

# The 5 types of Animal Communication

by Bruce Butcher

If you are living with an animal, you are, in some fashion, already communicating. It may be that you have trained the animal, or that the animal has trained *you*. Nevertheless, the two of you have worked out a functional system of some sort. Perhaps you have studied your animal's natural behavior patterns or how it uses body postures to communicate. Your observations and conclusions are then used to decode the animal's motives.

## Scientific Study

I was raised watching Marlin Perkins and Jim Fowler on the TV show, Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom. These two traveled the world to observe and educate the viewing audience about wild animals and their behavior patterns. They used a helicopter to reach remote areas and once they landed, Jim ran to subdue the animal while Marlin turned to the camera and said something like, "I'll stay safely here behind these bushes as Jim wrestles the wild anaconda." The next few minutes showed Jim struggling and barefoot about to be strangled by a very *large* snake. Suddenly Jim emerges with the anaconda wrapped around his body, steps in front of the camera and begins to educate the viewers about the snake's habits, the role it plays in nature, or how it communicates its discontent – which, in this case, was by wrapping itself around Jim. Jim tells us, as he struggles to maintain control of the snake, that the anaconda is the largest snake in the world. Its great size and muscular strength give it few predators and puts it at the top of the food chain. It is a constrictor that kills by ambushing its prey, wrapping itself tightly around the animal and squeezing ever tighter thereby preventing inhalation and resulting in death by asphyxiation. The anaconda then swallows the dead animal whole. It has been observed killing and consuming large deer and even cattle. As Jim spoke, Marlin would creep out of the bushes to get in the camera shot. If the snake began to wiggle loose, Marlin would run back into the bushes to hide. I found that so entertaining. This show used scientific observation to educate its viewers about different species, how they survive and capture their prey -- a very survival-oriented and instinctual communication perspective.

## Reinforcement, Cause and Effect

Another form of communication takes place when we take the dog, cat, horse or bird to a training class. In class, we teach the animal a few words in our language by reinforcing desired behavior. We work toward putting desired behaviors on cue to lend a predictable and consistent language, of sorts. In this method, we learn to monitor an animal's body language to determine how it is distracted from successful performance. This method calls upon both the animal and the human to learn a little of each other's language, and they meet each other half way. It works well once the human can react as quickly as the animal can learn. Otherwise, the animal manages to shape the human's behavior to fit *its* needs and the human walks around looking dazed.

## Learning a “Third” Language

I observed another type of communication while watching large captive sea mammals at Sea World. The animals were being trained using a series of hand signals or cues unrelated to either humans or sea mammals -- a neutral, made-up language. The trainers explained that by using these operant conditioning methods, they ensure a positive experience for the animal and a safe experience for the human. Essentially, when a killer whale feels frustrated by his training, he begins to consider eating the source of his frustration, the trainer. The training focus is to induce and motivate the animal *to desire* to express the exact behavior, on cue and to be happy doing so.

## Animals as Spiritual Messengers

The fourth type of animal communication looks to the myths and legends of aboriginal cultures the world over. It was an ancient belief that the Creator sends animals as messengers. By close observation of nature, one would notice an animal showing itself to you in a manner atypical to the species. The appearance of a particular animal in one’s life was a symbol of Divine guidance. The myths and legends of the culture are then used to translate the significance of the message to one’s life. In this type of communication, we simply note the animals we consider our favorites and those which appear in our life and our dreams.

Let’s say you are worried about how to resolve a difficult relationship and you begin to notice hawks showing up wherever you are. The message brought by the hawk is to see life as the hawk sees life. The hawk flies high, gaining the widest perspective on its environment. Perhaps the solution to your relationship problem is to “get a wider perspective” or “get the big picture.” It may even be a reminder to “soar above the pettiness.” I am frequently asked, “How do I know whether this animal is a messenger or merely an animal going about its daily routine?” I answer by reminding the questioner that a messenger appears in an atypical fashion and I share the following *true* example. A meditation classmate shared that one fall morning she walked downstairs on her way to make coffee and found a squirrel drinking out of her toilet! This, I submit, is an animal showing itself in an atypical manner. To be honest, it took a week or two for her to recover from the shock of this squirrel’s appearance and begin to explore the deeper meaning of this symbolic messenger. This squirrel went to great lengths to *show itself* to this individual. In this case, the message came from the fact that a squirrel learns by observation and imitation, that is, by doing, experimenting and exploring. The squirrel brought my friend the message that the best way to develop her intuitive abilities and meditate was by *doing* rather than by studying -- very helpful guidance for this elementary school teacher. To help you to understand the symbolism behind the animals appearing in your life, I recommend the book titled *Animal Speak* by Ted Andrews.

## Telepathy

The final type of animal communication is telepathy, the sending and receiving of thought and emotion through the unseen realm of Spirit. Telepathy is direct contact with the essence, or soul, of the individual animal. The soul’s existence is eternal; it is part of the Universal energy. So, we do not need to be in the physical presence of the animal, nor does the animal

need to be in physical form in order to communicate. This level of contact is an innate human ability developed when our ancestors relied on animals for survival. In early cultures, the observation of nature was cultivated because it was critical to survival. When our ancestors moved *with* the natural patterns of nature, they thrived, and when they moved *against* natural patterns, they perished. In addition, stories say that our early ancestors discovered many medicinal plants by observing animals eating specific plants for specific conditions. For example, they may have noticed that when a bear became ill, it sought out and ate the goosefoot plant to help expel intestinal parasites. Observing his stools afterward and seeing him recovering his vitality would confirm the plant's effect, and our ancestors learned to mimic the bear's behavior. To safely navigate their way through the mountains, early people followed the animal trails. They secured adequate water by observing the movements of the water-loving animals and by asking to be taught about the water. Our ancestors utilized all of their perceptual abilities to ensure their survival. They lived close to nature and the animals, coexisting in harmony. There was no need to impose limits on the amount of game taken from an area. Our ancestors simply knew that, if they were to survive, they had to take only what was needed and not deplete their long-term resources. Moreover, our ancestors honored the souls of those who gave their lives so that they could continue to live. They knew that the animals responded to their intentions rather than their words. It is as if the animals could hear our ancestor's hearts thinking and our ancestors could hear theirs, as well.

Then, there came a time when humans domesticated the animal and began the age of agriculture and industrialization. The focus shifted from survival through harmony *with* nature to *controlling* nature for profit. The connection to animals faded for most people and their telepathic ability fell into decay. Today, humans continue to focus outside of ourselves, on developing external technology to solve our problems, rather than turning inward. In our state of forgetfulness, telepathic communication with animals seems abstract and without value. Nonetheless, it may have great value in helping us both to connect deeper into our own essence and to help us see through the eyes and intellect of another. We humans have a highly developed intellect, and it can help us to adapt and survive life changes if we are open to viewing life including the animal's perspective.