



spring 2004

SPEAKS!

FELLOWSHIP FOR THE INTERESTS OF DOGS
and their owners!

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How Did He Learn to Speak Volumes With a Look?

Rob Stein - Washington Post Staff writer
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As any poodle, spaniel or mutt owner knows, dogs have an uncanny ability to read human body language, whether it's following a finger pointing or spotting a glance that signals an imminent trip to the park. But animal behavior experts have debated for years how much this dogged perceptiveness is inborn and how much is learned by being raised around humans. New research, however, indicates that the capacity to communicate with humans, silently through gestures and glances, has become an inborn talent as a result of the thousands of years that dogs have lived, worked and played with people.

"They don't speak like we do. But there is communication," said Adam Miklosi of Eotvos University of Budapest. Miklosi is among researchers around the world who have been working to gain a better understanding of the talents displayed by man's best friend. Most recently Miklosi and his colleagues conducted an experiment to try to seek out exactly how much of the ca-

capacity to interpret humans' subtle signals is instinctive. People usually assume that dogs got more stupid because humans provided everything. All they have to do is lie back and enjoy life," Miklosi said. "What we think is that dogs went through a revolution that started from some sort of wolf-like animals... they acquired skills that made them adaptive to the human environment. They interact with humans. They learn from humans."

To test his idea, Miklosi and his colleagues designed an experiment comparing dogs with their closest relatives – wolves. They took 13 wolf pups from their mothers when they were just four or five days old and raised them in human homes like puppies. As adults, the wolves received intensive contact with their human caretakers, who literally carried the animals with them wherever they went. Previous studies had shown that adult dogs were better than adult wolves at reading human body language. But it was unclear how much of that was inborn and how much dogs learned growing up around humans. This experiment was aimed at clarifying that point.

"The wolves got more human contact than the ordinary dogs got from their owners," Miklosi said in a telephone interview. "They were really thrown into the human environment."

The researchers then trained the wolves and various breeds of dogs to get a piece of meat by pulling on a string. After the animals learned to get the meat, the researchers attached the string so that no matter how hard the animals pulled, they could not get the meat. The wolves continued to pull on the string in frustration. But the dogs quickly stopped pulling when the string did not move and turned to look

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Dog Walk Against Cancer

Riverside Park is the place to be on Sunday, May 2, 2004. It's easy to register and help make a difference in the fight against human and animal cancers. Join Teddy of Teddy's Treats and Team Co-Captain, Yuffie, Fido's own canine advice columnist of www.askyuffie.com; as well as thousands of fellow dog owners, animal lovers and New Yorkers for this truly amazing event. The fun-filled day includes contests, entertainment, food, a copy of the 2004 Dogwalk journal and of course, give-aways from our sponsors. The money raised goes to support the work of the American Cancer Society, and 10% of the net proceeds will go to the Donaldson-Atwood Cancer Clinic of the Animal Medical Center. More info: www.dogswalk.com.

**\$25/person pre-registration -
\$35/person day-of-registraiton.
9 a.m. Registration - 10 a.m. Walk Starts**

Clicker Expo

By Misa Martin

On the weekend of March 26th - 28th, some Prospect Park dogs and their humans participated in the 3rd-ever Clicker Expo, a 3-day intensive series of workshops exploring many facets of positive reinforcement training systems. A series of dynamic speakers - some from the world of dog training (for house pets as well as dogs who compete in agility and for seeing-eye dogs, Search and Rescue, and police work) others from zoos and marine parks that have implemented this positive training system.

Topics ranged from the science of clicker training and its evolution to changing aggressive behaviors in dogs with the use of non-punitive methods. Fascinating discussions abound during weekends like these and the opportunities to interact with the presenters and other attendees were a great opportunity for all to exchange ideas and brags about our dogs.

The Clicker Challenges that were introduced to teams of dogs and handlers were especially fun to watch : a choice of "challenges" was given to the teams (such as running through a rolling hoop; a dog jumping over and running under other dogs three times) and the teams had to choose and train these behaviors successfully within a 90-minute period. Such excitement! Next year's Clicker Expo will probably be in Orlando. Charter plane, anyone? More info: www.clickertraining.com

Spring Calendar

April 1st - Thursday

Spring/Summer Off-Leash Rules now in effect:

In a nutshell, off-leash now starts at 9pm, except weekdays in the Nethermead, where Happy Hour is still 5pm. (Unless it's a holiday, like Memorial Day.) Visit www.fidobrooklyn.org for the whole deal.

