

# Interspecies Friendships

## *Dogs and their Non-Canine Compadres*

By Susan Kauffmann for Modern Dog Magazine, Photos by John Drysdale

**W**e've all heard the expression "fighting like cats and dogs", and most of us have had the experience of watching a normally docile dog take off like a slaving maniac after some neighborhood cat, squirrel, bird or other hapless creature. Yet despite the instinctive prey drive so natural to canines, there are certain dogs who display a remarkable capacity to bond with animals of other species, making for some wondrously odd friendships.

My Alaskan Malamute, Kodi, was one such dog. From a very early age, he showed an unusual predilection for interspecies friendships, becoming fast friends with the neighbor's cat, my pet rabbit, and a horse with whom he would play rollicking games of "tag". However, it wasn't until I brought home a little white kitten named Myshkin that I learned just how deep the interspecies bond could be.

Myshkin, all of ten weeks old, immediately attached himself to Kodi, trotting after him everywhere he went. Myshkin soon took to sleeping on top of Kodi, and the big dog would patiently endure the little claws that dug into his back as Myshkin - purring all the while - kneaded his furry "bed". As the years passed, the love that grew between Kodi and Myshkin was manifest in many forms, from the way Kodi would gently "swallow" Myshkin's head when the cat misbehaved, to the way Myshkin would follow along on all our neighborhood jaunts, sitting proudly beside Kodi outside the local shops.

As close as they were, it seemed natural that Kodi was fiercely protective of Myshkin, ready to fight off any dog who threatened "his" cat. What was truly remarkable, though, was how this protectiveness turned around when Kodi became stricken with cancer at the end of his life. Myshkin, obviously aware that his beloved friend was gravely ill, was seldom more than a few feet from Kodi's side. I thought the cat just wanted to stick close to his best friend, but what I didn't realize was that Myshkin was actually guarding him.

This became evident one afternoon towards the very end, when I witnessed an encounter that was a true testimony to the friendship between the two animals. Kodi, too weak to walk, had been carried out to the front lawn and was resting there with Myshkin beside him. Suddenly, a huge black dog appeared up the street, heading our way with no owner around. Normally, the sight of a strange dog would send Myshkin running for cover until Kodi chased it off, but this day, Myshkin held his ground. As the big dog approached, Myshkin stood up and moved directly into its path, puffing himself up and growling like something possessed. The dog tried to go around him to get a sniff at Kodi, but any way he turned, Myshkin blocked him with his own tiny body - left, right, then left again.

The poor cat was clearly terrified, yet there he was, risking his own life to protect the helpless friend who had been his guide and guardian for so many years. The stray dog soon gave up and departed, leaving me with a lump in my throat - and a sense of awe that remains to this day.

I still marvel at that display of courage, and at the deep and abiding friendship it made so poignantly clear. However, I have since learned that interspecies bonding between dogs and other animals is more common than one might think. Dogs, in fact, have been known to form close friendships with all manner of creatures, including birds, rodents, camels, lions, monkeys, llamas and just about anything else you could think of.



Suzie the Bulldog

One man who has witnessed and documented many such friendships is the renowned British photographer, John Drysdale. His latest book, "My Love Unleashed", is a collection of dog portraits that contains many remarkable photographs of dogs and their non-canine animal friends. According to Drysdale, such relationships can easily develop if a dog and the other animal are raised together from a young age, but he has also seen a number of interesting instances where fully mature animals have taken to each other.

His 1970 photo "The Rescued and the Proud", for example, illustrates the truly amazing friendship that sprang up between a grown dog and an injured seagull. "While walking along the beach," Drysdale relates, "the Mastiff-Golden Labrador found this seagull with a missing wing and gently carried it home to his owners. He then promptly adopted the little gull. Strangely, so did the three cats with whom he lived. Via the infliction of an occasional sharp peck, the one-winged seagull quickly took over and became boss of the house-but with affection unchanging for his dear friend and rescuer".

Drysdale has also photographed a number of unusual relationships that developed as a result of a dog being brought in to nurse or nurture an orphaned baby of another species. "I've come across quite a few bitches who were used for suckling young animals that would otherwise require bottle feeding," he says. "The strangest of all was a tiger that grew up with a dog, to maturity, and the tiger considered the dog the master even though it was fully grown and could have easily killed it with one swipe of the paw."

