

106

Autumn 2020

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animalwatch

PUTTING ANIMALS ON THE AGENDA OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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WHEN LANGUAGE KILLS

A GUIDE TO ANIMAL
LANGUAGE RESEARCH

LANGUAGE AND THE
DEMONISATION OF ANIMALS

AMIGOS DOS GATOS
DO ALGARVE

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Cover image by Brigitte Schellens from Pixabay

DORIS' DIARY

Hello! My name is Doris, and I am a Border Leicester ewe with very large ears! I was rescued by ASWA secretary Sam Chandler, as I had outlived my usefulness as a breeding ewe.

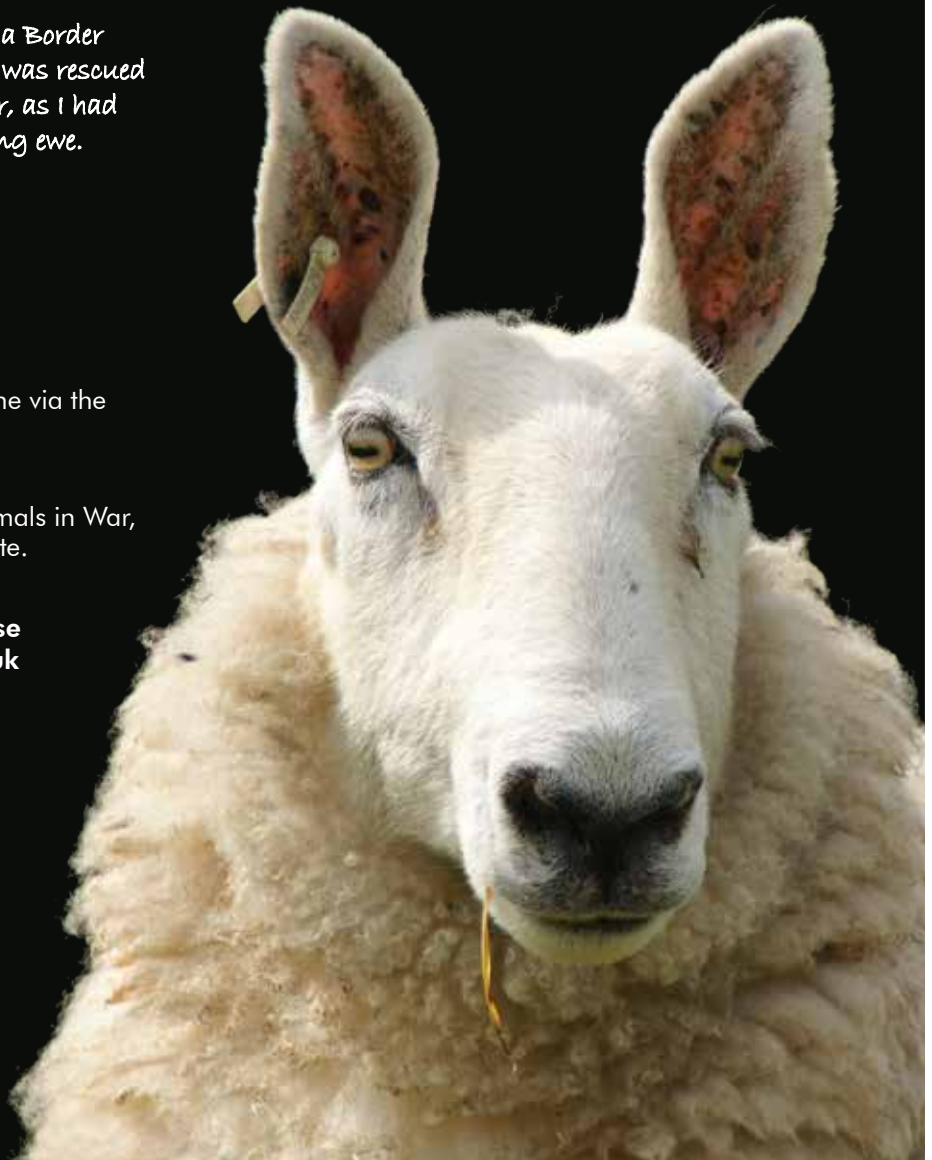
Below are some great events we may enjoy!

Sunday 4 October
Animal Welfare Sunday.

ASWA Annual Service, available online via the ASWA web site.

Sunday 8 November
ASWA Remembrance Service for Animals in War, available online via the ASWA web site.

For further details of events, please visit the website: www.aswa.org.uk



HELLO AND WELCOME TO ANIMALWATCH

Welcome to *Animalwatch*. In this issue, we focus on language, both the question of whether animals use language and issues around our language about animals.

We hope that you enjoy keeping up-to-date with news and information on our website. Do check regularly for resources and information about upcoming events. Please do make a note of the dates in Doris' Diary and check out the important notices about our annual service.

Please send any items for consideration for *Animalwatch* to Revd Jennifer Brown, Editor, PO Box 7193, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 8GT. Email is even better – animalwatch@jenbrown.org.uk. Please note that, owing to space restrictions, it may not be possible to print all contributions. Please refer to the information about contributions to *Animalwatch* for further details and restrictions on submissions.

Jennifer Brown, Editor

The deadline for the Spring magazine is **Monday 25th January 2021**.

ASWA SPEAKERS AVAILABLE

If you have a group or service that would welcome an ASWA speaker, we would love to hear from you! We often travel a fair distance so please call to discuss it. We usually bring a stall and literature and always liaise with our hosts to ensure the talk is appropriate for their particular audience. Keep the invitations rolling in!

