

‘THE EMOTIONAL LIVES OF ANIMALS’

by
Professor Marc Bekoff

This is a wonderful book offering compelling and moving insights into the rich emotional lives of animals and, by reflection, of humans. It is written by Professor Marc Bekoff, one of the world’s foremost experts on animal emotions, and is a very readable mix of hard scientific data, amazing animal stories and human being musings.

What people have always known intuitively is given depth and breadth, making the world a bigger and richer place. ‘Just what is going on in animals?’ a person might well ask after reading this book.

The case for animals having emotions and why they matter is made with tales about magpies and other creatures mourning, foxes grieving and burying their mates, elephants caring for their weak, elephants finding solace in the music of Mozart, the joyful abandon of dogs playing, the empathy and bond between humans and animals especially that between children and animals, the tales of Jasper the bear and Pablo the chimp, the devotion of lamas, the awe and wonder of chimps dancing in waterfalls, the gratitude of whales, the humour of donkeys, and the extraordinary antics of the smart horse Jim Keys.

In fact, seeing emotions in animals is sometimes easier than in humans because animals don’t filter them: what they are feeling is clearly expressed by tails, ears, odours, facial expressions, postures and behaviour. Animals are honest with few exceptions.

Emotions are vital in bonding individuals both within a species and between species, as is well known to any pet owner. Moreover, from this a strong case is made for emotions and fairness providing a basis for morality in animals as well as in humans.

The subject matter of the book is animals and their emotions, but it is ultimately very humanising and points the way to a more elevated, respectful and ethical dialogue with these other beings we share the planet with, enriching their lives and our own human lives as a consequence.

Michael O’Doherty