April 3- Saturday

Park Opening Day:

Prospect Park Little League Parade, 10 a.m.
An annual tradition! Starts at 7th Ave. and Carroll St. Ends at Bandshell at Prospect Park West and 9th St., with a ceremonial ball toss by elected officials to kick off the new season. FIDO is once again sponsoring the Wolves!

Opening Day Clean-Up:

10am - 2pm
Calling All Nature Lovers!! Join Volunteers In Prospect Park and help spruce up the Park after a long winter! Meet at the Tennis House: (718) 965-8960.

April 21 - Wednesday

2nd Annual Parks Advocacy Day:

Take your ideas and concerns regarding parks and recreation to all 51 Council Members, then Join NY4P for a rally in City Hall Park to show support for providing Parks with adequate funding and recognize it as an essential city service.
Contact New Yorkers for Parks at 212.838.9410 or visit www.ny4p.org.

May 2 - Sunday

Dog Walk against Cancer:

10am 86th Street in Riverside Park, Manhattan.
Join Yuffie and friends by registering online at www.dogswalk.org. This event benefits animals as well as humans.

Spring Calendar

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June 25th - Friday

FIDO's annual Pupnic:

From 5pm to Sundown in the Nethermead. Potluck, fun and games. See Events section of website for more details.

Walking tours of the Park:

Ongoing thru November. Exotic and native birds, plants, critters- you'd be amazed. Lean more about the space we all love so much! Guided and self-guided. Many other events listed at the Park homepage: www.prospectpark.org.

FIDO Steering Committee Meeting:

second Monday of the month. All welcome. Call the FIDO voicemail 1-888-604-3422 or email fidobrooklyn@att.net.

Percent for Pups

Buy some biscuits, save a life. When you buy your pet food and supplies at NYC Pet, 15% of every purchase made at any of their three locations will be donated to Hearts and Homes for Homeless Dogs of Brooklyn.

Just about every dog owner western Brooklyn has at least a passing familiarity with Hearts and Homes. (www.HeartsAndHomes.org). Since 1990, Mel, Roseanne, and their many volunteers have placed over 1,500 dogs and 600 cats in good homes. Hearts and Homes works seven days a week rescuing homeless animals, and showcasing adoptees at several high-profile Brooklyn locations (weather permitting). In addition, they run a sanctuary on Long Island for animals deemed unadoptable due to age, timidness, blindness, or other ailments.

Like with many good things in life, these good deeds come at a price, measured in time, sweat, tears, and cold, hard cash. Vet bills, food bills, phone bills, gas, electricity, rent.... the list goes on.

Now, Mel and Roseanne have come up with a plan to help raise at least some of the money needed to continue their rescue work. Thanks to the generous support of animal lover George DiGuido, co-owner of NYC Pet, 15% of every purchase you make at any of NYC Pet's three locations will be donated to Hearts and Homes for Homeless Dogs of Brooklyn.

"When you order, just be sure to mention that this is a Hearts and Homes order," George points out. "Call ahead and your order will be ready when you arrive at any one of our locations. Or, if you prefer, we'll be glad to deliver right to your door, free of charge, anywhere in Brooklyn or lower Manhattan."

NYC Pet has three locations: 192 Fifth Avenue between Union and Berkeley; 385 Seventh Avenue between 11th and 12th Streets, and at 241 Bedford Avenue in Williamsburg.

There are no dues to pay, no forms to fill out- just mention when ordering that yours is a Hearts and Homes Order. It's win/win/win deal. Pets will enjoy the widest selection of toys, accessories, treats and premium pet food in Brooklyn. Their people will like the price and convenience. And with every Hearts and Homes order, volunteers can spend less time worrying about funding and more time on animal rescue.

Fido Speaks - Staff...

Editor – Bob Ipcar

Art Direction & Design – Debbie Caponera

Art Illustration – Paul Belliveau

Alpha Desk – Mary McInerney

Our Poet Laureate – Maureen Sanders

Fido Membership Renewal Policy

As of 2004, Fido Membership renewals will be due each April First. This reflects a change in policy but one which benefit our members in that we won't have to "hound" you one year after you've joined. If you become a new member, say after April, then you have the option of renewing the next April, or waiting until the second following April. Hey sometimes \$15 is what it takes to keep within your monthly budget.

Membership entitles you to receive Fido Event & Newsletter mailings. If you can't remember ever getting a renewal notice, then it's probably time to renew - Please! So stay on our mailing list. Use the handy form on the back cover to renew...

How Did He Learn...

Continued From Page 1

at the faces of the humans, the researchers reported in the April 19th (2003) issue of the journal *Current Biology*.