A WARM WELCOME

to our new members. We look forward to hearing from you.

We are pleased to welcome six new members who have joined since the publication of the Summer issue.

To all our new members we extend a warm welcome and we would ask that you, along with our existing members, encourage others who share your concern for animal welfare to join. Introductory leaflets are available from the Secretary.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO ANIMALWATCH

We very much welcome contributions to *Animalwatch* from our readers. We are interested to hear about the positive things being done for animals in your churches and communities. We also welcome informed pieces on specific areas of animal welfare, such as items relating to animal welfare law, the history of animal welfare, and theology. Articles should be submitted to the Editor

either as typed manuscripts by post or by email as Word documents, with any accompanying photos sent as high-resolution jpg files. Items submitted as pdf files or email text cannot be accepted. Submissions must be the contributor's (sender's) own original work, and (unless otherwise agreed) not published elsewhere. Items may be edited for length, readability and

appropriateness of content. Publication of submitted items is at the Editor's discretion. In submitting an article, the contributor assigns copyright for the piece to ASWA. For items submitted by email, please assume your item has been received unless you get a delivery failure notice. The Editor is unable to acknowledge receipt of individual submissions.

ASWA MERCHANDISE

ASWA Christmas card now available!



Once again, Thea Olrog has created a unique design exclusively for the ASWA Christmas card. The card is now available to order, either on-line via our website or by sending the Secretary a cheque made payable to ASWA. The price for this year's

cards is £5.50 for a pack of 6 (including postage). Made from good-quality stiff card with high-quality envelopes, each card is printed with a Bible verse and has ASWA's details on the back. Sending an ASWA Christmas card is a great way to help raise the profile of ASWA and the work that we do.

Also available from the ASWA web site

ASWA literature: a range of literature on a variety of animal welfare subjects available.

Egg Cards: egg shaped cards with a prayer printed on one side. £0.20 each.

ASWA bags: handy cotton shopping bag with the ASWA logo. £4 each.

ASWA badges: show your support for ASWA by wearing a lapel badge with the ASWA logo. £1.50 each.

Sticker sheets & books: Activity sheet with stickers (ravens or bees), £2.00 each.



GOOD NEWS

African animal populations appear to be recovering

There has been very little good news for wild animals recently. An estimated 1 million species (including plants and insects as well as vertebrate animals) are at risk of extinction and the number of animals across the globe has declined by approximately two-thirds over the past 50 years. But some animals are managing to buck these trends. WWF UK reports that rhino poaching in Kenya has decreased by more than 40% compared with 2018, and elephant populations in Tanzania appear to be growing. Mountain gorilla populations are also increasing. In the early 1980s, there were only about 600 mountain gorillas left in the wild. Today there are more than 1000.

NEWS & NOTICES

Don't forget, you can follow ASWA on Twitter – [aswanews](https://twitter.com/aswanews)

You can also keep up with what's new via our website – www.aswa.org.uk.

Check the web site for the latest resources, including materials for children & youth.



Animal-friendly Church award

Is your church animal friendly? ASWA sponsors the Animal-friendly Church award to recognise those churches that take animal welfare seriously as part of their ministry and mission. Churches can apply at any time and those meeting the necessary criteria will be awarded animal-friendly church status. Information is available on the website or from the Secretary.



Changes to ASWA Services due to COVID19

Unfortunately, the ongoing COVID19 pandemic means that we will not be able to hold our Annual Service or our Remembrance Service in person this year. An on-line version of these services will be available on 4th October (Annual Service) and 8th November (Remembrance Service) via the ASWA web site. We hope that both services can be held in person in 2021.

TALKING POINT

Words can never hurt?

"Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me," is a rhyme taught to children as a defence against insults and taunts by others. But is it true that words can never hurt? Social movements such as Me Too and Black Lives Matter are showing us that words do matter. The language we use about others can perpetuate stereotypes and inequalities. We cannot police the language that others use, that would violate their right to free speech. But we can, as Christians and out of courtesy for others, think carefully about the language we use. This also applies to language that draws on animal imagery. Many common expressions reference violence towards animals (killing two birds with one stone, more than one way to skin a cat, and there are more). Not all animal-based metaphors are harmful and many are positive (free as a bird, for example). Is it right to reshape our language so that it is less violent, even when it is only metaphorical? Is such moderation 'political correctness run wild'? How much of our linguistic culture and tradition is worth keeping and how much, if any, do we need to change?

ASWA NEWS

Congratulations to ASWA Secretary Samantha Chandler

Congratulations to ASWA Secretary Samantha Chandler who is to be ordained Deacon on Animal Welfare Sunday in Winchester Cathedral. We are delighted that Samantha will be entering ordained ministry and we wish her every blessing in her new ministry.



OBITUARY

Margaret Pinder

It is with sadness that we report the death of Margaret Pinder, whose support of ASWA we have greatly appreciated.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

AUSTRALIA



Recommendations to Ban Puppy Farms and to Protect Koalas in New South Wales



Puppy farms, although lacking a legal definition in NSW, are generally understood to mean intensive dog breeding facilities producing large numbers of puppies for profit. Mother dogs are confined for most of their lives, continually impregnated to produce what the market wants. The lives of these mothers continue in this way until the mother can no longer produce, when she is most likely killed and replaced.

Dogs in puppy farms often suffer untreated ailments and the puppies can have serious health conditions and genetic defects which are not discovered until they go home to their new owners. These owners never know the background of their puppies, which they may have bought from a pet shop or on the internet.

