



Minding Animals

Minding Animals International Bulletin No.9

Happy New Year and the best of the festive season
to you all!

Minding Animals International (MAI) welcomes you to its ninth Bulletin. 2012 is shaping up to be a fabulous year with the second Minding Animals Conference, several pre-conference and partner events beforehand, as well as other activities to be announced soon. Details contained in this Bulletin are also provided on the Minding Animals Website www.mindinganimals.com

**JUST OVER ONE WEEK
BEFORE ABSTRACTS
DEADLINE FOR
MINDING ANIMALS 2
IN UTRECHT**

**YOU MUST HAVE YOUR
ABSTRACT SUBMITTED BY 15
JANUARY (European time)**

**Instructions on submitting an abstract can
be found at:**

[http://www.uu.nl/faculty/humanities/EN/congres/mindinganimals/
Pages/callforpapers.aspx](http://www.uu.nl/faculty/humanities/EN/congres/mindinganimals/Pages/callforpapers.aspx)

Expressions of Interest for Minding Animals 3 in 2015 extended to 31 January

MAI would like to receive Expressions of Interest from institutions interested in hosting Minding Animals 3 in July 2015.

If you are interested, please contact mindinganimals@gmail.com to receive a copy of the 2015 guidelines.

Minding Animals Study Circles

Four exciting new Study Circles have been established:

Minding Animals and Sentience Study Circle

Great Apes Study Circle

Minding Marine Mammals Study Circle

Compassionate Conservation Study Circle

To become involved in these Study Circles, please join by subscribing at the following sites:

Minding Marine Mammals:

<http://groups.google.com/group/minding-marine-mammals>

Minding Animals and Sentience:

<http://groups.google.com/group/minding-animals-and-sentience>

Great Apes and Minding Animals:

<http://groups.google.com/group/minding-animals-and-great-apes-study-circle>

Compassionate Conservation:

<http://groups.google.com/group/minding-animals-and-compassionate-conservation>

[An important component of Minding Animals 2 in Utrecht will be lunch-time round-table discussions to be coordinated and held by the established Study Circles. Several lunch-time round-table discussions were held at Minding Animals 1 in Newcastle, Australia, to stimulate debate on several themes. The sessions were highly successful. After Newcastle, the concept was extended and several transdisciplinary Study Circles were formed.

It was envisaged that discussions within the groups would culminate in lunch-time roundtables at Utrecht 2012 and in joint papers to be submitted for publication; and despite some quiet times, the Study Circles are proving productive and have been providing some stimulating debate. Would you be interested in participating in any of the Study Circles? If so, sign up by following the prompts on any of the Study Circle home pages - details on Study Circle Group home pages and email addresses are listed below.]

Upcoming Minding Animals Events and Partner Conferences

10 February, 2012: Sydney, Australia

Host: Macquarie University Animals and Society Working Group, Centre for Social Inclusion, Macquarie University

Event title: *Bats and Ibis*

Venue: Royal Botanic Gardens

Time and Date: Friday, 10 February, meeting at 10am outside the Mitchell Library on Macquarie Street (we will be having lunch in the Gardens – bring an umbrella in case it rains)

Guest speaker: Professor Marc Bekoff

Organiser and contact: Deborah Bird Rose (deborah.rose@mq.edu.au) and Rod Bennison (mindinganimals@gmail.com)

The event will be completely free, but does not include lunch

Event description: Join the Macquarie University Animals and Society Working Group in the Royal Botanical Gardens in Sydney, to talk to experts on the resident Grey-headed Flying Fox colony, consider the resident Straw-necked Ibis, and discuss with Professor Bekoff notions of mutualism, compassionate conservation and misplaced otherness

10 March, 2012: Exeter, United Kingdom

Host: School of Social Sciences and International Studies (SSIS), University of Exeter

Event title: *Critical Perspectives on Animals in Society*

Venue: St. Sidwell's Centre, Sidwell Street, Exeter

Time and Date: from 9am, 10 March (conference events until 6pm, live music event from 7.30pm)

