



THE ONE YEAR[®]

DEVOS for
ANIMAL
LOVERS

Cool Things
Animals Show Us
about Our Creator



Dandi Daley Mackall

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The One Year Devos for Animal Lovers: Cool Things Animals Show Us about Our Creator

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INTRODUCTION

ALL GOD'S CREATURES

God could have made the world without animals. Or God could have settled on one animal—a cow, maybe. Or one type of fish—an angelfish, or a shark.

Do we really need a couple hundred breeds of dogs and nearly that many horse breeds? Was it necessary for cats to come in different colors and fur patterns or for birds to be able to sing their own unique songs?

Our Creator, in his infinite wisdom, kindness, creativity, and love, has filled the world with so many different kinds of creatures that scientists can't even agree how many types of animals exist on earth. And more species are being discovered all the time.

Each animal has a purpose in the world—to spread pollen, to dig, to fill a spot in the food chain, to keep the environment balanced . . . and to teach us about God, the Creator.

If you're reading this book, you probably consider yourself an animal lover, so you've experienced for yourself how important animals are—not only to the world, but to you. Most pets show us unconditional love, gratitude, joy, generosity, compassion, and creativity—all the qualities we'd like to see in our friends, and in ourselves.

It's no accident that creation reflects the Creator. Animals can give us insights into who God is and how God works. Nobody who owns a loving dog can doubt the kindness of God. The sight of a horse galloping, the touch of a cat's soft fur, the sound of a goose honking—they all point to a God we want to get to know better.

As you read this book, you'll discover more about the animals you already love . . . and more about the loving God who created them.

God said, "Let the earth produce every sort of animal . . . livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals." And that is what happened. God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

GENESIS 1:24-25

Estimates of the number of animal species range from a few million to nearly a billion. Every time you see an animal—even a bird or a bug—you can talk to God about his amazing creation. (That's praise!)

ON PURPOSE

Bees know what they're all about. Worker bees have one mission in life: to serve the queen. Everything a worker bee does is on purpose, even though she might live for only six or eight weeks.

As soon as a worker honeybee is an adult, she will spend her first week cleaning the hive. The next week she might take over feeding the queen's babies. During week three the worker builds the wax cells of the hive. The fourth week she's put on guard duty. And finally she gets to fly off to flowers and collect pollen.

A worker bee makes about 10 trips a day back and forth to the hive, visiting as many as 1,000 flowers each trip. And that's what the bee will do until she dies.

What's your purpose in life? To get rich? To go to college? To move out of the house? To get married? To become a doctor? Those ambitions may be good ones, but they're not really *purpose*. A purpose should last you your whole life. If your purpose is to go to college and you get there, then what?

You need to know why you're here on earth. You need a purpose that everything you do can fit into. All your decisions can be checked against that purpose before you take another step. Those honeybees make their trips, take the pollen, and work their whole lives for one purpose: to serve the queen bee.

We serve a great King. Knowing and serving God gives us a purpose that explains why we're here. The psalmist wrote, "Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth" (Psalm 73:25). That's a good place to start for the new year. Desire God—to know him, to enjoy him, and to serve him.

O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

MICAH 6:8

With back-and-forth trips from flowers to the hive, the total distance honeybees travel to produce a pound of honey is equal to traveling around the world twice.

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TODAY: Talk to God about the things you want out of life. What do you want your life to look like in 10 years? in 20 years? Write down your overall purpose in life and tuck it in a safe place where you can check in from time to time and see how you're doing.

BLIND SPOTS

Don't you love the big, beautiful, soulful eyes of a horse? Horses have the largest eyes of any land mammal. Those giant eyes are set on the sides of their heads, which means they can see almost all the way around them, in nearly a complete circle. While horses graze in the pasture, they're able to keep an eye out for predators and danger on all sides—without interrupting lunch.

But horses can't see *all* the way around, only about 340 degrees out of 360. If you're standing directly in front of a horse, or directly behind (not a good idea, by the way), the horse won't see you. You'll be in the animal's blind spots.

You have blind spots too, and they're bigger than a horse's blind spots. Look straight ahead and see how far behind and to the sides you can see without turning your head. Even when you turn your head, you can't see much behind you, right?

When it comes to spiritual things, we all have blind spots. We say or do things that are wrong, but we may not see what we've done. You make a joke at someone's expense, teasing about a bad haircut or laughing because your friend is overweight or short or dressed funny. You might not realize that what you're doing is hurting someone else. *Blind spots.*

How can we miss seeing how depressed a friend is? how much pain our own brother or sister is in? how much pressure our parents are under? *Blind spots.*

So how do we get rid of spiritual blind spots? We can listen to God, who talks to us through his creation, in prayer, and through his Word. Have you ever read a passage in the Bible and felt the words were written for you? God's words have the power to open your "blind" eyes. His Spirit can break through any blind spot and help you see clearly.

The word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

HEBREWS 4:12

A cat can't see what's under its nose.

Whiskers and smell help keep cats from bumping into things.

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TODAY: Ask God to remove your spiritual blind spots. Keep your eyes open for people who are hurting. Then see what you can do to help.

CATNAPS

Cats sleep more than any pet on the planet. The average cat sleeps away two-thirds to three-quarters of its life. Still, cats have been big favorites throughout history. Four thousand years ago in Egypt, the penalty for killing a cat—whether you meant to or not—was death. Some cats were mummified after death, like the pharaohs, and placed in tombs with saucers of milk.