Puppy farms are often located in remote areas and the RSPCA cannot intervene unless cruelty which breaches the criminal law is reported. The State of Victoria has banned puppy farming, and soon Western Australia will follow, but until NSW moves similarly, puppy farms from these States will simply relocate to NSW. The Animal Justice Party is currently campaigning to raise public awareness of this awful situation, and hopefully this will spur on the NSW Government to legislate these 'facilities' out of existence.

Koalas are Australia's most loved wild animals. They are absolutely adorable and adored. So it wasn't surprising that there was huge community concern during the devastating fires. Some animals can run, some can fly, some can burrow, but in the face of fire, the koalas could only climb higher in their trees. At least 5,000

died in NSW and across Australia that figure is estimated to be 30,000. In total it is estimated that one billion animals died.

The NSW State Government set up an Enquiry into Koala Populations and Habitat in NSW. The Enquiry found that, despite claims to the contrary by some stakeholders, koalas and their habitats were simply not being protected. Aside from the fires, logging, drought, land development for various purposes, roads through forests, and irresponsible owners who allow their dogs to wander, all impact negatively on koalas.

The Enquiry has made 42 recommendations to the Government which need urgent action if these wonderful animals are not to become extinct in NSW by 2050.

Olga Parkes

SOUTH AFRICA



Winter in Cat Village



Winter in South Africa can be cold, and the cats at Cat Village need extra care during the winter months. They are given straw and blankets in which they can nest, and they enjoy napping in the winter sunshine during the day.

Keeping warm takes energy, and that means that the cats consume more food during the winter, leaving Cat Village with higher feed bills and the need to get in more food for the coming months. With over 1000 tummies to fill, that can be a real challenge!

We are grateful to all our supporters. During the pandemic, fundraising opportunities have been limited, but we've been able to raise money through our on-line shop and we'll soon be launching our 2021 calendar.

Anyone who wants to find out more about our work, donate, or buy from our shop can visit our web site, www.catvillage.org.za.

Heather Seagers Cat Village

SWEDEN



Newsflash: Bird life and the sandpiper



For the past 20 years, extensive tracking of the sandpiper (and other waterfowl) has been done in Sweden with the objective of checking the level of threat and their vulnerability. Unfortunately, the sandpiper needs extra protection.

They cover a wide area and have a large population, yet it is estimated that they are diminishing, though not yet severely enough to be 'red-listed'. The world population is estimated at 2.6–3.2 million individuals, 1.5 million breeding pairs, of which Europe has roughly 800,000 individuals.

In Sweden that population has decreased and in 2010 the sandpiper was put on the list as 'severely threatened'. We have about 115,000 pairs mating and hatching little ones and this means that there has been a 30–49% decrease in sandpipers over the past 30 years. The sandpiper remains on the 'severely threatened' list today in 2020.

I had the good fortune to see one this summer and managed to take a snapshot of it. Beautiful, beautiful bird with a lovely plumage.

Sandra Kinley

WHEN LANGUAGE KILLS

Can language kill animals? Do we consent to this killing simply by using certain words? It is actually quite hard to kill another sentient creature. In order to do it, we usually have to rebrand them, either as food, as pests, as vermin, or as a danger to the public. The killing can then be called food production, management, control, culling, balancing out, or protecting biosecurity or biodiversity. To kill fellow human beings, we first have to change the label of the persons we intend to kill to 'enemy', and with non-human animals we also have to first change the label, both to ease our conscience and to hide the killing from others. And, before we know it, the killing gets out of control, and no one knows any longer why it has happened or how to stop it.

This is certainly true in the case of animals that are classed as 'invasive alien species'. A rather extreme example is the humble grey squirrel, residing in the UK since the 19th century and endlessly entertaining city dwellers in particular with their agility and intelligence. Because of their status as 'invasive aliens', they are mercilessly persecuted, a process that has passed beyond absurd in December 2019, when a law came into effect that punishes with a prison sentence of up to two years any wildlife rescuer who returns back to the wild a grey squirrel whom they took in for rehabilitation. The grey squirrel is accused of causing deforestation (not true, according to Forestry Commission research), of causing the decline of songbirds (not true, according to an extensive government-funded monitoring programme), of killing off red squirrels (who were in severe decline, due to habitat loss, before grey squirrels were introduced). And all because grey squirrels are on the list of 'invasive alien species'.

So, who exactly are these dangerous 'aliens'? The species in question, ranging from plants like Japanese knotweed to animals such as signal crayfish, muntjac deer and the aforementioned grey squirrels, have the misfortune of not having lived in Great Britain since the formation of the English Channel about 8000 years ago (which would make them native), or since the 12th century (which would

make them naturalized). Historically, they could almost be described as victims of fashion. In the 19th century the fashion was to collect animals and plants from all over the British Empire and try to establish them on different continents. The process was called 'acclimatization' and was considered cutting-edge science. It was in this atmosphere that grey squirrels, for example, were brought over from America 150 years ago. Unfortunately for the bushy-tailed ones, the pendulum of fashion has swung in the opposite direction, and introduced species are now considered public enemy number one.

One could, of course, argue that the unpopularity of these species is not a question of fashion, but of science, namely their ecological impact. But science formulates its agenda, and reports its conclusions, in words, in concepts, and it is important that these concepts are neutral and impartial, as well as equal to the task of conveying facts. The concept of 'invasive alien species', however, falls far short of these requirements.

