

Volume 15 / Issue 01 • MARCH 2015

# Animal Scene

15 YEARS ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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MARCH 2015



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## On the cover

THE GOULDIAN FINCH

This gorgeous, colorful little creature is a Gouldian finch, and you can learn more about it (and why it needs foster parents) by turning to page 46!



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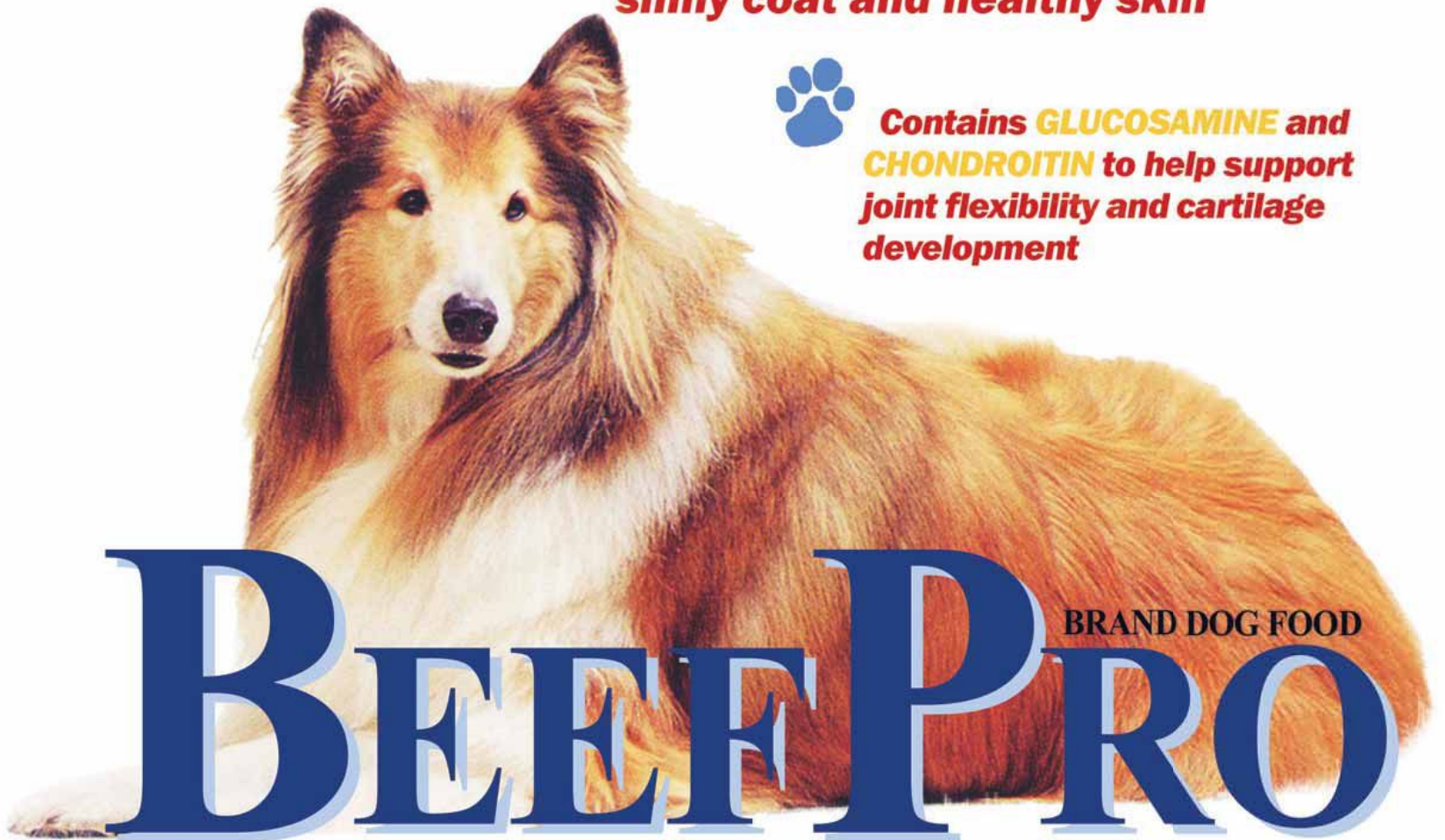
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## Menagerie

Charlene Bobis

**W**

e're slowly getting the hang of what you like to read; it's a shame those who have contacted us prefer to remain

anonymous. We were happy to hear that readers enjoyed our compilation of animal love superstitions for the February issue, and to get comments complimenting us on the revamped look and lineup is quite heartening. Thank you very much, and please do keep writing and texting in; we do love to hear from you!

On our cover is one of the cutest animals I've ever seen: the Gouldian Finch. Learning more about it from

breeder Hansel was one of the more fascinating interviews I've done so far for Animal Scene and it excites me to know that there may be more such interviews in store in the future. While the Gouldian finch is not for beginners or casual fanciers, it is still a lovely species of finch to learn about; it is, after all, related to the ubiquitous maya we see everyday outside our windows.

We're also setting the record straight on cats; we haven't neglected them, we simply haven't had the space, as there is so much to feature! You can also learn about their problems, how to travel with them and other pets, how to deal with bird emergencies, and so on.

As always we've got animal news from around the world, the regular columns by Angel Ampil, humor, and more. We're also always open to your suggestions. Please let us know about what you'd like to read about in Animal Scene by dropping us a line at [mbanimalscene@gmail.com](mailto:mbanimalscene@gmail.com), or message us at 63917.926.7431—and we'll do our best to find the relevant experts and to come up with articles you will love. We're also looking for contributors, especially those from animal clubs and those who raise their own animals; just drop us a line.

We look forward to hearing from you! ■





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**46** Cover Story  
**Charming Colorful:  
The Gouldian Finch**

Charming, colorful Gouldian finches are an Australian import; while they are delicate, they are a delightful feast for the eyes

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## 70 Feature

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## Contributors

Returning columnist ANGEL AMPIL has been a fishkeeper since he was four years old. In the many years he has been keeping fish, he has gained the respect of his peers locally as well as internationally. He has been writing for Animal Scene for over a decade. He is a founding member of Philippine Cichlid Association (PCA), Philippine Bichir Brotherhood (PBB), and Betta Club Philippines (BCP). He was formerly the president of the Aquarium Science Association of the Philippines (ASAP) and is a corporate member of the Philippine Arowana and Luo Han Society (PALHS). Also known as "Fishyguy," he is active in local fish shows and exhibits where he is often called upon to judge the entries for specific fish groups like goldfish, betta, cichlids, and bichirs.



ANNA GAMBOA At some point in her pre-teen life, Anna had 3 dogs, 2 cats, 12 parakeets



and two tanks full of fish all at the same time--and it never occurred to her that she could've pursued Vet Med. Currently pet-free, she indulges other people's pets with massages and the occasional long walk.

## MEET THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE SCENES OF ANIMAL SCENE!

PATRICIA VEGA is a dog person among cat-loving friends. She has a day job in government but sometimes stays up nights writing about pop culture for various publications. Chuckie (a Shih Tzu mix) and Coco (a chocolate Labrador Retriever) have been part of her family since 2007.



STEF DELA CRUZ, M.D. is a blogger-columnist. She was conferred the 2013 Health Media Recognition by the Department of Health. She is the proud human of a cat and a dog, both of whom she treats not as pets, but as family. Connect with her on [www.stefdelacruz.com](http://www.stefdelacruz.com) or via Twitter and Facebook (@StefdelaCruzMD).



MAAN D'ASIS PAMARAN has been writing for several publications for more than a decade. While she writes about diverse topics running the gamut of lifestyle, business, and showbiz, animal stories are close to her heart. She picks up stray cats from the streets and swears that they bring her good luck. She finds cat videos highly entertaining.



CLIFTON JAMES F. SAWIT is a lawyer, writer, and armchair philosopher. He has written for several other publications, including Rogue and Esquire, Philippines. His current pet is a Siamese fighting fish named Machiavelli. He would like to have more, but unfortunately Siamese fighting fishes don't play nice with other fish.

JOSE JOEL QUIZON is a graduate of Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communications at Lyceum of the Philippines University. During the day, he works as the marketing manager for R2 Holdings, Inc. and consults for various companies. He regularly contributes for online magazines, PinoyFitness.com and WheninManila.com.



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Lani delas Alas

Fur Parent/ Satisfied Eagle Pro user



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# GRAY WOLF KILLED IN UTAH WAS PROTECTED ANIMAL

By LAURA ZUCKERMAN (REUTERS)

**A** gray wolf killed last year by a Utah hunter was "Echo," a female that had garnered international attention after roaming from Wyoming to become the first of the protected animals seen at the Grand Canyon in Arizona in 70 years, U.S. wildlife managers said on Wednesday.

News that the lone wolf spotted last fall near the north rim of the Grand Canyon was the same animal later killed in Utah by a hunter who said he mistook it for a coyote ignited outrage among wildlife advocates.

"It's tragic that Echo traveled over 500 miles (800 km) only to be cut down by an incredibly irresponsible coyote hunter," said Bethany Cotton, wildlife program director for WildEarth Guardians.

Authorities have not released the name of the coyote hunter, who in December reported to Utah wildlife officers that he had accidentally shot and killed a radio-collared wolf near the border with Arizona.

It is illegal to kill wolves without a special permit in the Lower 48 states where most wolves are protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Wolves in just two states - Idaho and Montana - are not on a federal list of endangered and threatened



species and can be legally hunted.

Federal wildlife officials said an investigation into the incident is ongoing. Echo was the first gray wolf to appear in the national park in Arizona since the 1940s, when the last of the creatures there was killed as part of an extensive eradication campaign, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said.

The carcass of the wolf was confiscated by federal authorities, who submitted it to the University of Idaho for genetic testing that confirmed it was the same animal first collared in Wyoming in January 2014 and seen later that year in the Grand Canyon, Fish and Wildlife Service spokesman Steve Segin said.

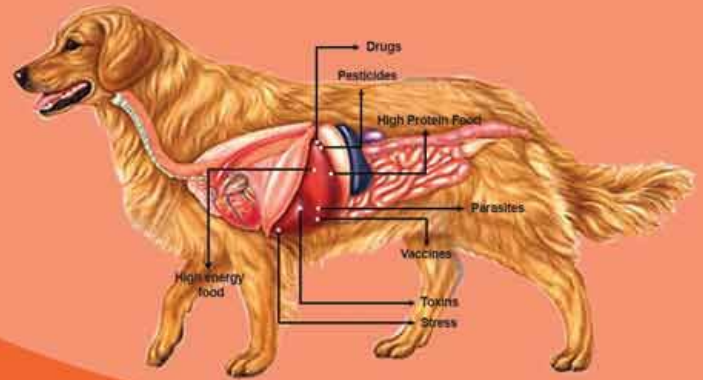
Gray wolves have been at the center of a bitter debate in

Western states since several dozen were released in Yellowstone National Park and the central Idaho wilderness in the mid-1990s in a push by U.S. wildlife managers to restore an animal that had been hunted, trapped and poisoned to near extinction in the Northern Rockies.

Ranchers and hunters in the region blame wolves for preying on livestock and big-game animals like elk favored by sportsmen. Conservationists argue wolves are restoring public rangelands and mountain forests damaged from overgrazing by deer and elk whose populations swelled in the absence of natural predators. ■ (Reporting by Laura Zuckerman in Salmon, Idaho; Editing by Cynthia Johnston and Sandra Maler)

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# TWO FOR THE ROAD

By NORMAN ISAAC

“I have been training Blackjack for almost a year,” says Selyo Redolosa, with a white moustache, in Filipino. He is a 72-year-old native of Leyte.

Blackjack is gray and white with a yellowish tinge; he is also an ‘aspin’ or native dog owned by Mang Selyo. He believes he puts smiles on the lips of the motley crowd watching the dog tricks they perform every Saturday and Sunday. Truth to tell, the tricks the tandem perform wow the passersby and the crowd milling around in front of Manila City Hall under the scorching sun.

“I used to have other dogs named Habagat, Amihan, and Bagwis. All of them passed away already,” the lanky septuagenarian shares. “I even had a dog, Jack, which appeared in a TV commercial.

He mysteriously died right after the shooting of the ad. I suspected it was poisoning,” he says with a sad face. Mang Selyo shares that Jack got PhP 3,000 as his talent fee.

Mang Selyo, father to 9 children and a former fisherman of Navotas, opted for a less backbreaking job due to health reasons. Now the dog trainer of over two decades has an assistant: Eddie, 12, his youngest child, a fifth grader is fast learning the tricks of the trade.

### THE DOG DOES MATH

“Blackjack is good in arithmetic,” Mang Selyo proudly says. “Blackjack, two plus three?” he shouts.

Blackjack barks, “Aw! aw! aw! aw! aw!”

The students watching are amused; some are clapping, while others are laughing with delight.

“Blackjack, four minus two?” Mang Selyo, with his weather-beaten face, enthusiastically eggs Blackjack for an answer.

“Aw! aw!” Blackjack barks loudly; in volume, he competes with the blaring horns of passing jeeps.

“We will make it more difficult. Fifteen divided by five?” the master yells.

Without hesitation his four-legged pet snaps, “Aw! aw! aw!”

The crowd roars approvingly.

The dog-man team has other acts: Blackjack walking on two feet; sitting and turning around a basketball; fetching slippers and a basket, where appreciative audience put coins and paper bills; card tricks; jumping through a hula hoop; crawling and playing dead when ‘shot’ with a toy gun.

Justifying his street performance



cum trick show, pony-tailed Mang Selyo says, "What I'm doing is not cruelty to animals. This is just entertainment. I take good care of Blackjack. We even sleep together. I bathe him twice a week."

Since he cannot afford to buy dog food, he gives him table scraps. "But I give him fried chicken without the sharp bones," Mang Selyo says with a toothless grin while stroking his white goatee.

"Occasionally I enter Blackjack in dog shows. Just recently at a big

## THIS MAN FROM LEYTE AND HIS TRAINED DOG PUT SMILES ON THE FACES OF MANILANS

mall in Biñan, Laguna, doing our routine tricks, he won PhP 3,000 cash and other goodies. Yes, dog food!" he beams with pride.

Mang Selyo, clad in a black T-shirt, and Blackjack, and their

tricks may be just a pause that refreshes in the frenetic rat race of urban living. Yet they put a little smile on the lips of Manilans on this dog day afternoon. ■





# CELEBRATING THE LEOPARD GECKO



PHOTOS By JEFFREY LIM

**L**ike many other reputable animal groups, Leopard Gecko Philippines – Classifieds (LGPC) was established with the aim of educating the public about their chosen creature and its care as a pet.

Two years ago, the group chose to center their efforts on helping other leopard gecko hobbyists learn more about their pets, particularly how to keep and care for them properly.

Leopard geckos are lizards found in the deserts of Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and some parts of India. They have been bred in captivity since the 1970s, though



they only became popular pets in North America ten years later.

These lizards are nocturnal (active at night) and terrestrial (land dwelling). They can live up to 20 years in captivity under the right conditions. These include the right temperature and a proper enclosure, with dry/moist hides, a food dish and a water dish, and an optional separate calcium dish.

They also need adequate food. Their diet includes live feeder worms, pinky mice, crickets, and roaches – all dusted with calcium and vitamins.

Established on September 20, 2013, LGPC also had an urgent mission: to make clear the difference between the Leopard Gecko and the Tokay Gecko, which is currently endangered due to the unfounded rumor that its body parts can help cure AIDS or cancer.

The group also aims to help other hobbyists identify the morphs (or mutations) of their leopard geckos; examples of some of these are also posted on their webpage for those who want to learn more.

