awareness in Nonhuman Animals

Marcin Urbaniak (*The University of National Education Comision in Krakow*)

Neurobiology, cognitive science and comparative psychology provide conceptual frameworks necessary to understand phenomena of awareness and (if possible) self-awareness in animals. My presentation discusses a phenomenological concept stating that a minimum form of self-awareness is a universal trait of conscious experience in the animal kingdom, understood as an intrinsic, first-personal perspective on objects. In the opinion of supporters of that concept (Mark Rowlands, Dan Zahavi, Shaun Gallagher or Dorothee Legrand), a universally first-person nature of experiences, which is a constantly present, subjective component of these experiences, called “pre-reflective self-awareness”, may occur as a promising basis for animal ethics. From my neurocognitive and neurobehavioral perspective, the most problematic issues are: (1) pre-reflective self-awareness does not require additional, higher order thoughts or higher cognitive processes, (2) the unity of a mental life can allegedly be grounded in pre-reflective self-awareness and (3) pre-reflective self-awareness is thoroughly non-observational and non-objectifying

aspect of conscious state. In my opinion, such phenomenological hypothesis, unsupported and even contradictory to the empirical evidence, seems to harm rather than help to develop animal ethics and research into animal minds and sentience.

Keywords: animal minds, animal cognition, animal awareness, animal self-awareness, animal consciousness, animal self-consciousness

Listening to Pain: Shark Subjectivity, Corporeal Compassion, and Posthuman Inquiry

Sarah Oxley Heaney (*University of Exeter*)

Cristina Zenato (*Shark Listener, People of the Water*)

Utilising a Participatory Action Research approach, this co-developed presentation explores how understandings of shark pain can be expanded through the practice of shark-listening, when examined through a posthuman lens and Acampora's concept of corporeal compassion. We begin by briefly considering how literary sources have historically addressed shark pain, often through anthropocentric frameworks shaped and limited by assumptions of human exceptionalism. Building on this critique, we explore how shark-listening resonates in practice, with Acampora's call to think beyond human-centered epistemologies. Drawing on Acampora's work on posthuman ethics, we suggest that moving beyond human-centered frameworks allows for a deeper, more posthuman engagement with sharks as ethically significant beings. This presentation is part of an ongoing PhD research project, *Kissing Sharks*, and welcomes feedback, discussion, and critical engagement.

Keywords: anthrozoology, morethanhuman, shark, corporeal compassion, posthuman

Human-Animal Studies and Interdisciplinary Music Research: A Novel Approach in Higher Education

Martin Ullrich (*Nuremberg University of Music*)

The presentation contextualizes the applied projects in an otherwise online-based, international and innovative approach to higher education in the arts. The students show that they can successfully work together with other students, with stakeholders from science and the broader public and in this way build bridges between different academic disciplines and between science and practice. Thus, students address real-world applications through theory and research, as well as recognize societal, political and socially relevant areas of responsibility regarding human-animal relations through music and sound.

Cross-species Motherhood under Oppression: Education through Sound Communication

Katarina Radaljic (*Nuremberg University of Music*)

The main goal of this project is to educate the broader public about the similarities in cross-species motherhood with a focus on the importance of sound communication between a mother and a child for safety, bonding, or educational reasons. The intersection of oppressive systems in which these mothers are raising their infants is also explained. Sound examples include human lullabies and the sounds from mothers of humpback whales, pigs, and chicken communicating with their infants. Through audio-visual presentation in the form of a performative lecture, the project reaches the audience of the feminist and queer festival Red Dawns in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Birdsongs in Piano Education: A Creative Exploration

Mehves Aydin (*Nuremberg University of Music*)

This project introduces birdsongs into piano education through three one-day workshops with 26 piano students (ages 10–18) and 6 teachers from Uppsala Culture School in Sweden. Students draw lots to select a bird and engage through listening sessions, birdsong games and VR experiences of its habitat. In small groups, they learn to perform birdsongs transcribed by teachers. The groups then present their performances, culminating in a grand finale as a collaborative Bird Orchestra. The project aims to integrate non-human animal songs into music education and develop innovative pedagogical methods.

Sounding Whales Archival Recording Project

Abigail Sanders (*Nuremberg University of Music*)

As part of her long-term project Sounding Whales, where hornist Abigail Sanders is learning to become “fluent” in whale song on the French horn, this artistic research project delves into the archives of humpback whale song recorded between 1950 and 1970 by William Schevill.

Through a process of transcription and imitation she creates works for horn out of the music contained within the database. The resulting pieces for solo French horn are recorded and published in the form of an EP, distributed in a sustainable and ocean-friendly format.

SESSION 3

13:00 – 15:00 UTC / 15:00 – 17:00 EET

Loved to Death: “Humane” Meat and the Logic of the “Species Contract”

Vasile Stănescu (*Mercer University*)

I argue that the practices of locavorism, humane slaughter, and the identity of the “compassionate carnivore” obscure the reality of the death and suffering they entail. When the “humane” farmer Catherine Friend tells us she raises and

slaughters lambs because she “loves them,” there is something more disturbing in this justification than if she simply believed the animals were unfeeling automatons. Humane farmers normalize existing power relations between humans and other animals. As such, humane farming cannot mount an adequate critique of the factory farm system, since it serves to obscure the killing at the heart of the practice. The so-called “humane farming” movement does not challenge anthropocentric privilege; instead, it restates and re-entrenches the foundational logic of all animal farming: the species contract. At its core, the species contract claims that animals “want” to be there, that they choose to be there, and thus that they consent to their treatment—making their death appear as the ultimate expression of their protection. Animal agribusiness does not render animals voiceless; rather, it permits only one response—always, already, and irrevocably: yes.

Keywords: humane farming, compassionate carnivore, the species contract, translation

Corporate Profit Rests on Torture: Animals Pay the Price

Rimona Afana (*independent researcher*)

Torture is to me the worst test for nonhumans’ consciousness and for humans’ conscience (or lack thereof). Normalized legally and culturally, torture is a daily experience for trillions of sentient beings who, on their journey to premature death, experience horrific forms of torturous violence, with impunity. The law makes all of it possible: the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted forty years ago, remains narrow and exclusionary even for humans (with many forms and contexts of torture excluded) while sentient nonhumans are completely left out. Though most countries have anti-cruelty laws, the definition of cruelty is narrow, they are typically only applied to companion animals, and are rarely enforced. Anti-cruelty laws do not criminalize the torture normalized in economic sectors reliant on animal abuse: torture becomes a given, facilitating extraction (and thus profit): whether it is animal body parts or animal labor.

My presentation illustrates some of the worst torturous practices against animals—commonplace in sectors like food, clothing, medical research, entertainment—and how this violence affects animals physically and psychologically. I also show that humans and nonhumans with complex sentience suffer similarly from torture and that the law, due to its narrow definition of torture

and to the deficient enforcement of anti-torture legislation, often permits torture. Conceptualizing crimes narrowly within existing legal paradigms is a disservice to victims, humans and nonhumans. Given the ongoing and horrific forms of torture endured by beings of different species, understanding the similarities and intersections between these crimes against humans and nonhumans can create compassion and solidarity.

Keywords: torture, anti-cruelty laws, state-corporate crime

Let the Self-Domestication Come? As in the Cities, So in the Wild.

The Case of Brazilian Midwest Jaguars and Their Cultures

Eveline Baptistella (*Mato Grosso State University*)

This study aims to discuss how the process of self-domestication in jaguars (*Panthera onca*) in the Brazilian Midwest reveals important aspects of animal consciousness, while also raising an alarm about the harmful consequences of the ecological crisis and human actions on the lives of other species.