"The dogs gave up much earlier. They were, very quickly, looking at the humans, the owners, looking at their faces," Miklosi said. "That is what is interesting. That never happened with the wolves. They just kept pulling. But the dogs what they did was basically look at the owners. If you observe this in humans, you would describe it as an asking-for-help gesture."

"The experiment shows that the dogs have adapted to this channel of communication," Miklosi said. "This has provided an opportunity to communicate with us. And the wolves have not. The dogs have learned our language to some extent. So we don't need to learn dog language. They can use our channel of communication like vision," Miklosi went on. "You can point for a wolf to communicate with it. You can point for a wolf, but it won't understand what you're doing."

Brian Hare of Harvard University, who previously conducted a similar experiment that showed dogs were superior to chimps and wolves at reading human gestures, said the results show that... "dogs really understand that humans are their partners in life. They can elicit their help and use them as kind of a tool. Wolves don't know that. They keep trying to solve it on their own. It's something that's programmed into their genes," Hare said. Hare is planning a follow-up experiment to try to determine why dogs are so much better at reading human cues.

"It could be that because there was selection for dogs that are smart – dogs that can read human cues and figure out what humans want," said Hare. "Those were the ones who survived and passed their genes on."

But another possibility is that dogs are a product of domestication. Hare tells the story of foxes that were domesticated in Siberia 50 years ago. Over the generations, the foxes developed physical changes, including floppy ears, curly tails, different colorings and small teeth and jaws.

"The human caretakers of the foxes weren't trying to create any of those changes. They were just trying to get friendly foxes. But when they bred them together, they got these changes as by-products." Hare said.

"So for dogs the alternative is that when dogs were domesticated, the capacity to pick up clues from humans was just an accident – like floppy ears."

Hare plans to compare domesticated foxes with dogs. "If they perform like dogs on the test, then we know it's likely the dogs also changed as a by-product. The question is: how did the evolution happen? It's very rare that you can demonstrate what the selection pressure was. That's why this is so exciting. We're going to take a big step in solving the mystery."

Marc Bekoff, a dog behaviorist at the University of Colorado in Boulder, said Miklosi's experiment shows that "dogs aren't just dumbed down wolves."

"A lot of people think that domesticated animals, when compared to wilder animals, aren't so smart," Bekoff, said. "It shows that species adapt to the social niche in which they live. And the social niche for dogs would be its human companionship."

Bekoff said that this ability probably helps explain the sense that many dog owners have that their animals empathize with their own emotions. Dogs can pick up the subtle physical clues that signal what their human companions are feeling, whether it's happiness, sadness, anxiety or anger. "I think part of the reason there is a strong human bond between dogs and humans is because we are empathetic to them and they to us," Bekoff said. "We can never know for sure. But I've done a lot of work on animal emotions. Animals and humans share a lot of the same neurological structures and the same neurochemistry. I think it's really dog empathy."

PLACE YOUR AD HERE!

FIDO
in
Prospect Park

Backstage at Westminster

by Jane Landis

Most people go to Westminster Dog Show to watch dogs strut their stuff on the catwalk (pardon the expression) vying for the coveted title of "Best in Show". The judges scrutinize every doggy attribute from stance to gait to symmetry. At least I think that's what they are doing. I'm not really sure what they look for specifically and truth be known, I don't really care. I'm content to prowl around the peripheries collecting free samples of dog food in my oversized plastic bag (compliments of Pedigree Dog Food) and checking out the back stage action.

Besides getting freebies there's a bunch of cool things to do behind the scenes. You get to meet all kinds of interesting people and their dogs. Some owner/handlers are clearly uptight and uninterested in talking to the masses. But others are quite friendly and delight in extolling the virtues of their particular breed. Sometimes the owners will actually let you pet the dogs. Hands off the Poodles, Bichons and Pomeranians though, especially after they've been groomed! I guess if I spent hours being duded up in the salon I wouldn't want anyone coming over and messing up my hair either.

I found a dog with no body hair and figured that was a safe bet. It was called a Hairless Chinese Crested. The owner let me pet the dog even after I asked him if that variety of pooch was actually bred for eating. I thought it was a good question at the time and besides my husband swore it was true. Oh well, no harm in asking.

I marveled at the Komodors with their tangle of white dreadlocks that made it difficult to tell which end was the head and which was the tail. I admired the Spinone Italiano, a bearded hunting dog which is described as having "human-like" eyes. Some of the breeds to my untrained eye looked a lot like the motley mutts of Prospect Park. But all of them glowed with that certain je ne sais quoi "it" factor that movie stars and models possess. These dogs know they are cool.