A recent competition organized by LGPC administrators Norman

Roquios, Liezel Delos Reyes, Albert Tagasa, Don Lima, Miguel Villanueva, Nyza Ho, Lemuel Lauigan, and Jeff Diaz was aimed at uplifting the hobby, expanding the public's knowledge of the Leopard Gecko, and to encourage breeders to do line breeding.

Judges were Brian Santos and Nick Leoncio, considered one of the pioneer hobbyists for Leopard Geckos since 2007. The grand prize was a 36 x 22 x 46 centimeter Otto Aluminum Glass enclosure, and this was taken home by the best leopard gecko in the show, Blood Line from Geofrylle Benamer.



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#### OTHER NOTES

### TOKAY GECKO

Arboreal (tree dwelling),  
Southeast Asia,  
Western New Guinea

Endangered species

Lack of fat deposit in the tail

Presence of suction pads

Wild/untamed

Is mistakenly rumored  
to be a cure for AIDS/cancer

### LEOPARD GECKO

Terrestrial (land dwelling),  
Middle East

Considered of "least concern"

Fat deposit in the tail

Presence of nails

Domesticated/tamed

Can regenerate own tail



# 2015

# PET CITY EXPO

## A CELEBRATION OF PETS AND MORE

Photos By JEFFREY LIM  
Reporting By MELVIN TE

**E**vents like Pet Expo 2015 tend to evoke nostalgic memories, especially for pet fanciers who have early childhood memories of living with animals.

It's no wonder hobbyists looked forward to the second edition of Pet City Expo. What with the public interest being stoked by social media hype, organizers felt the pressure to make the exhibit this year better than the last.

The idea of a "Farm Barn" theme for the Pet City Expo was floated during organizers' meetings, and while there were initial hesitations about whether they could pull it off given the limited



*Team Pet City: From left to right – Eric Tiu, Melvin Te, Mavi Clamor, Ryan Clamor, James Luna and Boniface Lan*



amount of time they had to prepare, the organizers went for it after several days of brainstorming.

Finally, booths for the Pet City Expo 2015 included goldfish, betta fish, guppies, birds, hamsters and rabbits, geckos, cats, dogs, arowanas, stingrays, koi fish, and discus.

Photobooth and balloon twisting stations were also installed in strategic locations, where kids and families could

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# EVENTS

easily see them, have some fun, and get their souvenirs.

Inside the venue, there was a big tent where visitors could feast their eyes on displays of planted tanks, aquarium accessories, fish food, and the “Urban Jungle” of which Pet City is the sole distributor in the country.

The exhibit lasted from January 29 to February 1, 2015 at the Bonifacio Global City High Street in Taguig City, open during mall hours, from 11:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m.

There was a ribbon cutting with special guest John Marc Buencamino of Bonifacio Global City leading the event. The event then opened with a short talk from Atty. Benjamin



City Planted Tank Competition; a Guppy Fish Competition; a Betta Fish Competition; and an Arowana Photo Contest.

Tabios, Assistant Director of Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

Four competitions helped make Pet City Expo 2015 even more exciting. These were the Third Pet

For the planted tank competition, “Aquascaping Level-Up,” 35 hardineros participated; all were provided with tanks for uniformity. Lighting and filtration devices were also given during the contest proper.





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The entries this year stunned viewers and were declared by participants to have been far better than those in the previous years, Kudos to the hobby! There is much hope that the country will be able to produce winners in international competitions in the near future.

True to its vision of “appropriately-equipped hobbyists and responsibly-owned pets make healthier happier lives,” Pet City sponsored several workshops on goldfish, betta, and guppy keeping, plus Pomeranian and hamster Basics. These were aimed at giving the spectators tips on how to take care of their pets, and ways how to become responsible hobbyists and pet owners.





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# EVENTS



Aside from the cash prize, winners were also given plaques and round-trip tickets to Macau.



The event would not be complete without celebrities. Jhong Hilario of It's Showtime was spotted enjoying the exhibit as well as Martin Nievera, Gwen Garci, and Richard Gomez, who joined the Betta Fish competition and emerged as the Grand Prize winner.



Judges for all the competitions were from abroad: Taiwan, Malaysia, and Thailand.

Judges for all the competitions were from abroad; two were flown in from Taiwan, two from Malaysia, and one from Thailand.

Aside from the cash prize, winners were also given plaques and round trip tickets to Macau for two courtesy of Air Asia, the airline of choice.

The event would not be complete without celebrities. Jhong Hilario of It's Showtime was spotted enjoying the exhibit; also spotted were Martin Nievera, Gwen Garci, and Richard Gomez, who joined the Betta Fish competition and emerged as the Grand Prize winner.

Organizers, judging the outcome of the event and the response it received, deemed themselves greatly rewarded for their efforts in producing this one-of-a-kind event.

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# OBAMA ADMINISTRATION TO TARGET ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING



By RON NIXON

**H**oping to stem illegal wildlife trafficking, the Obama administration introduced Wednesday an aggressive plan for taking on traffickers that will include using U.S. intelligence agencies to track and target those who benefit from the estimated \$20 billion-a-year market.

The plan, which was outlined by officials from the State, Justice and Interior departments, will also increase pressure on Asian countries to stop the buying and selling of illegal rhinoceros horns, elephant ivory and other items, which President Barack Obama has called

an "international crisis" - and try to reduce demand for those items worldwide.

"Right now, wildlife trafficking is a very profitable enterprise," said John C. Cruden, the assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division. "Our goal is to take the profit out of this illegal trade with all the tools at our disposal."

But the planned actions, the result of a two-year administration review on how to limit wildlife trafficking, will be supported by only a modest increase in funding and staffing for the law enforcement arm of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the agency

chiefly responsible for policing the wildlife trade.

Anti-trafficking experts praised the effort as an important step, even as they said the government faced a daunting task.

"It's fantastic that we are doing this, but given that there are still limited resources, the government needs to really focus its efforts and go after the criminal organizations behind the trade in the most critical areas both here and abroad," said Crawford Allan, a wildlife trafficking expert with Traffic, a program of the World Wildlife Fund. "They can't have a scattershot approach where they put a little money here and a little there."

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The action comes as the United States has grown into the second-largest market for illegal wildlife products and a major conduit of the products to Asia, where rhino horns and ivory are believed to cure ailments like headaches and hangovers. Officials say that millions of pounds of illegal animal products, including bear and fish bladders, are sold every year to American and foreign customers. The trade has driven several animal species to near extinction while fueling the growth of international criminal gangs.

"The ongoing slaughter of rhinos and elephants in Africa is driven by rising consumer demand here, and United States citizens are intimately involved in illegal trade both here and abroad," said Daniel M. Ashe, the director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

As part of the administration's effort, the wildlife service is for the first time dispatching officers abroad to help combat trafficking originating in Africa, Asia and South America. One officer has been posted to Thailand, and three will be sent to Tanzania, Botswana and Peru later this year. In its most recent budget request, the administration asked for \$75.4 million a year for the wildlife service's law enforcement division, \$8 million more than the year before.

About \$4 million of the funding would be used to support efforts to stop wildlife traffic in African countries and another \$4 million to expand forensic labs and add special agents.

But even with the increase, wildlife service officials say that the staffing remains inadequate and that investigations have fallen from more than 13,000 in 2012 to about 10,000 last year. The service has 205 investigators, and an additional 120 officers who patrol nearly 40 ports of entry, examining more than 180,000 wildlife products last year.

"We have the same number of officers we had in the 1970s when the trade was nowhere like it is now," said Edward Grace, deputy director of law enforcement at the wildlife service. "We try to go after the big smugglers, but a lot falls through the cracks."

Since 2012, records show that U.S. law enforcement officials have arrested 26 people and prosecuted 18 for trading in rhino horns and ivory as part of Operation Crash, a nationwide criminal investigation into the black market for wildlife, records show.

In addition, officials have smashed smuggling rings trading in gallbladders and paws from black bears and the totoaba, a fish in Mexico that has been pushed to the brink of extinction because of illegal trafficking. A totoaba bladder can fetch up to \$20,000 in Asian countries, where it is prized in soups.

Court records and other documents show that the smuggling rings are made up of Chinese and Japanese traders; individuals with links to Mexican and South American drug cartels; Irish gangsters; U.S. auction and antique dealers; and South African safari operators.

Most traffickers have little to fear, law enforcement officials said, because only an estimated 10 percent are caught. Law enforcement agencies often lack the resources to fully police the illegal trade. Also, fines for trafficking are low, and loopholes in the law still allow trade in some items like ivory.

The shadowy wildlife trade takes place in auction houses and antique stores across the country, self-storage facilities in New York, and on the Internet, officials said. Smugglers bring in the items mainly through ports in New York and Los Angeles.

Stopping the ivory trade has proved to be especially problematic, officials said. Under U.S. law, ivory can be sold if it is more than a

century old. But an investigation of vendors in the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas last year by the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental organization, found that 77 percent to 90 percent of the ivory sold by vendors in the two cities might be illegal under federal law.

While many vendors tried to pass the ivory off as 100-year-old pieces, investigators said many of the pieces appeared to have been chemically aged or physically damaged to look older.

"These fake antiques are a growing problem," said Daniel Stiles, a wildlife investigator based in Kenya, adding that many of the pieces come from factories in China, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria, where raw ivory taken from poached elephants is carved into statues and altered to look older.

Trafficking in wildlife has decimated elephant and rhino populations in Africa. The latest figures from South Africa show that 1,215 rhinos were killed last year, up from a little more than 300 in 2010. More than 100,000 elephants were killed for ivory since 2010, according to a 2014 Colorado State University report. Rhino horns can fetch prices as high as \$30,000 a pound, and ivory can command prices as high as \$3,000 a pound.

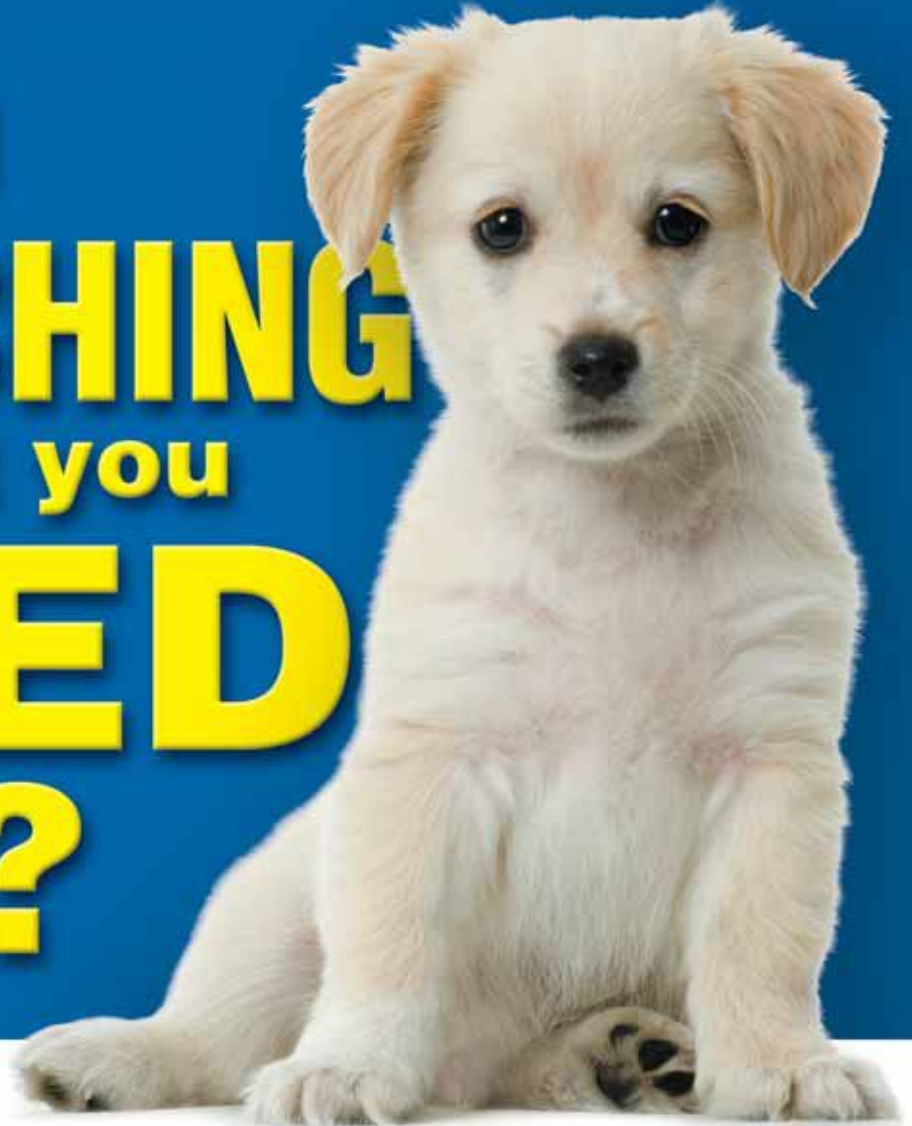
Congress is also trying to address wildlife smuggling. Last month, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., introduced a bill that would increase fines for trafficking in wildlife and allow law enforcement officials to confiscate the assets of traffickers.

"The problem with these wildlife crimes is that the penalties are too low," Feinstein said. "They aren't much of a deterrent. We want to change that."

The bill is pending. ■ (2015 *New York Times News Service*)

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## Fish In Your Tank

If you have any questions or inquiries about the fish discussed here or if you wish to have your fish featured in this column, please write Angel Ampil at [AngelAmpil@yahoo.com](mailto:AngelAmpil@yahoo.com).

# HAMPALA MACROLEPIDOTA: A GIANT AMONG THE BARBS

**F**

or a Filipino fish hobbyist, a Barb is a small fish that normally would interest them when they were children or

maybe novice aquarists.

Mention a Barb and most likely, people will associate it with the Tiger Barb (*Puntius tetrazona*). The Tiger Barb is a very beautiful fish with a light orange base body color adorned with 4 vertical black stripes and a red face, fins, and tail.

The species also comes in different variants like the Albino, Green Sumatra, and Glass. Surely most fish hobbyists have had this popular species of Barb one time or another. This 2-inch fish, after all, is probably





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the most popular Barb species in the world.

After some time, hobbyist will try their hands with other Barb species. In the Philippines, other Barbs commonly bred locally for the aquarium trade are the Rosy Barb (*Pethia conchonius*), Cherry Barb (*Puntius titteya*), Golden Barbs (*Puntius semifasciolatus*), and Black Ruby Barb (*Puntius nigrofasciatus*), among others.

However, these are relatively Tiger Barb sized.

If you are looking for bigger Barbs that grow to about 6 inches, your choices would be the Aurelius Barb (*Puntius arulius*), One Spot Barb (*Puntius terio*), Red Line Torpedo Barb (*Puntius denisonii*), and the T-Barb or Spanner Barb (*Puntius laterstriga*), which used to be easily available, but seems to be rare nowadays.

### The giant barb

But among Filipino fish hobbyists, the giant among the barbs is the Tinfoil barb (*Barbonymus schwanenfeldii*). This 12-inch fish dwarfs all the Barbs we are well familiar with. That is so because we haven't really seen the real monster Barbs.

Unknown to most fish hobbyists, there are many giant Barbs swimming in the mighty Mekong River that never made their way here to our tanks. One such species is the

Hampala Barb (*Hampala macrolepidota*). Thus, when my fish supplier said he had three 12-inch specimens. I told him to bring them right over.

Actually, I am personally aware that the *H. macrolepidota* was imported to the country some ten years ago. In fact, I remember buying some 3-inch juveniles then, but I can't remember enjoying them because they were small. At three

inches, they basically behaved like Aurelius Barbs and seemed to be just another member of a peaceful community aquarium.