First of all, it is highly charged emotionally, conveying a feeling of, "Help, we are being invaded!" Instead of 'invasive' we could say 'highly successful' or 'adaptable'. The scientific facts behind the statements would remain exactly the same. We would simply be adding the extra semantic layer of, "aren't they impressive," instead of, "help, we are being invaded!". A more neutral expression would be 'wide-spread' species – scientific fact, and nothing else. Plus, the word 'alien' in this context sounds biased. It suggests that a species does not belong here. But that something does not belong here is not an evidence-based judgement, it is a value judgement. Habitats change, sometimes beyond all recognition, and an animal that did well in it 300 years ago (such as the red squirrel) is not necessarily going to do well in the new changed habitat, whereas an introduced species (such as the grey squirrel) can become an accidental, but nonetheless good, ecological fit. So why should the history of dispersal, rather than present-day ecological fitness determine who belongs and who does not? The neutral expression 'wide-spread introduced species' seems

far more appropriate for scientific communication than the emotive and biased 'invasive alien species'.

'Invasive alien species' terminology is also problematic in purely scientific terms. As an instrument for formulating and exchanging scientific ideas, it is too blunt. As Andrew Chew and Matthew Hamilton point out in an essay entitled, *The Rise and Fall of Biotic Nativeness: A Historical Perspective*, the term in question does not accomplish any theoretical work, other than justifying human intervention in nature. The authors point out that the very idea of biotic nativeness is scientifically obsolete. They write, "This is a pre-Darwinian conceptual framework, worked out before a full description of natural selection, before ecology and genetics; and none of these offer to reinvigorate it." In other words, if scientific research and communication is guided by 'invasive alien species' considerations, it amounts to taking modern science and stuffing it into a pre-Darwinian conceptual straightjacket.

And it gets worse. In an article published recently in the *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, Meera Iona Inglis notes a parallel between automatic rejection of introduced animal species with the portrayal of human immigrants as dangerous invaders – something that makes 'invasive alien species' rhetoric both misleading and morally inappropriate. It is worth noting that many social media accounts that advocate the killing of grey squirrels, for example, will also carry politically far right content.

In the same article Dr Inglis highlights yet another moral problem with the 'invasion' narrative. Vilifying introduced species can be a distraction from far more significant problems in conservation, problems that relate to human activity. "The invasive species discourse is too often used as a political tool to scapegoat other living things for problems that are in fact caused or exacerbated by humans," she writes. To illustrate her argument, one could add the following point. The latest UK State of Nature Report points to two main problems for wildlife, intensive

farming and climate change. But tackling these issues would bring the government into conflict with powerful commercial interests, whereas grey squirrels, and other 'invasive alien species', are an easy target and can be legislated against with impunity.

Perhaps the most famous, and certainly articulate, public opponent of the 'invasion' narrative is the award-winning environmental journalist Fred Pearce. In his book entitled, *The New Wild*, with the subtitle, *Why Invasive Species Will be Nature's Salvation*, he argues that we should rather celebrate the 'new wild' of a mix of species, including non-native ones, who are, in many cases, nature's own way of overcoming the damage that humanity has done to the common environment. An example that he does not give, but that easily comes to mind, is our own grey squirrel. Our current habitat, except for some parts of Scotland, simply cannot support red squirrel populations. But the far more adaptable grey squirrels can survive in our ecological mess and perform the role in the ecosystem that their red cousins used to play. And are we grateful? No. We choose to label them as 'invasive' and persecute this species that is Nature's own way of dealing with the environmental problems that we created.

As with all public discussion, any criticism also draws counter-criticism. Those who object to the use of 'invasive alien species' vocabulary have been called science-deniers. This counter-criticism, however, rather misses the point of exactly what is denied. It is not the science that is rejected, but the conceptual tools that the science operates with. This is not the same thing. Science does not make moral decisions for us. Science can tell us, for example, that in certain habitats one species outcompetes another (e.g. the grey squirrel outcompetes the red in most British habitats). But science does not then tell us to kill off the more successful grey squirrels and artificially maintain the red squirrels in conditions that are not suitable for them. This is a moral decision, and one that is not helped by the automatic adoption of 'invasion' terminology.

So let us not be taken in by words. 'Invasive alien species' rhetoric leads to animal cruelty on a massive scale. Once labelled 'invasive alien species',

animals lose what little moral protection they had, and are exposed to unimaginable mistreatment, from being denied help by vets to being culled (another euphemism for killed, of course) in their thousands and millions. Grey squirrels, for example, are trapped, transferred to a bag and hit on the head by an army of volunteers recruited by conservation charities. These acts were first described as 'bludgeoning' in the press, but the newspapers were later forced to change this to 'cranial dispatch' – another linguistic trick for us to watch out for. Some other examples of language being used to cover up activities that the public may find distasteful are: 'managing the ecosystem', 'protecting biodiversity',* and 'balancing the habitat'. These can all be euphemisms for killing animals

that some humans think should not be there. If we love animals, we should be careful about the language we use, and be prepared to examine the language that others use, so that we do not sleepwalk into condoning animal cruelty that is normally abhorrent to us. In the English-speaking world we have all heard that, "sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never harm me." For millions of animals it is, sadly, not true.

Natalia Doran Urban Squirrels

*Editor's note: 'protecting biodiversity' can also be a termed used to describe positive action, such as the replanting of hedgerows or introducing field margins where wildflowers and grasses are left to grow to support insect, bird and small mammal species.