The dog show is a great venue for people watching. The place was packed. Ice -T from "Law and Order" was there, good naturedly posing for pictures with fans. I wondered if he was a dog owner or if he was "just looking". Steve Cojocar, who's described as a TV fashion maven/celebrity insider was there doing an "Entertainment Tonight" piece on dogs who look like

celebrities. I have a feeling that the Afghan Hounds must have figured prominently in that story. They look like a lot of people I knew in the 1960's.

There were lots of concessionaires selling dog sweaters and key chains and lapel pins depicting every breed for a price. Of course they also sold hot dogs. I didn't buy anything to wear or to eat since I didn't want to shell out \$25 for a tie tack or even \$5 for a small soda. This is a major sporting event and the prices were fairly steep.

A great looking Newfoundland named Josh won top honors. As the owner of a Mastiff I was pleased to see a giant breed dog earn recognition. But to tell the truth, all I know about the standards which determine who will be crowned "Best In Show" I learned from the Christopher Guest movie by the same name; which basically means I know nothing. To me, the perfect dog doesn't bite, drool excessively or grab food off the table. I also appreciate it when a dog comes when it's called.

"I found a dog with no body hair and figured that was a safe bet."

If you're a dog owner/lover I highly recommend a visit to Westminster. It's kind of like going to the car show. You go to wistfully admire the Porsches and Lamborghinis but chances are you actually own a Dodge minivan. I'm sure that you, like me, love your dog, pedigree or not and wouldn't trade her/him for the world. But it sure is fun to check out the other high priced makes and models once in a while.

The Westminster Kennel Club is America's oldest organization dedicated to the sport of purebred dogs. Established in 1877, Westminster's influence has been felt for more than a century through its famous all breed, bench dog show held every year at New York's Madison Square Garden. The show is America's second longest continuously held sporting event, behind only the Kentucky Derby. The show is a yearly event which is generally held in the second week of February.

From the Alpha Desk

The Winter That Wouldn't End seems to have ended quite abruptly, and people and dogs we haven't seen since November are suddenly back in action. Of course, it also means the ballplayers, bikers, joggers, and fishermen are back in force, too. Please remember (broken record time) that we need to share "our" Park with about a million others who have equal rights to the space. Let courtesy reign - especially around the baseball fields and bridal paths. Nobody wants to have a dog beat them to home plate and nobody wants their dog stomped by panicky horses!

It was hardly a quiet winter for FIDO, though. We are constantly updating our website with Adoption Opportunities, as well as posting lost and found dog information. And crawling out of bed before dawn one Saturday each month to get Coffee Bark together! We had to cancel one and postpone another this winter due to weather, but these were the only times in 5 years the coffeemakers, muffin wranglers, and banner-setter-uppers have caught a break!

We hustle year-round to keep our agenda on the Park radar. We attend meetings with local Parks representatives, and petition the people in Albany to give the City Parks more budget money. We answer mail from around the country from dog people only dream about a deal like ours.

This year, FIDO was invited by the Philadelphia Horticultural Society to speak on the benefits and responsibilities of off-leash recreation. I accompanied FIDO Communications Director Charlotte Gemmel to Philadelphia where we gave a presentation to Philadelphians both for and against off-leash dog areas. We were able to give encouragement to people trying to start or preserve off-leash sites, and established an initial dialog between some "pro" and "anti" groups. Listening to some of the dog-park people speak reinforced our appreciation of Prospect Park: We have trees! And grass! And fountains! We even have police who respond to emergencies!

On April 21, we plan to send a committee to a city-wide rally in Manhattan for Parks Advocacy Day. Organized by New Yorkers for Parks, this event will also give groups direct access to the members of the City Council so we can emphasize again (and again and again) how important Parks are to main-

taining sanity in this city. If anyone would like to join in, e-mail fidobrooklyn@att.net or leave a message at the FIDO voicemail at 1-888-604-3422.

Finally, a note to all the denizens of the Peninsula who were dismayed to see those "No Pets in Lake" signs: one benefit of FIDO's presence at all those Park meetings is access to the Powers That Be. The signs should be modified or removed by the time the water warms up. (Thanks, Tupper!)

So enjoy the weather and be nice to Mother Nature (and the ballplayers, bikers, joggers, fishermen, horseback riders....!

Mary McInerney

Advertise In the Fido Newsletter

Reach Fido's Membership & Beyond

Dog-walking - boarding, roofing (no pun intended)
business services - whatever

Your Address: Brooklyn, NY 11- - -

Phone: 718 - - - - -

E-mail: - - - - - @ - - - - -



Needless to say, printing and stamps are costly, so in an effort to make our quarterly newsletters self-supporting, we will be accepting ads, beginning with the Summer Issue.