But the big boys are totally a different story. They are truly what monster fish keepers would like to see in a fish... big, fast, and voracious eaters.

These three fishes can gobble up a handful of superworms before you can actually position yourself in front of the tank to watch. To enjoy them eat, you will have to ask someone to drop the superworms for you while you sit and wait.

Feeding is quite a sight, given how greedy they can be, and this fish may actually out-eat a Peacock Bass for food!

The *H. macrolepidota* is a large fish. The ones I have are not even half grown. It grows to about 70 centimeters or 28 inches, and weighs 7 to 8 kilos in the wild. It is also a shoaling fish, so it needs the company of its own kind.

### Their requirements

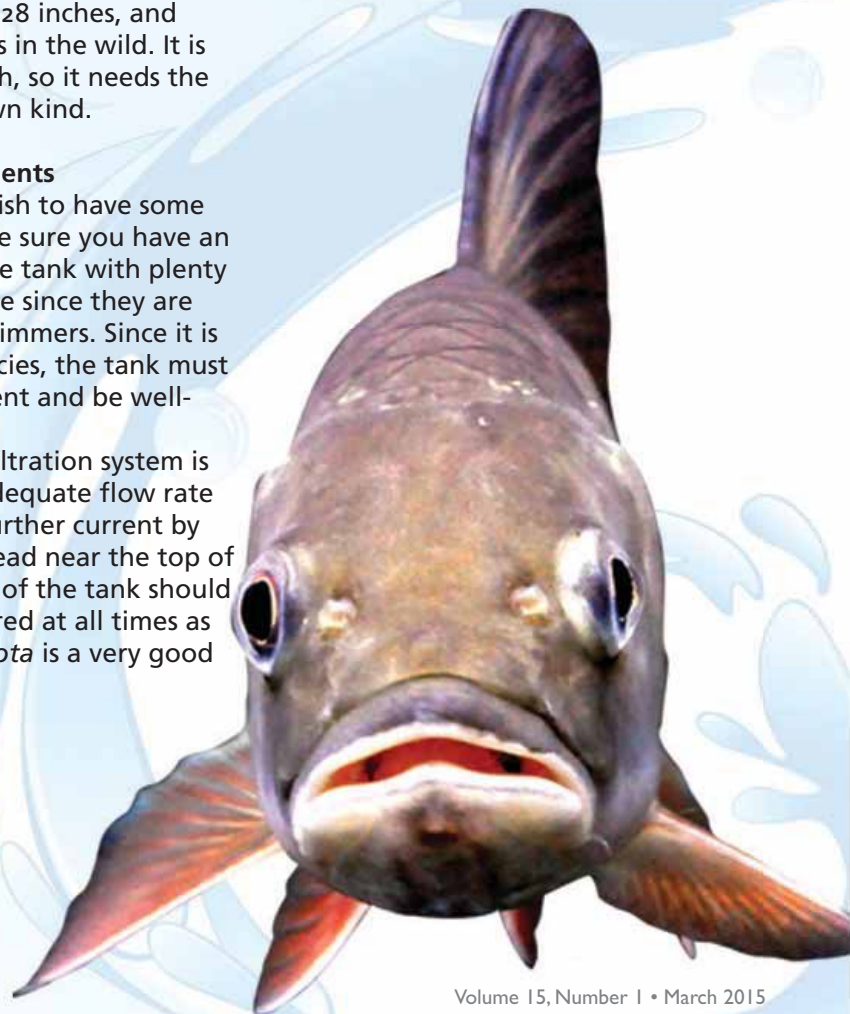
Thus, if you wish to have some in your tank, make sure you have an exceptionally large tank with plenty of swimming space since they are active and fast swimmers. Since it is a riverine fish species, the tank must have a good current and be well-aerated.

A very good filtration system is necessary, with adequate flow rate a must. Provide further current by adding a powerhead near the top of the tank. The top of the tank should also be kept covered at all times as the *H. macrolepidota* is a very good jumper.

The *H. macrolepidota* was first described by German naturalist Heinrich Kuhl and Dutch zoologist Johan Coenraad van Hasselt in 1823. *H. macrolepidota* is one of seven species in the genus *Hampala*.

Incidentally one species, the *H. lopezi*, is endemic to Langbuan, Busuanga in the Philippines.

*H. macrolepidota* is found in the Mekong and Chao Phraya basins, the Malay Peninsula, and Indonesia. It occurs mainly in clear rivers or streams with running water and sandy to muddy bottoms. It is found in most water bodies, except small creeks, torrents, and shallow swamps.



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AMONG FILIPINO FISH HOBBYISTS, THE GIANT AMONG THE BARBS IS THE TINFOIL BARB (*BARBONYMUS SCHWANENFELDII*). THIS 12-INCH FISH DWARFS ALL THE BARBS WE ARE FAMILIAR WITH.

FEEDING *H MACROLEPIDOTA* IS EXCITING AS THEY ARE GREGARIOUS FEEDERS AND WILL EAT ANYTHING.

In Thailand it is known as Pla Kasoop, and in Malaysia, it is called Sebarau. In both countries, the *H macrolepidota* is an important food fish commonly seen in local fish markets and is said to be of good eating but bony.

It is also a popular game fish; sports fishermen aspire to catch it using fly fishing gear or light tackle. Anglers believe weight for weight the *H macrolepidota* is the hardest fighting freshwater fish in their side of the world.

Personally, I would like to see the *H macrolepidota* in our aquariums because it is such a beautiful fish. It has a metallic bronze body adorned by a black bar or blot between the dorsal and pelvic fins. The dorsal fin is generally clear in color but the caudal fin or tail is a vibrant orange to red with a black longitudinal stripe at the margin of both lobes.

The other fins are all orange to red in color. It has a large stocky head with the eyes located along the upper side. The mouth is big, with 'barbels' at the side. Its head is hard, as you can hear the 'thud!' when they accidentally bump the tank walls.

In the aquarium, the *H macrolepidota* does well in water with a pH range of 5.5 – 8.0 and hardness of 36 – 357 ppm. Being a Southeast Asian fish, it is best kept in water temperatures ranging from 20 – 28 °C.

In the wild, juveniles are generally omnivorous while they become carnivorous as adults. When young, they feed on planktons and zooplanktons. They then learn to feed on small insects.

As adults, the majority of their diet consists of fish and shrimp.

In captivity, feeding the *H macrolepidota* is an exciting activity. They are gregarious feeders and will eat anything. They hardly refuse anything thrown to them. Thus they are very easy to feed. They take processed fish food like pellets as well as fresh meats cut to size.

Superworms are another favorite. They easily pick these up and swallow two or three pieces at a time.

But nothing compares to feeding the *H macrolepidota* live feeder fish. Pandemonium ensues when feeder fish is offered. All chaos breaks loose in the tank as they race against each other trying to gobble up as many fish they can.

The *H macrolepidota* can be kept with other fishes so long as they are too big to be considered food. Bear in mind, however, that tankmates should also be fast and quick so that they won't be on *H macrolepidota's* menu and they won't have to fight the bigger fish when feeding.

In this age, when keeping monster fish is fashionable, I hope the *H macrolepidota* will be reintroduced to the Philippine aquarium trade. We tried reintroducing the *H macrolepidota* 10 years ago, but somehow, its popularity never took off.

Maybe this time around, the *H macrolepidota* can reenter the scene with a lot of noise.

Maybe with the same noise you hear when it sucks down its prey at the surface of the tank!

Imagine a huge tank with a large Arowana swimming gracefully about, a few large Tiger Danioides settling in their corner of the tank, and some jumbo Clown Loaches hugging the tank bottom—and a shoal of *H macrolepidota* swimming all over the tank. Wouldn't that "Little Mekong" be a magnificent sight in your patio? ■

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# BETTA WORLD CUP 2015

By ANGEL AMPIL

# T

he BEP Beta World Cup 2015, an International Beta Congress (IBC)-sanctioned international Beta competition and exhibit, was recently held at Z Square Mall on Banawe Road in Quezon City, Metro Manila.

With a total of 1,006 entries (714 entries for the IBC Division and 292 entries for the Junior Division) from 181 participants from the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, China, and the USA, those curious about Betta fish and Betta fanciers alike enjoyed a weekend of viewing some of the world's most prime specimens of this popular fish species.



(Left to right) Show host Mika Umali, 2014 BEP auditor & Philippines IBC judge Allan Paul Francisco, BEP chairman & Philippines IBC judge Bryan Lim, Thailand Betta Club president & Thailand IBC judge Sarawut Korsoongsak, Betta Club Indonesia, Area 6 IBC representative & head judge Hermanus Haryanto, Indonesia Betta Splendens Club & Indonesia IBC judge Dominikus Ferdinand, and BEP president & Philippines IBC judge Mark Lester Hao.



Betta booth section

Trophies and prizes for winners of the Beta World Cup 2015



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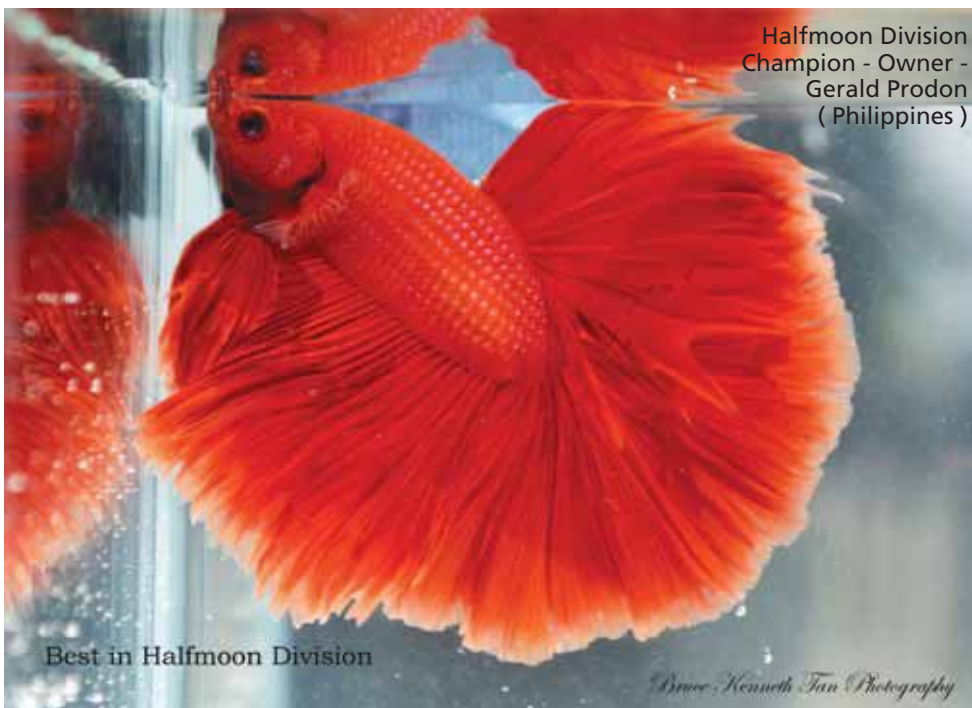


BEP models Jannie Alipo-on, Honey Lena Bloom, and Janna Roque

Judging the Betta World Cup 2015 were International Betta Congress certified judges Hermanus Haryanto (IBC Area 6 head/Indonesia), Dominikus Ferdinand (INBS/Indonesia), Sarawut Korsoongsak (Thailand Betta Club president/Thailand), Mark Lester Hao (BEP president/Philippines), Bryan Lim (BEP chairman/Philippines) and Allan Paul Francisco (BEP auditor/Philippines).

Betta keeping in the Philippines has gone a long way, observed IBC judge Hermanus Haryanto, who first visited the country seven years ago "This is my second visit in the Philippines and I am very happy to meet a lot of Betta enthusiasts...and a lot now participate in the show. The fish are of very good quality. I heard from the organizers that a lot of these come from Davao and they are very good quality too. I am happy that the entries are mostly from local breeders who can now produce competition grade Bettas."

The event was organized by a group that has played a major role in making the Betta a popular fish in the Philippines, the BEP or Betta Enthusiasts Philippines. This is a non-profit organization formed by a group of Betta (fighting fish) hobbyists, which include Mark Lester Hao, Bryan Lim, Bruce Kenneth Tan, Allan Paul Francisco, Genel Cordero, Marc Franco, Angelito Hernandez, and Sherwin Jabines. During the event, the BEP marked its first anniversary of becoming an official IBC Chapter.



Halfmoon Division Champion - Owner - Gerald Prodon (Philippines)



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# EVENTS

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- Hendry Sutrisno  
(Indonesia)



Best in Optional  
Class - Owner -  
Marlon Lim  
(Philippines)



Halfmoon Plakat  
Division Champion -  
Owner - Jeffrey Duyan  
(Philippines)



The BEP has conducted many shows and activities aimed at making Betta keeping one of the more popular hobbies in the Philippines. BEP president Mark Lester Hao says to Betta keepers and enthusiasts, "I would like to thank each and every one who supported BEP's Betta World Cup 2015. You have made a significant contribution in catapulting the Philippine Betta hobby to the world scene. We are committed to stage more exhibits, seminars, and



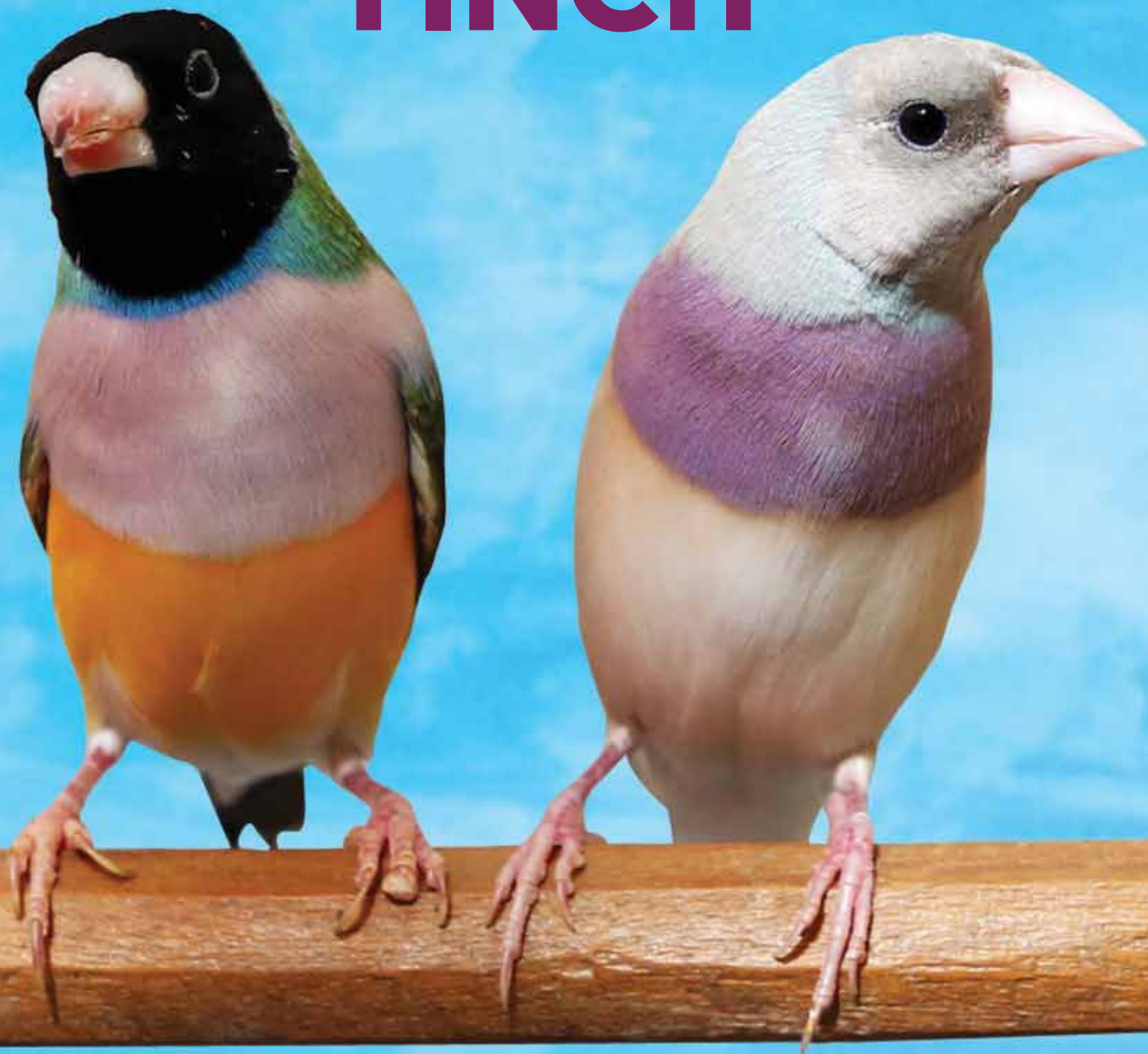
show competitions for the upliftment of our hobby. Together let us fuel the passion of Betta keeping furthermore. Be one of us."

