



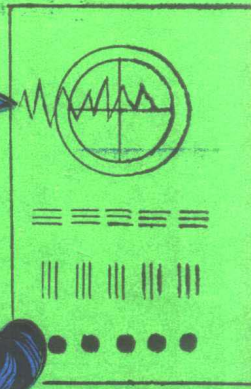
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# 动植物拾趣

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科技英语通俗读物

## 动 植 物 拾 趣

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## 动 植 物 拾 趣

孙延生 刘曙刚 注释

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## 编 者 的 话

《动植物拾趣》取材于美国作家 Ackady Leokum 所著的 *Tell Me Why* 一书原著，文字流畅、语言规范、图文并茂、内容丰富，具有很强的知识性、科学性和趣味性，是一本理想的科技英语通俗读物。现根据内容我们从中选编成《自然界探秘》、《动植物拾趣》等读物以供大专院校学生、科技人员、英语自学者以及具有一定基础的英语爱好者阅读。

本读物的注释部分不仅注意了语言结构和语法现象，而且对难句进行了翻译，旨在帮助读者理解其意，同时，书后附有总词汇表，便于读者查阅。

编者

1986年

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## 1. CAN ANIMALS UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER ?

If we mean can animals communicate with each other, that is, pass on certain messages by signs and sounds, the answer is yes. If we mean can they talk to each other as we do, the answer is no.

Even among human beings, all communication is not by means of① words. We have expressions to indicate anger, a shrug of the shoulder to indicate indifference, nodding and shaking the head, gestures with hands, and so on. Many animals make noises and signs to do the same thing.

When a mother hen makes a loud noise or crouches down, all her chicks understand this as a warning of danger②. When a horse neighs or paws the ground, the other horses "get the message." Some animals can follow very slight signs or signals given by other animals. When a bird merely flies up to a branch to look around, the other birds don't move. But if a bird flies up in a certain way, they can tell it's about to③ fly off and they may follow.

Dogs communicate in many ways. They not only

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①by means of: 通过...手段。 ②as a warning of danger: 作为一种危险的警告。介词短语作宾语补足语。 ③is about + inf.: 就要, 即将。如: He is about to retire. 他就要退休了。

bark, but they howl, growl, snarl, and whine. They lift a paw, or bare their teeth. Other dogs can understand what these sounds and actions mean.

Animals communicate with each other not only with sounds and movements, but with smell. Most animals that live in herds depend on smell to keep together. And, of course, we know how dogs recognize each other by smell.

Apes are supposed to be among the most intelligent of animals,<sup>④</sup> yet they really have no better “language” than other animals. They make many sounds and expressions of the face to communicate their feelings of anger or hunger or joy, but they have nothing like the words of human speech.

By the way, unlike human beings who have to learn how to talk, apes and other animals know their “language” by instinct. They will make the right kind of cries and sounds and expressions even if they have never seen another animal like themselves before.

Birds, however, learn their way of singing, at least in part. That's why a sparrow brought up among canaries will try to sing like one. It has been learning the wrong “language”!

---

④to be among ... of animals: 是最聪明的动物之一。动词不定式短语, 作主语 apes 的补足语。

## 2. DO ANIMALS LAUGH OR CRY ?

If you have a pet, such as a cat or a dog, you may become so attached to it that in time you almost feel it's "human." That is, you begin to think it can express the way it feels in terms of<sup>①</sup> human emotions, such as crying, or perhaps even laughing.

But this isn't really so. Crying and laughing are human ways of expressing emotions and no animals have this way. Of course, we know that animals can whimper and whine when they are hurt, but crying involves the production of tears with this emotion, and animals cannot do this.

This doesn't mean that animals don't have the tear fluid in their eyes. But it is used to irrigate the cornea of the eye. A creature must be a thinking and emotionally sensitive person to cry. Even children begin to cry only when they learn to think and feel. An infant yells, but he is not crying.

Crying is a substitute for speaking. When we cannot say what we feel, we cry. It is a reflex that happens despite ourselves and that helps us "get out" what we

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①in terms of: 根据……; 以……形式表示。

feel.<sup>②</sup>

Laughter is also a human phenomenon. Some animals may give the impression that they laugh, but it is not at all like human laughter. The reason is that man always laughs at something, and this means that a certain mental process or emotion is involved. Animals are incapable of having such a mental process or emotion.

For example, when we laugh at a joke, or at a “funny” sight, our minds or our emotions make it seem laughable<sup>③</sup>. In fact, there are many kinds of laughter and many reasons why we laugh. We may laugh at the ridiculous (a big, fat man with a tiny umbrella), or at the comic (a clown, for example), or at the humorous (a joke), and so on. We may even laugh in scorn.

Psychologists also believe that laughter is a social phenomenon. We laugh when we are part of a group that finds something amusing. Animals, of course, cannot resort to laughter for any of these reasons.

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②It is a reflex ... what we feel.: 这是我们不由自己控制的自发习惯性反应, 它有助于我们“发泄”我们的感情。 ③make it seem laughable: 使它看来似乎令人发笑。seem laughable 系不定式短语作英语补足语。

### 3. CAN ANIMALS TASTE ?

Our sense of taste is a source of great pleasure to us. It makes the enjoyment of food possible. But we have a sense of taste not just to give us pleasure, but to protect us, too. It often prevents us from eating things that might harm us.