Guest speaker: Professor Richard Ryder

Organiser and contact: Jessica Groling, animalsinsociety@googlemail.com

The event will be completely free

Conference details and registration at: <http://animalsinsociety.wordpress.com>

4 May, 2012: Geneva, Switzerland

Host: SHARRE (Society for Human-Animal Relationship Research & Education)

Event title: *Mon chien (...) ce héros ! / My dog (...) what a hero!*

Venue: Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève, Auditoire Marcel Jenny, Rue Gabrielle-Perret-Gentil, Geneva, Switzerland

Time and Date: 8am to 6:15pm, 4 May, 2012

Confirmed speakers: Àdàm Miklòsi, Jòzsef Topàl, Giuliana Galli Carminati & others

Organiser and contact: Rachel Lehotkay and Erika Lorincz at info@sharre.ch

The event will be conducted in French and English

Conference details, including program, event fees and registration, will be available on the SHARRE website shortly at <http://www.sharre.ch/> - see the flyer on the next page

12 to 13 May, 2012: Genoa, Italy

Host: MAnITa (Minding Animals Italy)

Event title: *The Emotional Lives of Animals: Which Implications? A Comparison between Researchers and Disciplines*

Time and Venue: to be confirmed in the next Bulletin or by contacting the organiser

Keynote speaker: Professor Marc Bekoff

Organiser and contact: Alma Massaro, almamassaro@gmail.com

The event will be conducted in Italian and English

Please contact the organiser for more details

14 to 16 May, 2012: Aarhus, Denmark

Host: Aarhus University and the Centre for Bioethics and Nanoethics in collaboration with Animal Concepts

Event title: *Animal Welfare: Ethical & Behavioural Questions*

Venue: Auditorium 2, Building 1441, Aarhus University, Tåsingegade 3, 8000 Aarhus C, Denmark

Keynotes/Speakers: Professor Bernard Rollin, Professor Donald M. Broom, DVM Aage Kristian Olsen Alstrup, Dr Mickey Gjerris, Dr Lene Munksgaard, Dr Jes Harfeld, Judith Benz-Schwarzburg and Sabrina Brando

Time and Date: 14 to 16 May, 2012

Organiser and Contact: Jes Harfeld JEH@teo.au.dk and Sabrina Brando sbrando@animalconcepts.eu

Registration: open until conference starts

Abstracts: please send abstracts to Jes Harfeld JEH@teo.au.dk

Website: <http://conferences.au.dk/animalwelfare/>

13 June, 2012: Sydney, Australia

Host: HARN - Human Animal Research Network, University of Sydney

Event title: *Animal Death*

Venue: University of Sydney (Camperdown Campus)

Keynote speaker: Professor Deborah Bird Rose, Centre for Social Inclusion, Macquarie University

Convenors: Dr Fiona Probyn-Rapsey (fiona.probyn-rapsey@sydney.edu.au) and Dr Jay Johnston (jay.johnston@sydney.edu.au)

This symposium brings together cross-disciplinary voices on the topic of Animal Death. We seek papers which explore how animal and human death are conceptualised, diverge, differ and also connect in profound ways. Papers could explore issues of sacrifice, 'necessary' expendability, utility, species extinction, human survival, climate change and conservation. We are particularly interested in human and animal relationships around the nature of death. These include (but not limited to) issues of grief (for the dead companion animal), euthanasia, rituals of slaughter, vivisection, cultures of denial, the issue of who (and who isn't attributed a 'soul'), post-death belief systems. Please send 200 word abstracts to Dr Jay Johnston: jay.johnston@sydney.edu.au by **16 January, 2012**. Individual papers will be 20 minutes in duration. Panels of up to 3 speakers are welcome.

Selected Reports from Pre-conference Events and National Groups

7 October, 2011: London School of Economics, UK

Animal Citizens

Report reprinted from the ASI and AASG Bulletins and with the kind permission of the author, Kim Stallwood, Deputy CEO Minding Animals and ASI European Director.