Throughout history, the issue of non-human animals' cognitive abilities has been subject to controversy, and it is often used as a justification for abuse and mistreatment, always grounded in the concept of human exceptionalism. It is within this context that the concept of sentience arises, with different definitions depending on the author (Godfrey-Smith, 2020; Francione, 2012; Singer, 2007; Reus, 2005). However, as Baptistella (2019) argues, the term hides a form of speciesism, since it relies on the premise that consciousness is an exclusively human trait and the pinnacle of cognition among all life forms. Even with the publication of the Cambridge Declaration on Animal Consciousness (2012) and other relevant contributions on the topic, such as the work of cognitive ethologist Mark Bekoff (2010), sentience continues to be widely used as a term to hierarchize human and non-human animals.

This research combines multispecies ethnography (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010) and netnography (Kozinets, 2005) to trace how the jaguars inhabiting the state of Mato Grosso have been providing clues about their consciousness through the process of self-domestication they have undergone in the Pantanal and various urban areas. According to Hare & Woods (2022), we are currently experiencing the greatest self-domestication event in history, as wild animals are becoming increasingly tolerant of human proximity. This is happening worldwide, due to

human interference in their original habitats. Thus, the behavioural changes of jaguars in different situations not only demonstrate their adaptability but also their consciousness, as they establish distinct cultures and behavioural patterns according to the environments and circumstances they face.

We bring into discussion the case of the jaguars of Porto Jofre, which, through a now-surpassed process of baiting (*ceva*), became tolerant of human presence and have gained a protective network, as they became integrated into local tourism activities. As a result of this dynamic, the region now hosts a community of jaguars that transmits behaviours from one generation to the next regarding how to act in the presence of tourists. On the other hand, in cities, jaguar sightings are becoming increasingly frequent, and these animals are beginning to adopt submissive codes of conduct in line with human expectations.

The goal, then, is to discuss how these unique cultures are expressions of animal consciousness and how recognizing their subjectivity should serve as a basis for ensuring rights for these animals—so that they no longer must sacrifice their ways of existing for the sake of survival.

Keywords: animal cultures, self-domestication, Anthropocene, jaguars, animal conscience, sentience, animal rights, human animal studies

Thought Fox: the Fox in the Country, the City and Our Imagination

Isabella Clarke (*independent researcher*)

In this paper, I will consider the relationship between how we imagine animals to be, how we treat them, and how they actually are. This is not purely about the stories we tell to justify our treatment of them, though I will briefly explore that. My main aim is to complexify the process of imagining-animals, suggesting that this can have animal-shaping implications, such that to imagine may not be morally neutral but instead may (sometimes) be a further demonstration of our desire to dominate other animals. In contrast, I will offer an alternative to the/that kind of imagining that I suggest is somewhat self-seeking: a way of imagining that is wildly creative, allowing the animal, in this case the fox, to become seen as a truly and distinctly self-willed Other. This is a form of imagination which, instead of putting a veil between us and the world, removes accretions that prevent us from enabling the fox's "fuller realisation" (McGilchrist 2021).

McGilchrist, Iain. 2021. *The Matter with Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions, and the Unmaking of the World*: Perspectiva Press.

Keywords: fox, narrative, urban animals, imagination, domination.

SESSION 4

15:30 – 18:00 UTC / 17:30 – 20:00 EET

Conscious Persons of the Forest: Ethical Reflections on Teaching Sign Language to Orangutans

Gary Shapiro (*Orang Utan Republik Foundation*)

This paper presents a reflective analysis of my groundbreaking work with sign-learning, ex-captive orangutans in the forests of Borneo, emphasizing the recognition of these apes as conscious persons. It explores the critical role of agency, autonomy, and consent in cross-species research, considers our ethical obligations toward sentient beings, and contrasts this approach with other studies involving language acquisition in great apes. It also highlights the significance of allowing these orangutans to return to the forest, underscoring respect for their personhood status and the value of both interactive learning and naturalistic observation for understanding orangutan cognition and communication.

Keywords: orangutan, consciousness, personhood, sign language, autonomy, ethics, reintegration, great ape studies, communication, conservation

The Soundscape of Cooperation: Acoustic Signals between Dolphins and Fishermen

Lilian Sander Hoffmann (*Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo*)

Olavo Marques (*Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul*)

Matheus Montanari (*Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina*)

Caetano Sordi (*Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina*)

Rafael Devos (*Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina*)

Viviane Vedan (*Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina*)

The cooperative interaction between Lahille bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus gephyreus*) and fishermen (*Homo sapiens sapiens*) in the Tramandaí inlet, southern Brazil, constitutes a complex system of interspecies sociality involving

synchronized behaviours during mullet (*Mugil liza*) capture. This collaboration presents a unique opportunity to investigate its acoustic dimension, exploring the intricacies of interspecies communication. While visual communication plays a role, the acoustic dimension of this interaction remains crucial, raising questions about the existence of shared cognitive processes between the species. This study investigates the complexity of the acoustic signals produced by both species during cooperative fishing. We analyse underwater recordings of dolphin vocalizations. These include sounds associated with signalling behaviours, such as humps, tail slaps, and head beats. We also examine noises generated by fishermen, both intentional and unintentional—such as net casting and water kicks. Our goal is to identify patterns in these sounds that suggest intentionality, mutual recognition, and understanding. We also investigate how dolphins may anticipate fishermen actions and model their own action to produce a coordinated inter-action. Our results reveal that, while clicks are predominant and burst sounds are associated with dolphin signalling behaviours, certain spectral properties of fishermen-generated sounds may serve as acoustic cues for the dolphins. We consider the impact of these findings for understanding interspecies communication and the possible emergence of a shared language. Additionally, we highlight the potential impacts of increased anthropogenic noise on the integrity of this intricate interaction, mainly on the dolphins' ability to detect and interpret these subtle signals. Finally, we address the implications of these outcomes for the conservation of Lahille bottlenose dolphins and the sustainability of this traditional fishing practice, emphasizing the need to consider the acoustic environment in the management of human activities in critical interaction as well as an aspect to be taken into account when safeguarding it as cultural heritage.

Keywords: interspecies communication, signalling, cues, noise, soundscape, cultural heritage

Biocultural Diversity and Cultural Keystone Species of Mobile Pastoralism in India

Kanna Siripurapu (*University of Guelph*)

The concepts of cultural keystone species and biocultural diversity have been around since time immemorial; however, they made inroads into scientific research relatively recently. Indigenous livestock breeding communities have a tradition of assigning social and cultural meaning to the livestock they breed. In this regard, an

attempt was made to review the term biocultural diversity and propose and tentatively define the term culture animals with reference to the indigenous Poda Thurpu cattle breed reared by pastoralists inhabiting the Indian state of Telangana in the article. Indigenous livestock breeds such as the Poda Thurpu cattle represent the collective heritage of communities they are associated with and cannot be conserved separately. Such breeds will survive only when the indigenous knowledge and production systems that they are a part of also survive.

Keywords: biocultural diversity, cultural keystone species, pastoralism, livestock, Poda Thurpu Cattle

Spatial Memory and Orientation in Birds

Lucja Fijoł (*University of the National Education Commission, Krakow*)

Spatial cognition in birds includes memory and spatial orientation and represents a set of cognitive abilities crucial for survival. These abilities manifest themselves differently depending on the species, foraging strategy, social structure and ecological niche occupied.

Crows show the ability to recognize geometric shapes, suggesting an ability for abstract spatial reasoning.

Moreover, the research proves the compartmentalization of tasks between the two hemispheres of the brain and indicates that birds under difficult conditions will base their actions mainly on signals processed by one of the hemispheres.

Studies of non-migratory food-caching birds suggest the existence of a genetic component affecting their spatial cognitive abilities.