Ads should consist of "Business Card" formats, meaning content and size should resemble a business card (see above). The charge will be \$25.00 per quarterly issue. While it's impractical to scan business cards we can go with your information. Unfortunately our printer doesn't guarantee gray tones (as in pictures)

Mail your information and a check to Bob Ipcar, FIDO Newsletter Ads, 342 16th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215. Deadline will be (June 10th)

Tort Tails....

You Cannot Go To Jail For Not Taking Your Animal To the Veterinarian

David Singer, Attorney at Law,

A recent case decided before the Criminal Court of the City of New York, Kings County (Brooklyn) held that a pet owner cannot be charged with the crime of cruelty to an animal under Section 353 of the Agriculture and Markets Law for failing to provide medical care to a terminally ill animal, and based upon that rule, the Court dismissed a criminal complaint against an individual.

The facts of the case were presented to the Criminal Court by representatives of the ASPCA. Their claim was that an individual failed to provide medical care to a dog that had a tumor on her chest the size of a grapefruit. The tumor became infected and was obviously causing pain to the animal. The condition of the dog was reported to the ASPCA, and the owner admitted that the dog was his, that he was aware that the dog was in pain, he was aware that the dog was terminally ill with cancer, but he could not afford medical treatment for a veterinarian and did not want the animal to suffer through chemotherapy.

The owner of the dog was charged with a misdemeanor pursuant to Section 353 of the Agriculture and Markets Law, which states the following:

"A person who overdrives, overloads, tortures or cruelly beats or unjustifiably injures, maims, mutilates or kills any animal, whether wild or tame, and whether belonging to himself or to another, or deprives any animal of necessary sustenance, food or drink, or neglects or refuses to furnish it such sustenance or drink, or causes, procures or permits any animal to be overdriven, overloaded, tortured, cruelly beaten, or unjustifiably injured, maimed, mutilated or killed, or to be deprived of necessary food or drink, or who wilfully sets on foot, instigates, engages in, or in any way furthers any act of cruelty to any animal, or any act tending to produce such cruelty, is guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment for not more than one year, or by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars, or by both."

The Court held that the words contained in Section 353 do not give the public sufficient notice under the Constitution that failure to provide medical treatment

would constitute cruelty, lack of sustenance or any of the other acts detailed in the statute as punishable as a crime. Therefore, if an animal is not being mistreated and the injury was not caused to the animal through some act or omission on the part of the owner, but is the result of an illness, an owner who cannot afford veterinary services or chooses to withhold treatment for any reason cannot be charged with a crime pursuant to Section 353.

Since this decision is at the Criminal Court level and has not been reviewed by an Appellate Court, it does not mean that another judge in the same Court or in a different county cannot interpret Section 353 differently, but at the present time, at least in Kings County, a person cannot be charged with a crime for failing to provide medical care.

It is interesting to note that in this case, the ASPCA performed surgery upon the dog and determined that the animal was terminally ill and provided whatever medical treatment was necessary. If you find yourself in a situation where your animal has severe medical problems and you cannot afford medical treatment, it is suggested that you contact the ASPCA and/or some other group such as Muffin Pets for the purpose of seeking some form of assistance for your animal, even if it is to ultimately put the animal at rest. You can also avail yourself of pet insurance, which can be obtained at a discount through FIDO.

Anyone You Know?

When called, (s)he'll be sleeping
as sound as a log.
Then (s)he'll run like a deer,
and leap like a frog.
(S)he'll steal the hors d'oeuvres,
(s)he'll sample the grog.
A master of mischief,
(s)he's smarter than Oz.
(S)he clings to you tightly.
(S)he eats like a hog.
(S)he snuggles in bed with you
-- off in a fog.
(S)he loves you completely,
one loveable dog.

Maureen Sanders

Keep Prospect Park Off-Leash Friendly

Here is my Membership contribution of:

___ \$15 ___ \$25 ___ \$50 ___ \$100 _____ Other

Renewal (Annual Renewal due each April 1st*) _____

Name _____ Dog(s) Name _____

Address _____ Apt _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Mail This Form to: Fido In Prospect Park, 230 7th Ave, #157, Brooklyn, NY 11215
Contact Us: Voice Mail 888 604 3422 - E-mail: f idobrooklyn@att.net

*Renewals due yearly on April 1st - If you signed up after April 2003, you're good until April 2005!



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Address Label