



A day at the Zoo!

Those five words conjure up many happy childhood memories. To the young, the national collection of animals is so much more exciting than, for example, the national collection of pictures. [...] To the very young the National Gallery is very dull indeed. (1)

The public wanted creatures that were curious, wild, ferocious and very different from European animals, to provide a change of scene and a chance to dream of distant lands. (2)

Michelangelo is alleged to have said that **“something strange in the proportions” was an important ingredient of beauty**, and it is the whimsical improbability of the proportions of the giraffe that contributes so much to its charm; indeed many early authors believed it to be a cross between a camel and a big cat (hence, “camelopard”). As the French had said of their animal, “On la trouve belle sans pouvoir dire pourquoi”. (3)

It is the unanimous opinion of those who have worked in zoos that **the behavior of the animals is in general gentlemanly, while that of the visitors is on occasions bestial**. This is an unpleasant subject, but it cannot be passed over in total silence. (4)

The public is an unpredictable animal. (5)

From time to time, rash youngsters or **stupid adults risk their lives by disregarding the warnings notices and approaching too close to dangerous animals**; on these occasions the victims or their relations, to excuse their folly or their negligence, almost always unjustly blame the authorities. (6)

Bear-safety advice of the state’s Division of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Environmental Protection: **Never feed or approach a bear!** Remain calm if you encounter a bear. Make the bear aware of your presence by speaking in an assertive voice, singing, clapping your hands, or making other noises. Make sure the bear has an escape route. If a bear enters your home, provide it with an escape route by propping all doors open. Avoid direct eye contact, which may be perceived by a bear as a challenge. Never run from a bear. Instead, slowly back away. To scare the bear away, make loud noises by yelling, banging on pans or using an air horn. Make yourself look as big as possible by waving your arms. If you are with someone else, stand close together with your arms raised above your head. (7)

I’m telling you right now, you’re not getting out of this alive. I wish to God you hadn’t come across this grizzly bear. I wish you’d just gone to Barcelona like you originally

planned. But instead you went with the eleven-day Alaska trek. Let me just ask - **did you know it's a terrible idea to be around grizzlies when they emerge from hibernation?** That took me five seconds to Google. I'm not pointing fingers; it is what it is. So puff out your chest, stand in a wide X position, and meet your destiny like a man. (8)

We modern people who **have killed the wild animals** that lurked once at the edges of human life miss them and want them back, and have replaced them with dogs and cats and innumerable tales about wild beasts. (9)

If “Save the Whales” was the motto of the environmental movement in the nineteen-seventies, **“Bring Back the Woolly Mammoth”** is something of a slogan for the twenty-twenties. Woolly mammoths, which were as big as the African elephant but closer, genetically, to the Asian elephant, lived across Asia, Europe, and North America until about ten thousand years ago—although in some places they survived until about four thousand years ago. **They are the first species whose extinction humans came to understand**, and could prove. The reason was harder to know. Humans were first believed to have played a role, by hunting them, but climate change more likely caused the decline, by ending the last Ice Age. The mammoths left behind bones and giant tusks, which Western naturalists began collecting in the seventeenth century, before the discovery of dinosaurs. (10)

London housewife Barbara Carter won a “grant a wish” charity contest, and said she wanted to kiss and cuddle a lion. Wednesday night she was in a hospital in shock and with throat wounds. Mrs. Carter, forty-six, was taken to the lions’ compound of the Safari Park at Bewdley Wednesday. As she bent forward to stroke the lioness, Suki, it pounced and dragged her to the ground. Wardens later said, **“We seem to have made a bad error of judgment.”** (11)

Recorded history, in a sense, begins with the famous cave paintings at Lascaux in southwestern France. The subject of the paleolithic artists was animals. Great bisons stalk the dank limestone walls; a herd of stags fords a stream; shaggy ponies trot out of the lost past. As hunters and prey, as gods and demons, as workers and parasites, or merely as mobile larders, **animals have lived intimately with man since before he was man.** (12)

In the past, families of all classes kept domestic animals because they served a useful purpose – guard dogs, hunting dogs, mice-killing cats, and so on. The practice of keeping animals regardless of their usefulness, **the keeping, exactly, of pets is a modern innovation**, and, on the social scale on which it exists today, is unique. It is part of that universal but

personal withdrawal into the private small family unit, decorated or furnished with mementos from the outside world, which is such a distinguished feature of consumer society. (13)

Bonds between humans and animals are easily sentimentalized - girls loving their horses, dogs devoted to their “owners.” This sentimentality, like a fever fighting infection, battles against the unspoken discomfort of connections we can’t quite understand. [...] the notion of “unconditional love” from animals is a delusion that gives people solace in the face of all the “misrecognition, contradiction and complexity in their relations with other humans.” (14)

Mickey Mouse lives in a typical American home. It is the environment of our homes which our pet animals normally share. Rather than building special houses for them we offer our own living spaces and share bathroom and kitchen. (15)