The ability to process spatial information differently, depending on the type of cues available, highlights the functional specialization of the avian brain and its ability to make flexible decisions depending on the spatial context. The preference for one type of cues over others may depend on specific environmental conditions or the type of task being performed, demonstrating the adaptive capacity of birds.

These observations show birds as vertebrates with advanced cognitive abilities, indicating cognitive processing that goes beyond simple recognition of landmarks and includes a more complex understanding of spatial positioning.

Keywords: neuroplasticity, adaptive behaviour, spatial cognition, cognitive abilities, hemispheres

Vocalization in Dogs

Konrad Krupnik (*University of the National Education Commission Krakow*)

Dogs use a wide range and great variety of sounds in their communication with humans to convey information. Some acoustic signals can be combined, for example, growling with barking. Excessive vocalization may also indicate health problems in the dog (Schroll & Dehasse, 2020).

In my work, which will be based on books, I will present the following types of vocalizations produced by dogs: growling, yelping, whining, howling, grunting, and barking. I will describe each type of vocalization, explaining its characteristics and which sounds typically precede others (Horowitz, 2013; Schroll & Dehasse, 2020; Wynne, 2022).

I will devote the most attention to barking, where I will present different types of barks, including warning barking, reprimanding barking, deterrent barking, and boredom barking (Donaldson, 2014).

Donaldson, J. (2014). *Pies i człowiek*. Łódź: Galaktyka.

Horowitz, A. (2013). *Oczami psa*. Warszawa: Czarna Owca.

Schroll, S., & Dehasse, J. (2020). *Zaburzenia zachowania psów*. Wrocław: Edra.

Wynne, C. D. L. (2022). *Pies jest miłością*. Warszawa: Marginesy.

Keywords: bark, yelp, growling, whining, howl, yawning

DAY 2 – 7th of November

SESSION 5

7:00 – 9:30 UTC / 9:00 – 11:30 EET

Factors Affecting Differences in Adult Attitudes toward Animals

Professor Dennis C. Turner (*Institute for Applied Ethology and Animal Psychology*)

The effects of religion, gender and animal contact on adult attitudes toward nature conservation, pets, intensive farming, animal feelings and cognitive abilities have been examined in 12 countries across the globe. The results serve as a basis for discussion.

Tired of Being Kind: Moral Injury, Urban Cruelty, and the Emotional Cost of Seeing

Surabhi Baijal (*Ambedkar University Delhi*)

This paper reflects on the experience of rescuing indie dogs in urban India as a form of witnessing, where recognising animals as sentient, conscious beings brings not only connection—but exhaustion, grief, and injury. It engages with the emotional cost of caring in a world that persistently denies animal agency and pain and treats acts of compassion as irrational or even subversive.

Drawing on personal rescue experience and interdisciplinary theory from critical animal studies, psychology, and cultural history, the paper explores how cruelty is normalised, kindness is stigmatised, and animal lives are framed as nuisances in the project of urban development. It argues that recognising animal sentience is not a neutral act it rewrites the moral geography of the city, forcing us to see how laws, infrastructure, and social attitudes routinely exclude, harm, or erase non-human lives.

By foregrounding the idea of moral injury—the psychic toll of witnessing preventable suffering—the paper suggests that care for animals becomes a double burden: the animal is at risk, and the carer is isolated. Through this lens, it reclaims

kindness and sympathetic imagination not as sentimentality, but as radical ethical acts that demand new languages of recognition, policy, and community.

Keywords: moral injury, urban animal rescue, sentience, cruelty and care, anthrozoology, empathy, human-animal relations, kindness as resistance, Indie dogs, emotional labour

Are Cows Considered Significant Others? PTSD-like Symptoms in a Slaughterhouse Worker – A Case Report

Goran Arbanas (*University Psychiatric Hospital Vrapče*)

Karla Marušić (*University Psychiatric Hospital Vrapče*)

The concept of significant others typically refers to close human relationships, yet human-animal bonds and interactions have profound psychological consequences. This case report explores whether exposure to animal death can constitute a traumatic event under current psychiatric definitions.

The patient, a 24-year-old male, worked in a slaughterhouse for nine months, tasked with removing the bodies of slaughtered cattle. He was exposed daily to blood-soaked environments, dismembered carcasses, and the aftermath of mass animal death. Upon transitioning to a supermarket butcher unit, he developed recurrent nightmares, flashbacks, hypervigilance, avoidance of meat and animal-related stimuli, social withdrawal, and emotional numbing—symptoms consistent with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

According to the DSM-5, trauma (Criterion A) involves exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence involving humans. While witnessing human suffering is an established cause of PTSD, the psychological toll of witnessing or participating in animal death remains unrecognized in diagnostic classifications. Yet, studies show that slaughterhouse workers, veterinarians performing euthanasia, and animal shelter employees frequently exhibit stress-related psychopathology. This case challenges the current anthropocentric model of trauma and questions whether the definition of "others" in PTSD criteria should be expanded to include non-human beings.

By presenting this case at the Anthrozoology Symposium 2025, we invite discourse on the psychological, ethical, and ontological dimensions of trauma, urging a reconsideration of how human-animal interactions shape mental health.

Keywords: PTSD, slaughterhouse work, trauma, human-animal relationships, consciousness, psychiatric classification

Human-animal Relationship and Communication Practices with Cattle

Maxime Garcia (*Research Institute of Organic Agriculture - FiBL Switzerland*)

Anet Spengler Neff (*Research Institute of Organic Agriculture - FiBL Switzerland*)

Pamela Staehli (*Research Institute of Organic Agriculture - FiBL Switzerland*)

Good practices for handling animals on farms are relatively well-known and widespread. Yet, farmers sometimes face situations where routine handling methods do not apply: A difficult birth, one or more animals panicking when moved to a new paddock, an animal refusing to be milked, high stress when animals are sent to the slaughterhouse. In such situations, it is often difficult to know how to react and what to do so that both human and animal resolve the problem as efficiently and calmly as possible.

The aim of our project is to document the practices used by farmers in such situations. We conducted on-farm visits and engaged in an open (nevertheless guided through a questionnaire) discussion focusing on the relationship between humans and animals and the communication between them.

From these discussions, we drew up an inventory of the practices used to deal with non-routine situations. Because each farm is unique, both in terms of the people who run it and of the animals who live on it, we do not provide a set of "rules on animal handling". Rather, we present a range of possible practices resulting from farmers' know-how, from which other farmers can willingly pick in a way that suits their own farm.

Keywords: farming practice, cattle, animal handling

Coping with Companion Animal Loss and Grief

Anna L. Arnaudova-Otouzbirova (*Trakia University*)

Companion animals undoubtedly have an important role to play in human society today and are considered by many an integral part of their families. They are often regarded as friends providing unconditional love and companionship, emotional and psychological support and improving the physical and mental well-being of their owners. Even though the human-animal bond is now widely recognized, the loss of a companion animal and the subsequent grief with its intensity and wide-ranging impact on the bereaved still remain minimised, undervalued and poorly understood by society as a whole. The literature review of research publications on the topic reveals the necessity for future studies reflecting the need for acceptance and understanding of the compounded processes associated with companion animal loss and bereavement. Therefore, the aim of the current article is to outline the challenges faced by owners following the death of a beloved pet, which may involve emotional and psychological distress, day-to-day struggles, as well as forms of complicated grief and disenfranchised grief. Furthermore, the processes of bereavement and coping with companion animal loss are discussed along with existing possibilities for grief and mourning counselling and support.

