

Animal History Group
Summer Workshop
1st June 2017

The Anatomy Museum
6th Floor, Strand Building
King's College London
Strand
London
WC2R 2LS

Co-operation and Conflict



Programme of Events

09.00 – Registration and coffee

09.15 – Welcome

09.30 – Panel 1: Domesticity

11.00 – Coffee

11.30 – Panel 2: Understanding

13.00 – Lunch

14.00 – Panel 3: Deployment

15.30 – Coffee

16.00 – Panel 4: Capture

17.30 – Break

18.00 – Keynote Address

19.30 – Drinks Reception

Domesticity

Chaired and co-ordinated by Alison Skipper

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Ideal food for ideal dogs: domesticity and the transformation of canine nutrition, 1900-1939

Tom Quick

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In this exploratory paper I address the emergence of a science of canine nutrition during the early decades of the twentieth century. For much of the nineteenth century dog food production centred on local economies of cattle and poultry rearing, milling, and household waste. In contrast, by the 1930s large-scale manufacturers of 'scientifically proven' dog foods, including Spratt's, Entwistles, Spillers and Carnation, had gained considerable prominence. I contend that the emergence of scientific conceptions of domesticity played a critical role in this development. Drawing on newspaper reports, advertisements, and specialist dog fancy literature, I show how dogs came to be integrated into a particular vision of the scientific home that came to prominence during the 1920s and 1930s. This integration was epitomised by the showing of dogs at events such as the Daily Mail Ideal Homes Exhibition (1930, 1932) and the Manchester Daily Dispatch Brighter Homes Exhibition (1930-32). These shows, I suggest, marked the culmination of long-standing trends in which dogs came to be understood as objects of (womanly) domestic care and attention. The science of canine nutrition produced and relied upon a conception of dogs as desirable additions to the newly scientific home, and as such as appropriate targets for the manufacture of specialist foodstuffs as infants and expectant mothers.

Promiscuous Travel Companions, Admirable Midwives: prairie voles, ecology and fatherhood 1947-1971

Nicholas Stücklin

In recent years, the North American prairie vole (*Microtus ochrogaster*) has risen to fame as a highly social, monogamous and bi-parental rodent species. These features have made it a prominent animal model for investigating the neurobiology of pair bonding and functional social relations in humans. Curiously, the first study of the ochrogaster's social behaviour in the 1950s concludes that "the animal is promiscuous". It seems to live in peaceful companionship with many different individuals, and the males appear to show no interest in the young – except when driven by a mysterious tendency to kill and eat the newborn. However, a laboratory study 10 years later insists that the males act as dedicated fathers and "admirable midwives", maintaining the nest, attentively caring for the female and the pups, and ferociously attacking individuals outside of the family unit.

Rather than attempting to separate erroneous from truthful accounts, this case study addresses how the social and scientific contexts of these studies seem to give rise to very dissimilar versions of the same animal. This contribution argues that developments in Midwestern agriculture, population ecology and equal pay legislation seem to endorse different social scripts, and redefine which behaviour appears as plausible and possible in animal societies, and in the North American prairie vole.

Living with Siamese Cats: co-operation and conflict with companion animals in the home in mid-twentieth century Britain

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The first half of the twentieth century saw a new emphasis on cats as pets. In the nineteenth century, their status was often blurred by their role as utility animals. Some writers praised their domestic qualities, but others depicted them as

duplicitous, contrasting them with dogs, which were held to embody loyalty and fidelity. In the early twentieth century, more emphasis was placed on the emotional and economic value of cats. This change was particularly evident in the rise of Siamese cats, which were increasingly bred, sold and celebrated.

This paper will examine how this new form of pet keeping played out in everyday life, through a close analysis of three detailed accounts written by Siamese cat owners. Focusing on 'pet memoirs' written by the publisher Michael Joseph, the army officer and Conservative MP Sir John Smyth, and the writer and President of the Siamese Cat Club Doreen Tovey, the paper will explore how these animals often disrupted the everyday processes of domestic life. Arrangements for eating, sleeping, and travel were all subject to conflict and co-operation. While animal agency emerges prominently in these accounts it is also necessary to consider how the depiction of cats in 'pet memoirs' was shaped by the purposes of entertainment and identity politics. Conflict was used for comic effect, while co-operation was often laden with emotional and moral meaning. As we will show, the depiction of the Siamese in mid-twentieth-century Britain was also strongly shaped by contemporary ideas of class, gender and race.