To know more about BEP and their activities you may view their video at this link: [www.dailymotion.com/video/x227xjn\\_bep-the-bubble-makers-highlights-hd\\_animals](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x227xjn_bep-the-bubble-makers-highlights-hd_animals). Those interested in learning more about Betta keeping may join BEP through their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/groups/BEP.IBC](http://www.facebook.com/groups/BEP.IBC) (With additional reporting by the event organizers; additional photos courtesy of Marc Rozen Franco and Ace Santos) ■





# COLORFUL, CHARMING: THE GOULDIAN FINCH



By CHARLENE BOBIS  
PHOTOS By JEFFREY LIM

**A**ptly also called the rainbow finch, the Lady Gouldian Finch originated in Australia. A glance will tell you why it's popular; it's small, utterly cute, and colorful. Many other finches are also attractive, but breeder and fancier Hansel Sy says, "Finches are nice to look at, and they look clean."



### HANDLE WITH CARE

Hansel explains that there aren't too many finches in the Philippines to begin with; the birds are very expensive despite their small size.

But, being small birds, small mistakes can kill them, he cautions. It's worth mentioning that Googling the breed will include some sources that will say the bird is popular because it is easy to raise. Responsible breeders have carefully reserved judgment on this but their experience—and Hansel's—have taught them that the Gouldian finch is not a bird for a casual or beginning bird keeper or fancier.

Finches of different subspecies have different temperaments, Hansel cautions, and the Gouldian is one of the more delicate of its kind. You can, however, expect them to live up to 10 years with care.

For one thing, these birds are not to be handled on a regular basis as they are quite sensitive to stress, he says. They are also easily scared, and should not always be disturbed. In short, they are creatures best appreciated from a distance; appreciating the Gouldian finch requires patience, imagination, and the ability to leave the bird alone. Likely the fact that it does not have a particularly sweet song compared to other birds will make the latter piece of advice fairly easy—in fact, it is mostly silent.

How do you know a Gouldian finch is healthy? Hansel says their

feathers must be brilliant. Watch out for diarrhea and keep the bird from getting cold; you'll know it's cold if its feathers are standing up. If it is sick, put it in a 'hospital cage' made of wood that's draft-proof; Hansel explains that such boxes have screens or wire and have a light inside to heat the birds.

Currently classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as "endangered in the wild" since 1992, the Gouldian finch's population is declining, and it's the serious hobbyists who are helping conservationists and scientists save the species.

Hansel says he's been fascinated with birds since childhood; back then, all he had access to were lovebirds. He considered them to be very colorful and cared for them; later, he saw finches such as star finches in magazines and on the Internet. That's what helped expand his appreciation of the hobby.

### DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

Hansel's experience has taught him much about raising this delicate creature, which does not like to be startled. He credits a friend and fellow fancier, Raffy Yap, for teaching how to keep them. Along the way, he's learned a few other things, including the fact that Gouldian finches tend to be scared easily, so it's best to leave them alone. "Don't disturb them a lot," he cautions.



“FINCHES ARE NICE TO LOOK AT,  
AND THEY LOOK CLEAN.”



**“THE GOULDIAN IS A VERY QUIET BIRD;  
JUST FEED IT WELL, KEEP ITS ENVIRONMENT CLEAN...  
DON'T HOLD OR PLAY WITH THEM THIS WILL STRESS  
THEM OUT AND CAN KILL THEM.”**



## THE CHALLENGE OF BREEDING

Having plants nearby also helps; they appreciate having foliage nearby. "They like shaded environments not exposed to sun; they like the outdoors," Hansel says. But as with any other bird, owners need to ensure that their cages are always clean so that these will not attract mice, rats, or other vermin that can prey on the Gouldian finch.

"You must study them first," Hansel insists. "Don't take the bird lightly. You can join finch clubs to learn more about them. But be sure you're serious about it." Unlike other, hardier bird species, the Gouldian finch requires that the owner be familiar with the vagaries of bird-keeping. You can't wing your way (apologies for the pun) through caring for a Gouldian finch.

For one thing, their temperature preference is "just right," Hansel explains; neither too cold nor too hot, owners need to be alert to when the weather is too hot (so that they can bring the birds indoors) or when it's too cold. While the Gouldian finch is normally a seed eater, preferring grass seeds, those kept by fanciers, Hansel explains, has a diet that includes chicken eggs mashed with bread crumbs. They can also have fresh leafy greens.

For a treat, you can feed them flatworms, Hansel says. Gouldian finches are known to be insect eaters in the wild during mating season, after all. "You can buy the flatworms from aquatic suppliers. Just feed a little; they eat those quickly!" He also advises that the birds be given Vitamin C; a powder can be bought from veterinarians or veterinarian supplies which can be dissolved in their water. They particularly need this when the weather is cold, and daily, they need clean water daily.

Gouldian finches like company, and ideally should be kept in, at the minimum, pairs. When mating, the male Gouldian finch does an interesting courtship dance that shows off its colors. Once mated, a female lays from 4-8 eggs (with the number decreasing as the bird ages), and normally, both male and female brood the eggs.

The interesting part, he says, is that even the males sit on nests; they are parental in nature. And paired mature males can care for young together; in 8 – 12 months, Gouldian finches are mature, Hansel explains. Pairs tend to bond together and breeders do not recommend that they be separated.

It can be somewhat different when the birds aren't in the wild. "It's better if they are compatible; they're like people, with individual temperaments. The happier they are together, the better," Hansel says when asked about what it's like to breed the Gouldian finch. But mating is just the first step. There is a behavior in which one of the parents tosses a chick away; this is when a breeder knows it's time to use a foster parent.

"We have foster parents for the birds when we breed them; we use the Bangalese or society finch," he explains.

When the Gouldians have eggs and have difficulty brooding, the breeders give these to the foster parent birds to care for. While other bird species also require foster parents for their young, Hansel says it's a breeder art to find them.

"The Gouldian is a very quiet bird; just feed it well, keep its environment clean...Don't hold or play with them this will stress them out and can kill them," Hansel sums up. ■





“DON'T TAKE THE BIRD LIGHTLY. YOU CAN JOIN FINCH CLUBS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THEM. BUT BE SURE YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT IT.”

## QUICK FACTS

Scientific Name

*Erythrura gouldiae*

Native habitat

Tropical savannah woodlands

Migratory behavior

Nomadic within 40 square kilometers; they follow food and water sources

Estimated population

About 100,000 birds worldwide

Appearance

Brightly colored, featuring black, green, purple, red, and yellow; mutations like the ones featured here show even more colors. Males tend to be brighter-colored than the females. Color mutations include dilute, yellow-bodied, blue-bodied, silver, and pastel.

Size

About 5 inches from head to tail

Found at

- Bastion Hills, next to the town of Wyndham in eastern Kimberley, Australia (biggest concentration observed)
- Northern Australia, from the Cape York Peninsula through north-west Queensland

Did you know?

- First described by British ornithological artist John Gould in 1844, he named the finch after his wife Elizabeth.
- Newly hatched Gouldian finches, which are born bald (feathers do not appear until they're about two weeks old) have light-reflective (not luminescent as claimed by some) markings/nodules in and around their beaks.
- In the 1989 "Batman" movie, the Catwoman character played by Michelle Pfeiffer swallows a bird in one scene—and it's a Gouldian finch.
- It is the only grassfinch that nests exclusively in tree hollows or holes in termite mounds. This makes it vulnerable to wildfires.
- When this bird molts, it can lose so many feathers, it looks bald. The molting process can be stressful for the Gouldian finch.
- A parasite called the "air sac mite" was largely responsible in the dramatic decrease in the number of Gouldian finches, as was the decrease in the woodlands they prefer to call home.
- Female Gouldian finches can control the sex of their babies!
- This colorful bird is part of the logo of the electronics company Viewsonic.





# THE BUTANDING

**T**here's a 'gentle giant' on the 100-peso bill, although you may not have noticed it. Billed as the biggest fish in the world, the whale shark or 'butanding' is known to grow up to 9 meters in length. Those who have traveled to Donsol in Sorsogon in southeastern Luzon know that they can interact directly with these fish.

While in the past, local fishers tended to kill this slow-moving fish, eco-tourism has helped preserve their population. First identified in 1828 in Africa, this distinctly yellow-marked shark has a flattened head and a round, blunt snout—unlike most sharks, which have their mouths under the head. It also has a spiracle or vestigial gill slit behind its eye for breathing when it rests on the sea floor.

The mouth has two barbell-like protrusions from its nostrils that give it a friendly, almost comical look. Overall, the butanding tends to be gray or brown with a white belly, and has vertical and horizontal stripes. These markings are unique to each individual of the species and can help identify them.

Its skin can reach 10 centimeters in thickness, and females tend to be bigger than the males. It also has

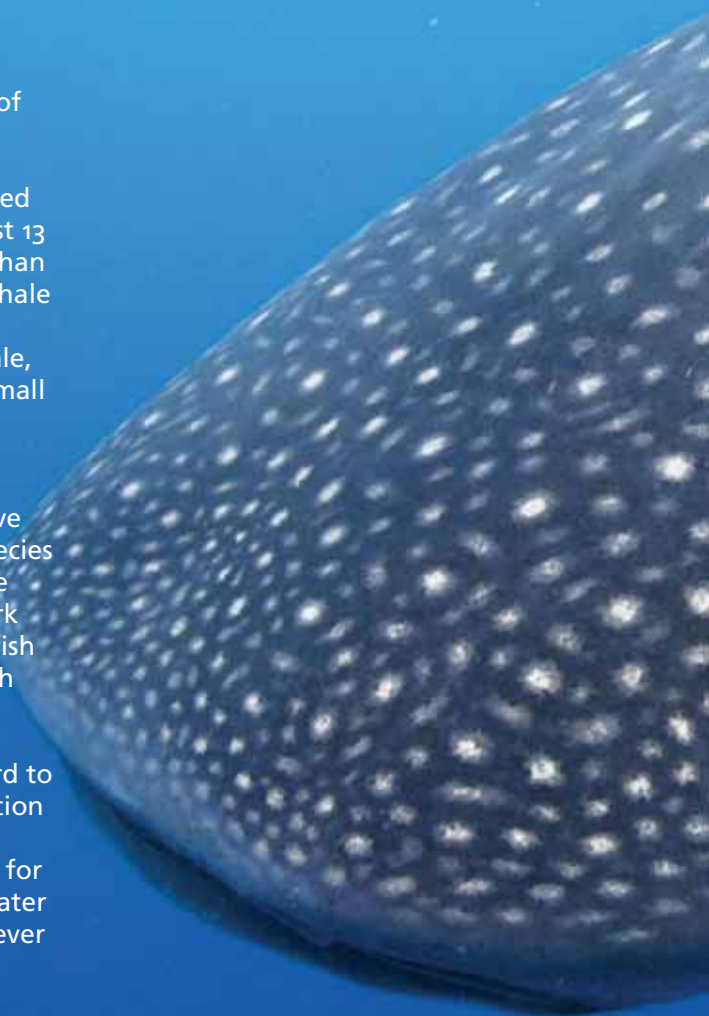
two dorsal fins towards the rear of its body and a two-lobed tail.

A previous article in *Animal Scene* stated, "The largest recorded individual whale shark was almost 13 meters long and weighed more than 21.5 metric tons. Not actually a whale and more of a shark, the whale shark is a filter feeder, like a whale, filtering tons of plankton, krill, small fish, and other tiny ocean tidbits through its mouth and gills."

This accounts for their large mouths (with 3,000 teeth) and five pairs of gills. Only three shark species are known to filter feed, with the other two being the basking shark (incidentally the second biggest fish in the world) and the megamouth shark.

Unlike other sharks, the butanding need not swim forward to feed; it can stay in a vertical position and simply bob up and down, swallowing water and filtering it for food. When it shuts its mouth, water leaves through its gills and whatever isn't forced out through there is what the butanding feeds on.

Unlike most sharks, which elicit a shudder of fear, the butanding is harmless to humans. Donsol is a seasonal feeding site for a large school of them, and you can go snorkeling with them; just avoid photos in which you harm or hurt



# NG



them! Also, swimmers and divers are advised to keep clear of its large tail fin, which can accidentally hit and injure them.

**Tip:** younger butandings tend to be more playful! It's easy to stay abreast of butandings, which reach a top speed of, at most, 5 kilometers per hour; they move their entire bodies from side to side to swim.

While their mating habits have not been observed, whale sharks are known to be oviparous (eggs hatch and develop in the uterus of the female). They give birth to live

offspring about 40-60 centimeters long. While the female can carry up to 300 embryos, only about 10% of these are expected to survive to birth, and these take 30 years to reach maturity. Once born, the mother leaves her offspring, making them vulnerable to predators.

There are long intervals between pregnancies, though they are expected to live up to 150 years in the wild if left alone. Given that the Philippines has the highest concentration in the world of whale sharks, when in 1998, it banned



all fishing, selling, importing, and exporting of whale sharks for commercial purposes, this was a good move for the preservation of the species. India (2001) and Taiwan (2007) followed suit.

What a lot of people don't know is that the whale shark is an important part of the marine ecosystem, linked to the survival of creatures like crab and other fish, and even coral reefs. The International Union for Conservation of Nature considers the butanding to be a vulnerable species, especially crucial because there are no population records for it.

It is listed on the CMS Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks, along with 6 other shark species; it is also on Appendix II of the 2003 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) that regulates the international trade of live specimens and their parts. ■ *(Compiled by CFB)*





# QUICK FACTS

## Scientific Name

Whale shark (Rhincodon typus)

## Habitat

Tropical, warm-temperate waters; they seem to prefer the bottom of the sea

## Habits

Highly migratory

## Depth

Can dive to 1,200 meters

## Size

Anywhere from 4.5 to 14 meters in length

## Average weight

Approximately 750 to 1,500 kilograms

## Diet

Plankton and krill

## Also known as

**Vietnam:** Ca Ong

(literally means "Sir Fish")

Mexico and throughout Latin

**America:** Pez dama, or domino (because for its patterns of spots)

**Africa:** Papa Shillingi in Kenya (in the belief that God threw shilling coins on it, hence its spots)  
Indonesia (Java): geger lintang, meaning, "stars in the back"

## Found at

Seasonal feeding areas, which include (in addition to Donsol in Sorsogon):

- Southern and eastern parts of South Africa;
- Saint Helena Island in the South Atlantic Ocean;
- Gulf of Tadjoura in Djibouti, Gladden Spit in Belize;
- Ningaloo Reef in Western Australia;
- Lakshadweep, Gulf of Kutch, and Saurashtra coast of Gujarat in India;
- Útila in Honduras;
- Southern Leyte, Pasacao, and Batangas in the Philippines;
- Off Isla Mujeres and Isla Holbox in Yucatan and Bahía de los Ángeles in Baja, California, and México;
- Ujung Kulon National Park and Nabire National Park in Indonesia;
- Nosy Be in Madagascar;
- Off Tofo Reef near Inhambane in Mozambique;
- Tanzanian islands of Mafia, Pemba, Zanzibar;
- Dimaniyat Islands in the Gulf of Oman; and
- Al Hallaniyat islands in the Arabian Sea

## Did you know?

Butandings can process over 6,000 liters of water per hour when they feed.