The U.N. estimates that at least a million species are at risk of extinction [...] Yet there’s a small subset of animals that are doing remarkably well. Known as synanthropes, these are the tiny minority of wild animals—not livestock or pets—that have adapted to thrive in the places that humans like and are forever building more of. [...] Familiar examples include opossums, coyotes, raccoons, rats, wild turkeys, Canada geese, and crows. [...] Some urban populations seem to be actively evolving to live in the habitats that we’re creating. **Mice in Central Park have developed genes that allow them to metabolize fatty foods and rancid peanuts;** mountain lions that live near the Seattle exurbs have shifted their predation from ungulates to rats, opossums, and raccoons. Studies have shown that many synanthropes are actually more successful—living at greater densities and achieving larger body sizes—in urban and suburban landscapes than they are in the wild. (16)

In 2012, twelve zoos in the U.S. and Canada introduced iPads for use during the enrichment times allotted to **orangutans** as part of a program called Apps for Apes. Richard Zimmerman, director of Orangutan Outreach, said of the animals in the program, “We’re finding that, **similar to people, they like touching the tablet, watching short videos of David Attenborough, for instance, and looking at other animals and orangutans.**” (17)

For those who admire lions and tigers, yet are reluctantly forced to admit that these magnificent carnivores are not suitable pets in most homes, the Almighty, with man’s assistance, has produced a perfect substitute: the domestic cat. This handsome, lap-sized animal is affectionate (though not servile), clean, healthy, relatively odorless, easy to acquire, cheap to feed, little trouble about the house, and to be had in colors and

hair styles to suit all tastes. It is much to be regretted that few if any of our other big mammals are available in miniature, domesticated versions. A house-trained, eighteen-inch-tall giraffe? A pocket bear or pandalet? A pygmy hippo that was truly pygmy? What charming pets they would make! But as things are, all that most of us can (or should) have is a cat, a dog or a budgerigar; **only the skilled, or the foolish, attempt to keep such animals as monkeys in the sitting-room.**" (18)

There is no real difference between the terms pigeon and dove. In general the smaller birds, usually white, are called doves, and the larger ones pigeons. (19)

New York's most persistent threat, the pigeon eats our ivy, our grass, our flowers and is a health threat. **But everyone seems to want to feed them... It's impossible to stop the pigeon-feeders.** (20)

Goats will happily devour vegetation that other animals won't touch, including species with thorns. By ravaging the leaves, they deplete a plant's energy, inhibiting new growth. **Goats eat in volume and they do it fast. They're particular only about ivy: no to English, yes to poison.** [...] The Riverside Park Conservancy has hired a herd of twenty-four to chew their way through a hillside of poison ivy and other invasive species. [...] Porcelain berry, mugwort, and multiflora rose were choking out the native plants, wrecking the ecosystem. The weeds blanketed a slope between 119th Street and 125th Street, where the steep terrain and the prolific poison ivy thwarted human intervention. The crisis called for goats. (21)

Imagine the following scene: You are in a room with an owl, a bat, a mouse, a spider, a mosquito, and a rattlesnake. Suddenly, all the lights go off. Instead of pulling out your phone to call an exterminator, you take a moment to ponder the situation. **The bat,** you realize, is having no trouble navigating, since it **relies on echolocation.** **The owl has such good hearing** that it can find the mouse in the dark. So can **the rattlesnake,** which **detects the heat** that the rodent is giving off. **The spider** is similarly unfazed by the blackout, because it **senses the world through vibrations.** **The mosquito follows the carbon dioxide** you're emitting and lands on your shin. You try to swat it away, but because you're so dependent on vision you miss it and instead end up stepping on the rattler. (22)

In these days of insecticides and drained swamps, those of us who live in the rich, temperate world have become accustomed to the luxury of not thinking very much about **mosquitoes** and the risks they carry. But the insects **are still killing**

more than eight hundred thousand people a year, primarily in Africa. (23)

The sulfur-crested cockatoo is a sizable bird, about twenty inches tall when full grown.

It has mostly white feathers on its body and, atop its head, a distinctive swoosh of citrine plumage, which fans upward in moments of excitement or agitation—looking like the avian equivalent of a dyed-and-sprayed Mohawk. Cockatoos, a kind of parrot, are a familiar presence throughout northern and eastern Australia, where they live in parks and in wooded areas. To some people, the cockatoo is a squawking pest that can damage a building's timbers with its beak; to others, the bird is a cherished companion. In captivity, sulfur-crested cockatoos can learn to mimic human speech, and some have been known to live for more than eighty years. There's a national pride in the bird: it appears on the Australian ten-dollar bill. **Cockatoos are nonmigratory**, and their native habitat is restricted to Australia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and the Philippines. [...] **“How did a bird from Australasia end up in a fifteenth-century Italian painting*?”**

*Madonna della Vittoria, Andrea Mantegna. (24)

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