Keywords: companion animal loss, bereavement, disenfranchised grief, coping, support

SESSION 6

10:00 – 12:30 UTC / 12:00 – 14:30 EET

Ethiologies and Thinking Animals

Mare Koiva (*Estonian Literary Museum*)

Elena Boganeva (*Estonian Literary Museum*)

In the legends of different peoples of the world, animals, birds, reptiles, fish, insects are represented by animate, intelligent, thinking beings. The picture of the world in oral folklore traditions assumes the whole world to be animated. Animals, birds, fish, amphibians, insects, plants are endowed not only with emotions and consciousness, but also with moral qualities, the ability to consciously choose between good and evil, truth and falsehood, readiness for self-sacrifice and sin.

The paper will address one of the parallels between Estonian (Baltic Finnic) and Belorussian (Slavic) in the field of traditional legends – The texts should be divided into the following groups: 1) legends about the origin of animals from humans, 2) legends about animals who made a conscious choice in a situation of precedent and later received their properties, qualities of character, features of appearance. Archival texts and fieldwork materials, their function, and a preliminary statistical overview are presented.

Keywords: ethiologies, legends, thinking animals, Estonia, Belorussia

From Mythology to a Sustainable Future: On Hinduism's Approach towards Portraying Animals' Divinity

Aditi Basu (*independent researcher*)

In Hinduism, the world's oldest religion, the relationships between humans and other animals have been a constant source of meaning, generating concepts, ideas and images that have helped towards the creation of the Hindu identity and imagery. Animals in Hinduism have been portrayed as *vāhanas*, or divine vehicles, of various gods and goddesses within the sacred religious texts. While some are perceived to be divine messengers, others like the Hanumana (the Monkey God) are believed to be reincarnations of gods and goddesses. Additionally, the practice of worshipping animals before the temple deities underscores their symbolic importance and ritualistic significance in Hindu worship that creates a scope to understand the communication beyond human realm within the rich tapestry of Hindu mythology. This results in the integral roles of animals in a Hindu's life, whether through belief systems, ritual observances, or moral teachings derived from sacred texts. The Hindu literature provides a wealth of warm and personable, vibrant and fascinating animal characters, from monkeys and bears to snakes and dogs. It does not differentiate between species nor between the gods and humans but, instead, reiterates the manifestation of divine souls within different creatures. In my paper, I delve into the captivating world of Hindu mythology and its enigmatic portrayal of the concept of a harmonious human-animal communication channel by tracing its roots from ancient times to the present. I also analyse how the revival of such mythological relationships can promote ecological conservation and a sustainable future. The emphasis is on acknowledging the relevance of the Hindu principles of animal conservation through their deification. I believe that my paper

contributes to this year's symposium, which focuses on human-animal interactions through the lenses of literature and mythology.

Keywords: animals, divinity, ecology, Hinduism, sustainable future

Walk the Bear/ Walk of Shame.

Ethical Issues concerning a Winter Solstice Practice in Bacău, Romania

Adina Hulubaș (*Alexandru Philippide Institute of Romanian Philology, Romanian Academy, Iași Branch*)

In the north-eastern part of Romania, a region called Moldavia, people have been celebrating New Year's Eve also by using animal masks depicting a goat, a stag, a bull or a bear. They symbolize vegetational gods who die in winter and must come back to life in order to make nature thrive again. There are several ethical issues that were raised /Several ethical issues were raised starting 2004, when a rapporteur of the European Council on the environmental protection in the Carpathian Mountains notified the Romanian Prosecutor's office attached to the High Court of Justice and the office of the Prime Minister of the time that the uncontrollable proliferation of these real fur bear masks in Comănești – Bacău county lead to an increased poaching and slaughtering of both bear cubs and adult animals.

The lack of education lies at the root of this ethical crisis, since people in the crowd no longer know how this practice is supposed to be performed; that there was only one bear that had to mimic death, they can't tell if the drums are beating a correct rhythm or if the dancers respect traditional steps. On the other hand, the fact that authorities pay for this display sends the message that it is a representative performance and misinforms the public who start to believe this is what traditional culture looks and sounds like. A second cause would be festivalization, since the mayor of Comănești started a bear masks festival in 2013.

Keywords: intangible cultural heritage, bear mask, winter solstice, New Year's Eve, poaching, ethics

Soliloquy as a Cephalopod: What Is It like to Be an Octopus?

Jessica Ullrich (*University of Fine Arts Münster*)

I want to discuss the ongoing project “Visiting Octopus” by the German artist duo Hörner/Antlfinger, which explores a specific form of telepathic communication with octopuses. The artists learned the technique for a guided imagination, which has roots in shamanistic practices, from an animal communicator. It involves a kind of trance that begins with breathing in sync with the animal and politely asking for permission to slip into her body. If the animal gives her permission and the human being engages with the imagination, bodily sensations, thoughts and ideas appear. The practice ends with thanking the animal for her hospitality. These empathy exercises and the resulting artwork are anthropomorphizing the involved octopuses. Nevertheless, strategic anthropomorphism can raise awareness for the plight of other animals, challenge human exceptionalism and help perceive other animals differently. Telepathic communication challenges the alleged unbridgeable gap between the species and might become an experimental tool for being more attentive to the plights of other animals.

Keywords: octopus, empathy, storytelling, guided imagination, art

Zoosomatics and the Imaginal Bodymind: Toward a Post-Anthropocentric Practice

Marco Adda (*AEDC Anthrozoology Education Dogs Canines*)

This presentation extends on zoosomatics by focusing on the imaginal dimension: guided practices in which an animal form is invited into the human bodymind. Through imagination, meditation, and somatic movements, participants open perceptual passages where nonhuman presences can be embodied and felt. Such encounters generate a rewiring of perception, shaking anthropocentric habits and awakening latent forms of animality within the human. The process is that of an intercorporeal dialogue, through which participants return to animals with renewed sensitivity, reciprocity, and ethical attention.

These practices carry implications for anthrozoology, ecological thought, and post-anthropocentric philosophy: by cultivating embodied imagination as a mode of multispecies knowing, zoosomatics proposes new ways of situating humans within ecological systems and interspecies relations. In this sense, zoosomatics aligns with

Practice as Research (PaR), positioning embodied and imaginal exploration as a mode of inquiry that generates knowledge through lived multispecies encounter. It suggests that animality is not a residue of human evolution but an active potential for reorienting perception, ethics, and cultural practice toward more reciprocal forms of coexistence.

Keywords: zoosomatics, animality, imagination, ecosomatics, anthrozoology, post-anthropocentrism, ecology, multispecies relations, embodied research

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

13:45 – 14:45 UTC / 15:45 – 16:45 EET

Animal Sentience, Emotions, Perceptions, and Choices: In Conversation with Marc Bekoff

Marc Bekoff, *Professor Emeritus at the University of Colorado, Boulder*

A professor emeritus of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder, Marc has published more than 30 books. He has won many awards for his research on animal behaviour, animal emotions (cognitive ethology), compassionate conservation, and animal protection. He worked closely with Jane Goodall as co-chair of the ethics committee of the Jane Goodall Institute and is a former Guggenheim Fellow. He also has worked closely with inmates at the Boulder County Jail.

His books include *The Animals' Agenda: Freedom, Compassion, and Coexistence in the Human Age*; *A Dog's World: Imagining the Lives of Dogs in a World Without Humans*, *Dogs Demystified: An A to Z Guide to All Things Canine*, the second edition of *The Emotional Lives of Animals*, and *Jane Goodall at 90: Celebrating an Astonishing Lifetime of Science, Advocacy, Humanitarianism, Hope, and Peace*. In 1986, Marc won the Master's Tour du Var, aka the age-graded Tour de France. His homepage is marcbekoff.com.