# THE NO-SCRATCH CLAWS CLAUSE:

HOW TO KEEP YOUR FELINE  
FROM VANDALIZING YOUR HOME



By STEF DELA CRUZ, M.D.

**A**

woven mat with a soft blue-and-white fabric. An authentic ikat rug with pretty fringes. A couch with a

classic pinstripe pattern. A delicate, white curtain that touches the floor.

No, this isn't a wish list for someone trying to furnish a brand-new home. It's a list of things which have been probably been torn, scratched, and vandalized by—who else?—your beloved cat!

If you're watching helplessly as your cat scratches your expensive bedsheets in blissful ignorance, consider this your emergency intervention.

#### **THE FURNITURE VANDALIZER... A.K.A. YOUR CAT!**

Stop scratching your head and wondering how to keep your feline friend from ruining everything it gets its paws on! There's no need to steer clear of fabric altogether, but there's no need for your upholstered furniture to go to waste, either.

#### **WHY HE DOES IT**

All the seemingly destructive scratching is actually normal cat behavior, says veterinarian and pet expert Dr Rizalyn Zunio, co-founder of The Pet Project Veterinary Clinic and Surgery. She said that before you scold your cat for poking another hole through your blanket, it's best for you to understand that they "need to scratch."

Your cat is itching to get his paws on almost every fabric it sees—he believes it's part of his being a fab feline. When he scratches his claws on the carpet, he is simply trying to complete his daily grooming ritual by sharpening his claws.

If he doesn't keep his claws sharp, he can't paw his way up the walls or climb up his favorite bookshelf. He might even hurt himself if he can't latch on while surveying his territory (a.k.a. your home) from atop the kitchen cabinet!



#### **Why it's more serious than you think**

"It's just a cat that wants to scratch stuff. What's so serious about that?" one might ask.

Yes, the perennial scratching puts a strain on the budget, what with furniture being thrown out or reupholstered and new curtains being purchased every now and again. But that's just scratching the surface.

What's worse is this: It puts a strain on a cat's relationship with his beloved human!

Many frustrated cat owners label their feline companions stubborn and uncooperative—some even go as far as to call them evil - once their cats go on a scratching spree. This misunderstood feline habit puts a wedge between a cat and his human companion, one that may very well lead to a frustrated human and a homeless cat.

#### **THE PROBLEMATIC SOLUTION**

Buying a scratching post for your cat makes sense. It allows him to go on with his regular grooming, sans the furniture mayhem, of course. However, there are a few problems you may encounter.

#### **1. Your cat thinks it's an ugly, useless thing.**

You come home happy one day with what promises to be the solution to your problems. It costs a little more than you expected from something that looks blah, but the saleslady over at the pet shop said it will put an end to your cat-scratch misery.

Unfortunately, your cat pretends the expensive scratching post you bought doesn't exist. Even after you followed the vet's instructions by placing his paws on the scratching post, your cat just won't use it.

#### **2. YOU think it's an ugly, useless thing.**

Whether or not it works, it just stands there in the corner, looking like an out-of-place tree that lost its leaves after giving up on life. Yes, it's not pretty—and it sticks out like a sore thumb.

Life with a cat isn't always purrfect. Your cat's relentless scratching, however, is something you can put a stop to.

WHO HASN'T HAD TO DEAL WITH CATS  
DAMAGING FURNITURE?  
HERE'S SOME ADVICE FOR DEALING  
WITH THIS COMMON PROBLEM.  
AND YES, CATS AND NICE FURNITURE CAN MIX!

**ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS**

If you can't get that scratching post to work for you and your cat, there are two things to focus on: deterring your cat from scratching the furniture, and encouraging him to scratch where you want him to.

**MARKING NO-SCRATCH AREAS**

Notice how your cat rubs against the legs of your table? He's marking his territory by rubbing his cheeks against the wood. This transfers his scent onto furniture, effectively marking the vicinity as his territory.

In other words, your cat uses scent as a way to communicate! This is something you can do if you want him to understand your message.

Use odors to ward off a cat from areas he shouldn't scratch. You can purchase deterrent sprays that smell of citrus, Dr Zunio advises. Your cat has a keen sense of smell; his sensitive nose will find the tangy odor too overwhelming.

However, if your cat is unfazed by commercial lemon-scented sprays, why not make your own? Mix chopped chili peppers in a bottle of water and spritz on areas where he likes to scratch!

"It may seem extreme, but it may work in worst-case scenarios," says Dr Zunio. Just make sure to do the spraying while your cat is away.

Are curtains your cat's preferred scratching area? Keep them from becoming too much of a temptation by tying their ends away from the floor. (Having a do-scratch rug nearby might also do the trick; see below.)



*"Shawn likes climbing trees," says happy parent Jonna Baquillas. If your cat does, too, he needs to sharpen his claws by scratching them on anything that provides resistance... including your couch. (Ouch!)*

**PROVIDING DO-SCRATCH AREAS**

With a little creativity and resourcefulness, you can live a happy life without ever having to buy a scratching post! Here are a few alternatives.

**1. Area rugs made of tough fibers**

Cats are drawn to rough fibers; they know they make more effective claw sharpeners. Fake sisal rugs make a good neutral palette for home decorating while also giving your cat a scratch-resistant area to sharpen his claws!

**2. Resilient woven mats as upholstery protection**

If your cat loves scratching your couch, protect the sensitive fabric with a decorative mat that can withstand his claws! There are many woven mats that come in different patterns and colors. These can prettify your couch even as they give it a layer of protection.

Of course, don't forget to reward your cat when he scratches in the right places! Give him a healthy treat and tell him he's doing a great job. ■



## CAT- (AND FURNITURE-) FRIENDLY SCRATCH SOLUTIONS

The first thing you need to understand is that scratching is normal cat behavior. It isn't done to destroy a favorite chair or to get even. Cats scratch to remove the dead husks from their claws, mark territory, and stretch their muscles. Here's a cheat sheet of solutions from this article for you to clip and keep:



**1.** For items resistant to staining: Citrus sprays or scents; chopped chili mixed with water and used as a spray

**2.** Do-scratch mats and posts placed near items you don't want scratched

**3.** Sisal (or fake sisal) rugs and cheap woven mats as "do-scratch" mats

**4.** Scratching posts placed all over the house (added bonus: many makers of such items donate part of their proceeds to animal causes and/or shelters)

**5.** Treats and rewards for when Kitty scratches the right thing

**6.** Cheap slipcovers for expensive furniture

**7.** Weekly trims for kitty's toenails (always cut only at the end and never cut anywhere near the red part of the nail!)

**8.** Why not try using a squirt gun filled with water? You just spray Kitty every time s/he scratches something inappropriate.

**9.** Ask your vet about the rubber or soft plastic caps that can be attached to Kitty's claws to keep him or her from scratching inappropriately.





# NO TO DECLAWING!

Declawing, also known as onychectomy, is a cruel and pointless procedure, expensive, irreversible, and with lifelong detrimental health effects on a cat. PETA unequivocally declares, "If performed on a human being, declawing would be like cutting off each finger at the last knuckle."

Expert Dr. Karen Becker explains, "Cats use their claws for balance, exercise, and stretching and toning the muscles of their legs, back, shoulders and paws. They also use them to hunt and capture prey, to escape or defend against predators, and as part of their marking behavior when they live outdoors."

Dr. Becker adds, "Declawing isn't a nail trim or even nail removal. It's removal of the claw, bones,

nerves, the joint capsule, collateral ligaments and the extensor or flexor tendons. Amputation of the third phalanx or the first toe bone that houses the nail drastically alters the confirmation of the feet, which can lead to a whole host of physical complications such as chronic small bone arthritis, degenerative joint disease, and neuralgia."

There are no known benefits to cats from declawing, no matter what mercenary veterinarians out to make a quick buck will tell you. Humanesociety.org explains, "People often mistakenly believe that declawing their cats is a harmless "quick fix" for unwanted scratching. They don't realize that declawing can make a cat less likely to use the litter box or more likely to bite."

That's because you've taken away a cat's first line of defense—hence they become more aggressive.

Declawed cats walk with constant pain, can no longer use the litterbox (because the litter gets into their wounds), and have to relearn how to walk. While a few sites like webmd.com claim that there is "no evidence" of all of the above aftereffects on a declawed cat and that declawing is "okay," the experience of a majority of veterinarians, cat owners, humane shelters and workers, and many other experts speaks volumes.

If you feel you need to declaw your cat, please give it up for adoption instead of subjecting it to a lifetime of pain and cruelty. ■  
(Compiled by CFB)



# CAT MYTHS

Compiled and edited By CLIFTON JAMES SAWIT



Cats are mysterious, inscrutable creatures, sometimes sacred animals, sometimes witches' familiars.

It's no wonder then that we humans have accumulated many myths about our feline friends, perhaps in an effort to explain their sometimes bizarre behavior. But which ones are true and which ones are simply old wives' tales? Let's take a closer look at our domestic companion and separate furry fact from fiction!

## 1. CATS HAVE NINE LIVES

We've all seen or heard about feline brushes with death that leave them completely unscathed, like falling from great heights, going a long time without food, or narrowly avoiding incoming traffic. This seems to lend some credence to this myth, which appears to have started in ancient Egypt, where the Ennead, or the nine gods, sometimes assumed the form of a cat while entering the underworld.

But cats are simply nimble creatures who can react quickly

to dangerous situations in order to preserve the one life that they actually have. Cat owners should make sure that their pets get regular vet checkups and have a safe home environment away from high falls and other hazards. Don't leave your cat's safety in the hands of myth!

## 2. CATS ALWAYS LAND ON THEIR FEET

Speaking of high falls, we've all heard of someone described as being like a cat, always landing on their feet after a fall. Cats have

a righting reflex that allow them to reorient themselves in the air as they fall, using their unusually flexible backbones and their lack of collarbones.

Contrary to popular belief, even tailless cats have this reflex, and the tail is more of a counter-weight for when the cat is running, jumping, or turning at high speed, and is not a deciding factor in its ability to land on its feet.

That being said, cats do need at least 12 inches of height in order to perform this maneuver. Any less and there simply isn't enough time during the actual fall for the cat to right itself. Also, cats can still break bones or even die from extreme falls, so condo and high-rise dwellers who own cats, make sure your cat doesn't nap on the edge of your balcony!

### 3. CATS STEAL THE BREATH FROM BABIES

Here's a strange one: According to one myth, cats have the mystical ability to suck the breath out of babies' mouths while they are sleeping.

Some people say it's because cats can smell milk on the breath of babies and just can't help themselves, while others think cats are jealous of all the attention babies get from other humans. This isn't a new myth, and has been quoted in print since 1607. One jury at a coroner's inquest in England found a cat guilty of stealing a baby's breath, probably influenced by this superstition.

A doctor in Nebraska was quoted in 1929 as having seen "the family pet in the very act of sucking a child's breath, lying on the baby's breast, a paw on either side of the babe's mouth, the cat's lips pressing those of the child, and the infant's face pale as that of a corpse, its lips with the blueness of death." Yikes.

The doctor's unconfirmed ranting toward the local newspaper aside, while cats have been known to curl up next to a baby while it's sleeping, this is because cats like heat and comfort, not because they're stealing the baby's life essence through magic. However, there is a fear that if the cat lies across the face of a sleeping baby it might smother the child.

In 2000 a woman reported that she found her six-week-old son dead with their cat laying on its face. However, further examination showed that SIDS, or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, not the family cat, was the cause of death.

Still, cats should be supervised when they are around babies, and should be put out of the crib whenever the baby is sleeping. In fact pediatricians recommend that the crib of a sleeping infant be clear of anything else, whether it's toys, pillows, or, yes, cats.

### 4. DON'T LET A BLACK CAT CROSS YOUR PATH

Everyone's heard this one: It's bad luck to let a black cat cross your path. Gamblers in particular avoid





black cats on their way to the casino. But why? And why black cats in particular?

Black cats weren't always seen as harbingers of doom. In the famously cat-revering culture of ancient Egypt, black cats were associated with the goddess Bast, who ruled not only cats but also fire, the home, and pregnant women.



Charles I, the ill-fated 17th century King of England, had a black cat. When his beloved pet died, he declared that his luck was gone. The next day, he was arrested, charged with treason, and later executed.

So what was the PR disaster that turned public opinion against black cats? It was being associated with witches during the Middle Ages. The onset of the Black Death, the plague that killed millions of people across Europe, drove the local populations of cities and towns to blame outsiders, particularly those who did not practice the Christian faith, such as Jews and pagans.

Soon, rumors of devil worship spread like the plague itself, and everything associated with witches gained a bad reputation, even all the way to America, with its famous Salem witch hunts. This meant that lonely old ladies who took care of neglected alley cats in cramped medieval towns and cities were often seen as witches, and their feline charges as their demonic familiars. But that's just the way superstition works, isn't it?

Nonetheless, cultures across time viewed the black cat as a symbol of good luck. For instance, a strange black cat's arrival at a Scottish home signifies prosperity. Black cats are also considered lucky in Japan, particularly for single women. A black cat is believed to bring a woman many suitors. Maybe they're there to visit the cat?

It gets even more complicated in Germany: if a cat crosses from right to left, it's a bad omen, but if it's from left to right, it's a good omen.

They neglect to mention what kind of luck you get when you see a cat sitting in the middle of your driveway refusing to move, though!