Then there was Suzie, the British bulldog who became the adoptive mother of three orphaned squirrels - and the subject of one of Drysdale's most famous photographs. "Suzie's puppies had recently been sold when someone brought three tiny gray squirrels to the farm where she lived," explains Drysdale "Assuming they had been abandoned by their mother, the farmer undertook the laborious task of feeding the squirrels with a syringe every two hours. He then successfully transferred nursing to Suzie, whose strong maternal instincts welcomed them. The squirrels accepted the bulldog as their mother, and meanwhile, Suzie of the fearsome look and gentle nature was happy in her mothering role - no longer forlorn over the loss of her puppies."

Sometimes, in Drysdale's experience, it is the other animal who ends up taking care of the dog, as was the case with a shy, gentle Boston terrier with the inappropriate name of Bossy. "Bossy was constantly being harassed by rough, neighborhood dogs near his home in Oundle, England," recalls Drysdale. "When his mistress was asked to bottle-feed an abandoned lion cub, she brought it to Bossy for company. They became friends, and as Sylvia the lion cub grew bigger, she became very protective of the Boston terrier. The aggressive dogs wisely avoided the pair, and Bossy, at last free of their torment and happy with his beloved Sylvia, smiled and laughed a lot."

Those of us lucky enough to have a dog with an unusual friend also tend to smile and laugh a lot. Just ask Jeanne Hale of Alaska, whose Boxer, Rosie, was inseparable friends with a ferret named Cookie. As Hale recalls, "They had several really funny games they would play: hide and seek, jump on the dog, tug of war with socks, and boxing ferret style - in which the ferret would grab the dog's jowls with her teeth and hang on! You could tell it sometimes hurt Rosie, but that was okay because it was 'her' ferret." The ferret would also steal Rosie's toys, but made up for it by snatching things off the Christmas tree and bringing them to Rosie, much to Hale's amusement.



Cat and Mouse



Complete Surrender

Susan Kauffmann is writer living in Langley, British Columbia. Myshkin the cat is alive and well - and still enjoys coming along for "dog" walks with the new malamutes, Teela & Kuma.

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Micah Shawn, of Farmington, Michigan, was similarly delighted when his male Husky-Shepherd mix, Chowder, became the friend and self-appointed guardian of his stepdaughter Alison's guinea pig, Pip. "We would often come home to find Chowder sleeping up against Pip's cage," says Shawn. "Whenever Alison clean Pip's cage, she would place Pip between Chowder's front paws. He would cross his paws to keep her there, and if she tried to climb out he would gently lower his muzzle on top of her to keep her from climbing out." The dog often sought out his little friend's company, and seemed to particularly enjoy having the guinea pig placed on his back, bringing a warm smile to all.

Dustin Aalder's home in Nova Scotia is also provided with plenty of smiles, thanks to a Chihuahua named Duchess and her best friends - a collection of Fancy rats. "Duchess just LOVES to play with the rats," laughs Aalder. "She'll groom them, they'll groom her...they'll chew on her collar. When they hide in the blankets, she digs around searching for them." Unusual as it seems, Aalder has no doubt that Duchess and the rats truly love each other. "Oh, they get along famously. The rats get excited and cling to the bars when Duchess gets close to their cage because they love her so much. And as soon as I take the rats out, Duchess jumps up and down until I put one on the bed or floor for her to play with. I've even had her curl up on a chair with one and sleep. She can't get enough of them, and vice versa!"

Those of us who have dogs that will chase down any critter that moves may find these interspecies friendships totally incredible, but according to Dr. Stanley Coren, an expert in dog psychology, they are simply a by-product of the traits we have selectively bred into domestic dogs. "Dogs have been genetically modified by us to be extremely sociable and extremely accepting," says Coren, though he points out that this varies from breed to breed. "Generally speaking, the issue is something which we call neotony. Neotony simply refers to the fact that we have bred our dogs so that are effectively puppies for their entire lives." The more highly neotonized breeds - characterized by floppy ears, large round eyes and shorter snouts - are far more likely to be friendly and tolerant towards other animals, according to Coren.