Understanding

Chaired by Kathryn Schoefert

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Co-ordinated by Alex Bowmer

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On the Beach and Beyond: responses to and understandings of sperm whale strandings on the British North Sea coast since 1980

Sophia Nicolov

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Recent sperm whale strandings provide an exceptional example of how one natural phenomenon exemplifies instances of co-operation and conflict between humans and animals. This paper focuses on the two fundamental aspects of human responses: the specialist welfare and scientific interactions and the response of wider society. It reveals how human responses to and interpretations of sperm whales and their strandings conflict and co-operate with both the real and imagined animal. Furthermore, it demonstrates how interactions between humans are also in co-operation or conflict, impacting on the physical creature on the beach.

My paper analyses the role of key organisations involved in welfare and scientific research, applying Arnold Van Gennep's seminal theory of liminality from *Les Rites de Passage*. It charts the development of stranding management protocols of humane responses to live stranded cetaceans. I will also discuss scientific research emanating from strandings and the transformation of the whale from its wild state to an afterlife as museum specimen or digitally stored data. These specialist responses evidence collaboration between different bodies to coordinate practices in the best interest of the animal and species.

Sperm whale strandings attract intense public interest, emotional responses and interactions with the physical whales. Public responses are often at odds with

specialist knowledge and protocols. How the general public construe sperm whales and strandings and the implications of the stranded whales as indicators of human-caused degradation of the marine environment are analysed, again highlighting conflict and co-operation with the whale of the imagination and the real creature.

Blaming the Rat? Animal agency and plague in colonial India

Nicholas Evans

University of Cambridge

The recent theoretical move within the humanities toward interspecies studies has often stressed the manner in which the discovery of animal agencies can conflict with anthropocentric accounts of society. This paper explores a series of scientific experiments undertaken in British India between 1896 and 1910, which sought to demonstrate that bubonic plague (most famous as the medieval Black Death) was a zoonotic disease. This scientific work involved a massive, almost industrialised, examination of rat corpses so as to produce an animal linkage in plague. I show that this production of animal agency paradoxically served to hasten an on-going process whereby the individualised bodies of colonized Indians were identified as complicit in their own disease. Far from challenging an anthropocentric worldview, this discovery of animal agency helped to re-establish one.

Healing the Feeling Heart: emotional health as more than human co-operation in the late-twentieth century

Robert Kirk

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Whilst nonhuman animals have long been associated with human wellbeing it is only relatively recently that the 'human-animal bond' has been developed as an object of scientific study with medical value.

In 1962 the clinical psychiatrist Boris Levison outlined his experience of using “the dog as a co-therapist” before proposing – only partly in jest – that a “Canine Counselling Corps” be established to enable nonhuman animals to contribute to the promotion of human mental health. A decade later, the Pavlovian experimental psychobiologist Samuel A. Corson began using his experimental ‘laboratory’ animals in the ‘clinical’ setting hoping to improve or stimulate patient recovery. Corson subsequently led a pilot study of ‘Pet-Facilitated Psychotherapy’ to establish evidence of the therapeutic value of nonhuman animals. Corson believed that human mental and emotional health could be improved with the cooperation of highly trained animals; he saw a future where mental health would be treated by highly trained ‘Feeling-Heart’ dogs.

By reconstructing the history of ‘pet’ therapy this paper explores how, why and to what consequence human relationships with nonhuman animals emerged as novel spaces for therapeutic interventions into human health and wellbeing. Analysis explores what the animal was expected to bring to the therapeutic encounter and how nonhuman presence was thought to ‘heal’. Speaking to the themes of the meeting, the paper also considers why the ‘laboratory’ is so often considered a site of ‘conflict’ when it comes to human-animal relations whereas the clinic and social space can more easily be construed as one of ‘cooperation’.

