



Pre-Conference Events Bulletin

Minding Animals International is proud to announce that several events are being planned before the next Minding Animals Conference. So, welcome to the first Pre-conference Events Bulletin.

Events are at various stages of development, and workshops, lectures, exhibitions or seminars in at least Abu Dhabi, Brisbane, Cape Town, Christchurch, Delhi, London (x2), New York, Oslo, Rennes, San Francisco, Sydney (x2), Wollongong, Uppsala and Utrecht, are now being considered.

The First Pre-conference Event is an expert meeting scheduled for Utrecht on 29 and 30 November, 2010, followed by a Second Event in Sydney on 3 December, 2010, a public lecture by Professor Marc Bekoff. In this bulletin you will also find a call for papers for a pre-conference event in Rennes next October.

Inaugural Event: Expert Meeting, Utrecht, 29 and 30 November, 2010

Fish Welfare: the Interplay between Science and Ethics

The Ethics Institute of Utrecht University will hold an Expert Meeting, bringing together scientific experts from the fields of fish biology and physiology, the philosophy of mind, and animal ethics.

The meeting is also part of an interdisciplinary research project financed by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). The project is part of the NWO programme "The Value of Animal Welfare" and focuses on the African Catfish. The aim of this expert meeting is to define the state of art regarding knowledge on fish emotion, cognition, awareness and welfare, and relate this knowledge to ethical theories on the moral status of fish. A deliberate aim is to promote understanding between different disciplines, both empirical and philosophical.

Speakers will include: Colin Allen, Michel Cabanac, Felicity Huntingford, Dieter Birnbacher, Kirsten Schmidt and Helena Röcklinsberg.

Limited places will be available, so registration is compulsory. For queries and registration, please contact Bernice Bovenkerk at: b.bovenkerk@uu.nl

Second Event: Public Lecture, Sydney, 3 December, 2010

Animals, People and Earth: Compassion and the Ethics of Inclusion

To launch the Macquarie University Animals and Society Working Group, the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion will be hosting a Minding Animals evening public lecture by **Professor Marc Bekoff**.

The public lecture venue will be **Building Y3A, Theatre 1**, at Macquarie University. **Time: 6:00 for 6:45pm start.**

For queries regarding the public lecture, please contact Professor Deborah Rose at: deborah.rose@mq.edu.au or Ashley Soytemiz at: ashley.soytemiz@mq.edu.au

Call for Abstracts: International Interdisciplinary Conference, University of Rennes 2, 20-21 October, 2011

Representing Animals in Britain

The University of Rennes 2 now invites abstracts to this International Interdisciplinary Conference and Minding Animals Pre-conference Event.

Britain is traditionally seen as a nation of animal lovers and evidence for this has cropped up with mounting regularity over the past two centuries:

- The first ever piece of animal welfare legislation was British. Martin's Act (1822) made it a crime to treat a handful of domesticated animals (cattle, oxen, horses, and sheep) cruelly, or to inflict unnecessary suffering upon them. The recent legislative history of the country attests to the same continuing concern, as encapsulated in the highly publicised Hunting Act (2004) which banned hunting wild mammals with dogs.
- Animal painter Sir Edwin Henry Landseer's popularity in Victorian England was bewildering and his depictions of Newfoundland dogs as rescuers of humankind made their way from the higher rungs of society down to the biscuit tins of lower middle class homes.
- According to the annual charity trends survey conducted by the Charities Aid Foundation in 2006, the RSPCA, founded in 1824, ranked among the top ten charities in the country with an annual income of £80 million (Alexandra Frean, "Big Charities Corner the Market in Public Donations," *The Times*, June 29, 2006, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article680853.ece>).
- Cases of animal suffering revealed by the media regularly horrify the country. In 1982, Sefton, the British army horse, became a national hero after an IRA bombing in Hyde Park. In August 2010, the CCTV footage of a woman dumping a cat in a wheelie bin in Coventry caused such outrage that she had to make a public apology.

