Celebrating a Life by Recognizing Realities

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Published online: 11 Aug 2010.

To cite this article: V. Wensley Koch (2007) Celebrating a Life by Recognizing Realities, Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science, 10:1, 1-6, DOI: 10.1080/10888700701277212

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10888700701277212
INTRODUCTION

Celebrating a Life by Recognizing Realities

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This special issue on nonhuman primate behavior and welfare, the proceedings of a special Animal Behavior Society session, celebrates the life of Dr. Sylvia Taylor (1963–2005). Sylvia’s premature death reminded her friends to recognize the reality that life is short, but one can make the most of it. Many individuals and organizations have also recognized the reality that an educational venture such as this one requires adequate funding and support. Their generosity has made this undertaking a success. The idea behind the session was to recognize the reality that one cannot ensure nonhuman animal welfare without understanding animal behavior, and to explore the ways in which this principle applies to primates. One must also recognize the reality that nonhuman primate welfare depends on understanding the behavior of the human primate as well as the nonhuman primate. Ensuring the welfare of the nonhuman primate sometimes requires educating and motivating the human primate. This special issue will hopefully provide helpful information to increase the reader’s knowledge of primate behavior and welfare and to help the reader educate others on these important topics.

As part of its 2006 annual meeting, the Animal Behavior Society (ABS) held a special session in memory of Dr. Sylvia Taylor (1963–2005). The subject of this session was the association between understanding nonhuman primate behavior and providing for nonhuman primate welfare. This issue constitutes the proceedings of that special session.

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RECOGNIZING THE REALITY OF LOSS

Sometimes we need a reminder to prompt us to recognize reality. The unexpected loss of a friend can cause us to become depressed, or it can remind us that life is short, so we should make the most of it. This special issue on nonhuman primate behavior and welfare, the proceedings of a special ABS session, celebrates the life of Dr. Sylvia Taylor—a life devoted to nonhuman animal welfare, with a special interest in primates. Her death on January 6, 2005, at the age of only 41, was a shock to her many friends around the world.

At the age of 4, Sylvia decided to become a veterinarian—a goal she accomplished at the age of 22. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) hired Sylvia after she graduated, and she worked for the USDA for the next 19 years, until her death. She was one of the first USDA Veterinary Medical Officers to focus on animal welfare issues, even before the USDA formed its Animal Care division to enforce the federal Animal Welfare Act. She was part of the Animal Care program from its very beginning, and she was the first to fill its recently developed position of non-human primate field specialist, the position she held at the time of her death.

Sylvia had incredible compassion for animals and a constant thirst for knowledge, with a special love and interest in animal behavior and in primates, elephants, birds, and marine mammals. She was always willing to share her knowledge with everyone, both inside and outside the USDA. She was active in a variety of professional organizations, nationally and internationally, and was a former chair of the ABS’s Animal Care Committee. For the last several years she also served as a consultant for International Veterinary and Animal Welfare Consulting in Tampa, Florida. She traveled extensively throughout the world, both in a professional capacity and to pursue personal interests—always including animal activities. Sylvia never needed to be reminded to make the most of life. All of us who knew her and had the experience of working with her will deeply miss her.

Sylvia’s survivors include the thousands of animals she loved and protected; aunts; uncles; cousins; her beloved grandmother, Hildegard Rosenkranz; and her parents, Martin and Gertrud Taylor, who generously contributed to support the attendance of fully half the speakers at the ABS special session.

RECOGNIZING THE REALITY OF SUPPORT

In planning the session it was also necessary to recognize the reality that adequate funding and support are necessary to ensure the success of any such undertaking. Therefore, I would like to recognize briefly the other individuals and organizations whose support has been critical to the ability to present both the special session and these proceedings. The Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory
Animal Care (AAALAC), the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), and the Scientists Center for Animal Welfare (SCAW) each contributed funds to support the attendance of one of the speakers at the session.

AAALAC International is where science and responsible animal care connect. AAALAC is a private, nonprofit organization that promotes the humane treatment of animals in science through voluntary accreditation and assessment programs. Any institution using animals for research, teaching, or testing is eligible to apply for AAALAC accreditation. Accreditation is a symbol of quality. It shows that an institution is serious about setting, achieving, and maintaining high standards for animal research programs. Accreditation also promotes scientific validity. When research involves animals, reliable results depend on healthy animals and superior animal care. Perhaps most important, accreditation demonstrates a willingness to go above and beyond the minimums required by law, assuring the public that an institution is committed to the responsible use and treatment of animals in science. AAALAC International proudly supported the ABS, one of its member organizations, through sponsoring the paper and presentation by Dr. Steve Schapiro.

The ASPCA’s mission is to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States. On April 10, 1866, Henry Bergh persuaded the New York State Legislature to approve incorporation of the ASPCA. The ASPCA thus celebrated its 140th birthday in 2006. ASPCA programs have included (a) animal protection law enforcement; (b) a poison control center; (c) a mobile spay–neuter clinic; (d) the Bergh Memorial Animal Hospital; (e) lobbying for animal protection legislation; and (f) educational outreach to the public, veterinarians, animal shelters, and those involved in animal protection law enforcement. In accordance with the concept of the ABS special session, the ASPCA recognizes the importance of understanding animal behavior to enhancing animal welfare and preventing cruelty to animals. As a result, its staff includes six people with doctoral degrees in animal behavior, four of whom are certified ABS applied animal behaviorists.