Sources and Significance of Beliefs about Animal Emotions

Professor Michael A. Kisley, *University of Colorado - Colorado Springs (UCCS)*

Do animals experience complex emotions such as grief? Do they genuinely feel love? While science pursues definitive answers to these questions, what laypeople believe about these questions may exert greater practical influence on animal welfare by impacting food choices, consumer behaviour, and conservation policy. Here I present a program of research aimed at mapping these beliefs and their consequences. Central to this effort is the psychometrically validated Beliefs about Animal Emotions Scale (BAES), which assesses three dimensions: (i) beliefs about the complexity and authenticity of animal emotions; (ii) independence from human similarity—whether emotional capacities are granted more readily to species closer to humans; and (iii) the moral relevance attributed to animal emotions. New findings show that higher educational attainment predicts lower scores on all three dimensions, prompting reflection on how scientific training frames conceptions of animal emotion. Additionally, higher BAES scores consistently predict greater avoidance of animal-derived foods and other products, emphasizing the potential implications of these beliefs for animal welfare and sustainability. This research program will be framed within the European COST Action Affect-Evo, an effort aimed at developing shared terminology and methodological standards for studying and communicating findings about animal affect (including but not limited to emotion) to researchers, practitioners, and laypeople alike.

Michael A. Kisley, PhD, is Professor of Psychology at the University of Colorado - Colorado Springs (UCCS). Originally trained as a neuroscientist (PhD, University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A.) with post-doctoral specialization in human neurophysiology, he has spent over twenty-five years investigating how people understand, value, and regulate emotions—both their own and those of other species. Dr Kisley has authored more than forty peer-reviewed publications, including most recently psychometric work on emotion acceptance and the development of the Beliefs about Animal Emotions Scale (BAES). Over the years, his broader scholarship has spanned affective neuroscience, the social and health impacts of people's beliefs about emotion, and most recently anthrozoology research

into people's beliefs about non-human animal emotions. Dr. Kisley's research has been funded by a number of organizations including the prestigious U.S. National Institutes of Health. He has earned university awards for both research and teaching. Beyond the laboratory he serves on the board of the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region in the United States and is an active member of the EU COST Action Affect-Evo. Dr. Kisley has provided research mentorship to more than 80 students, and he continues to teach university courses in Biopsychology, Social Neuroscience, Evolutionary Psychology, and Animal Psychology. He has also held several administrative roles including Associate Dean of the College of Letters, Arts & Sciences at UCCS.

SESSION 7 – Flash Presentations

16:30 – 18:00 UTC / 18:30 – 20:00 EET

Human-Bear Meditations: Embodied Multispecies Relationships

Kaisu Koski (*Sheffield Hallam University*)

This film-based research project builds a speculative remote relationship between the artist-author and Bolik, the bear she adopted from the Liberty Bear Sanctuary in Romania a year ago. During the year, the artist has followed the sanctuary video stream and studied Bolik's movement qualities and daily rhythms to develop an embodied understanding of these and a non-invasive relationship with Bolik. The presentation shares a short video piece in which the bear and the human follow the same meditative choreography simultaneously.

Keywords: bear, sanctuary, multispecies relationship, meditation, video

Between Non-animal and Fully Animal: A Brief History of Human Participation to Animality

Cosmin Mărtinaş (*Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iaşi*)

This essay's aim is to analyse the manner in which, in the history of thought, the definition of man was of such nature that it allowed for humans to be both fully animal and unlike any other animal at the same time. Some belief systems that allow this are the views of humans as mechanical bodies imbued with soul, humans as

culture-makers or political animals. Believing that humans are animals can be seen as a consequence of treating out-group humans like animals. Believing that humans are nothing like animals is necessary for the same treatment not be applicable to the in-group, including the self. One peculiar symptom can be observed when the successes of the in-group are attributed to their humanity while the shortcomings of the out-group are attributed to their animality. Whilst what is considered to be the in-group is subject to change, the fact that “I” is never fully or simply animal remains constant. “I” is at most a quasi-animal, because it acts as such, and, consequently, becomes estranged from its fully animal nature. This, in a materialist world-view, can be considered as partly a consequence of participation to (in) animal exploitation, while, in an idealist world-view, as one of the causes of participation to animal exploitation.

Keywords: human exceptionalism, animality, non-animal human, non-human animal

Assigned ‘a Donkey’: Dismantling the Discourse and Dogma regarding Donkeys

Jo Hockenhull (*The Donkey Sanctuary*)

Liz Hazell-Smith (*The Donkey Sanctuary*)

Sarah Worth (*The Donkey Sanctuary*)

Cara Clancy (*The Donkey Sanctuary*)

Tamlin Watson (*The Donkey Sanctuary*)

Laura Kubsiewicz (*The Donkey Sanctuary*)

Donkeys have been maligned, misrepresented, or rendered invisible throughout their long association with humans. Their domestication predates that of horses and camels, with donkeys providing much of the power behind the progression of human civilization, both historically and to a lesser extent in present times. Yet we are only now starting to appreciate what it means to be a donkey in an anthropocentric world. Donkey sentience is being discussed, donkey behaviour is now recognised as subtle rather than stubborn, and the lived experiences of donkeys are being considered alongside those of their human counterparts, whether working in brick kilns in India or as partners in therapeutic programmes. But what does it mean to be a donkey in a human world, viewed through the murky lens of human culture and constructs and subject to anthropogenic pressures? In this presentation we will shift the traditional paradigm of donkey servitude and meet donkeys for who they are. Drawing on global research insights from all walks of donkey life, we

will consider donkeys from a new perspective that meets them on their own terms as autonomous individuals.

Keywords: agency, culture, donkey, sentience

From Healing to Harm: Wellness, Welfare and a Vanishing Species

Laura M. Kubasiewicz (*The Donkey Sanctuary*)

Liz Hazell-Smith (*The Donkey Sanctuary*)

Sarah Worth (*The Donkey Sanctuary*)

Cara Clancy (*The Donkey Sanctuary*)

Tamlin Watson (*The Donkey Sanctuary*)

Jo Hockenhull (*The Donkey Sanctuary*)

Today, if both modern science and ancient wisdom traditions are leading us to transcend anthropocentric world views, it would be remiss to turn away from one ancient healing practice which, although defined by the holistic concept of harmony between man and nature, is single-handedly causing a seismic decline in the global population of one species: the donkey.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a medical knowledge system, dating back at least 2000 years. Its core focus is on restoring homeostasis within the body. TCM is used as a framework from diagnosis through to treatment/prevention of disease or dysfunction. Various routes to wellness are pursued through therapies such as herbal medicine, acupuncture, massage and diet amongst others. One such treatment is the ingestion of ejiao, which is believed to be a blood tonic, used to enrich blood, cure anaemia, stop bleeding, and improve overall health. However, as ejiao is primarily made from the collagen extracted from donkey hides, its production process is not without some deleterious effects.

In order to fuel the demand for ejiao production at least 5.9 million donkeys are slaughtered for their skins every year. From source to slaughter, the donkeys who get caught up in this trade suffer at every stage. These numbers are unsustainable and a threat to the very existence of donkeys. In order to maintain production volume, donkeys are being sourced from developing countries, through means which are often illegal and harmful to the local donkey population as well as those communities who depend on donkeys for their livelihoods.

TCM, a system which purports to promote balance and harmony in its recipients, is in itself causing an egregious imbalance in the world, compromising the welfare and even the existence of donkeys in some geographic locations, the

survival of donkey-dependent communities, and contaminating environments through unregulated slaughter and carcass disposal.

Keywords: donkey skin trade, ejiao, TCM, exploitation, linked lives

Beyond tools: Rethinking the Awareness of Assistance Dogs as Cognitive and Emotional Help

Pavla Bíglová (*University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine (USAMV) Cluj-Napoca*)

Assistance dogs are often viewed through a task-based, utilitarian lens. This presentation reconsiders them as sentient partners with emotional and cognitive awareness. Drawing on research in canine cognition and multispecies relationships, it challenges dominant views of animality and highlights the ethical significance of recognizing assistance dogs as active, aware agents in human lives.