A GUIDE TO ANIMAL LANGUAGE RESEARCH

Most readers are familiar with observations of animal language in the media, from prairie dog alarm calls encoding descriptive detail about their potential predators, to complex chimpanzee gestures, marmoset turn-taking similar to how we chat back and forth, and dolphins using signature whistles that are specific to individuals, almost like names. My bookshelf still holds the first text I read on animal communication: a 1991 Usborne publication, *How Do Animals Talk?* Yet the debate on whether any of this constitutes language rages on, in a battle of multiple, even fallacious, assumptions, as well as meagre evidence – both what has been found, as well as what has been sought, especially as animal researchers and linguists have only recently started collaborating.

Many maintain that language is the very quality that makes us human, especially as research now provides daily evidence of the surprising levels of cognitive and social intelligence amongst other animals, from problem-solving to potential theory of mind in western scrub jays (they are more likely to hide their food from prying eyes if they themselves have stolen food before), to mushroom-farming ants, as well as sentience in creatures as strange and distantly related to us as the octopus. This all erodes the notion we have of our paramouncy on the planet. It appears only language is left to us.

Given the above, it follows that the literature and issues are many and incredibly complex. Here is a brief guide to some of the key considerations about the possibility of animal language.

First of all, it may surprise you to know that there is no definition of language. There are many theories, but no unified agreement. Still, the general consensus that language is unique to humans thrives, even down to the common phrase, human language, which does not mean much, if we are assuming that language is human-only anyway. Many of these kinds of assumptions have been adopted from Victorian days. Radick's *The Simian Tongue* gives an accessible, thought-provoking account of this.

Lack of definition allows us to move the language goalposts. Syntax has been one such liminal proposal, quickly becoming a very specialised form of syntax, 'centre-embedded recursion'. It turns out, however, that European starlings can recognise this, while for humans it is difficult to process and not common in natural conversation. Anthropologist Deacon proposed a 'symbolic threshold'. Yet, young female chimpanzees carry sticks around almost like dolls, and the male gift-giving spider offers food 'gifts' to a potential mate, nearly three quarters of which are empty, and more like the symbolic gesture of a man buying a woman flowers. So is symbolism widespread, if not in communication, in cognition?

Also important is that there are two opposing views of language as it co-exists with animal communication, both carrying their own problems. Some researchers retain a strict human language/animal communication distinction, or difference in kind; others argue for a difference of degree, or continuum, seeking to explain the world in Darwinian terms, that nature makes no great leaps during its evolutionary processes. Thus, we are presented with the puzzle of explaining either how and why only humans acquired such a complex cognitive (and social) skill, if we accept the clear divide account, or the paradox of accepting a continuum, if simultaneously assuming other animals are not capable of full language. How can we have a continuum with such a break in it? I am currently working on other possible options, which might lead us to ask not, "What is language?", but rather, "What counts as language?"

Linked to these divide or continuum concepts, and my research, is the fact that equating language to animal communication is also problematic in itself. Aside from the fact that we are all animals, including us humans, language is not proposed as identical to communication. Rather, to some researchers, communication is the major function of language. Therefore, comparing the ingredients, if you like, of animal communication and language is not going to be an exact science. Plus, there are

those who argue that perhaps it was animal cognition that developed into language, not animal communication.

It may be apparent now that linguistics comprises a range of theories, and can be broken down into formalist and functionalist perspectives, with generative linguistics and cognitive linguistics being two of the most popular approaches, respectively. The distinction, crudely speaking, rests on whether one focuses more on grammar and syntax, the rules of how words and sentences are put together, or on the use, meaning, and context of language. Linguists are also divided over whether language is innate and 'switched on' in the human brain during childhood, or learned, as well as over the primary role of language – does it organise, even create, thought, or express thought through communication? Amongst such disputes, how and where are other species supposed to fit in?

Moreover, what exactly do we look for amongst other species? When researchers each use what they think we know of language as a basis of comparison, we risk ignoring or simply not observing key features, as happened with early approaches to documenting recognised world languages. McWhorter's *What Language Is* offers entertaining examples of the weird and wonderful instances of languages that have since been discovered.

Conversely, studying animal communication can actually highlight our lack of knowledge about language. Linguist Hockett's language design feature list from the 1950s/60s was (and sometimes is) used as a criteria list to compare other species to human communication, i.e. language, until his features were soon found not to represent even all recognised human languages. Evans' *The Language Myth* discusses this at length. Possibly the most familiar example was Hockett's proposal of the vocal-auditory channel, which has been overthrown by the recognition of signed languages.

Modality (how language is expressed) as a practical consideration was also one of the few positive outcomes of last

century's animal language teaching experiments, which were horrendously flawed. So it was recognised that although other primates could not speak, they could learn to sign, and we are now discovering that animals communicate in all sorts of ways, from rapid octopus colour changes, to chemical scenting, and electrocommunication. Additionally, broadcast communication of other species, like long-distance calls, are more intensively studied than close contact calls between affectionate family members or fearful individuals. So again, we may need to adjust what we search for.

Other animal language considerations range from noting variation amongst individuals, the ways species differ because of their bodies and environmental niches, and the content of any communication. There is also

a difference between production and comprehension. Thus, elephants may have little to say, but they can certainly discern humans based on their age, gender, ethnicity, and native tongue, reacting more defensively to adult male Maasai speakers, who regularly hunt them, than to others, according to findings by McComb, Shannon, and colleagues in 2014.