Animal Citizens focused on political approaches to animal ethics. The seminar organizer, Alasdair Cochrane, began with an overview of animal ethics and how political science can add further insight into our understanding as to what animal rights means in a moral and legal sense (see his *An Introduction to Animals and Political Theory*, published by Palgrave Macmillan). Siobhan O'Sullivan, from the University of Melbourne, contrasted the ways the same species is treated in legislation depending upon the context of the relationship we have with them and how they are used. For example, dogs, cats and rabbits as companion animals have different legal protections than when they are used by science as research tools in a laboratory. She made the case that these internal inconsistencies should be highlighted and used to elevate the legal status of those who are less protected (see her *Animals, Equality and Democracy*, published by Palgrave Macmillan).

The next speaker, Robert Garner, who teaches political science at the University of Leicester, has researched and written about animals and the law since 1993 with the publication of *Animals, Politics and Morality* (see second edition published by Manchester University Press in 2004). His paper, "Animals Rights in a Non-ideal World", examined the challenges to achieving effective legal protection for animals in the current political climate. He made the case for an enhanced sentience position for animals which afforded significantly stronger legal protection for animals than their current legal status. In short, animals have a right not to suffer regardless of any benefit that may accrue to humans.

The concept of animal citizenship was proposed by Will Kymlicka from Queens University, Ontario. He asked us to imagine a plane arriving at its destination. Everyone aboard held the legal status of citizen; however, depending their circumstances, their status maybe as a full citizen entitled to live, work and vote or someone, for example, who enters the country as a student on a temporary visa with limitations on the length of their stay and what they are legally entitled to do. Drawing from this analogy, he made the case that animals could also have citizenship status, which, depending upon their species and situation, afforded them particular rights. The seminar concluded with a discussion by Steve Cooke (University of Manchester), whose paper, "Justice for Wild Animals: Sovereignty and Partial Sovereignty", discussed animal citizenship as proposed by Will and his co-author Sue Donaldson in their book, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (Oxford University Press).

8 October, 2011: London, UK

Animal Ecologies in Visual Culture

Report reprinted from the ASI and AASG Bulletins and with the kind permission of the author, Kim Stallwood, Deputy CEO Minding Animals and ASI European Director.

This MAI pre-conference event was organised by Giovanni Aloï, editor of the online journal *Antennae*. The program was divided essentially between academics who studied the representation of animals and nature in the arts and artists whose practice is also the focus on this relationship. Included among the scholars were Joyce Salisbury (Professor Emerita from the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay) and

Linda Williams (Associate Professor of Art, Environment and Cultural Studies at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia), who spoke respectively on the representation of mammals and non-mammals as good and evil in the middle ages and related positions in eco-critical theory in response to the works of Australian environmental artists John Wolseley and Harry Nankin.

Artists Bruce Gilchrist and Jo Joelson, who collaborate as London Fieldworks, described various projects in urban and rural settings that engage ecology as a complex inter-working of social, natural, and technological worlds. Based in Budapest and London, contemporary art historians and curators Maja and Reuben Fowkes considered socialism and its legacies in Eastern Europe and how artists represented animals and the natural world. This focus included a consideration of Laika, the dog who was sent on a one-way mission into orbit in 1957. Jussi Parikka focused on the disappearance of insects and animals in early 21st century culture of environmental waste of which electronic media waste constitutes an ever-growing proportion. Additional commentary was given by arts journalist Rikke Hansen and a concluding discussion was given by Ron Broglio, assistant professor of English and senior research scholar of the Global Institute of Sustainability at Arizona State University, and Giovanni Aloï, lecturer in History of Art at Roehampton University, Queen Mary University of London, The Open University and Tate Galleries.

14 to 15 October, 2011: Oslo, Norway

Shared Worlds

The University of Oslo hosted this two day conference. A report by Minding Animals Norway follows.