Keywords: assistance animals, ethical relationship, interspecies communication

Dominance as Influence of Group Behaviour in Social Animals and Humans

Olivia Pamfil (*University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine (USAMV) Cluj-Napoca*)

There is a fashionable theory that dogs' group behaviour is not influenced by dominance and there is another trend of humanizing dogs and treating them as humans. But dogs, humans and other social animals actually have dominance as part of their group behaviour. I will make a comparative analysis in order to find the similarities in behaviour.

Keywords: applied ethology, group behaviour, dominance, social animals, human

Do Horses Perceive Age Differences in Humans? A Critical Analysis of Cross-modal Representation

Miruna Boitos (Stinga) (*University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine (USAMV) Cluj-Napoca*)

This paper presents a critical analysis of the study "Horses form cross-modal representations of adults and children" by Plotine Jardat et al., which investigates whether horses can distinguish between adults and children using visual and auditory cues. The original research explores cross-modal perception in horses and reveals that they exhibit longer looking times for incongruent stimuli and elevated heart rates in response to children's voices, indicating differentiated emotional responses. This analysis evaluates the study's methodology, theoretical grounding, and contributions to the field of animal cognition, with particular focus on the dimensions of perceptual richness and unity in consciousness. Strengths such as the multi-modal design and relevance to animal welfare are highlighted, alongside limitations including sample bias and restricted generalizability. The discussion incorporates insights from related studies on dogs and dolphins and aligns the findings with the Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness. The analysis concludes that horses possess complex perceptual and emotional capacities, advocating for further research and more ethically informed human-horse interactions.

Keywords: cross-modal perception, horse cognition, human-animal interaction, animal consciousness, emotional reactivity, ethology

On Women and Other Primates: The Female Leadership Paradox

Cătălina-Daniela Răducu (*Gheorghe Zane Institute for Economic and Social Research, Romanian Academy, Iași Branch*)

My presentation addresses the topic of female leadership in human and nonhuman primates; I argue that, although widely used, direct comparisons between humans and primates not only reveal gender differences in leadership but also serve to justify gender inequality in complex modern human societies. As recent evidence from evolutionary biology shows, some differences and potential obstacles are rooted in the evolutionary history of mammals generally and primates specifically; nevertheless, many possibilities for female leadership exist, including those that are often ignored in operationalized definitions of leadership. In line with

the limitations highlighted by researchers in this field, my analysis reveals, at the same time, that other obstacles to female leadership are superficial, as they are rooted in recent cultural traditions. I will show that a direct comparison with other primates, notably chimpanzees, is too simplistic a strategy and tells us more about the gender ideology of our moment than about gender differences in humans and their relevance to leadership.

Keywords: dominance, females, gender roles, leadership, primates, power, sex differences

Animals, Archaeology, and Theory: Archaeozoology Across Cultural-Historical, Processual, and Post-Processual Thought

Marcela Ifrim (*Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași*)

Luminița Bejenaru (*Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași; Romanian Academy, Iași Branch, Anthropological Research Centre "Olga Necrasov" Iași*)

George Bodi (*Institute of Archaeology, Romanian Academy, Iași Branch*)

Archaeozoology, the study of human–animal relationships through faunal remains, reflects the shifting theoretical frameworks of archaeology. Within the cultural-historical paradigm, it was primarily descriptive, using species identification to support cultural chronologies and define archaeological cultures. Processualism in the 1960s reoriented archaeozoology toward scientific explanation, grounded in ecology and systems theory. Faunal assemblages became datasets for reconstructing subsistence, domestication, and human adaptation to environmental constraints. Post-processualism in the 1980s challenged this determinism, emphasizing symbolism, identity, and ideology. Animals were interpreted not only as resources but also as agents within ritual and social practice. Tracing these paradigms shows how archaeozoology mirrors archaeology's epistemological shifts, evolving from classification to ecological modelling and interpretive analysis, and underscoring its role in connecting materiality, environment, and cultural meaning.

Keywords: archaeozoology, archaeology, theory, human-animal relationships

Beyond Anthropocentrism: An Approach to Consciousness in the Plant Kingdom

Daniel Măgurianu (*Ensorinstituut, Oostende, België*)

Liviu Adrian Măgurianu (*Gheorghe Zane Institute for Economic and Social Research,
Romanian Academy, Iași Branch*)

This paper critically examines the conventional notion of consciousness, proposing an expanded perspective that extends beyond the realms of the human and animal kingdoms to encompass the plant kingdom and other organisms. Challenging the hypothesis of a single standard of consciousness, it argues that consciousness is an emergent property specific to each species, tailored to its interaction with the environment. The article analyses empirical evidence of the complex cognitive capacities of plants, including decision-making, memory, learning and communication. It also explores the sensorimotor mechanisms through which plants perceive and respond to external stimuli, such as gravity, light and chemical signals. Elucidating plant consciousness is suggested as a means of providing a deeper understanding of the fundamental mechanisms of consciousness in general, and of redefining the relationship among all forms of life. Extending the concept of consciousness to include plants has significant implications for our understanding of consciousness in animals. Comparing the consciousness mechanisms of plants, which lack centralised nervous systems, with those of animals, which have varied nervous systems, may help to identify the essential elements for consciousness to emerge. This could lead to new neuroscientific research approaches, focusing not only on structural complexity, but also on informational dynamics. Acknowledging consciousness in plants, and by extension in a broader range of animals (including those considered 'lower'), could have profound ethical implications. It could prompt us to reevaluate how we treat other life forms and our responsibilities towards the environment.

Keywords: consciousness, cognition, plants, animals, ethics

DAY 3 – 8th of November

SESSION 8

8:00 – 10:00 UTC / 10:00 – 12:00 EET

Do [Not] Feed the Cats: Feeding as Care, Spectacle, and Conflict

Kris Hill (*University of Hradec Králové*)

Food and feeding can be an expression of love and care, but overfeeding and poor diet can lead to poor health outcomes. Many people enjoy feeding animals, but littering and disagreement over who has the right to feed and be fed can cause conflict. This paper is based on a multispecies ethnographic study of a colony of cats (*Felis catus*) inhabiting a popular “sun and sea” style vacation destination on the Costa del Sol, Spain. The research focuses on the relationships between tourists, residents, and free-living cats, and is situated at the intersection of tourism, migration, and human-animal studies. Based on thematic analysis of empirical data, collected from fieldwork undertaken in late Spring 2024, this paper focuses on feeding cats as a form of care, spectacle, and conflict.

Tourists of all ages, genders, and various nationalities openly expressed joy at seeing the cats who inhabit the Torremolinos promenade, stopping to look, take photos, and sometimes pet the cats (many of whom are human-friendly). Despite signs explaining these cats are fed regularly by licensed feeders and asking people not to feed them, residents and visitors continue to put food down for the cats. Sometimes this is cat food bought specifically for the purpose, other times it is human leftovers. There is also disagreement amongst locals over who should have the exclusive right to feed the cats. The licenced feeders arrive daily in the early evening, and crowds inevitably gather to watch, film, and ask questions about the cats. This presents an opportunity to increase awareness and encourage empathy towards unowned cats in the region and elsewhere. Although issues associated with overfeeding and inappropriate foods are not easily resolved, I provide an analysis of the underlying motivations under a framework of care.

Keywords: cats, tourism, feeding, care, coexistence

Beyond 'Dog-Friendly': A Canine-centered Perspective on Pet Tourism

Gabriela Munteanu (*Center for Geographic Research, Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca Branch; University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca*)

Traveling with dogs has become increasingly common, supported by a growing range of pet-friendly services and accommodations. While existing literature often focuses on the motivations of pet owners, economic implications for the tourism industry, and the responses of stakeholders such as hospitality providers and non-pet-owning guests, the experiences and welfare of the dogs themselves, the only participants unable to voice their needs, remain largely overlooked.