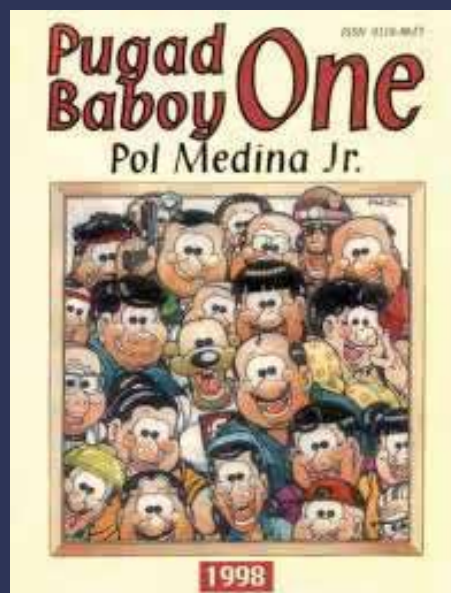
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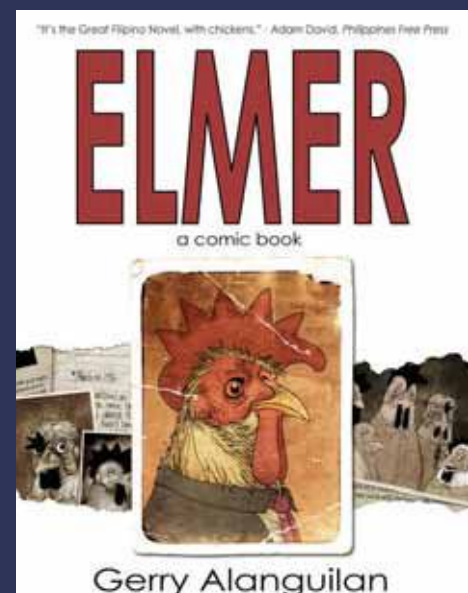
# ANIMALS, animated

By ANNA GAMBOA

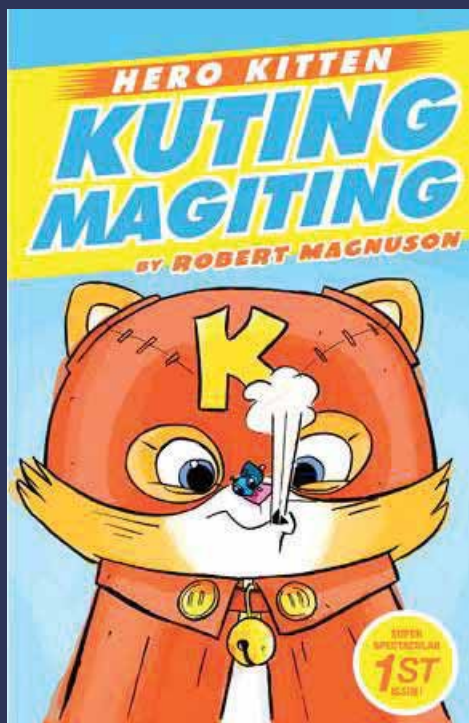
**G**raphic novels or komiks have always featured some sort of hero or villain sporting superpowers related to a member of the animal kingdom—hello Paul Rudd as Ant Man—and comicbook staples like Hawkgirl, Catwoman, etc. Pinoys aren't slouches in that department either, having created a telenovela centered around winged folk in a fantasy kingdom with a caste system (Mulawin), a comic book series about a girl with rat-like features (which got turned into a movie starring Rio Locsin, then remade into a telenovela series), then a more recent version about a girl with cat-like features (Felina)—and various iterations of serpentine people (Zuma, Galema, Kamandag).



**1. Pugad Baboy by Pol Medina Jr.** Featuring Polgas, “ang asong hindi” who acquires the human ability to talk and walk on his hind legs after several helpings of Mang Dagul’s culinary experiments, the dog with an appetite for beer/pulutan, good sense and justice serves as the voice of reason in the comic strip (from print to digital formats), and its subsequent incarnations as comic book compilations, and Pugad Baboy merchandise.



**2. Elmer by Gerry Alanguilan** The creator of “Wasted” explores issues of emancipation, discrimination, race, and disenfranchisement—from the perspective of a chicken. In an alternate reality where sentient chickens talk and go through the process of taking hold of their rights, no quarter given, there’s no eyebrows raised at interspecies love, a chicken becomes a matinee idol, and an angry young chicken ponders his future and the freedom that was won by his forebears. Winning a Will Eisner award made this labor of love all the more sweeter as Alanguilan labored in between crushing deadlines for various projects.



### 3. Kuting Magiting by Robert Magnuson

While marketed as a series of toddler board books by OMF Literature, Magnuson's distinctively playful style of depicting animals shines through words and pictures. The mischievous antics of a super-powered kitten being raised by a good-natured dog are currently available in the ingeniously written "Run, Kuting! Run!" and "Go To Sleep, Kuting".

### 4. Calvin and Hobbes by Bill Watterson

Almost a decade since the daily comic strip ceased production, the adventures of a tiny hyperactive boy and his equally mischievous stuffed tiger still register a significant beep on everyone's pop culture radar. With wild adventures produced from sheer imagination taking readers for a fun ride, with most conjecturing that Hobbes often represents the rational ego or more mature aspects of Calvin's personality, there are moments of reflection befitting the series named after two philosophers. The collected Sunday comic strips are a joy to behold with their riot of color after the discipline of black and white illustrations for the weekday strips.

### 5. Garfield

Jim Davis' orange feline, who will forever be associated with dreaded Mondays and lasagna, has been immortalized in so much merchandise from the 1980's onwards, aliens from another planet may conclude that humans are cat worshippers (well, when combined with Hello Kitty merch). Everyone may adore the daily strip, or compiled comics, but grade-schoolers and wordsmiths in dire need of comic relief love the Webster's dictionary that incorporates the sardonic cat in its pages.

### 6. Sandman:

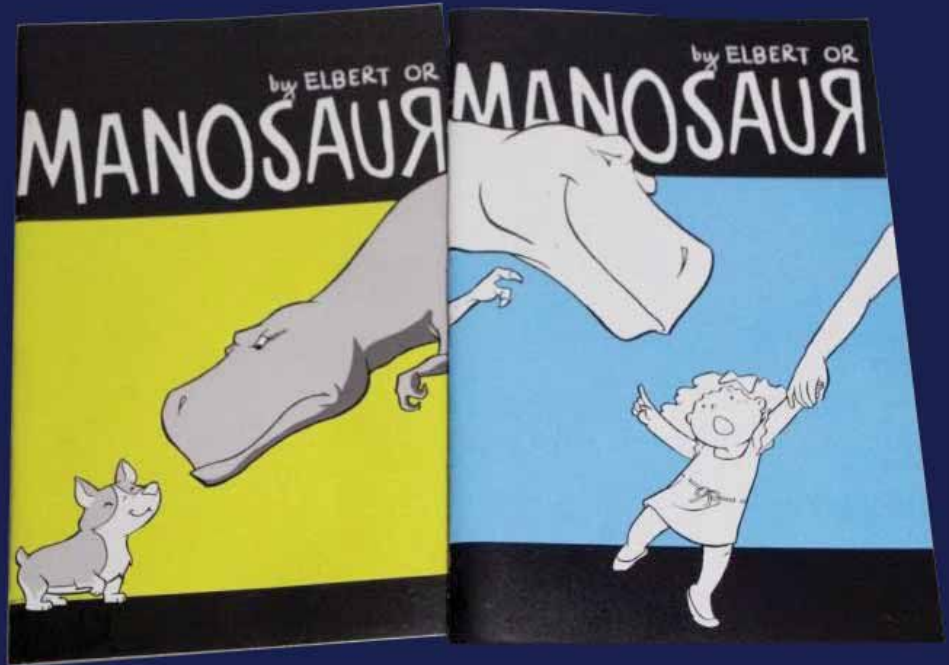
The Dream Hunters by Neil Gaiman  
Featuring a fox as the protagonist in the series, as she embarks on a perilous quest to save the soul of a beloved, Yoshitaka Amano's lush illustrations provide the visuals for Gaiman's Japanese-inspired land of dreams or nightmares. As is with Gaiman's tales, while our fox heroine saves her loved one (and is foiled just before triumphing), her revenge comes with a price, which she pays willingly. Called "a dark tale of enduring charm" it won the Bram Stoker Award for best illustrated narrative, and the Hugo for best related book, it's a haunting story worth re-reading again on any weekend.





**7. Sandman:  
A Dream of a Thousand Cats**

Presenting an alternate reality where humans were tiny and enslaved to catdom, ultimately liberating themselves by dreaming of another reality where humans became masters, and cats their pets, this single-issue story from "The Dreaming" series is food for thought—what **WOULD** happen if we found ourselves at the mercy of a cat's paw, should one cat succeed in her mission to get a thousand cats to dream the same dream of freedom?



**8. Manosaur by Elbert Or**

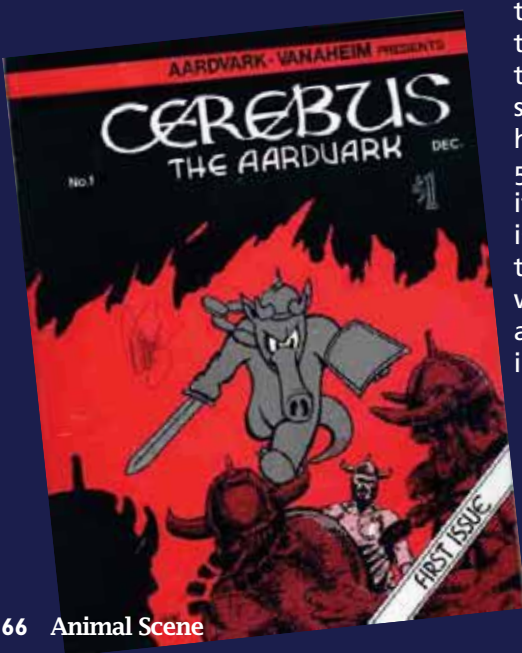
No words populate the charming world of Manosaur (an overly civilized T-Rex with an adoring corgi for company), but there are moments when the reader may wonder if the dinosaur's misadventures in trying to date once paralleled its creator's (who is now very happily married). But the sight gags are fun, involving the dilemma of a ridiculously large creature cursed with extraordinarily tiny forelimbs.

**9. Cerebus the Aardvark by Dave Sim**

Hailed by Alan Moore as the hydrogen to the periodic table of comics, the 300-issue series tackled a variety of topics and its experimental tone had the protagonist shifting from parody to social commentary. While the somewhat acerbic character may be hailed on some lists as part of the top 50 or top 100 of comic book greats, it can certainly be said this aardvark is a tough act to follow, spawning the term "Cerebus Syndrome"—when a body of work becomes more ambitious than when it was first intended.

**10. Honorable mention: Liz Climo's series and Sandra Boynton**

The heart-warming silliness of Liz Climo's characters are great stress-busters in a busy day, and Sandra Boynton is no slouch in that department either. Depicting various adorable beasts—Climo often has sea creatures, reptiles or dinosaurs in her repertoire, while Boynton often favors farmyard animals—the positive messages they spread often talk about unconditional love, acceptance, and the administration of large quantities of candy or chocolate in an emergency.





# ROAD TRIP!

Here are a few tips on how to take your pet along as a passenger

By MAAN D'ASIS PAMARAN

**I**t is so adorable to see a cute little doggie sitting quietly in a car and staring out the window as his owner zips by on the highway. That heartwarming sight gets you wondering if you can do that with your own little precious fluff of fur.

Visions of strolling down a pet-friendly park where your big dog can run free flash through your mind, or maybe you can see your little baby sitting prettily in a pet satchel, popping her head up occasionally to give a tiny meow (yes, why not bring a cat if it's well-behaved?) as you take her shopping.

These are all possible, as more and more establishments are now setting themselves up to be pet-friendly. The first challenge would be: how to get your pretty little baby out there. Here are some tips on how to take your pet on a road trip:

**1. Take baby steps.** If you are planning to go on a long haul trip, it's a good idea to start small. Acquaint your pet with the concept of riding in a moving vehicle. Days before your outing, go out on short distances, such as around the block in your car. This will help you observe how he behaves, which will then help you gauge whether you need to put your pet in a crate or carrier.



**2. Feed your pet just right.** Don't overfeed your pet before a car trip. Even if he is already used to long journeys, there is still a possibility of car sickness. A light meal three or four hours before the trip is ideal.

**3. Don't feed your pets while you're on the move.** Keep water intake at the right levels too, so there are fewer chances that your pet will need to pee while in transit.

**4. Shake it off.** Take your dog for a short walk or play with your kitty before your trip begins. This will help to calm him down and work off all the excess energy. If you are taking long trips, stop every two hours to stretch your legs—and those of your pet. Never forget to bring a leash or harness though so that your pet doesn't accidentally run away!

**5. Keep safety in mind.** If you think your dog will be overly excited or anxious in the vehicle, it is better to use a crate. A cat is also better off boxed in, to prevent it from running loose and getting under your car pedals. Under no circumstances should you have your pet in the front seat or worse, on your lap when you drive. This is very distracting and therefore, very unsafe. You might want to invest in a pet harness for your car, especially if you plan to take frequent road trips with your furry co-pilot.

**6. Pack it in.** Some of the things you need to bring are food, a bowl, an extra leash, a pooper scooper, plastic bags, and, of course, water. You may opt to bring a favorite chew toy or a blanket to ease boredom and anxiety. If you are putting your pet in a carrier, make sure to bring along extra lining.

**7. Close that window.** While the quintessential image of pet on the road may be that of a cute dog with its snout hanging out the car window, experts advise that it is best to just blast that air-conditioning if your pet needs it, and keep the



windows closed. Airflow and road debris (not to mention Metro Manila pollution) can irritate your pet's eyes and nose. There have also been instances where pets simply jump out the window in pursuit of something they see; you don't want your pet to be the subject of another sad story. While you're at it, employ a child-lock on the doors and windows.

**8. Zip and click.** If you choose not to use a crate, don't just leave your pet free to wander about in your car. There are pet seatbelts that connect your dog's harness to a regular car seatbelt. However, restraining devices should never be attached to a dog's collar.

**9. Never leave your pet in the car alone.** Even if the window is open or even for just a "few minutes," this is an absolute, total no-no that is considered animal abuse. Temperatures can rise quickly inside a parked car and this can cause heatstroke.

**10. Cover up.** Often, the only reason why cats get to ride in a car is to go to the vet, so keep your cat calm by covering the carrier with a light cloth. Arrange the cloth so that your cat can see you, if possible, but not out the windows. According to the PETA website, the sight of the earth or sky speeding past causes most cats to panic, begin open-mouthed breathing, and howl miserably.

**11. Be patient.** Your dog or cat may either become anxious or overexcited, and may begin to bark, howl, meow, cry, or even try to escape their carriers. Remember that your pet is not human and that being in a vehicle can be a very scary experience for it. He or she isn't doing that to irritate you; it is a genuine emotion, and you owe it to your pet to understand how they feel. ■



## I DON'T HAVE A CAR; NOW WHAT?

Here's the good news: RA8485, otherwise known as the Animal Welfare Act, Section 4, states, "It shall be the duty of any owner or operator of any land, air or water public utility transporting pet, wildlife and all other animals to provide in all cases adequate, clean and sanitary facilities for the safe conveyance and delivery thereof to their consignee at the place of consignment. They shall provide sufficient food and water for such animals while in transit for more than twelve (12) hours or whenever necessary."

But this is for shipping your pets to other destinations. Other considerations apply when you're traveling with your pet over a fairly short distance to bring him or her to the vet. Here are some tips for making the trip less painful for both of you:

Do your research. Find out who the closest veterinarian is to you who

has a good reputation and whom others can vouch for.

When commuting by jeepney, bus, or other local public transportation, it is best to use a carrier. You can borrow one from friends (carriers are not always in use, after all), because boxes and cardboard carriers will not withstand a frantic dog or cat trying to get loose. Your pet may feel overwhelmed by the noise and the feeling of being surrounded by unfamiliar people, so keeping him confined in a sturdy plastic-lined box if you don't have a carrier (with air holes, of course) is your best bet.

If traveling by taxi, it is best to use apps for booking cab services and informing them ahead of time that you'll be taking a four-legged passenger along for the ride. This is crucial, because once they agree, it's a contract they are obliged to fulfill. You will still need a carrier, though, and if your pet poops or pees in

the cab, you are obliged to pay for cleaning it up. Never agree to place your pet in the trunk! If a driver insists on this, report him to his company, as your pet may asphyxiate in the trunk.

Many bus companies allow pets to be carried on board. If necessary, pay for a second seat so that you won't have to be burdened by the carrier. The same goes for a jeepney; it's best to pay for both front seats so that the driver will be happy and you and your pet will have space.