In 2011, a number of us in Norway with an interest in human/non-human animal relations took inspiration from Minding Animals International and its upcoming conference in Utrecht to see how we could best express these interests in Norway. Our first act was to organise a Minding Animals Pre-conference Event in Oslo, which was successfully held on October 14 and 15, 2011. From this, a decision was taken to form Minding Animals Norway as a member organisation which acts as a space for the interface between academics and activists for better understanding and treatment of animals across the spectrum of human/non-human animal interactions.

Minding Animals Norway has duly been convened as an NGO within Norwegian law. Its officers are Morten Tønnessen (Chair), Kristin Armstrong Oma (Vice-chair), Rune Ellefsen, Rhys Evans, Runar Næss and Frode Bakke Bjerkevik. Its purpose is to further discussions on the topic, plus it aspires to become the gateway for all interests in the topic, including Human-Animal Studies in Norway, through its website (<http://www.mindinganimals.no/>) and through at least one annual conference/workshop.

The Pre-conference Event focused on the theme "Shared Worlds", looking at how both humans and non-human animals co-construct the worlds they inhabit. It featured two species-specific Round Table discussions - one on human-horse and one on human-wolf relations. Rod Bennison, Tora Holmberg, Liv Emma Thorsen and Nelly Mäekivi gave plenary addresses. The Pre-conference Event also included a Position Paper Workshop where efforts were made to find a position on the ethical treatment of animals to which both academics and activists could sign up.

Minding Animals Norway will continue to seek to attract new members and to engage with key issues in human-animal relations in Norway, in collaboration with other local, Nordic and International actors. We will be holding a meeting in Utrecht before the actual conference in which all are welcome to join us. You can contact us by sending an email to post@mindinganimals.no

24 to 25 October, 2011: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain

Animals and the Law

Report reprinted from the ASI and AASG Bulletins and with the kind permission of the author, Kim Stallwood, Deputy CEO Minding Animals and ASI European Director.

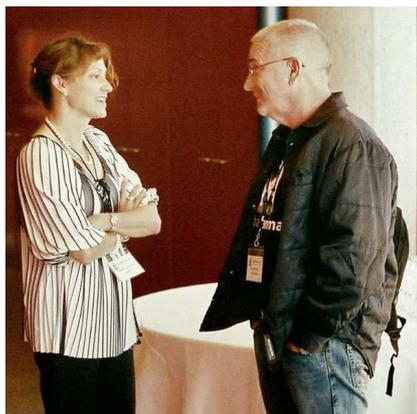
In 1976 at the RSPCA's Rights of Animals symposium at Trinity College in Cambridge, England, I heard Lord Houghton of Sowerby say, "My message is that animal welfare, in the general and in the particular, is largely a matter for the law". Fast-forward 35 years to Barcelona, Spain, where I recalled Lord Houghton in the presentation I made last week at Europe's first conference on animals and the law.

Hosted by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, "Animals & the Law" brought together for two days legal scholars, public policy makers and animal advocates, like myself, from Europe, including Spain, Belgium, France and the UK, as well as from Australia, Canada and the United States. The conference organiser, Professor Teresa Giménez-Candela, who also established Europe's first Master in Animal Law and Society at UAB, wrote recently, "If you care about animals, make them your profession. If you work with animals, improve your education". Along with the exciting news that the Center for Animal Law Studies at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon, will be hosting the world's first Advanced Degree in Animal Law, it is heartening to see Lord Houghton's advice being taken seriously at last throughout the world. As he said, "There is no complete substitute for the law. Public opinion, though invaluable and indeed essential, is not the law. Public opinion is what makes laws possible and observance widely acceptable."

With the rapid growth in Human-Animal Studies, Animal Law is, perhaps, in an even more advanced state of development, particularly in the US. There is, of course, no competition between them. They are both equally needed to help us disentangle the intricate web of confusion and collusion we have spun in our complex relations with animals. Understanding how they figure in our lives and they in ours, as well as developing a body of law giving animals protection, including moral and legal rights – both HAS and Animal Law are essential. Speakers at the Animals & the Law conference in Barcelona tended to either focus on specific aspects or, like me, took the opportunity to look at the topic more broadly.