This qualitative study explores canine well-being in the context of travel. Drawing on the author's experience as a search and rescue dog handler and trainer, as well as grounded interviews with pet guardians, sport dog handlers, and trainers, the research investigates how assumptions about a dog's happiness shape travel decisions. For many owners, bringing their dog along is motivated by affection and a desire to include them in family experiences. However, these choices reflect human-centered priorities rather than a careful consideration of the dog's preferences or capacity to cope with the demands of travel.

Responsible tourism with dogs involves more than proximity and good intentions. It requires a critical shift in perspective, one that evaluates destinations and activities through the lens of the dog's experience, not merely through labels like "dog-friendly."

By placing canine welfare at the center of the discussion, this study calls for a more ethically grounded approach to pet travel. It suggests a need for clear guidelines, better owner education, and a reevaluation of what "dog-friendly" truly means from the perspective of animal well-being.

Keywords: tourism, pet-friendly, dogs, welfare, travel

Adolescent Responses to Animal Cruelty in Social Media: An Experimental Approach in a Romanian High School

Tudor-Tim Ionescu (*National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA), Bucharest*)

This study is part of an ongoing doctoral research project focusing on the representations, normalization, and ethical responses to animal cruelty in social

media, with special attention to the potential of social platforms to act both as vectors of violence and tools for moral engagement. Drawing on this framework, we designed and implemented an exploratory experiment involving 247 students from the Ion Ionescu de la Brad Technical College (Harnaj) in Bucharest, a high school with a veterinary profile.

Participants were exposed, via mobile phones, to a series of four videos representing various types of animal cruelty typically encountered on digital platforms (abandonment, exploitation, regimentation, and false rescue). The videos were followed by a structured digital questionnaire hosted on Google Forms, assessing emotional impact, empathy, likelihood of online action (comment, report, share), and attitudinal change regarding animal protection.

Quantitative results show a high level of declared empathy (mean score of 3.44 out of 4) and moral concern (importance of animal care: 3.88), yet this did not translate into active online behaviors: over 84% of participants declared they did not comment, report, or engage with the content. Qualitative responses revealed patterns of moral disengagement, desensitization, and confusion between real and staged content.

The findings confirm a discrepancy between normative values and digital conduct, highlighting the need for pedagogical interventions and digital empathy training. This experiment also contributes methodologically by simulating real-life digital environments through mobile-based tools, enhancing ecological validity.

Keywords: adolescents, animal cruelty, social media, empathy, moral disengagement, digital behavior, animal welfare education, experimental study

A Pilgrim's Progress

Gordon Meade (*University of Dundee*)

In this presentation, I will give a reading from my most recent publication, *Selected Poems: Beyond the Ninth Wave*, and from a collection I am working on at present entitled *The Resurrectionists*. The presentation will follow my journey from writing 'about' animals to writing "for" animals and, more ambitiously, writing 'as' animals.

Keywords: a lifetime of more-than-human poetry, Creatures in the wild, creatures in captivity, abuse, zoochosis

Creating a Community of Care in Romania: Four Years of Impact of the Anthrozoology Symposium on the Master's Degree Program "Ethology & Human-Animal Interaction"

Alina Simona Rusu (*University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca*)

This presentation analyses the role of the Anthrozoology Symposium in fostering a community of care among students, alumni, and faculty in the EHAI master's program at the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The EHAI master's program is based on an interdisciplinary approach to responsible human-animal interaction, combining animal sciences with ethology, psychology and sociology. In the last four years since the launching of the EHAI master's degree program, the Anthrozoology Symposium functions as a valuable educational, research and networking platform, by offering to students and teachers the following benefits: connections with a multitude of national and international researchers, educators and practitioners in the field of anthrozoology, dissemination opportunities of the work of students and teachers (oral presentations, publications), integration in the curricula by connecting the Symposium with the seminar hours of the subjects "Animals in Society & Humane Education" and "Psychology applied to Anthrozoology", and developing of collaborative interdisciplinary projects with participants to the Anthrozoology Symposium (for example, the "Philosophy in the Wild" project). In conclusion, the Anthrozoology Symposium can be recommended as a tool that can bring benefits to students and faculty, by enhancing educational experience, supporting collaborative research, and by fostering the professional development of future experts in animal behaviour and human-animal interaction.

Keywords: Higher Education, educational platform, collaborative projects, anthrozoology

Vessels of Memory: Animal Symbolism and Cultural Narratives in Race Canoes of Car Nicobar

Jyoti Nagarkoti (*Doon University, Wildlife Institute of India*)

Dhanesh Ponnu (*Doon University, Wildlife Institute of India*)

This study examines the cultural significance and communicative aspects of Race Canoes Hodi decorations among the Nicobarese of Car Nicobar Islands. While previous research on Nicobarese canoes have primarily focused on construction methods and materials, this study explores the symbolic meanings embedded in their decorative elements. Through direct observations, visual documentation, and participatory approaches, we investigated the symbolic use of animal and cultural depictions on large racing canoes. Our findings reveal that these decorations transcend mere embellishment, serving as complex symbolic expressions that reflect various aspects of Nicobarese life. Each village's canoes feature distinctive colours, depictions, sizes, and personalised inscriptions that function as communication symbols.

The decorative elements commonly found on these canoes include representations of pig feeding and hunting practices, traditional Nicobarese dance, chicken feathers, and traditional huts. Before the Canoe Race, the Hodis are placed at their respective village locations, El Panam, near the beach. Traditional lanterns, Tafungi, crafted from raw coconut shells, Vok-Tit using pig fat mixed with turmeric and cotton wicks Hila, are positioned on both sides of the canoes to invite ancestral blessings. Additionally, dried coconut flowers Chovah, are placed inside the canoes to ward off evil spirits.

This research demonstrates that studying these decorated canoes provides insights into broader aspects of Nicobarese society, including their social and economic activities. The decorative traditions of these races canoes serve as a medium for the Nicobarese to communicate their culture and daily life to wider audiences, reflecting the intricate relationship between their material culture and social practices.

Keywords: Nicobarese, communication symbols, Islands Hodi

Whale-Human-Entanglements: Assessing Humpback-whale Entanglement in North-East Iceland and Situating Whale Conservation in a Wider Ethical Perspective

Malena Mogwitz (*University of South-Eastern Norway, Whale Wise UK, Hólar University, Iceland*)

Alyssa Stoller (*Whale Wise UK*)

Maria Glarou (*Húsavík Research Centre, University of Iceland*)

Charla Jean Basran (*Húsavík Research Centre, University of Iceland*)

Anna Guðrún Þórhallsdóttir (*Hólar University, Iceland*)

Whales (Cetacea), alongside many other animals, encounter various challenges caused by anthropogenic impact, for example entanglement in fishing gear, which often do represent causes for concern in regards to their welfare. Here we examine different perspectives and meanings of whale-human-entanglements. A case study about direct physical entanglement of whales in fishing gear from Iceland serves to illustrate one concrete human-whale-interaction. Whale conservation and research are situated in a wider context of multispecies-entanglements, different ways of knowing and ethical perspectives. Potential ethical and methodological assumptions towards whales and others were assessed, which might perpetuate a predominant human-animal divide.

The case study from Skjálfandi-Bay, North-East Iceland, estimated the frequency of non-lethal entanglement of humpback-whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in fishing gear for the year 2022. Estimates were made using scar analysis, based on two different methods: boat-based and aerial images. Results show that about half of the assessed humpback whale individuals have been involved in entanglement incidents previously, stressing the anthropogenic challenges that these animals face, often unperceived by human eyes. We discuss whale-conservation and research in a larger context and point out underlying biases and paradigms in these fields. By perpetuating power relations towards other species, a predominant anthropocentric worldview potentially limits the success of conservation measures and the emergence of new fields of research. The question emerges whether unachieved conservation goals arise due to a lack of knowledge or a lack of willingness to change our ethical positioning towards other species.

