

# The Emotional Lives of Animals: A Leading Scientist Explores Animal Joy, Sorrow, and Empathy — and Why They Matter

*By Marc Bekoff*

Based on award-winning scientist Marc Bekoff's years studying social communication in a wide range of species, this important book shows that animals have rich emotional lives. Bekoff skillfully blends extraordinary stories of animal joy, empathy, grief, embarrassment, anger, and love with the latest scientific research confirming the existence of emotions that common sense and experience have long implied. Filled with Bekoff's light humor and touching stories, *The Emotional Lives of Animals* is a clarion call for reassessing both how we view animals and how we treat them.

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### **Summary Details**

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If the onus on *Emotional Lives of Animals* author Marc Bekoff was simply to prove that nonhuman creatures exhibit Charles Darwin's six universal emotions (anger, happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, and surprise), then his book would be very brief. As anyone who has ever had a pet dog, cat, rabbit, or even bird can attest, animals not only possess such emotions but broadcast them clearly and often. Bekoff's goal, however, is much grander: To show that wild and domestic species have a kaleidoscopic range of feelings, from embarrassment to awe, and that we dismiss them not only at their peril but our own. And if an endorsement squib by PETA president Ingrid Newkirk and Foreword by renowned animal scientist Jane Goodall doesn't give it away, then readers quickly learn that Bekoff also has an agenda: showing that using animals for scientific experiments, amusement, food, and the like is reprehensible and unconscionable.

Not that *The Emotional Lives of Animals* is a polemic. By turns funny, anecdotal, and deeply researched, the book is all the more persuasive because it's so compelling. As Bekoff (professor emeritus of biology at the University of Colorado) points out, "It's bad biology to argue against the existence of animal emotions. Scientific research in evolutionary biology, cognitive ethology, and social neuroscience supports the view that numerous and diverse animals have rich and deep emotional lives. Emotions have evolved as adaptations in numerous species, and they serve as a social glue to bond animals with one another." And with us, as Bekoff argues in this absorbing and important book. -- *Kim Hughes*

From Publishers Weekly

Any dog owner knows that her own pet has feelings, but what evidence exists beyond the anecdotal, and what does this evidence teach us? Bekoff, professor emeritus of biology at the University of Colorado, pores through decades of animal research—behavioral, neurochemical, psychological and environmental—to answer that question, compelling readers to accept both the existence and significance of animal emotions. Seated in the most primitive structures of the brain (pleasure receptors, for example, are biologically correlative in all

mammals), emotions have a long evolutionary history. Indeed, as vertebrates became more complex, they developed ever more complex emotional and social lives, "setting rules" that permit group living—a far better survival strategy than going solo. Along the way, Bekoff forces the reader to re-examine the nature of human beings; our species could not have persevered through the past 100,000 years without the evolution of strong and cohesive social relationships cemented with emotions, a conclusion contrary to contemporary pop sociology notions that prioritize individualism and competition. He also explores, painfully but honestly, the abuse animals regularly withstand in factory farms, research centers and elsewhere, and calls on fellow scientists to practice their discipline with "heart." Demonstrating the far-reaching implications for readers' relationships with any number of living beings, Bekoff's book is profound, thought-provoking and even touching.

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From [Booklist](#)

For several years ethologist and author Bekoff (*Minding Animals* 2002; *Encyclopedia of Animal Behavior*, 2005) studied communication in wild and domestic animals and gradually became convinced that humans are not the only animals that experience emotions. Here, Bekoff examines the concept of emotion in the lives of nonhumans, the evolutionary advantages of emotions, and the neurological basis for emotions. This field of cognitive ethology--the study of the subjective, emotional, empathic and moral lives of animals--encompasses researchers from many different fields and embraces data from the most scientifically rigid to the anecdotal. Bekoff writes in a highly personal style that vitalizes his discussion of the scientific background of cognitive ethology, and the text is liberally sprinkled with stories from his own and other authors' writings, as well as anecdotes from other scientists, that illustrate his arguments. The final sections focus on how to conduct scientifically rigorous research while addressing scientific rigidity on the subject of animal emotions, and the ethics of how we live our lives with animals. A readable book equally charming and challenging. *Nancy Bent*

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