

Psychology Today



“The Web has resurrected the gluten sensitivity issue—even as science has tried to avoid it.”

Dr. Mark Borigini, M.D.

- Home
- Find a Therapist
- Topic Streams
- Get Help
- Magazine
- Tests
- Psych Basics
- Experts

Animal Emotions

Do animals think and feel?

by Marc Bekoff

Previous Post
[Killing Other Animals For Food Does Not Make us Human](#)

Dolphin Confidential: A Woman and the Dolphins She Loves

Read a wonderful book about the adventures of a passionate scientist

Published on March 26, 2012 by Marc Bekoff, Ph.D. in Animal Emotions

Every now and again an easy to read and inspirational book comes along, written in a personal tone by someone who's a card-carrying scientist and clearly loves the animals they study. *Dolphin Confidential* is one of them and I'm pleased to recommend it highly on many accounts.

In her latest book, Maddalena Bearzi, a passionate scientist and co-author of another wonderful book called *Beautiful Minds: The Parallel Lives of Great Apes and Dolphins*, writes about what it is like to be a highly intelligent and emotional being such as a dolphin and also tells readers about what it is like to do scientific field research. In 1996, Bearzi founded the Los Angeles Dolphin Project, the first comprehensive marine mammal study ever conducted in the waters around Los Angeles.

Subscribe to Animal Emotions
[Subscribe via RSS](#)



Marc Bekoff, Ph.D., is Professor Emeritus of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder.
[more...](#)

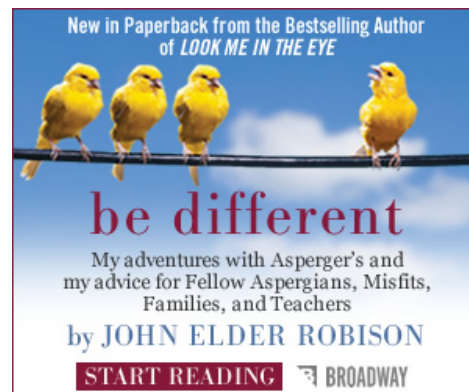
Related Articles

- [Dolphin slaughter continues in Japan](#)
- [Killing animals redux: Animal damage control means unrelenting slaughter and a huge waste of money](#)
- [A Snowboarding Crow Playing and Having Fun](#)
- [The Dolphin's death pool: Let's get these amazing beings out of Siegfried and Roy's Secret Garden of pain and suffering](#)
- [Whales and Dolphins at Play: A Great Lift That'll Make Your Day](#)

It's really educational to read an informed account of what it takes to study animal behavior and work on the conservation of a given species. While studying animals for hours and years on end can surely be enjoyable, it also can be extremely frustrating, disappointing, time-consuming, and exhausting. Some think it's all fun and games to swim with dolphins, watch chimpanzees run about and swing in the trees, or track wolves or coyotes, for example, but it's not.

Wild animals often live in environments that are very challenging to us, aren't always around when we want them to be, and don't perform on command. Having done field work on a number of different animals I well remember sitting on my butt, waiting for days on end for something, anything to happen, and trying to convince my co-workers, as we were freezing in -40 degree cold watching coyotes living around Jackson, Wyoming, that it was all worth it. I also remember 24 hour watches and needing only a few more data points to complete one aspect of a study and waiting a year or more for them to materialize, that is, for the animals to do something that was related to the questions at hand. I also remember getting nipped in the butt as I looked into a coyote den to see if the pups were there and an Adelle penguin squawking and beating me ferociously with his wing as I walked around a colony counting chicks at Cape Crozier, Antarctica. They were both clearly telling me to leave, and I did. I had intruded into their homes and wasn't welcomed.

Scientists are humans first and foremost and in addition to the fun and rigors of doing field work, we see individuals get injured and die during the course of a study, often at the hands of humans. We also see them lose their homes because of human sprawl and other sorts of intrusions in which our interests selfishly trump theirs. Watching individuals suffer in this



Animal Emotions Recent Posts

- [Read a wonderful book about the adventures of a passionate scientist](#)
- [There's nothing spiritual about killing innocent animals for unneeded meals](#)
- [HBO finally pulls "Luck" after third horse dies](#)
- [Watch a dog and his river otter friend play with one another and smile](#)

Find a Therapist

Search for a mental health professional near you.