Professor Georges Chapouthier provided an overview of how animals are and could be viewed in the eyes of the law. Veterinarian Andrea Gavinelli, head of the European Union's Animal Welfare Unit, described how the EU is working to improve the ways in which animals are used. Professor Giménez-Candela also considered the changing status of animals within European codes. Marlene Wartenberg, director of European Policy for Vier Pfüten in Brussels, and Enrique Alonso Garcia, former negotiator for the Spanish government, focussed on Article 13 in the European Union treaty, which addresses animal welfare and how it can and should be utilized to further the interests of animals.

For an international perspective outside of Europe, American law professors David Favre and Steven Wise explored pet trusts and legal personhoods respectively. Martine Lachance, who established the International Research Group in Animal Law and teaches at the University of Quebec in Montreal, described the challenges and opportunities to the legal status of animals in Canada. Australian Rod Bennison (CEO of Minding Animals) considered greyhounds and how they are socially constructed and how this impacts their legal status. Celeste Black of the University of Sydney detailed the federal government's response to the public outcry to how cattle and sheep exported from Australia are treated and slaughtered in Indonesia.



Martine Lachance and Rod Bennison

My presentation, "Animal Rights and Public Policy," challenged people to understand the single greatest obstacle we face is establishing moral and legal rights for animals as a legitimate mainstream public policy issue. "Campaigning for personal change will persuade some people, indeed, a minority of people, to change their hearts, minds and lifestyles," I said. "But only public policy will achieve institutional change in society. Personal change changes one person at a time. Institutional change changes society. What we have to discover is how to achieve institutional change so that the values of animal rights are embedded into society along with human rights".

The conference concluded with law students making brief presentations exploring such issues as the design of enclosures used in zoos and their impact on animal welfare, and whether Spanish law could adopt similar institutions as pet trusts as they have been in the US. Professor Teresa Giménez-Candela is to be congratulated for organising such a successful conference and establishing the first Master in Animal Law and Society program in Europe. We look forward to a Minding Animals Spain national group being established prior to the Utrecht conference.

28 November, 2011: New Delhi, India

Buddhism and the New World Order: Compassion, Animal Welfare and Conservation

The Wildlife Trust of India and IFAW hosted this pre-conference event that formed part of the Global Buddhist Congregation. A Press Release from Rupa Gandhi Chaudhary, Marketing Manager for the Wildlife Trust of India, follows.

New Delhi, November 28, 2011: Buddhist scholars and environment conservationists today endorsed a global declaration to apply Buddhist principles in societal, consumer and political decision-making frameworks to address the current environmental crisis.

In recent years, there is a growing tendency for humans to influence environmental and conservation decisions for short-term gains. Indiscriminate developmental activities have drastically modified the environment, causing negative implications to life on earth.

Exploring for solutions to this crisis in Buddhism, the Asoka Mission in collaboration with the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and its partner the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), organised a day-long session on 'Environment & the Natural World: A Buddhist Response' today in New Delhi. The session also marked a pre-conference lecture series for the Minding Animals Conference to be held in Utrecht in the Netherlands, next year.

"The impact of human activity on the environment has accelerated since 1950. So that now the world is confronted by increasing levels of pollution of air, land and water, the destruction of great forests and of

no more the natural habitats for wildlife, extinction of species and unprecedented crisis of environmental degradation,” said His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje, who chaired the sessions today. “Our very sustenance and existence depends on other beings,” he added speaking about interdependence of living beings, adding that each of us can and must change for the better of the earth. “We have a unique ability to mould our environment for the better”.



His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje (Event Chair) with keynote speakers, including George Schaller, Christopher Key Chapple, Manish Vyas, Cindy Milburn and MAI Board member, Vivek Menon

The session was also a part of the larger Global Buddhist Congregation event, envisioned to engage Buddhism in addressing various pressing concerns of the modern world, including environment degradation, violence, social and economic disparity.