Ultimately, to some, animal language study remains fundamentally an issue of not wishing to anthropomorphise other animals, so if research proceeds at all, it is very cautiously. While sensible, we could, however, move too far to the other end of the spectrum, to what de Waal terms 'anthropodenial', refusing to admit to any similarity between 'us and them', despite increasing evidence to the contrary. This includes the recent discovery by Semple and colleagues that statistical

linguistic laws for communicative efficiency, which apply to the world's recognised human languages, are also applicable to other species' communication.

So, in the end, could it be not so much the case that animals don't have language, than that we simply do not know how to listen? Do we want to? How well would it suit us to recognise the voice of other animals? To have to initiate a worm relocation programme whenever we wish to construct a building, or be expected to 'do lunch' with a dog before agreeing to adopt each other? Yet, we might also learn from other species, and avoid issues like Covid-19 in the process.

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THE BIBLE AND...

What animals can teach us

This Bible study is designed to help an individual or small group to explore what the Bible says about what we can learn about God from animals.

Job 12.7–10

"But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you;

ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being."

(NRSV)

In this beautiful passage from Job, Job recognises that human knowledge and wisdom are limited, that there are

things – particularly things about God the Creator – that the animals and plants know that we do not. Although this passage of Job does not explore the reasons human beings lack this knowledge, it may be because we have tried to cut ourselves off from creation, forgetting that we, too, are created beings, dependent on God. Our lives, as Job says, are in God's hands.

It is interesting that this passage presupposes that it is possible for humans and animals to communicate. Although it is not describing animal language, what this passage does suggest is that animals can 'speak' to us simply through their natural behaviours. By their very nature our fellow creatures demonstrate what it means to be dependent on God and in tune with one's environment. If we have eyes to see and ears to hear, we can learn the lessons they have to teach us.

Questions for Groups:

If we were to ask the beasts today about humanity's relationship with God and the wider creation, what answers do you think they would have for us?

What opportunities do you have to observe plants and animals? What lessons can you draw from those observations?

How can the Church help people to recognise that, like the beasts, we are part of the natural world, one of God's creatures, not detached from or independent of the rest?

LANGUAGE AND THE DEMONISATION OF ANIMALS

"Listen to them – the children of the night. What music they make!" So says Count Dracula to the hapless Jonathan Harker on the latter's first night at Castle Dracula as they listen to the howling of wolves in Bram Stoker's famous novel. Dracula, the vampire, is the personification of evil, so his admiration, even affection, for the wolves and their 'song' implies that there is an affinity – a bond – between evil and certain animals.

But why, in our culture, have certain animals come to be associated with evil? There are several reasons, many of which have to do, unfortunately, with Christian thought and the language and imagery used by the Church to describe evil. That language has been picked up, used, and expanded on in western literature, creating a cultural norm in which some animals are deemed good while others have been demonised.

According to historian and philosopher Peter Harrison, for the early Church, the various creatures of the natural world were a collection of symbols to be interpreted and understood. Interestingly, only certain categories or types of animals appear to be associated with evil.

Like the wolves who call outside Castle Dracula, many nocturnal creatures are associated with or thought to be evil. Humans are naturally diurnal creatures. That is, we are awake and active during the hours of daylight. Darkness is not our natural habitat. Many predatory animals are active at night, so the hours of darkness were especially dangerous for early human societies, and remain so for humans living in or close to areas of wilderness. In addition, we struggle to see in the dark, and can become confused and lost in a night-time landscape.

Unsurprisingly, darkness became a powerful biblical image. It is used in the Old Testament to describe those who have been separated from God, those who are in distress, and as the haunt of those who do evil deeds. In the New Testament, John's Gospel, in particular, makes extensive use of the metaphor of darkness and light, night and day. The importance of light and darkness for John are

evident at the start of the Gospel, in which John describes Jesus as the Word of God and the Light that shines in the darkness and says, "and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1.5). John also uses this imagery of light and darkness to show who is enlightened by the presence of Jesus and knowledge of who Jesus is, and those who through ignorance or rejection of Jesus are in the dark. This is perhaps no more evident than in John's account of Judas' betrayal of Jesus. When Judas leaves the table to go and betray Jesus to the authorities, John tells us, "[...] he immediately went out. And it was night." (John 13.30). Judas has abandoned Jesus, turned on him, and in so doing has removed himself from the light and moved into darkness and night. In this context, darkness equates with evil and rejection of Christ. Therefore, those who live in the darkness of night are also evil.

We've already seen how the wolf, a largely nocturnal creature, has been used in literature to represent evil. In the Bible, too, wolves are often used as a metaphor for that which is dangerous or destructive. Think, for example, of Jesus' warning to his disciples, "I am sending you out like sheep (or lambs) in the midst of wolves." (Matthew 10.16 & Luke 10.3). In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus continues by saying, "Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues." (Matthew 10.17). We are clearly meant to understand that those described as wolves are dangerous and not to be trusted. Of course, wolves have at times posed a genuine danger to humans. Although wolf attacks on humans have, as far as I know, always been rare, wolves do attack livestock, on which human communities depend. For those who lived with this very real danger, the metaphor used by Jesus would be easily understandable. It is important, however, to bear in mind the difference between something dangerous and something evil (a body of water can be dangerous, especially if you don't know how to swim, but that doesn't make it evil). And, of course, Jesus is not saying that his disciples are in danger from actual wolves.