Deployment

Chaired by Neil Pemberton

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Maintaining and Threatening the War Effort: homing pigeons in Britain, 1939-1945

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Homing pigeons were enrolled by the British armed forces during the Second World War as a mode of communication. Famously, they were parachuted in bright orange boxes into occupied Europe for espionage purposes. But they were also used as a form of S.O.S. communications by RAF bomber crews downed in the sea and were mobilised by the army for secret communications – most notably on D-day. However, this mobilisation of homing pigeons by the British state was also underpinned by efforts to regulate and contain the movements of the majority of those owned by civilians – predominantly working class men - on the Home Front. Amid fears of an internal ‘Fifth Column’ of spies, homing pigeons were represented as a potential means of subversive communications. Their ability to transgress borders with minimal detection caused anxiety within the Home Office, leading to state officials not only inspecting pigeon lofts but also destroying those without official permits. Drawing on recent insights from the ‘mobility turn’, which considers the physical movements, representations and practices that encompass the politics of mobility, this paper will examine how the movements of homing pigeons were simultaneously enrolled and contained. This will not only demonstrate how humans both co-operated, and came into conflict, with homing pigeons, but will also show how efforts to control the mobility of pigeons reveal wider co-

operations and contestations between pigeon keepers and the state at a time of war. Subsequently, this paper contributes to the fields of animal history, mobility studies, and the cultural and social histories of wartime Britain.

Conflict Situations, Contradicting Status: case of military transport animals of colonial Punjab

Heeral Chhabra

University of Delhi

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century witnessed many military expeditions in colonial Punjab. This necessitated formation of laws to enumerate, regulate and manoeuvre transport animal such as camels, ponies and mules for the purpose of military transportation. Consequently, Punjab Military Transport Animal Act was formulated in 1903. Spanning over almost a decade and a half, this Act saw many reviews, revisions and reformulations, finally culminating as 'Punjab Military Transport Act of 1916'. Through analysis of its various versions and ensuing official debates, I intend to highlight the incongruence between the working status of transport animals and their assumed (property) status in legislative understanding. Such discrepancy led to practical disfunctioning and inefficiencies, prompting the colonial government to push for changes. I argue that these transport animals, through their presence, temperament, specific occupational pattern, and other specificities were reasons for bringing about significant changes in the very law which sought to regulate their movement, role, identity and functioning. The idea is to highlight the conflicting nature of animal's status in practice and in colonial legislative measures, which not only reflects contemporaneous animal-human divide but also the ways in which such division has been made part of legal discourse and popular understanding. The larger effort is to reveal animals as affiliates rather than supplementary factors in making the past.

Canines Against Criminals: the difficult deployment of police dogs in early-twentieth century New York

Chris Pearson

University of Liverpool

New York police dogs emerged within the context of media-fuelled anxieties of urban crime and insecurity, the development of criminal anthropology and new understandings of animal intelligence. In the wake of evolutionary theories, dogs appeared to be more intelligent creatures than previously thought and humans less so, allowing trainers, handlers, and sympathetic commentators to position police dogs as intelligent and instinctual creatures who could make a difference to urban security by combating animalistic criminals. Yet the notion that intelligence and socially-beneficial instincts in canines (and humans) were qualities that could be lost through the re-emergence of atavistic violent instincts undermined optimistic claims that police dogs could make cities safer. This paper explores these doubts during the deployment of police dogs in early 20th Century New York City. After exploring their European roots and training, it examines the debates over police dog intelligence and instincts, including their capacity for aggression. On the one hand, their violence, constrained by intelligence and training, might protect police and the property of the wealthy. But on the other, they might attack innocent citizens and even policemen. This paper locates this history within transnational animal networks, histories of urban crime, and debates over animal intelligence. It argues that human-canine co-operation was treated as a possible source of, rather than a balm for, social conflict.