If your dog is not socialized, you may want to wait till you have a sturdy carrier and can use a taxi's services. You do not want your dog snapping at other passengers. If this is a problem, consider investing in a home visit by the vet. It's certainly more expensive but will save you much aggravation and the potential of having to pay for the medical expenses of whomever your dog bites. ■ *(With additional research by CFB)*



# LOVE, BIRDS

Here's how your feathered friends show affection

By MAAN D'ASIS PAMARAN

**Y**ou will often hear people say that they prefer keeping dogs or cats as pets because these can show their owners signs of affection. Animal experts say, though, that other animals have their own ways of showing their love. Here we give an insight into bird body language so you can tell if your pet thinks that you are the best thing since birdseed.

**1. Look into his eyes.** Birds can control their irises, enlarging and shrinking their pupils rapidly. This display is called 'flashing' or 'pinning'; birds may do this when they are excited, greatly interested in something, or when they are angry, frightened, or aggressive. You have to take this into context and look into other cues to know if he is feeling frisky or threatened.

**2. Bring on the noise.** Here are some verbal cues that will let you know if your bird is one happy camper:

**a. Chattering.** Happy birds generally chatter (but remember, some bird breeds are silent so know whether this is true about your bird first). A soft chattering sound can be a sign of contentment. When your bird makes a louder chattering noise, it could mean that he is trying to get your attention, or remind you that

he is

there. In the wild, birds often chatter in the evening before going to sleep to connect with other members of the flock—sort of their way of telling the others how their day went at the office.

**b. Talking or whistling.** As in the human world, whistling is a sign of appreciation—note that what goes through their minds are much different from what a construction worker's, though! In your bird's case, these vocalizations are often signs of a happy, healthy, content animal. Some birds love an audience and sing, talk, and whistle the most when others are around. Other birds will remain quiet when they have an audience. Small birds such as budgies chirp it up when they are feeling happy.





**c. Purring.** This does not sound the same as a cat's purr; a bird's sounds are more like a soft growl. This can be a sign of either contentment or annoyance. When you hear him purr, you have to then take a moment to look at the other indicators to be sure about how the bird is feeling. If the purr seems more like a growl, it means that you need to back off as he is feeling aggressive.

**d. Tongue-clicking.** By clicking his tongue against his beak, your bird may be entertaining himself or asking to be petted or picked up (assuming your bird is the type that can and should be handled; again, you should know this about him first!).

**e. Beak grinding.** When you hear your bird grind his beak, it means he's happy, contented, and relaxed.

**3. Check the crest.** Birds such as cockatoos and cockatiels have beautiful, expressive crests. A bird with his crest held back, with just the tip tilted up, is usually a picture of contentment. If he is happy to see you, he will often lift his crest.

**4. Wing it.** A bird flapping his wings may mean that he is trying to get your attention or displaying happiness; it can also be taken literally as him getting his exercise.

**5. Tell tails.** Just like a dog, a bird may wag his tail to tell you that he is glad to see you. There is another side to it, though; tail wagging can also be a sign that he is getting ready to poop. In any case, this sign is often helpful if you are trying to house-train your bird.

**6. Let him spit it out.** Regurgitation is the expulsion of contents from the mouth, esophagus, or crop (expanded,

muscular pouch near the gullet or throat, often used to store food). If your bird pins his eyes, bobs his head, and stretches out his neck, then regurgitates his dinner... well, be happy instead of grossed out. He is simply showing you how much he loves and appreciates you. Reach for a tissue to wipe away your happy tears...then his mess.

**7. Be a tree.** Birds can be touchy-feely too. Once out of the cage, affectionate bigger birds like cockatiels will often fly to your shoulder to perch. Your cockatiel may also nibble at your jewelry or play with your hair. He may try to groom your eyebrows for you. This is the same behavior that birds can display with their mates. Birds can nip playfully, but as with any species, affection should never be painful. ■

## BIRDIE BODY LANGUAGE

Here are more cues to look for to see how your bird feels about you

Angry or agitated birds will pin their eyes. While this can also mean that your pet has seen something exciting, it can also be a signal that he is getting mad and is about to strike. Another cue is when you see that the bird is flipping his wings at you (yes, there is an ironic joke in there somewhere). Wing flipping can mean that your bird is angry or in pain. If he flips his wings and it is accompanied by a hunching of the shoulders and head bobbing, he is trying to get your attention and is most likely asking to be fed. That said, flipping can also be a mating behavior.

If a bird wants to show his dominance, he may start tapping his feet. This universal human sign for impatience means territory marking in bird world. This may happen when your pet feels that something or someone is invading his space. Some birds may also use beak wiping as a way to mark their territory; this

behavior is often displayed when a new bird arrives on the scene. That said, birds are fastidious when it comes to keeping up appearances, so they may also wipe their beaks when done with a meal.

When your bird does a cute little curtsey with its wings slightly raised, it means that he is asking for attention either from you or from a potential mate. When your feathered friend is crouching with her head tipped downward toward you, and perhaps bobbing her head, she is asking to be petted or scratched. If you ignore his motions, he may try to cajole you into a head-scratch by emitting a burst of little begging chirps.

Lastly, if you see your pet holding their wings away from their body, it means that they are feeling too hot. Birds don't sweat, so they depend on air that reaches the underside of their wings to keep them cool. The more uncomfortable he is with the high temperatures, the farther he holds his wings away from his body. ■



# HOW TO FOSTER WHEN YOU'RE FOSTERING

By PATRICIA VEGA



Every animal deserves a loving home. As responsible pet owners, we make sure that our furbabies are raised

in an environment that enables them to lead healthy, happy lives.

But for every well-cared-for house pet, there are countless more stray cats and dogs roaming the streets—and if they're lucky, they are rescued from inhumane conditions and placed in animal shelters.

These shelters, operated by animal rights advocates such as Philippine Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) Philippine Animal Rescue Team, and Philippine Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PSPCA) are not meant



to permanently house strays and rescues, but serve only as a temporary home until they are ready for adoption.

But as non-profit organizations, animal shelters run on limited resources and are, more often than not, stretched to full capacity (or, more often than not, beyond) and are unable to take in additional animals, except for the most dire of cases.

While this ensures that their caretakers are still able to provide a modicum of care for the animals, an overcrowded shelter environment is not the most conducive space for those in need of medical and emotional attention. Even worse: other strays that could have been sheltered are left to roam free and

be in harm's way, or impounded and euthanized by city shelters because nobody stepped up and claimed responsibility.

### **WHAT IS FOSTERING, AND HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM ADOPTION?**

It will take the proverbial village to solve the problem of overpopulation and irresponsible pet ownership, but animal-loving households can help free up rescue and shelter services by fostering cats and dogs until they are ready to move into a new home.

Fostering pets is not a task to be taken lightly. Bringing a new animal into your home, however temporarily, entails affection, commitment, resources, and the cooperation of the human and non-human members of the household.

Consider the responsibilities of raising your own pet: the cost of food and healthcare, the time and space allotted for play, exercise, and emergency care, the discipline needed for training and socialization. If you feel that you are up to these tasks, then you are definitely ready to foster a pet.

But why foster, instead of adopting a shelter animal outright? While the end goal of fostering and adoption are the same—to provide a loving home for strays and rescues—fostering is usually the middle step between rescue and adoption. It allows shelter animals to become used to interacting with caring humans and furry friends; the same holds true for house pets, who are compelled to improve

their socialization skills when foster pets are regularly introduced into a household.

Fostered pets, or pet wards, also receive basic manners and obedience training, which increases their chances of adoption. The time-bound aspect may also play a factor for some pet owners who have an abundance of love but not enough resources to care for a new animal full-time.

Once you've made the decision to foster a pet, the next step is to inquire with your local foster pet program; in Metro Manila, PAWS and Compassion and Responsibility for Animals (CARA) Welfare Philippines, offer foster programs for their shelter cats and dogs.

Potential fosterers undergo a strict evaluation process and are asked to sign an agreement form delineating their responsibilities; PAWS and CARA reserve the right to decline applicants and to request for care updates from their fosterers.

While much of the costs and responsibilities rest on the fosterer, fostering pets from shelter organizations has its advantages. First, you are able to pick a pet ward that suits the level of care that you are able to give: you can pick a smaller pet if you don't have a big home, or pick difficult behavioral cases if you have prior experience with obedience training. The organizations will provide you with your prospective ward's history to help you assess suitability.

CARA and PAWS also offer discounted veterinary services and can contribute to the care costs

depending on the financial status of foster parent and availability of shelter resources. And lastly, they take in the pet wards once the contracted foster period is completed and have equally stringent protocols in place for adoption.

Another way to foster pets is to personally take in strays: no paperwork and approvals involved, but the responsibility to find adoptive homes for the animals rests solely on you, the foster parent.

Pet ward concerns vary per case, but foster parents will do well to keep an eye on their ward's physical and emotional health before introducing it to the other household pets. Having a time frame makes it easier to plan the care and rehabilitation of your ward: set realistic health and behavioral goals, and above all, shower your ward with the love and affection that it did not have in its previous living situation.

Perhaps the most difficult part of fostering is returning your happy and healthy ward back to the shelter. Forming an attachment is unavoidable, but knowing that you have helped prepare a pet for its new home, should balance your feelings of loss with joy and accomplishment.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals suggests becoming actively involved in finding an adoptive home for your wards to help ease the transition.

And if that doesn't work, then perhaps the adoptive home for your ward is your own. ■

# SUCCESS STORIES

Alice Sarmiento, writer and kitten foster parent

**1) How many pets do you have at the moment (foster or otherwise)? Please identify by name, age, and species (or specific breed when applicable)**

I'm caring for 11 animals. Three live with me (Bush, Cheney, Little Penguin); four with my dad (Hobo, Little Hobo, Penguin, and Moses); and four with my mom (Sandwich, Florentine, Paul Stanley, and Ginger the dog). That's 7 adult cats and one dog: domestic short-haired cats of unidentifiable mixed breeds, same goes for the dog. Two cats are going to be adopted out in a week by my aunt.

**2) When and why did you first decide to foster a pet? How many pets have you fostered since then?**

I began fostering in 2011 after a stray I found died of intestinal prolapse. I was supposed to donate her carrier to PAWS, then ended up taking home two kittens to foster: Sandwich and Maya. Maya has been adopted out through the shelter, while I adopted Sandwich.

**3) Many foster pets are abandoned pets or rescues from inhumane conditions (abusive owners, natural disasters, etc.). What challenges or special needs have you encountered in fostering these pets? How different are these needs from those of non-foster pets?**

Many of the animals who are fostered require attention (medical and emotional) they can't get living in a large shelter population. Fostering is a form of rehab for most; for others, it's a way to alleviate the overburdened, volunteer-driven shelter system.

**4) Do your foster and non-foster pets get along? Do your non-foster pets get jealous of the attention you give your foster pets? If so, how do you manage this?**

They're still animals, so of course



*Talia and Pancake are two of Alice Sarmiento's fostered cats. Both are still at the PAWS shelter awaiting a loving home.*

there's a period of adjustment when other cats are introduced into the clowder. Sometimes I isolate the newly fostered ones in an open carrier or separate room, to let them know there's a safe space for them, then allow them to come out whenever they're ready.

**5) As foster pet parents, what development goals do you set when caring for and training your pets? How do you know when your foster pet is ready for adoption? How long do foster pets stay in your care?**

I make sure they're spayed or castrated and their vaccines and deworming are complete before they're adopted out to new pet owners, as in people who've never had cats. I know they're ready once a vet clears them. Sometimes they have problems socializing, and that means they need to stay with me longer. Stress can be fatal to a cat's health.

**6) Is caring for a foster pet more expensive than caring for a non-foster pet?**

It can be, because as kittens you get them at a period when they need to go through bi-weekly deworming and vaccinations. If you foster through a shelter or NGO, the shelter takes care of the expenses—but it also means

depleting their resources. Proper care is always expensive, but there's no other option, and fostering is just part of my belief that since cats didn't have anything to do with the urban conditions we've made so inhospitable to them, we have to at least make things easier. It's a matter of pitching in to create a more humane environment that benefits everyone in the end.

**7) Have you adopted one of your foster pets?**

Three. I've adopted three.

**8) Are you able to keep tabs on your former foster pets? If so, how are they doing now?**

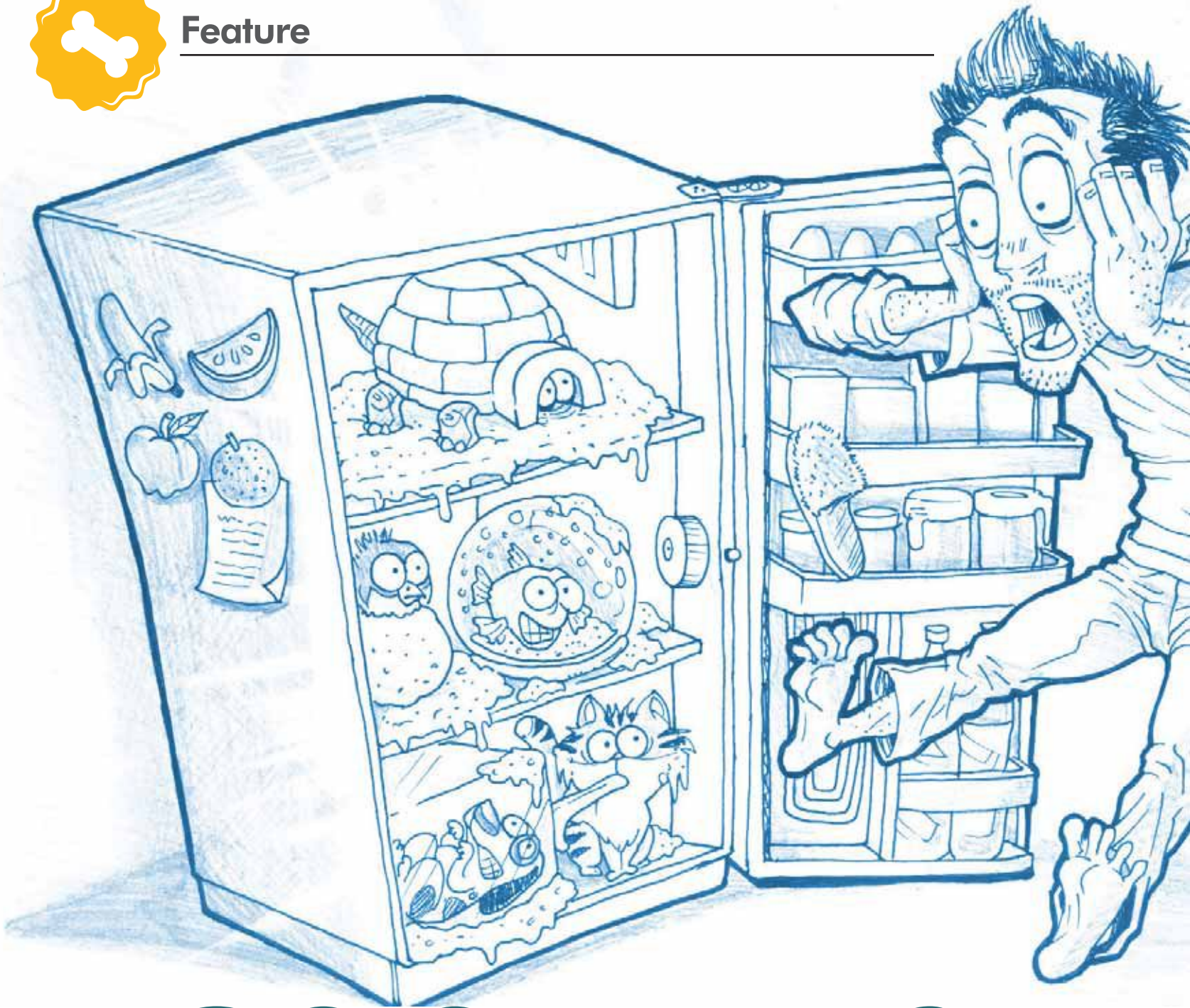
Some of them, especially the ones adopted by my friends. The ones I fostered through PAWS, (I have to trust) are in good hands because of how rigorously they screen adopters.