Even though cats sleep a lot, they only allow themselves to fall into a deep sleep for three or four hours a day. The rest of the day, cats enjoy catnaps.

A catnap is a state of light sleep. While napping, a cat can still hear the slightest sound and be ready to jump up at a second's notice. Cats have a third eyelid, a thin membrane that slides across the cat's eye, underneath the regular eyelid, when a cat is in deep sleep. When Kitty is just napping, he keeps the third eyelid rolled up and out of the way. He's staying tuned in to the world around him. That's the great thing about a catnap: the cat is still alert.

Nobody can think about God every second of every day, right? Ordinary things like school and dinner, or playing football or riding a horse, or even talking with parents and friends—they all require our attention too.

But even when life gets busy, you can still stay tuned to God. You can keep your soul's "third eyelid" open and ready to respond. Don't let yourself sink into spiritual deep sleep times, when you wouldn't hear God if the earth shook and your name flashed in neon lights. Instead, be easy to wake up, prepared to give God your full attention.

Stay tuned in to God, sensitive to his whispers.

I stay awake through the night, thinking about your promise.

PSALM 119:148

In the 1600s, heavy rains flooded the streets of London, England. Scores of dogs and cats and other creatures got caught up in the rapid currents of water and drowned. Their bodies floated in the floodwaters, making it look like it had rained cats and dogs. And so the expression "raining cats and dogs" was born.



TODAY: Think of three things you'll be doing today that will require a lot of thought (like taking a killer test or playing ball or reading). Make it a point to check in with God during those busy activities.

WHO'S TOP DOG?

Every pack of dogs in the wild has a leader, called the alpha dog. Usually a female, the alpha dog will nip dogs that get out of line or stray too far from the group. She gets to eat first and lead the way. It may look like the alpha dog is just plain bossy.

But the other dogs know they're better off with the alpha in charge. She'll make smart decisions for the good of the pack.

Our pets need a leader too, even if they're not out in the wild. And if you don't claim the alpha role, your dog will. Here's what that scenario may look like:

Your dog takes *you* on walks, instead of the other way around.

Your dog "marks its territory" on the living room rug. Doggie is free to do whatever it wants, including chewing on Mom's slippers.

Your commands to "Stop barking!" or "Come!" are ignored.

Life is chaotic when the wrong alpha tries to lead the pack.

You may have heard Christ referred to as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Christ is the best alpha anyone—any pack, any church, any individual—could ever have. He leads with love and wisdom, and he makes decisions that take us to the best places.

Before you jump into a new group of friends, talk to your Leader. Talk to Christ about every decision. When you find yourself in trouble or you get off track, turn to Christ and follow him back to safety.

Life goes more smoothly when you quit trying to be "top dog."

Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything.

COLOSSIANS 1:18

Most dogs have at least 100 different expressions, thanks to their expressive ears. But many people think pit bulls and bulldogs have only about 10 facial expressions. Maybe that's why they're so misunderstood by other dogs, who figure that with those mugs, the dogs must be looking for a fight.

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TODAY: As you go through your regular routine today, pay attention to anything you do or anyplace you go where you just might be taking over as the alpha. Talk to God about it, and make way for the real Top Dog.

TO LIFE!

The life span of animals runs the gamut, from mere hours to hundreds of years. Some mayflies don't survive even 24 hours as adults. The gastrotrich, a multicelled water creature, lives about three days. Aphids live about a month.

Lice (those nasty creatures that make elementary schoolkids scratch their heads in wonder) manage to mate and lay eggs in their one-month life span. If you knock them off your head, though, they'll die in two days.

On the other hand, a queen termite may live from 15 to 50 years. Parakeets average about 12 years, while parrots live about 40 to 100 years. Horses average between 20 and 30 years, but elephants live to be 60 or so. Guppies have a life span of 5 years, carp 30, and whales 50.

The prize for the longest life span has generally gone to the giant tortoise, which averages 177 years and has been known to reach 200. But the roughey rockfish and a clam called the ocean quahog may have lived even longer than that.

Ever heard the term *life expectancy*? As humans, we generally figure we'll live on earth for about 80 years. But Isaiah 40:7 warns, "The grass withers and the flowers fade beneath the breath of the LORD. And so it is with people."

We can talk averages, but nobody knows how long we'll live. And nobody lives forever . . . at least not on earth.

But that's okay. No matter how long we're expected to live on earth, we have the promise that we'll live with God in heaven forever if we believe in God's Son.

How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone.

JAMES 4:14

You can tell a whale's age by counting the number of rings in its waxlike earplugs (don't try this at home).

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TODAY: Ask (and answer) that old question: If you died today, do you know that you'd go to heaven? There's no in-between—it's yes or no. Your answer doesn't depend on how good you've been on earth (thank goodness!), but on how perfect Christ is and if you've put your trust in him.



Dandi Daley Mackall grew up riding horses, taking her first solo bareback ride when she was three. Her best friends were Sugar, a Pinto; Misty, probably a Morgan; and Towaco, an Appaloosa. Dandi and her husband, Joe; daughters, Jen and Katy; and son, Dan, (when forced) enjoy riding Cheyenne, their Paint. Dandi has written books for all ages, including Little Blessings books, *Degrees of Guilt: Kyra's Story*, *Degrees of Betrayal: Sierra's Story*, *Love Rules*, *Maggie's Story*, the Starlight Animal Rescue series, and the best-selling series Winnie the Horse Gentler. Her books (about 450 titles) have sold more than 4 million copies. She writes and rides from rural Ohio.

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