Interspecies friendships can be formed by dogs of the less neotonized breeds - the more wolf-like dogs marked by such characteristics as upright ears, longer snouts, and typically powerful prey drives - but this is far more unusual. "When these things happen with the less neotonized dogs," explains Coren, "it will usually be an association with a very young animal. Part of the reason for this is that very young mammals have pheromones that give them a characteristic 'baby smell'. One of the purposes of these pheromones is to excite protective instincts, or at least non-hostile instincts, in its own species. However, because of the similarity amongst all the mammals, we tend to find that other animals will respond to it." This, Coren says, will sometimes protect a young animal long enough for a bond to form with a dog.

Science and psychology aside, there is an undeniable magic in the special relationships dogs form with other animals. Perhaps it is the example they set for us, proving that love truly knows no bounds. After all, if a dog and a cat can be best friends - or a dog and a rat, chimp, seagull or ferret - perhaps we can learn to overlook the far less extreme differences that exist among people.

# Pet Sounds

## You Ain't Nothin' But A Hound Dog

Yep, that was the title of the Beach Boys most famous album and there have been an incredible number of songs about pets and animals in our lives. The first one to pop up in the mind of the olds might be "You Ain't Nothin' But A Hound Dog" by Elvis Presley but for the younger set it would no doubt "Who Let The Dogs Out" by Baha Men. Nan's choice would no doubt be "How Much Is That Doggie In The Window".

But you may not have known that the Beatles "Martha My Dear" was about a large English Sheepdog" or that Herman and the Hermits "Mrs Brown You've got A Lovely Daughter" also referred to a dog.

On a dare and with a little too much time on our hands, we started a list of 'pet sounds' that started getting out of hand. Still, it makes an

amusing list which we want to embellish over the next few issues of 'Urban Animal' with contributions from our readers. We'll add them onto the website as we get them and the five people who give us the best new song not on this list will win a prize depending on the pet they own of either dog, cat, fish, bird, reptile or 'other' pet breed products from our sponsors.

Email your entry to [critters@urbananimal.com](mailto:critters@urbananimal.com) with your song title & the artist who performed it, what kind of pet(s) you own, and your contact details so we can let you know if you've won the prize. Or if you're not on email, mail it to Urban Animal, 20 Hordern St., Newtown, NSW 2042.



Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens - Louis Jordan or Asleep at the Wheel  
 Alley Cat - Bent Fabric  
 Atomic Dog - George Clinton  
 Baby Snakes - Frank Zappa  
 Beast of Burden - Rolling Stones  
 Bird Dog - Everly Brothers  
 Bird Song - Jerry Garcia  
 Birdhouse in Your Soul - They Might Be Giants  
 Black Cat - Janet Jackson  
 Black Dog - Led Zeppelin or Dread Zeppelin  
 Blackbird - The Beatles  
 Blue, Blue, You Good Dog - The Dillards  
 Boa Constrictor - Shel Silverstein or Peter, Paul & Mary  
 Boris the Spider - The Who  
 Cat and a Mockingbird - Nickletoen  
 Cat and Mouse Game - Dr. John  
 Cat in the Window - Petula Clark, Turtles  
 Cat Turned Blue - Rusted Root  
 Cats Under the Stars - Jerry Garcia Band  
 Cat's in the Cradle - Harry Chapin  
 Cheshire Cat - Aerosmith  
 China Cat Sunflower - Grateful Dead  
 Cool Cat - Queen  
 Crawling King Snake - The Doors, John Lee Hooker  
 Dead Armadillo - Lost Gonzo Band  
 Dead Skunk in the Middle of the Road - Loudon Wainwright III  
 Disco Duck - Rick Dees  
 Dog and Butterfly - Heart  
 Dog and His Master - Marcy Playground  
 Dog Eat Dog - Joni Mitchell  
 Dog on a Leash - Bob Wiseman  
 Doggin' Around - Jackie Wilson