Much of the demonisation of animals like wolves has occurred because people have misunderstood the way in which language is being used. They confuse metaphor for reality. The use of darkness as a metaphor for both ignorance and evil, for example, has led some to believe that the natural phenomenon of darkness that we experience each day after sunset is, in fact, evil, as are the creatures who are active at night. This idea is reinforced by the description of heaven found in Revelation 22.5, "And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever," suggesting that night itself is excluded from heaven (although several earlier passages in Revelation talk of things occurring "day and night"). I would like to suggest that this is another metaphor that can be taken too literally. Those who live in the eternal presence of God will be illuminated and enlightened by God. They will see things clearly. That doesn't mean that the earthly experience of night that forms part of nature's rhythm is bad.

The Bible gives us an alternative language about and way of understanding darkness. In Psalm 104, the psalmist says to God, "You have made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. You make darkness, and it is night, when all the animals of the forest come creeping out." (Ps 104.19–20). In other words, the dark, like the light, is part of God's good creation. It is a space that God has created for his creatures.

How we use language matters. That doesn't mean that we can't use the things of the natural world and our experience of them, be that personal or societal experience, as metaphors to help us explain and make sense of spiritual realities. But we must ensure that we recognise metaphor when we encounter it in scripture. A metaphorical reference should not be assumed to imply a literal connection. Secondly, we need to be clear when we ourselves are making use of metaphor and not speaking literally. Finally, we must never be afraid to speak out against the demonisation of animals – the assumption that some animals

are by their very nature and being bad or evil – when we encounter it, and instead highlight those passages of scripture that show us the truth of God’s relationship with all types of animals, starting from Genesis 1.31, “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.” We must not lose sight of the reconciliation of all things described in Ephesians 1.9–10, “He has made known to us the mystery of his will,

according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”

Knowing that God’s plan for the fullness of time is the renewal and restoration of all things in himself, we should never call evil that which God created good.

Jennifer Brown



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ANGLICAN SOCIETY FOR THE WELFARE OF ANIMALS

ASWA AGM, 9th September 2020

What a strange year this has been. When we had to postpone our planned AGM in May, we knew we would probably have to find an on-line solution. On 9th September, therefore, we held our first ever ‘Zoom AGM’ and it was surprisingly successful!

Over the past few years, attendance at our AGM has declined. We absolutely understand that as our membership are dotted all over the country, as well as abroad, it is a lot to ask members, apart from a faithful few who live in the London area, to make the trip to London to attend a meeting. We are, therefore, usually few in number. This year, however, we had far more than usual and a full screen of faces, both familiar and not so familiar! Our President, Bishop Dominic Walker, was able to attend from Wales and our former Chair, Bishop Richard Llewellyn, was also able to tune in.

Our current Chair, Revd Dr Helen Hall, read the report for the year and thanked the Committee for, “keeping the show on the road,” as well as thanking our bookkeeper, Helen Hellier and Membership Secretary, Keith Plumridge for the invaluable work they do for the society. ASWA Treasurer, Dr Chris Brown, talked us through the accounts. If anyone would like a copy of the accounts or the minutes, please let me know and I can email them to you.

Revd Dr Helen Hall has agreed to stand for a further term as Chair and Dr Chris Brown (Treasurer), Janet Murphy and Philip Petchey have all agreed to stand again. There were no new nominations for the ASWA Committee. They have therefore all been duly elected. Any member interested in standing for membership of the Committee should contact the ASWA Secretary before the end of the year. You would need to commit to attending 4 meetings a year including the AGM which are usually London based although some will take place remotely via Zoom, which has proved to be both an efficient and cost effective solution.

It has been a difficult year for many charities. Many people are worried about job security and charitable giving has seen a sharp decline. As a society, we have made financial gifts to some of the rescue centres who are close to our heart, including Hillside Animal Sanctuary, Nowzad, Dean Farm Trust and Doris Banham Dog Rescue. There are so many more that need help, particularly those with large numbers of animals to care for, and we encourage our members to give if they possibly can. Due to the exceptionally dry summer, hay will be very expensive this year so any of the sanctuaries caring for farm animals will struggle with huge feed bills this winter.

We thank you for your patience and support this year. Due to the current restrictions, we have made the decision to cancel our Annual Service and instead we will be offering an on-line alternative. Similarly, there will be an on-line version of the Remembrance Sunday service. We hope that some of you will consider buying our Christmas cards this year as this is a valuable way to raise funds as well as promoting the society to a wider audience.

Take care and keep safe.
Samantha Chandler

AMIGOS DOS GATOS DO ALGARVE

We are a small cat charity based in Albufeira in the south of Portugal. AGA was founded by Lesley Normington around twenty years ago. On a visit to Albufeira she was horrified by the number of cats and kittens living on the streets and decided she had to do something. She set about registering AGA as a charity (Charity no 505144328) and opened a charity shop in Albufeira to raise funds. Lesley sadly passed away in 2016 but her legacy lives on. Today we feed approximately 400 street cats every day; one volunteer goes out every morning seven days a week to feed approximately 150 street cats, and then she begins her trapping. We provide cat food for several colony mums who, between them, feed another 250 street cats. We also run an active trap-neuter-release (TNR) campaign in which we trap, sterilise and return cats to their colony. This is the only way to prevent more kittens being born to a life of misery on the streets. Our vet bills are high, we are inundated with emails asking for help, with street cats that are sick or injured; there's always another mother that has given birth on the streets; always someone else feeding a colony of twenty or more cats, all unsterilized and growing in numbers as more kittens are born to the unsterilized mothers.

The pandemic has had a drastic effect on our fundraising with quiz nights and fêtes cancelled, but the vet and food bills still keep arriving.

If you would like to see some of the work that we do our website is www.agacatcharity.com and we are on Facebook www.facebook.com/agacatcharity.