SCAW is a nonprofit educational association of individuals and institutions whose mission is to promote the best practices of humane care, use, and management of animals involved in research, testing, or education in laboratory, agricultural, wildlife, or other settings. SCAW provides education and training for institutional animal care and use committees, scientists, and animal care personnel through workshops, conferences, and publications. It provides an ongoing forum for the exchange and evaluation of scientific information about the care, treatment, well being, and ethical use of animals. SCAW not only promotes but also helps develop best practices for animal welfare, with the conviction that quality animal care and use both improve the quality of scientific results and engender public support for scientific research.

Dr. Robert Willems and Dr. Norma Harlan also contributed, as individuals, to the financing of the ABS special session. In addition, the speakers have contributed
considerable time and effort in support of this endeavor. Their participation was essential to the creation of both the special session and these proceedings.

I would also like to express my appreciation to The Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science (JAAWS) for agreeing to publish the proceedings of the session. JAAWS is a joint project of the Animals & Society Institute and the ASPCA. It publishes articles and reports discussing methods of experimentation, husbandry, and care that enhance the welfare of animals in laboratories, farms, homes, and the wild. The publisher, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., sells subscriptions to libraries and other institutions, nonaffiliated individuals, and Animals & Society Institute members.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the ABS and, in particular, two of its members for making it possible to hold the special session and publish its proceedings. By including the speakers in its annual meeting, ABS provided all the logistical support without which the session would never have occurred. Jim Ha not only helped in the initial stages of the planning but also served as the peer reviewer for the publication of the proceedings. Steve Ramey provided invaluable support in every stage of the process. Without his help, the session would never have happened. Anyone who visited the session’s Web site saw only a fraction of the quality of effort he contributed toward making this endeavor a success.

I sincerely appreciate both the financial support of our sponsors and the time and effort expended by the individuals who were crucial to the crafting of the program. I would also like to thank the attendees at the session for their support and their participation in our panel discussions. I think the results would please Sylvia, and I hope they please our readers as well.

RECOGNIZING THE REALITY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BEHAVIOR AND WELFARE

The concept of this session was that it should be a forum for discussion of the issues of primate behavior and welfare. Any behaviorist recognizes the reality that we cannot ensure animal welfare without understanding animal behavior. The articles in these proceedings will explore the many ways in which understanding the behavior of primates can contribute to providing for their welfare.

Primate behaviorists come from a variety of backgrounds. They might have degrees in anthropology, biology, or psychology—or all of the preceding. They might have no degree at all but a wealth of experience in observing animals and successfully working with them to achieve amazing results. They might study non-human primates as complex and fascinating subjects in and of themselves, as models for human behavior or physiology, or as both of the preceding. However, they have one thing in common—an interest in primate behavior. In the special session and these proceedings, I believe we have experienced the benefits of bringing
together people with this common interest—but with various backgrounds—to achieve the goal of having a wide-ranging and profitable discussion of primate behavior and welfare.

The session proceedings begin with a section I have loosely called “applied behavior.” This section examines the possibilities inherent in teaching primates to communicate with us both directly, by using signs and symbols, and indirectly, as the subjects of “consumer demand” studies. Such communication can help us determine what is important to the welfare of primates in captivity by asking the primates themselves. We also examine the importance of social housing for primate welfare and how to manage it successfully in the sometimes less-than-ideal circumstances of captivity. Yet another topic of discussion includes the methods and value of teaching primates to cooperate with us in necessary husbandry and veterinary procedures. After these articles there is a short section including part of a panel discussion forum on the “applied behavior” aspects of primate welfare.

I have loosely designated the second part of the session and proceedings as the “primatology” portion. This section includes discussions of primate behavior and welfare in three situations common in captivity—primate centers, sanctuaries, and zoos. The final article discusses the role of the study of behavior in the conservation of primates in the wild. The primatology section concludes with a panel discussion forum addressing the primatology topics. A panel discussion forum open to all primate behavior and welfare topics completes the session proceedings.

RECOGNIZING THE REALITY OF THE NEED FOR EDUCATION

While perusing these articles, the reader should keep in mind that people are also primates. The motivations of a nonhuman primate’s caretakers determine whether the animal will receive appropriate care. In addition, when the caretaker truly wishes to ensure the welfare of an animal, an inability to provide appropriate care will negatively affect the caretaker’s welfare as well as that of the animal.

By the same token, if we do not understand the behavior of the human primate, we cannot ensure the welfare of the nonhuman primate in the wild. We need to understand the behavior of wild primates to ensure that we know what habitat to preserve to meet their needs. However, we also need to understand the behavior of the human primates who coexist with their wild cousins. Until we understand the needs of these people and provide alternatives for meeting those needs that avoid conflict with the wildlife in their areas, we will never succeed in ensuring a safe and adequate habitat for wild primates.

Our ability to provide for the welfare of nonhuman primates therefore depends not only on our understanding of their behavior but also on our understanding of
the behavior of the human primate. Education and motivation of the human pri-
mate is often a necessary step in ensuring the welfare of the nonhuman primate. It
is important to recognize the reality that not everyone understands the relationship
between behavior and welfare as behaviorists do. I hope that our readers will find
much of value in these proceedings, both information to increase their own knowl-
dge of primate behavior and welfare and also information they can use to educate
others on these important topics.

AUTHOR’S NOTE

This article contains the personal opinions of the author. It is not endorsed by the
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should not be used as a basis for compliance with the Animal Welfare Act.