“Buddhism teaches us to learn from nature, accept it as a way of life, and to change ourselves to live in harmony with our surrounding. If we incorporate these principles in our actions, we will be able to save the earth,” said Vivek Menon, Executive Director, WTI, Minding Animals Board member and moderator of the session on environment. Eminent speakers including biologist Dr George Schaller, stressed on Buddhist principles in compassion, ethics and wisdom as the panacea to the crisis.

“It is the good science upon which we base conservation to protect and manage the glorious variety of plants and animals, the millions of species in a natural community to which we belong and on which we depend for survival,” said Dr Schaller. “However, conservation is a moral issue of beauty, ethics and spiritual value. Without moral values, conservation cannot sustain itself. His holiness, the Dalai Lama said, ‘Ultimately the decision to save the environment must come from the human heart’ and he is right. Moral values can be transmitted through religion”.

Speakers at the Minding Animals lecture series included Dr Christopher Key Chapple, who regaled the audience with excerpts and characterisations of various animals from the Jataka tales that provided insights into human attitudes towards nature. Dr Manish Vyas spoke on how Buddhism can be adapted to answer environmental issues globally, while Cindy Milburn spoke on the need to recognise animals as fellow sentient beings rather than commodities to be used or traded.

At the end of the sessions, the speakers endorsed the global declaration. It will be a chapter in the overall GBC declaration which will also cover respective Buddhist responses to other issues being discussed at the Congregation. This will form a base document to establish an international Buddhist forum that willed fine collective action to address these concerns. The declaration incorporates the commitment of the Congregation and subsequently, the forum, to advocate and apply compassion, ethics and wisdom in activities that affect the Earth's environment and ecosystems.

2 December, 2011: Newcastle, United Kingdom

Animal Ethics and Sustainable Food Policy Conference

The University of Newcastle, UK, hosted this one day conference in northern England. A report by conference convenor, Jan Deckers, follows.

This Minding Animals Pre-conference Event brought together about 40 people from a wide range of personal and professional backgrounds to discuss the following question: 'How should the UK Government regulate the consumption of animal products?'

After Cristina Fernandez-Garcia had welcomed delegates, Steven McCulloch presented a paper that was critical of the Beddington report's proposal for sustainable intensification of the farm animal sector, raising questions related to the likelihood of increases in disease susceptibility and stress. He also claimed that some people might consume insufficient amounts of animal products, but that reductions in both the human population and the consumption of animal products are required in many countries.

The second paper, presented by Tanya Wyatt, concentrated on the continuing industrialisation of pig farming in the context of recent proposals to build mega-farms. Wyatt used evidence gathered in other countries, including the USA, to question the environmental and animal welfare records of such farms. She argued for greater openness and transparency, tighter environmental legislation and implementation, and expressed concern about pigs regaining consciousness after being stunned for slaughter and it taking long for them to bleed to death during slaughter. She recommended that legislation be introduced to demand that all slaughterhouses cut through both main neck arteries.

Maureen and Keith Robertson presented the third paper, questioning the negative health impacts associated with the heavy reliance on animal products in many current diets, and arguing that both the European Union and the UK Government should do more to promote stock-free farming and horticultural therapy. In the fourth session, Tony Milligan argued that a UK ban on the consumption of the bodies of wild land animals must be introduced, and that the burden of proof should lie with those who wish to make exceptions, demanding that they demonstrate that any consumption could be dissociated from the infliction of serious harm on wild animals.