All of this, and so much more, seems to bear witness to the widely circulated notion that the British have developed a unique relationship to the animals around them and that the story goes back a long way indeed, well past the Victorian era. Yet, for all these eminent symbols and tokens of affection, the essentially self-congratulatory idea that Britain is "a nation of animal lovers" and that their representations of animals are unlike any other people's is currently being questioned, in both activist and academic circles.

In the **visual arts** and their criticism, much has been made of the long standing British habit of commissioning portraits of one's favourite pets, either as individual sitters or as part of the family unit. Yet Hogarth's 1751 engraved series depicting *The Four Stages of Cruelty* has lately been singled out as a most useful prick with which to puncture the carefully composed and, in the main, upper class picture of the doting master and his dogs and horses. These recent developments in art historical studies are very much in keeping with the nature of the attraction that animals hold for contemporary artists. In their rejection of classical beauty and desire to expose the evils of the modern age, ecologically sensitive artists are currently putting animals to new uses in order to explore questions of morality and responsibility towards our environment. To quote Steve Baker, "the animal is now most productively and imaginatively thought about in art [...] as something actively to be performed rather than passively represented, an event rather than a subject" (<http://www.fathom.com/feature/122562/index.html>)

In so doing, art is connecting with issues articulated in the **scientific and ethical fields** with an urgency and originality that seem singularly British.

Perhaps the single most significant work impacting these disciplines was Charles Darwin's groundbreaking ideas published in *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). Darwin's theory was indeed to have a deep but paradoxical effect on the representation of "beasts" in Britain. As is probably best remembered, it struck the anthropocentric ideal of human superiority a serious blow by showing our common origins with apes. Yet, indirectly, Darwin also gave his blessing to the rise in animal experiments, as animals were now seen as providing models for the study of human biology and physiology.

These two elements - kinship between humans and animals, and the commodification of the latter - seem to be still very much at the heart of the British people's relationship with animals, whether it be in the recent heated debates on live exports and animal testing, or in the legislative moves aiming to protect animals without hindering scientific research or agricultural production. In the light of this complex set of attitudes towards animals, what can one say of the representation of their interests? Can we go as far as claiming, as Robert Garner does in *Animals, Politics and Morality*, when he says that there is a "growing political relevance of animals" in Britain?

This conference, which will welcome the healthy confrontation of interdisciplinary viewpoints, invites in-depth examination of the representation(s) of animals in the fields of history, philosophy, sociology, politics, law, cultural studies, the visual arts and the media. How have animals been imagined, portrayed, idealised, regarded or disregarded, even effaced? In what ways has their evolving ontological, legal and political status shaped these representations? The answers to these questions and those brought up by the participants will aim at making sense of a supposedly unique and long standing British relationship with animals.

Call for abstracts

Please submit 250 word abstracts by 1 February, 2011, to Emilie Dardenne (emiliedardenne@yahoo.fr) or Sophie Mesplède (sophie.mesplede@uhb.fr) with "Representing Animals in Britain Proposal Submission" noted in the subject line. Attachments should be in Rich Text or Word format only. Please include your name, professional affiliation, and contact information. Notification of acceptance will be made by April 1st, 2011. The best papers will be subsequently selected for publication. **Presentations at the conference will be in English.**

Keynote Speakers

Steve Baker, University of Central Lancashire
Robert Garner, University of Leicester
Hilda Kean, Ruskin College, Oxford University

Scientific Program Committee

Florence Burgat, EHESS
Claire Charlot, University of Rennes 2
Emilie Dardenne, University of Rennes 2
Renée Dickason, University of Rennes 2
Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier, University of Lyon 3
Jean-Baptiste Jeangène-Vilmer, King's College London
Sophie Mesplède, University of Rennes 2
Brendan Prendiville, University of Rennes 2
Emmanuel Roudaut, IEP Lille

Conference Co-Chairs and Local Organising Committee

Emilie Dardenne, University of Rennes 2
Sophie Mesplède, University of Rennes 2

Rennes Conference website

<http://www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/ace/Bienvenue.html>

This event is a pre-conference for the next Minding Animals Conference!

Further Events

Details regarding other Pre-conference Events will be posted on the website soon: www.mindinganimals.com

If you would like to be kept informed of these events and are not on the Minding Animals Conference email database, please send an email to: mindinganimals@gmail.com with your details