Through the recognition of other existing ways of knowing and the development of multispecies methods, science and practice should base themselves on ethical principles which bring forth interspecies-justice, and foster a thriving

environment for humans, whales and other species. We invite to bridge natural and social sciences, as well as other ways of knowing, in order to bring positive change for humans and other animals.

Keywords: multispecies, whale conservation, entanglement, anthropocentrism

Assessing Dolphin Cognition and Consciousness: A Review of Cooperative Problem-Solving Research

Adoriana-Felicia Zdărie (*University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca*)

This paper reviews a study on cooperative problem-solving in Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins using a cognitive enrichment device. Findings revealed that male dolphins outperformed females in coordinated tasks, highlighting intersexual differences influenced by social bonding and alliance behavior. The study also supports a multidimensional model of animal consciousness, emphasizing dolphins' high levels of self-awareness, evaluative capacity, and temporal integration. The results have significant implications for understanding dolphin cognition and improving welfare practices in captive environments.

Keywords: dolphin cognition, cooperative problem-solving, intersexual differences, social behavior, cognitive enrichment, animal consciousness, self-awareness, alliance formation, evaluative capacity, captive welfare

Suffering Makes Us Equal

Ionuț Bârliba (*Gheorghe Zane Institute for Economic and Social Research, Romanian Academy, Iași Branch*)

This brief presentation aims to raise some questions regarding the moral status of animals, mainly from a utilitarian point of view. As Peter Singer says, suffering makes us equal in rights. This means that not reason, the ability to speak clearly, or having a soul should be the criteria for establishing animal rights, but the ability to suffer. But what if we have to choose who should suffer or who should suffer more between a man/human and an animal? If you had to choose between slapping your mother and gouging out a cat's eye, what would you choose? A utilitarian would choose the first option because it brings a smaller amount of suffering. But is it

possible for a cat to be more important than a human being? According to Peter Singer or Tom Regan, animals should be included in the moral community because we base our moral decisions not only on reason but also on affects such as rage, sympathy, or compassion. We care about our animals and perceive them as individuals. Thus, in certain situations, animals and their suffering can be more important to us than some people and their suffering.

Keywords: animal rights, moral community, suffering, utilitarianism

Symbiotic Healing. Finding Resilience in Multispecies Togetherness

Irina Frasin (*Gheorghe Zane Institute for Economic and Social Research, Romanian Academy, Iași Branch*)

Human–animal relationships are very significant when we think of resilience, psychological well-being and coping strategies in a stressful environment. And the world we live in today, with all its changes and challenges, is significantly impacting us all. But when we analyze the various and different ways in which all of us, human and non-human are affected by these changes, we should re-discover our sense of belonging. When we discover our joint vulnerability, we may become more attuned to the others, human and non-human. And thus we need to find ways to heal our connections, to re-think our affiliations, and re-discover our shared sources of sanity and balance. We need to acknowledge that to be truly able to heal, we need to do it together. Only symbiotic healing can be effective.

The main purpose of this paper is to analyse our human–animal relationships within a larger framework and show that treating non-humans with equal respect truly means re-organising our perspective to acknowledge the importance of the presence of other animals and multispecies relationships for joint resilience. Instead of considering the benefits of these relationships for humans, we should think of mutual thriving in cooperation, in interrelation, in togetherness. Only by exploring the mutual benefits of these connectivities can we truly learn to respect our non-human partners.

Keywords: healing, resilience, humans, nonhumans, togetherness

Archaeology: Ethics, Consequences, and Animality

George Bodi (*Institute of Archaeology, Romanian Academy, Iași Branch*)

Archaeological ethics have traditionally been grounded in deontological frameworks—professional codes and scientific ideals that prescribe duties toward past human communities and material culture. Lately, however, consequentialist reasoning has gained traction, evaluating actions by their outcomes for heritage, descendant communities, and policy. This shift reflects a restricted consequentialism that remains tethered to deontological commitments and largely excludes non-human animals from ethical consideration.

This presentation examines the philosophical tensions between duty-based and outcome-oriented ethical paradigms in archaeological practice and explores how ethical reasoning in archaeology negotiates competing obligations. Finally, it argues that archaeology's long-term perspective on human-animal relationships offers fertile ground for rethinking moral agency and stakeholder inclusion. By engaging with debates in animal ethics, cultural anthropology, and archaeozoological theory, we believe a more expansive ethical framework that recognizes non-human animals as legitimate participants in the archaeological discourse is possible.

Keywords: archaeology, ethics, consequentialism, stakeholders, competing paradigms

The Psychological Effects on Pets Owned by Narcissistic Individuals.

The Social Media Case

Aurora Hrițuleac (*Gheorghe Zane Institute for Economic and Social Research, Romanian Academy, Iași Branch*)

Billions of people around the world, as research data consistently proves, consider and treat their pets as family members. However, pet guardianship can sometimes be less benevolent than we are tempted to think. Such is the case of pets owned by narcissistic individuals. As in every other relationship they have, narcissists instrumentalize their pets as a source of (strict) personal satisfaction, validation, and self-enhancement. My presentation will explore the harmful psychological effects on pets owned by individuals with narcissistic traits of personality. The focus will be on the use of social media as a non-regulated tool of pet narcissistic abuse.

Keywords: pets, narcissism, emotional abuse, social media

Understanding of Human Given Cues by *Sus Scrofa Domestica* and by Other Species

Adina Dumitrița Petrean (*University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca*)

We, as humans, tend to take for granted some things, like pointing something at an animal and expecting it to react. This might happen because dogs and cats, the animals most often around us, respond to these gestures. The paper shows several situations in which domestic pigs react or do not react to human-given cues, how other animals respond to the same type of cues, and why it is important to acknowledge the way intelligence is manifested in each species.

Keywords: human cues, pigs, *sus scrofa domestica*, consciousness

Critical Analysis of the Article “Unwilling or willing but unable: can horses interpret human actions as goal directed?” by Milena Trosch, Emma Bertin, Ludovic Calandreau, Raymond Nowak, Lea Lansade – published May 24th 2020

Ada-Estera Rus (*University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca*)

The critical analysis of the article “Unwilling or willing but unable: can horses interpret human actions as goal directed?” by Milena Trosch, Emma Bertin, Ludovic Calandreau, Raymond Nowak, and Lea Lansade, published on May 24th, 2020, reveals both significant strengths and areas for potential improvement.

The study investigated whether domestic horses (*Equus caballus*) interpret human actions as goal-directed, specifically differentiating between intentional (“unwilling”) and unintentional (“unable”) human actions. Utilizing a well-established “unwilling versus unable” paradigm, 21 horses were exposed to three conditions where an experimenter failed to provide food: “unwilling” (experimenter refused), “unable blocked” (physical barrier prevented food delivery), and “unable clumsy” (experimenter accidentally dropped food). Despite the consistent outcome of no food received, horses exhibited differential behavioral responses across conditions. Notably, horses spent significantly more time looking at the scene in the

“unable clumsy” condition compared to the other two. These findings suggest that horses are capable of inferring human intentions, reacting differently to various states of human willingness or ability. This research contributes to our understanding of equine social cognition, highlighting their sophisticated perceptual and interpretative abilities regarding human actions. The results have implications for enhancing human-animal interactions and improving animal welfare by recognizing horses as social beings sensitive to human intentions.

Keywords: horse, social cognition, intention understanding, goal-directed actions, human-animal interaction