

GOOD EARTH

## There's more to crocodile tears than glands

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Ethology helps us understand that animals do have emotions.

PHOTO: MANISHA SHETH GUTMAN



**HAPPY DAYS? Ask him.**

Science is an evolving subject and it has been seen that the discoveries of one age have been disproved by another. One such subject is that of animal emotions. For a long time scientists definitively proclaimed that animals did not have the capacity to feel emotion. Believing this to be true, scientific processes involved experiments on other species of life without much consideration for them. This belief, however, could not explain, what any animal lover experiences in the daily exchange of love with their animal companions.

### Understand emotions

That it is possible to develop a deep bond and communicate with a living being who is not human — if only one has the patience to learn their language.

Well, these days the science of ethology, which is the study of animal behaviour, is increasingly willing to accept that there may be more to crocodile tears than glands. Jane Goodall, one of the leading ethologists of our times, was taught to love animals even as a child. She speaks about how our education system makes us numb to animal emotions when we are encouraged to dissect an animal in biology class, and how modern poultry farms treat animals like machines to create protein for human consumption.

So the next time you begin to get a feeling that your dog is genuinely happy to see you or that your cat understands your moods, don't just laugh it off. Take the time to develop a relationship with the animals that visit your life. Watch them closely and you will be fascinated by the intelligence they display and maybe learn a few things from them in the process. The ancient Indian saint Dattatreya said that he had learnt all he knew from 24 teachers, of which most of them were other species of beings such as the elephant, the ant and the deer. When you see an elephant or a camel walk down the street in your city or in a circus or zoo, offering joy rides to children — ask yourself if the animal enjoys it as much as the children do? Or do you think he would rather be home in the forest or desert he came from, with his herd, glad to be free?

*In collaboration with Kalpavriksh Environmental Action Group*