Deborah Humphreys



BOOK REVIEWS

GOD, EVOLUTION, AND ANIMAL SUFFERING

Theodicy without a fall

By Bethany N Sollereeder

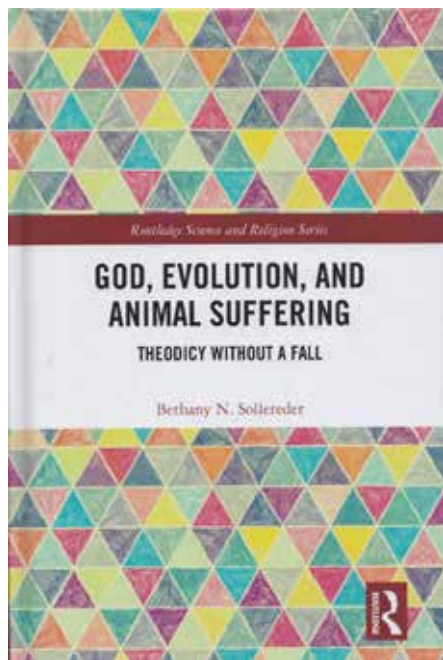
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What is theodicy and what has it to do with animal suffering? In short, theodicy is a term used to describe the ways in which we argue for the goodness of God in the face of evil and suffering. Although theodicy is most often concerned with human suffering, the non-human creation also must be taken into account when considering how suffering and evil have come to exist in a world created to be good by a good and loving God.

Traditional theology attributes the presence of suffering (and evil and death) in the world to human sin – ‘the fall’ described in Genesis 3. This theology assumes that humanity’s sinful disobedience had an effect beyond humanity, rippling out to cause the whole of creation to become fallen. As Sollereeder points out, there is also a theological tradition that associates the fall of creation not with the fall of Adam and Eve, but with the fall of Satan from heaven.

In this work, Sollereeder rejects both of these traditions. Creation itself is not, she argues, fallen at all. Creation remains, in its entirety, what it always has been: made by God and, as God declares in Genesis 1, very good. If that is the case, how can suffering and death be a part of this creation? How can evolution, which by necessity includes suffering, extinctions and wastage on an enormous scale, be compatible with a good creation made by a loving God?

Sollereeder rejects any theodicy that, in effect, reduces down to a cost/benefit analysis (is the harm caused outweighed by the good gained). Instead, she demonstrates how creation, including suffering and death, derives from God’s love. Genuine love, she argues, requires that the beloved be free to develop and become its true self in its own way. For the created world, this is the work of evolution – creation becoming its full self. But because God loves every part of creation, those creatures that suffer do not do so alone. God is with them in their suffering and, ultimately, they will be redeemed.

Through seven chapters, Sollereeder sets out her theory, arguing that misinterpretations of key texts in Genesis have caused us to misunderstand

the narrative of creation and the fall, exploring philosophical debates that contribute to theodicy, considering the nature of love and, in particular, God’s love for creation, and examining the ways in which God works in the world. Ultimately, Sollereeder concludes that precisely because it is messy and wasteful, the process of evolution as a means of creation demonstrates God’s love – God’s love is extravagant and willing to give creation the freedom it needs to develop in its own way. But God is not absent during this process, rather, God is there, alongside suffering creatures, drawing all life towards, in her words, “healing and fulfilment.”

Although an academic text (as attested by the price), it is accessible to non-specialists. Jargon is avoided where possible, and where technical terms and key words in Hebrew and Greek are used, they are defined or translated clearly.

What this work does not explore are the implications of this theodicy for Christian ethics. Does a belief that suffering in non-human creation is a by-product, as it were, of God’s love, mean that we have no responsibility to intervene to prevent or end suffering? Or, alternatively, should our understanding of God’s love for creation inspire us to work with God in bringing creation closer to the hoped-for destination – a point where suffering is no more, where violence and predation are no more?

Jennifer Brown



ANNUAL SERVICE FOR
ANIMAL WELFARE SUNDAY
Sunday 4th October 2020

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Sadly, we have had to cancel this service but there will be an on-line service on 4th October - details to follow. We hope to be back at St Botolph's, Boston in 2021.



All welcome

A SPECIAL SERVICE FOR ANIMAL WELFARE SUNDAY
ON SUNDAY 4TH OCTOBER 2020, 11.00 EUCHARIST

PREACHER: BISHOP DOMINIC WALKER OGS - ASWA PRESIDENT

Venue: St Botolph's Church,
Church Street, Boston, Lincs PE21 6NW

THEY ALSO SERVED

Remembering the Animals of War

Due to the changing situation with Covid-19, it is still unclear whether the usual service at the Animal War Memorial will take place on Remembrance Sunday. If possible, we will hold a short spoken service at 3pm on Sunday 8th November, but please contact the Secretary - AngSocWelAnimals@aol.com nearer the time, before making arrangements to attend. Whether or not the physical service is able to go ahead, we will be providing an online act of worship via the ASWA website.

Join us at the Animals War Memorial,
Park Lane, London

Sunday 8th November – 3.00pm

Speaker: PC Dave Wardell and Finn

Further details:

Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals

Tel: 01252 843093 **Email:** AngSocWelAnimals@aol.com

www.aswa.org.uk

ANIMAL WELFARE SUNDAY 2020

Sunday 4th October 2020



Is your Church remembering animals on this special Sunday?

Free information packs including order of service and sermon suggestions on a variety of animal welfare topics plus ideas for young people and children.

All resources available to download from our website

www.aswa.org.uk

or by post PO Box 7193, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 8GT, UK.

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