

Kangaroo playing air guitar wins top prize

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Guitar hero: Perth's Jason Moore captured a would-be Jimi Hendrix of the kangaroo world.

Are animals happier than humans? Science is divided on how their feelings compare to ours.

What's happening?

An **air guitar**-playing kangaroo has won the Comedy Wildlife Photo prize.

This prize goes to the animal photograph that makes the judges laugh the most. It is part of a long tradition of finding **humour** in animals.

Find out more

We laugh at animals all the time. But do animals laugh at themselves? Recent studies have revealed that many animals do appear to have a sense of humour.

Researchers found 65 species able to laugh, including foxes, dogs, cows, seals, mongooses and **parakeets**, as well as our ape and monkey relatives. Another experiment saw rats laugh after being tickled.

Biology supports the idea that animals can feel happiness. **Mammals** have similar brains to humans. So they have the same ability to feel basic emotions like fear, anger, grief and joy.

Their lower intelligence might make them happier than us. Their needs and thoughts are simpler. They do not have so much to worry about.

On the other hand, animals might not be able to reach **peak** happiness. They can enjoy eating, sleeping and sunbathing. But they cannot appreciate the finer things in life, such as a good book, a fine wine or a heated debate.

Are animals happier than humans?

Some say

Yes! Animals do not have our fears and worries, while we think too much to be truly happy.

Some people say

"Animals are such agreeable friends – they ask no questions; they pass no criticisms."

George Eliot (1819 – 1880), English novelist

What do you think?

Others think

No! Animals have less to worry about but also less to look forward to.

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? -

Has an animal ever made you laugh? What was the occasion?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: What is laughter? Why do we smile when happy?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - What evidence is there that animals feel emotion?

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - Look at the entries for the Comedy Wildlife Photo award. Which is your favourite?

5. Express

What do others believe? - In pairs, discuss which animals are the most intelligent.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Draw a cartoon starring an amusing animal.

Glossary

Air guitar - An imaginary guitar "played by someone miming to rock music.

Humour - The ability to find things funny, or the things you find funny.

Parakeets - A small parrot with green plumage.

Mammals - Warm blooded animals where the female gives birth to live young.

Peak - At the highest level; maximum. Since the early 00s, there has been a surfeit of high-quality television dramas, often starring Hollywood actors. This era has been referred to as Peak TV, or the Golden Age of Television.