What is the process of tasting? It is the ability to perceive the impact of molecules. These moving molecules stimulate the taste nerves and we identify the message we receive as having a certain taste. Only substances that are in solution, where the atoms move about freely, can be tasted<sup>①</sup>. A piece of glass, for example, has no taste. Everything that makes the molecules move about more intensifies the taste. That's why hot things have more taste than cold things.

The sensation of taste is first received by taste buds,<sup>②</sup> which are really nerves constructed like buds. They have the special ability to pick up certain sensations which we call taste.

These taste buds are located, in man and the higher animals, on the tongue. The number of taste buds varies

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① Only substances ... can be tasted.: 物质只有在溶解状态下才能辨别出味道来, 因为在溶解状态下, 原子能自由地运动。 ② taste buds: 味蕾。

greatly, depending on the taste needs of the particular species of animal. Man, for example, is only a moderate taster. We have about 3,000 taste buds. A whale, which swallows whole schools of fish③ without even chewing, has few or no taste buds.

A pig, oddly enough,④ is more particular in its tastes than man, and has 5,500 taste buds. A cow has 35,000 taste buds, and an antelope has as many as 50,000 taste buds! So you see that not only can animals taste, but many of them are more sensitive tasters than man.

Animals that live in the sea often have taste buds all over their body. Fish, for example, taste with the whole surface of the body, right down to their tails! Flies and butterflies can actually taste with their feet. When the last joint of a butterfly's leg touches something sweet its snout stretches out immediately so it can suck it up.

Snakes and lizards use their tongues for tasting, but not as we do⑤. The tip of the tongue flickers out and picks up particles. It brings them to a special organ in the roof of the mouth which smells or tastes them!

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③schools of fish: 鱼群。

④oddly enough: 说来也奇怪。作插入语。

⑤Snakes and lizards ... not as we do.: 蛇和蜥蜴用它们的舌来辨味。然而这与人类用舌来辨味的情况并不相同。

#### 4. WHAT IS THE FASTEST FOUR-LEGGED ANIMAL ?

Man is very proud of his speed. After all, doesn't he zoom through space faster than sound itself can travel?① Don't we fly from one coast of our country to another in a few hours?

What man should really be proud of in these cases② is his brain, which has enabled him to develop machines that can go at fantastic speeds. For when it comes to his body, he is very far indeed from being the speed champion among mammals. In fact, he ranks quite low.

Let's take a look at the speeds at which some four-legged creatures can travel. We must remember, however, that many animals capable of great speed cannot sustain this speed for a long time. Man himself, who can travel about 22 to 25 miles per hour, can hold this speed during a race such as a 220-yard dash, but not in a longer race! Also, the speeds given here are not scientifically exact. They are based on reports and observations which various people have made at different times. But they give you a pretty accurate idea of how animals compare in speed.

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①After all, ... can travel?: 不论以何种方法,人类陡直穿越空间的速度难道不比声音在空间传播的速度快吗? ②What man should ... in these cases: 在这些情况中,人类真正可感到自豪的。主语从句。

The champ<sup>③</sup> of them all is the cheetah<sup>④</sup>, a kind of leopard; it has reached 70 miles per hour! The black-buck comes next at about 65 miles per hour. At about 60 miles per hour, we have the Mongolian gazelle<sup>⑤</sup> and the Pronghorn antelope.<sup>⑥</sup> Any of these animals mentioned would outdistance all other mammals in a race of over a mile or so.

The lion, surprisingly enough, can charge after his enemy at a speed of 50 miles, but he can't keep it up. A deer, which most of us consider a very fast animal, only goes at about 45 or 50 miles an hour, and that's about the speed of a race horse!

Another animal that is used in racing, the greyhound,<sup>⑦</sup> goes at about 35 to 40 miles—only a few miles faster than a grizzly bear<sup>⑧</sup>! And an elephant has been known to make a dash at 25 miles an hour!

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③champ: 冠军[用于口语](= champion).      ④cheetah: (可训练来猎鹿等的)猎豹。      ⑤the Mongolian gazelle: 蒙古瞪羚。      ⑥the Pronghorn antelope: 叉角羚(= pronghorn)产于墨西哥与美国西部。      ⑦greyhound: 灵缇(一种身体细长, 善于赛跑的狗)。      ⑧grizzly bear: 灰熊(产于北美)。



## 5. WHAT ANIMALS LIVE THE LONGEST ?

There are many legends and stories about various animals that have lived to an amazing old age<sup>①</sup>. Most of them are exaggerated, however. Let us consider some of the longest-lived animals and see what the records actually show.

Among mammals, the elephant is generally believed to live the longest. There are stories of elephants that lived 150 or 200 years, but this has never been proven. It is probable that there has been an occasional elephant that lived about 100 years, but as far as verified records go, the oldest was an elephant that died at a little over 60.

The horse shares honors with the elephant for a long life<sup>②</sup>. There are many cases of horses that lived over 50 years. Here are some verified records of the long life of other mammals: hippopotamus, 41 years; rhinoceros, 40 years; bears, 34 years; monkeys, over 20 years; cats, about 23 years; dogs, 22 years. These are records set by individual animals and do not represent the average.

Among birds, it is sometimes claimed that parrots and eagles have lived more than 100 years. But this again

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① have lived to an amazing old age: 活到了惊人的高龄。 ② The horse ... for a long life.: 马和象享有长寿的声誉。