Don't Write Letters To My Dog - Roger Miller  
 Elusive Butterfly - Bob Lind  
 Everybody's Got Something to Hide Except for Me & My Monkey - The Beatles  
 Free Bird - Lynyrd Skynrd  
 Froggie Went a'Courtin' - Doc Watson  
 Glass Spider - David Bowie  
 God Gave Names to All the Animals - Bob Dylan  
 Gonna Buy Me a Dog - The Monkees  
 Gray Cat on a Tennessee Farm - Freight Hoppers  
 Hard Monkeys - Ten Years After  
 Honky Cat - Elton John  
 Horse With No Name - America  
 Horses - Tori Amos  
 Horses Don't Bet on People - Kay Kaiser  
 Hound Dog - Elvis Presley or Big Mama Thorton  
 How Much is that Doggie in the Window? - Patti Page, Homer & Jethro  
 I Dig a Pony - The Beatles  
 I Had to Shoot That Rabbit - Tom Paxton  
 I Like Birds - Eels  
 I Want a New Duck - Weird Al Yankovic  
 If Dogs Run Free - Bob Dylan  
 If You See My Rooster - Memphis Minnie  
 If Your Monkey Can't Get It - David Blue  
 I'm a Doggy - Marvin Pontiac  
 I'm a Hog for You - Freddie & the Dreamers  
 I'm in Love With a Big Blue Frog - Peter, Paul & Mary  
 Intoxicated Rat - Doc Watson  
 Karma Chameleon - Culture Club  
 Kitty - Presidents of the United States  
 Leather-Winged Bat - Spider John Koerner  
 Let's Talk Dirty to the Animals - Gilda Radner  
 Like Cockatoos - The Cure  
 Little Bird - Jerry Jeff Walker

Little Birdie - Ralph Stanley  
 Livin' With the Animals - Mother Earth  
 Long Snake Moan - P.J. Harvey  
 Love Cats - The Cure  
 Love is Like a Butterfly - Dolly Parton  
 Mammals - They Might Be Giants  
 May the Bird of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose - Roger Miller  
 Mean-Eyed Cat - Johnny Cash  
 Mickey's Son & Daughter - Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band  
 Muskrat Love - Captain & Tenille  
 Mythical Kings and Iguanans - Dory Previn  
 Nashville Cats - Lovin' Spoonful  
 Noah's Dove - 10,000 Maniacs  
 Octopus' Garden - The Beatles  
 Owl & the Pussycat - Dory Previn  
 Peace Frog - The Doors  
 Pet Sounds - The Beach Boys  
 Pets- Porno for Pyros  
 Pig in a Pen - Old & In the Way  
 Pigs on the Wing, Parts 1 & 2 - Pink Floyd  
 Piggies - The Beatles  
 Piggy - Nine Inch Nails  
 Pink Panther - Henry Mancini  
 Puff the Magic Dragon - Peter, Paul & Mary  
 Puppy Love - Paul Anka or Donny Osmond  
 Rock Lobster - B-52s  
 Rockin' Robin - Bobby Day or the Jackson Five  
 Rocky Raccoon - The Beatles  
 Shock the Monkey - Peter Gabriel  
 Sign My Snarling Doggie - The Bobs  
 Simon Smith & His Amazing Dancing Bear - Randy Newman  
 Spiders and Snakes - Jim Stafford  
 Stereo Chickens - Jerry Jeff Walker

Stray Cat - Rolling Stones  
 Stray Cat Strut - Stray Cats  
 Surfin' Bird - The Trashmen  
 Talk to the Animals - Dr. Dolittle  
 Tennessee Dog - Mike Seeger  
 Tennessee Stud - Doc Watson  
 The Dogs, They Really Miss You - Austin Lounge Lizards  
 The Dog's Asleep - Lou & Peter Berryman  
 The Mouse - Soupy Sales  
 The Truth About Cats - Timbuk 3  
 Three Cool Cats - The Coasters  
 Three Little Fishes - Andrews Sisters  
 Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Boy - Rolf Harris  
 Too Much Monkey Business - Chuck Berry, Tom Rush  
 Two Little Squirrels (Nuts to You) - Louis Jordan  
 Walk the Dinosaur - Was Not Was  
 Walk the Dog - Derringer  
 Walking the Dog - Jim Ferguson  
 Walkin' My Cat Named Dog - Norma Tanega  
 We the Cats - Louis Jordan or Joe Jackson  
 What's New, Pussycat? - Tom Jones  
 What's Up Dog - Was Not Was  
 When Doves Cry - Prince  
 Where Do the Animals Go - Kristin Lems  
 Where Eagles Dare - Iron Maiden  
 White Bird - It's a Beautiful Day  
 White Dove - Old & In the Way  
 White Rabbit - Jefferson Airplane  
 Who Let the Dogs Out - Baha Men  
 Wild Horses - Rolling Stones or Flying Burrito Brothers  
 Wildfire - Michael Murphy  
 Year of the Cat - Al Stewart