

## Political Animals

Author: Beardsley, Timothy M.

Source: BioScience, 62(6) : 527

Published By: American Institute of Biological Sciences

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1525/bio.2012.62.6.1>

---

BioOne Complete ([complete.BioOne.org](http://complete.BioOne.org)) is a full-text database of 200 subscribed and open-access titles in the biological, ecological, and environmental sciences published by nonprofit societies, associations, museums, institutions, and presses.

Your use of this PDF, the BioOne Complete website, and all posted and associated content indicates your acceptance of BioOne's Terms of Use, available at [www.bioone.org/terms-of-use](http://www.bioone.org/terms-of-use).

Usage of BioOne Complete content is strictly limited to personal, educational, and non - commercial use. Commercial inquiries or rights and permissions requests should be directed to the individual publisher as copyright holder.

---

BioOne sees sustainable scholarly publishing as an inherently collaborative enterprise connecting authors, nonprofit publishers, academic institutions, research libraries, and research funders in the common goal of maximizing access to critical research.

**PUBLISHER**  
Richard T. O'Grady

**EDITOR IN CHIEF**  
Timothy M. Beardsley

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
James M. Verdier

**BOOK REVIEW EDITOR**  
**PEER REVIEW / PRODUCTION COORDINATION**  
Jennifer A. Williams

**MANUSCRIPT EDITOR**  
Nathan N. True

**Editors:** Eye on Education: Beth Baker (educationoffice@aibs.org); Feature articles: Beth Baker (features@aibs.org); Washington Watch: Robert E. Gropp (publicpolicy@aibs.org).

**Editorial Board:** Agriculture: Marshall A. Martin; Animal Behavior: Janice Moore; Animal Development: Paula Mabree; Botany: Kathleen Donohue; Cell Biology: Randy Wayne; Conservation: Nick Haddad; Ecology: Scott Collins, Daniel Simberloff; Ecology and Conservation: David Wilcove; Ecotoxicology: Judith S. Weis; Education: Charlene D'Avanzo; Environmental Microbiology: Rita R. Colwell; Environmental Policy: Gordon Brown, J. Michael Scott; Evolutionary Biology: James Mallet; Genetics and Evolution: Martin Tracey; History and Philosophy: Richard M. Burian; Human Biology: David L. Evans; Invertebrate Biology: Kirk Fitzhugh; Landscape Ecology: Monica Turner; Mammalogy: David M. Leslie Jr.; Microbiology: Edna S. Kaneshiro; Molecular Biology: David Hillis; Molecular Evolution and Genomics: David Rand; Neurobiology: Catherine E. Carr; Plant Development: Cynthia S. Jones; Policy Forum: Eric A. Fischer; Population Biology: Ben Pierce; Professional Biologist: Jean Wyld; Remote Sensing and Computation: Geoffrey M. Henebry; Statistics: Kent E. Holsinger; Vertebrate Biology: Harvey B. Lillywhite.

**BioScience** (ISSN 0006-3568; e-ISSN 1525-3244) is published 12 times a year by the American Institute of Biological Sciences, 1900 Campus Commons Dr., Suite 200, Reston, VA 20191, in collaboration with the University of California Press. Periodicals postage paid at Berkeley, CA, and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *BioScience*, University of California Press, Journals and Digital Publishing, 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223, or e-mail customerservice@ucpressjournals.com.

**Membership and subscription:** Individual members, go to [www.aibs.org/aibs-membership/index.html](http://www.aibs.org/aibs-membership/index.html) for benefits and services, membership rates, and back issue claims. Subscription renewal month is shown in the four-digit year-month code in the upper right corner of the mailing label. Institutional subscribers, go to [www.ucpressjournals.com](http://www.ucpressjournals.com) or e-mail customerservice@ucpressjournals.com. Out-of-print issues and volumes are available from Periodicals Service Company, 11 Main Street, Germantown, NY 12526-5635; telephone: 518-537-4700; fax: 518-537-5899; Web site: [www.periodicals.com](http://www.periodicals.com).