Find Local:

Acupuncturists
Chiropractors
Massage Therapists
Dentists
and more!

way is deeply sad and depressing, but in some studies it's all part of the effort of learning as much as we can about them so that we can help them and others in the future.

Bearzi's behind the scenes accounts of the ups and downs of doing fieldwork is an informative and much-needed exposé, one that perhaps will help future researchers make better choices about where they want to focus their efforts. In her own words about her confessions of being a field biologist she writes, "This story chronicles the transformation processes by which I began my career in wide-eyed naivete, then slowly shifted toward the belief that conservation and protection of nature is virtually all that matters."

Writing about the urban dolphins living around Los Angeles, Bearzi writes, "Over time, I've learned how they cleverly deal with an ever-challenging ocean; I see how alike they are to other, seemingly unrelated species, including my own. The more I have watched dolphins in the wild, the less I saw them as objects of my research or as an anonymous and undistinguished group. Rather, I began seeing them as single individuals, not solely for their scars and notches, but also for their personality and emotions."

I hope this book receives the attention it deserves and I will surely recommend it highly as an informative scientific and personal narrative about these fascinating animals and what we all must do to protect them before it's too late. Budding scientists will also find much food for thought in this inspirational read. It's essential not to remove the person/researcher from the experience of watching and learning about the fascinating lives of other animals. Bonding with animals does not preclude doing solid science. Indeed, as Bearzi and others clearly show, it helps us do better science.

[Subscribe to Psychology Today](#) now and get a free issue!

Have a comment? [Start the discussion here!](#)

Tags: animal behavior, beautiful minds, chimpanzees, co author, co workers, coyote den, coyotes, dolphin project, fun and games, great apes, inspirational book, jackson wyoming, maddalena, mammal study, marine mammal, parallel lives, passionate scientist, personal tone, questions at hand, wild animals

[Read an interesting interview about the need to revolutionize zoos.](#)
[More of Animal Emotions blog](#)

Most Popular

- [How Threat Emotions Cause Us To Misread Our Partner](#)
by Russell B. Lemle, Ph.D.
- [Why Is It Socially Acceptable To Be Bad At Math?](#)
by Jonathan Wai, Ph.D.
- [10 Things I Didn't Know Before I Got Sick](#)
by Toni Bernhard, J.D.
- [How to Flirt Without it Seeming Like You're Flirting](#)
by Jen Kim
- [Five Keys To Developing Your Deepest Gifts](#)
by Ken Page, L.C.S.W.

[The Gathering of the Forces of Light: UFOs and their Spiritual Mission](#)
Benjamin Creme
Our Space Brothers are working tirelessly to help us in our time of crisis.
[Read more](#)

[Sierra Tucson Treatment Center](#)
Multi-licensed, accredited psychiatric hospital; internationally acclaimed neuropsychiatric treatment for addictions, mood, pain, and coexisting disorders.
[Read more](#)

[Anxiety Free](#)
A comprehensive formula with herbs and nutrients clinically proven to increase feelings of well-being.
[Read more](#)

Current Issue

[Slips of the Tongue](#)
Most of us live in fear of unleashing a Freudian slip. Do You?
MORE FROM THIS ISSUE
[ISSUE ARCHIVES](#)
[SUBSCRIBE](#)

Follow Psychology Today:  [Twitter](#)  [FaceBook](#)



The banner features three covers of Psychology Today magazine. The first cover shows a man's face with the headline 'READ PEOPLE'. The second cover shows a yellow smiley face with 'ON/OFF'. The third cover shows a family with the headline 'SIBLINGS'. To the right of the covers is a yellow starburst graphic that says 'SAVE UP TO 61%'. Further right, on a red background, is the text 'SUBSCRIBE NOW' in large white letters, with a black button below it that says 'CLICK HERE'.

Psychology Today

© Copyright 1991-2012
Sussex Publishers, LLC

The Therapy Directory [HealthPros.com](#) [BuildingPros.com](#)

© Copyright 2002-2012 Sussex Directories, Inc.

[About/Contact](#)
[Privacy Policy](#)
[Site Help/Customer Service](#)
[Terms of Service](#)

[Therapy Directory Index](#)
[Healthpros Index](#)
[Buildingpros Index](#)