Capture

Chaired by Karen Sayer

Leeds Trinity University

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Contesting the Value of Rhino Horns

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Removal of rhino horns from display, public-facing databases, and even storerooms at European museums following high-profile thefts in 2011-12 to furnish a recently dramatically increased Vietnamese medicinal market raises questions of the value of natural history objects. A research enquiry prompting a museum to contact the police is in tension with an ascendant paradigm in which behind-the-scenes tours of storage are becoming obligatory and the value of collections is framed in terms of their accessibility and utility. What is the value of a museum object that cannot be put to work? In display cases and upon the snouts of taxidermy trophies horns have been replaced with fibreglass models of sufficient mimetic quality that they require labels marked "fake" or "replica", making explicit their lack of authenticity. Conservationists, curators, governments and anti-trafficking NGOs alike stress that horn, whether stolen or poached, historic or modern, has "no value", being "just keratin". "Horn devaluation" projects range from injecting horns with a poisonous dye to a Seattle tech company's proposal to flood the market with "synthetic" rhino horn. The resurgent value retrospectively attributed to historic and often denigrated natural history collections, namely their usefulness as a source of historic DNA, is inverted in the case of museum rhino horns: rather than as a tool for taxonomic, evolutionary or ecological research, the UK rhino horn DNA database was set up c.2012 to prevent further thefts of valuable museum objects. The recent history of

the possession and consumption of rhino horns inside and outside the museum thus reveals a complex contestation of both the value of collections and the performative function of the concept of value.

‘Wild animals very often resent being gazed at.’ Conflict and Co-operation in Briton Riviere’s lion paintings, 1872-95

Kate Nichols

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[@plaster_figleaf](#)

This paper examines the idea of conflict and cooperation between human artists and animal models in the practice of Victorian animal painter Briton Riviere. With a few notable exceptions, art historians have been relatively absent from animal studies – even in the extensive discussion of what it means to look at animals. This paper uses Riviere’s lion paintings as a case study to explore what art historical discussion might offer animal studies.

In a large body of contemporary interviews, Riviere discussed the difficulty of painting animals, regularly invoking metaphors of hunting and battle for the artistic process. As well as the challenges of painting a mobile subject, Riviere notes in particular the dangers of looking at, and being seen by animals, claiming that: ‘Wild animals very often resent being gazed at ... if he sees you looking at him, he probably suspects that it is a question of a fight - that if he doesn’t kill you, you will kill him’.

Riviere spent hundreds of hours looking at animals – living, stuffed, and rendered on canvas. His claims to meaningful and dangerous visual interaction with animals who resent the human gaze, contrast with key twentieth-century discussions of the possibility of visual interactions with animals (e.g. Berger, Derrida). This paper will explore how Riviere’s claims, and the art works that emerged from these avowedly two-way interactions, might help us to reconsider the possibilities (and dangers) of visual communication in historical human-animal relationships.

A Necrogeography of Conflict and Conservation: the taxidermy museum, human-animal encounter and an 'ecology in between'

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This paper considers the practice of taxidermy and its relationship to various fundamental oppositions - the live and the dead; the wild and the domestic; and the hunter and the conservationist. Preserved for time immemorial in the 'great indoors,' taxidermy offers up a striking afterlife of the animal with a unique (and some might say unsavoury) ability to elucidate our environmental and cultural relations with other species. In this world of the 'Ecology in Between,' species and their habitats are presented in arrested motion - dead but seemingly alive - and preserved as 'wild things' in a thoroughly tamed space. In this paper, I delve a bit deeper into this curious historical geography - or, as I call it here, necrogeography - by looking at the construction and evolution of one specific collection - Quex Museum, the brainchild of Victorian hunter-naturalist Major Percy Powell-Cotton. A collection that started as a trophy room (1896), the wildlife dioramas created by Powell-Cotton in East Kent during the 1920s and 1930s provided a borderlands space and contact point in which museum visitors could get close to exotic wildlife species in a pre-Attenborough age and learn about species, habitats and ecological interconnectedness. From tawdry tool of colonial violence and antiquarian moth-eaten remnant to modern-day conservationist tool, the animated critters of the taxidermy museum present ideal candidates for chewing over human-animal histories of conflict, co-operation and co-production.

Keynote Address

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More details to follow...