**Advertising:** For information about display and online advertisements and deadlines, e-mail adsales@ucpressjournals.com. For information about classified placements and deadlines, contact Jennifer A. Williams, AIBS (jwilliams@aibs.org).

**Copying and permissions notice:** Authorization to copy article content beyond fair use (as specified in sections 107 and 108 of the US Copyright Law) for internal or personal use, or the internal or personal use of specific clients, is granted by the Regents of the University of California on behalf of AIBS for libraries and other users, provided that they are registered with and pay the specified fee through the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC), [www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com). To reach the CCC's Customer Service Department, call 978-750-8400 or e-mail [info@copyright.com](mailto:info@copyright.com). For permission to distribute electronically, republish, resell, or repurpose material, use the CCC's Rightslink service on JSTOR at <http://www.jstor.org/rf/ucal/bio>. Submit all other permissions and licensing inquiries through the University of California Press's Rights and Permissions Web site, [www.ucpressjournals.com/reprintInfo.asp](http://www.ucpressjournals.com/reprintInfo.asp), or e-mail [journalspermissions@ucpress.edu](mailto:journalspermissions@ucpress.edu). **Abstracting and indexing:** For complete abstracting and indexing information, please visit [www.ucpressjournals.com](http://www.ucpressjournals.com).

© 2012 American Institute of Biological Sciences. All rights reserved. Printed at Allen Press, Inc.

# BioScience®

**A Forum for Integrating the Life Sciences**  
American Institute of Biological Sciences

## Political Animals

If animals have personalities, as is indicated by the research discussed by Leslie Evans Ogden in her article starting on p. 533, should humans be more aware that their relationships with animals are in some sense personal ones—or that those relationships might with benefit become more deliberate? And how might such a deliberate sense of a personal relationship affect how scientists who aspire to be leaders approach questions about humans' uses of—and effects on—animals?

Needless to say, most of us come across very few animals, besides companion animals, with which we could or would want to have a relationship that is personal in the usual sense of the term. But a relationship based on the joint recognition of another individual and tied to norms of behavior is not the only kind of personal relationship. Research on animal personalities—different suites of behavioral tendencies that are apparently widespread—at the very least reminds us of similarities in how behavior often develops in human and nonhuman animals. In both, it is often idiosyncratic, integrating individuals' physiology and history. Since human behavior is subject to the same natural laws as other creatures', the commonality warrants reflection about how we behave personally with respect to the (behaving) natural world.

The recognition of this commonality does not have to lead to animal rights. They are a contested extension of a philosophical tradition that is itself far from universally accepted. However, coupled with the manifold benefits that we derive from animals (including psychological ones) and our knowledge of vast uncharted phenotypic differences between individual humans and animals, the commonality suggests that deeper and more widespread understanding of the human–animal relationship could extend the benefits on both sides. How this might be done, exactly, cannot be predicted, but the number of critical areas calling out for improvement points to a large potential. The articles by Catherine Reidy Liermann and her colleagues on p. 539 and by Irving A. Mendelsohn and his coauthors on p. 562 document the immense consequences for fishes and other animals of energy technologies that support human culture. The impacts are about far more than so much protein.

The hold that animals have on the imaginations of children, as well as their importance for food, for recreation, and for employment (to name just a few connections) strengthen the case for specific educational roles—formal and informal—for would-be leaders who want biology to support decisionmaking. The case argues that they should actively support opportunities for the public to learn about, witness, and deliberate over the full range of human transactions with other members of our kingdom. It seems likely that such efforts—aimed at adults as well as children—can disseminate a resilient basis for enjoying life. They could also lead in due course to wiser societal decisions, because deliberation can generate good ideas.

Our species' growing reliance on technology allows many of us to forget that we all have a relationship with animals that, because of their similarities to our kind, must be at some level personal. Most of us do not see where our food comes from or learn about how humans are decimating animal populations. But as feminists declared a long time ago, the personal is political.

TIMOTHY M. BEARDSLEY  
*Editor in Chief*

doi:10.1525/bio.2012.62.6.1