In the final session of the day, Jan Deckers introduced the UK vegan project, the project to create a law that would prohibit the consumption of nearly all animal products in the UK. The UK vegan project was defended against four objections, including 'Attenborough's teeth argument', the view that humans ought to eat animal products because of the fact that they have canine teeth. Lively discussions over breaks, meals, and drinks stretched out the event long into the night. A permanent link to the audios and slides of the conference can be found here at <http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2011/12/animal-ethics-and-sustainable-food-policy-a-minding-animals-international/>

Occasional Paper

Minding Animals as Persons: Beatrice, My Mother, and Jethro, My Dog

Nothing is lost by viewing nonhuman animals as persons

Published on November 14, 2011 by Marc Bekoff in *Animal Emotions*

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About ten years ago my deeply caring, passionate, and devoted father asked, "Marc, can you please wheel Mom into the kitchen and get her ready for dinner?" I answered, "Sure, Dad," and began the short trek. But the journey went well beyond the confines of my parent's home. In my heart and my head it remains a very difficult and multi-dimensional pilgrimage for which there weren't any road maps or dress rehearsals. I watched myself watching Mom. The role reversal was riveting; I became my keeper's keeper. Where's the person I called "Mom?"

My mother, Beatrice Rose, who I loved dearly, suffered major losses of locomotor, cognitive, and physiological functions. She didn't know who I was and likely had lost some self- and body-awareness. In a nutshell, my mother had lost her autonomy. She had little or no self determination. Nevertheless, there's no doubt others would still have thought of her as a "person" whose spirit and soul reside within and who's entitled to certain moral and legal standing. And they should.

Generally, included among the criteria for designating a being a "person" are being conscious of one's surroundings, being able to reason, being able to experience various emotions, having a sense of self, adjusting to changing situations, and performing various cognitive and intellectual tasks. While many human beings fulfil most if not all of these criteria, there are humans who don't, for example young infants and seriously psychologically challenged adults. But they're also rightfully considered to be persons. Renowned Washington University legal scholar Rebecca Dresser calls them "missing persons" (Dresser, R. "Missing Persons: Legal Perceptions of Incompetent Patients." 46 Rutgers Law Review 609, Winter 1994; a full discussion of personhood in animals can be found in Rutgers University law professor Gary Francione's book *Animals as Persons: Essays on the Abolition of Animal Exploitation*).

Now, what about animal beings such as my late companion dog, Jethro? He was very active, could feed and groom himself, was very emotional, and even cared for injured animals. Jethro's was as autonomous as a dog could be. Yet, many people wouldn't feel comfortable calling Jethro or other nonhuman animals a "person." This irreverence would be a prime example of just what's wrong with academic musings! Why the different attitudes toward my mother and Jethro? Why are some people, especially in Western cultures, hesitant to call chimpanzees, gorillas, dolphins, elephants, wolves, and dogs, for example, "persons," even when they meet the criteria for personhood, more so than some humans? Fear. Many people fear that elevating animal beings to persons would mean that the notion of personhood is tarnished, that it means less for humans. Some also fear that animals will then have the same legal and moral standing as humans and they'd be equals.

While some may believe this whole exercise is shamefully crass, there are some important issues at stake. Loving Jethro (and other animals) as much as I do doesn't mean I love my mother or other humans less. Does granting Jethro and other animals personhood and attendant moral and legal standing lessen or take moral and legal standing away from humans? No. Such fears aren't warranted. Little's to be gained by claiming that granting "personhood" to some animals would be a misguided or blasphemous move. Surely, Jethro went through life differently from most human and other dog beings, but this didn't mean he hadn't had any life at all. Indeed, he had a great life. People vary greatly (there are countless different personalities), but the term "person" is broad enough to encompass and celebrate this marvellous diversity. Excluding nonhumans from personhood is speciesistic and supports questionable human exceptionalism.

So, does calling a nonhuman a person degrade the notion of personhood? Not at all. However, this move would mean that animals would come to be treated with the respect, dignity, compassion, empathy, and love that's due them and that their interests in not suffering would be given equal consideration with those of humans. It would be part of what I call "minding animals". Could one reasonably argue that a world with less cruelty and more compassion and love wouldn't be a better place to live and to raise children? I hope not. Nothing is lost and much is gained by viewing nonhuman animal beings as persons.