**9) Why should prospective pet parents consider fostering a pet?**

Get a pet if you can take care of it. It teaches responsibility and compassion and you learn to trust other people to love what you love.

**10) Do you have any advice for people considering fostering pets?**

Get a vet you can trust and communicate openly with about your pets.



# COOL PETS

WAYS TO KEEP YOUR PETS COOL THIS SUMMER

By JOSE JOEL QUIZON

**A**

s temperatures rise, humans have a relatively easy time keeping themselves cool during the dry and hot season. However, the same is not true for our pets. To start with, most of the furry friends many of us have in our homes were not even originally intended to live in tropical climates. The good news is there are steps we can take to make sure they remain cool and safe for rest of season.



**1. Get to know your pet.** It doesn't get more basic than this. A lot of pet owners today still make the mistake of not learning about the quirks that come along with the kind of pet they are adopting. To make things simple for everyone, different breeds have different needs. This is especially true during the summer.

Let's take cats and dogs as an example. Much like cats, dogs dissipate heat by panting. For the most part, this technique allows them to get by when exposed to high levels of temperature. However, there are certain breeds, like bulldogs, pugs, Pekingese, Boston terriers, and Persian cats that have compromised upper airways that give them more difficulty removing heat in their bodies through panting. If you have a pet you love and don't know what its special needs are, then it's about time that you opened your browser and start learning more about it and its special needs.

**2. Making the cut.** This one's a no-brainer. If you own a pet that's really on the furry side—like a Pomeranian or a Shih Tzu—chances are you'll need to get him groomed to keep him cool. Don't shave your pet (and don't do it yourself!) though. The layers of dogs' coats protect them from overheating and sunburn. Go to a professional groomer and be sure to stay as your pet gets the treatment. Brushing cats more often than usual can keep them from getting sick due to excessive heat.

**3. Hydrate.** This is more crucial for pets during the hot season. Panting is effective in allowing animals to cool down because it helps evaporate fluids from the respiratory tract. But not all animals can pant. You can help replace these

fluids and prevent dehydration by leaving out water or water alternatives that your pets can access anytime. Water alternatives are especially great for pets since they replenish electrolytes and taste great.

**4. Timing is everything...**at least when spending time outdoors. If your pet needs walking, save your daily walks for early in the morning or in the evening once the sun has set. Do this and you'll actually make the activity pleasant for your pet as he'll have an easier time breathing and the ground will be cooler on the pads of his paws.

**5. vBe sensitive.** If going outdoors during the day can't be helped, be sure to pay attention to the needs of your pet. Find him a shady place he can rest. Remember that your pet does not wear shoes. He has nothing protecting his paws from scorching asphalt or other hot street surfaces.

**6. Bath time.** Be careful; you don't bathe your pet every day, not even during summer. Doing so can either make them sick or cause their skin to dry. A quick weekly shower for pets that bathe (like dogs and a few cats) is enough to keep their coats clean and cool. Use a moisturizing or mild shampoo so that you don't strip away too much moisture from their skin.

**7. Read the signs.** As pet owners, we can do everything we can to keep our pets cool. However, there will always be unforeseen circumstances that can cause them to overheat. If this happens, the best weapon you can use to keep your pet safe is knowledge. Be ready to read the signs. Symptoms of overheating in pets include excessive panting or difficulty breathing,

increased heart and respiratory rate, drooling, mild weakness, stupor, or even collapsing. They can sometimes also include seizures, bloody diarrhea, and vomit along with an elevated body temperature of over 104 degrees.

**8. Out of the car and into the house.** Never, ever leave your pets alone inside a car regardless of the circumstances. The temperature inside your car can quickly climb to 140 degrees Fahrenheit during the summer. If you're going somewhere to beat the heat and you know there's a chance that that establishment does not allow pets, then it's better that you just leave yours at home where they can enjoy the cool tiled floor.

**9. Party animal.** Taking your pet with you to attend a beach barbecue? Be sure to never forget to pay attention to him. Pets can often times wander off during parties. Especially if the event is held during the day, your pet can end up in some serious trouble if not taken care of. In addition, you might want to bring food and water for him or at least watch which items he gets access to. Remember that most things served during parties can be poisonous for pets. Keep them away from alcoholic beverages as these can lead to intoxication or cause depression and even a coma. Also, avoid chocolates, raisins, grapes, onions, and products with xylitol.

Summer can be fun for everyone if proper care and caution is taken. Just always remember that your pets cannot take care of themselves. They need you to look after them, especially during days when temperatures are scorching. If you can manage it, bring them inside airconditioned rooms, especially during the afternoon. Follow these simple steps and you and your pet are sure to have a great time with one another. ■

Quick cooling tips for popular pets; these are general suggestions, and you should adjust them based on the breed of your pet and any special needs it may have.  
*(Compiled by CFB)*

### DOGS

In addition to the many tips above, give them drinks of cool (even iced) water, let them play in water if they like, and keep them in the shade. Do not use cooling gel pads on dogs.

### CATS

As they only sweat through their paws, and can only cool down by licking themselves, give them access to the bathroom when you're not home. Use a mix of rubbing alcohol and water to lightly mist their ears and paw pads if they are panting from the heat. You can also cool their fur down by moistening paper towels and gently stroking them with these from the head down their backs, bellies, paw pads, armpits, under the chin, and outside the ears. Avoid using cooling gel pads as cats can be poisoned by what's inside.

### BIRDS

If they are kept outdoors, consider using an extra roof for their enclosure or cage, and moving them to a shadier area. Birds have no glands and cool themselves off by panting, so provide them with fresh water daily. You can also mist the plants and area near their cages daily; some breeds of birds like being sprayed with water. Watch out for signs of heat stress, which varies from breed to breed. If you can handle your bird, keep the featherless area under their wings clean. Ideally, their cages should be cleaned daily.

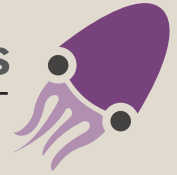
### HAMSTERS, RABBITS, MICE, AND OTHER SMALL FURRY PETS

Keep their cages clean so that flies and maggots won't be attracted by the mess. Check if your particular pet can have its coat trimmed if it has long fur. Ensure their cages or enclosures are not in direct sunlight at any time of the day. Provide fresh drinking water daily. Some of these pets will appreciate moisture-rich fruits like watermelons; check if their diet includes such fruits. Rabbits will appreciate having their ears misted daily, and may appreciate having cold vessels in their cages. Make sure they have adequate ventilation.

### REPTILES

Yes, they are becoming popular, and yes, they can suffer from the heat. Even breeds that bask in the sun need to be able to retreat to shaded areas when the heat becomes too much for them. Fans should only be used to circulate air; some breeds will not appreciate having this aimed at them. Amphibians will need cooler water temperatures, so do check their habitats daily. Air conditioning can be a great help for most reptiles; if this is too expensive or not available, monitor humidity levels in their habitats instead. You can also use ice to help cool them down. ■





# goldfish mania 2015



By ANGEL AMPIL  
Photos By JEFFREY LIM

**G**oldfish Mania 2015, a national goldfish competition, was recently held at Z Square Mall, Banawe, Quezon City, with the aim of promoting goldfish keeping among the general public, to teach them more about the standards of the hobby, and about how to select good quality fish.

Enthusiasts and the curious alike found the opportunity to have fun while immersing themselves in the world of goldfish keeping. A total of 38 entries spread across 7 categories joined the show.

Judges for Goldfish Mania 2015 were Bruce Kenneth Tan, Michael Go, Phillip Kaw (Neuva Pet Center), and Derrick Gaw (Tropiquarium).

The event was organized by the Philippine Association Of Goldfish Enthusiasts (PAGE), a non-profit organization and fish club composed of fish hobbyists with a distinct interest in keeping



1. Visitors peer at the goldfish on display. 2. Trophies and prizes for the winners from PAGE. 3. (Left to right) Show organizers Bruce Kenneth Tan, Harry Lim, Sigmund Munoz, Paul Luap, Galvin Garma, and Jeffrey Villegas.

# EVENTS



9

10

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- 4. Ranchu/Lionhead Division Champion  
Owner : Bryan Lim
- 5. Ryukin Large Champion / Grand Champion  
Owner : Bryan Lim
- 6. Oranda Large Division Champion  
Owner : Bryan Lim
- 7. Oranda - Junior division Champion  
Owner : Derrick Pascual
- 8. Open - Junior Division Champion  
Owner : Mon Bernardo
- 9. Ryukin- Junior Division Champion  
owner : Jeffrey Villegas
- 10. Open - Junior Division Champion  
Owner : Mon Bernardo

goldfish. It is also concerned with goldfish husbandry and maintaining proper standards to achieve selective quality for hobbyists and breeders in the country.

"I can say that the Goldfish Mania 2015 is another milestone for PAGE. It was successful and fun as it has always been supported by the group, its members, and those who believe in goldfish keeping. This would not be possible without the unending support from our sponsors (Pet City, Nueva Pet Center, Tropiquarium, and Sakura) and to our mentor who is always there to guide us, Mr. Danny Tio," shares co-founder Harry Lim.

PAGE was founded by Lim, Paul Bautista, Galvin Garma, Lucky Chan, Jehu Maderazo, and Patrick Garces, and Goldfish Mania 2015 is the second fish show PAGE has conducted.

Those interested in learning more about goldfish keeping can join PAGE by searching for the "Philippine Association of Goldfish Enthusiasts" on Facebook. (Additional reporting and photographs by Bruce Kenneth Tan.) ■

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# NEW RULE FOR MAYOR AND RODENT: HANDS OFF

By MATT FLEGENHEIMER

**P**erhaps justice demanded a different coda, a sequel to redeem the suspect's questionable dexterity or enshrine it for all time.

Even local officials acknowledged that many in the crowd Monday morning, like fans at a stock car race, were drawn to the prospect of a spectacular crash. But a layer of plexiglass and some half-dozen feet separated the mayor and his city from the ending they deserved: a throng of cameras, an icy rain and an elected leader clutching a marmot for salvation.

It was not to be. One year after Mayor Bill de Blasio fumbled Staten Island Chuck, prompting international headlines and possible groundhog unrest, common sense and responsible animal medicine at last dictated a new way. Last year's Chuck died of internal injuries shortly after the fall, though de Blasio's culpability remains an open



question, with officials proffering an alternative timeline involving a second tumble.

On Monday, the next iteration of Chuck was lifted to the stage on what appeared to be a miniature elevator, wandering out of a hutch

and into a portable habitat. The groundhog sniffed, eyes darting, with its rear initially turned to de Blasio and other dignitaries. Then it veered their way, brooding for a moment. A hush came over the Staten Island Zoo.



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No shadow, the zoo declared. Spring was coming. Chuck remained untouched.

"Chuck, I want to thank you for this new approach," the mayor said. "I think we finally understand each other."

Though an act of common rodenticide in New York might well be celebrated under the right circumstances, de Blasio's purported role in the incident last year seemed to complicate an already fraught relationship with Staten Island. It was the only borough he did not carry in the 2013 election, and early in his term, he ran afoul of local custom by eating pizza there with a knife and fork.

After The New York Post revealed in September that the groundhog had died shortly after the fall - and that "Chuck" was, in fact, a female named Charlotte - de Blasio and his aides responded tersely to questions about the episode. At one point, the mayor deferred a query about his own feelings to the Staten Island Zoo.

Yet in recent days, as the anniversary approached, de Blasio appeared to embrace the legend of his villainy. On Friday, he said he had

convened a "task force of emergency preparedness officials and health officials" devising a plan to "wrap me in platinum so that no harm would befall me or any groundhog in the vicinity of me."

On Monday, he sustained the riff. In a fit of "groundhog diplomacy," he said, both the National Institutes of Health and the National Institutes of Groundhog Health had been summoned.

"I think we got NASA involved," the mayor added.

He grinned gamely as Ed Burke, deputy borough president on Staten Island, told the crowd that 2015 would not be a "leap year," before introducing "our hands-on and, today, hands-free mayor."

"Eddie Burke, ladies and gentlemen, he'll be here all week," the mayor said. "Try the veal."

Although the typical climax - a groundhog held aloft by a local luminary - might never be seen again, a certain pageantry remained. De Blasio noted that the Weather Channel had placed Chuck second on its list of the "Top 11 Groundhogs to Watch," behind Punxsutawney Phil in Pennsylvania. (On Monday, Phil predicted a protracted winter.)

A band played event-appropriate tracks like "Ain't Nothing but a Groundhog" and a song whose apparent chorus included the line "zoo, zoo, zoo, how about you?" A costumed groundhog wiggled a few feet away, high-fiving passers-by.

Children held signs cheering their bemused celebrity as it fidgeted in its enclosure.

"Chuck!" one read simply.

Peter Schultheis, 58, wore a groundhog hat he had acquired in Punxsutawney. He boasted that he was most likely the only person in attendance who had seen three famous groundhogs: Phil, Chuck and Malverne Mel of Long Island.

The mayor's return, he said, was essential for a creature held in high esteem.

"It's good that we have high-level representation," he said.

Even before the ceremony, there had been signs that the mayor was moving beyond the episode. In December, de Blasio was named "Person of the Year" for 2014 by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals - narrowly edging, the jokes went, other elected leaders who had slain two groundhogs.

On Monday, though, some attendees could not help but replay the last visit in their minds, preserving the mayor's perhaps-too-slick yellow gloves as damning evidence.

"It was so quick," Sophia Lombardo, 10, recalled, giving the amended proceedings her blessing.

Lucy DePeppo, 93, a zoo volunteer, suggested the mayor would have fared better if given another chance with Chuck because "he knows all about him now."

She looked up at the stage, with the masses clustering and the band crooning "zoo, zoo, zoo."

"We live and learn," she said, and soon the groundhog had emerged at its safe remove.

Spring was coming, and the fall seemed far away. ■(2015 *New York Times News Service*)

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# How to Tell If Your Bird Is Sick



By CLIFTON JAMES SAWIT

**O**wning a pet bird carries many unique challenges that just aren't present for owners of more common pets like cats or dogs. Unlike those pets, which are mammals, birds are more closely related to reptiles than to us humans. That means it may be trickier to understand your pet bird's health and physiology than it would be with a mammalian pet. This is why it is very important to be familiar with the signs of a sick bird before they come up.

## ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Healthy birds are alert and responsive to everything that goes on around them. They have excellent balance and will maintain an upright posture, using both legs equally to carry its weight. If perched, they will usually hold both wings close to their body at equal heights.

Sick birds, on the other hand, often sit around the bottom of the cage. They may be aggressive toward their cage mates, or they might have difficulty maintaining their balance. A bird with its head tucked in all the time may also be sick or injured.

## MAKING WEIGHT

Birds usually consume a regular amount of food and water every day, so a decrease in the amount a bird eats or drinks can also be a sign of illness. Sometimes, a sick bird will sit around and peck at its food, but will actually drop more food than it swallows. Weighing your bird regularly at the same time each day, usually right after it wakes up and before you feed it, will help you determine if your bird is eating right. If your bird loses more than 10% of its normal body weight, take it to a veterinarian as soon as you can.

The keel, that extension of the breastbone present in birds, should be well-muscled but easy to examine with your hands, or palpate. If muscle definition is lacking, then your bird may be underweight. If the keel is hard to palpate, then your bird is overweight and could use some diet and exercise. Hold back on those crackers for Polly!



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**BREATH OF LIFE**

Healthy birds have smooth, easy breathing, with their beaks closed when they are at rest. A bird that breathes with its mouth open while it is at rest is one of the clearest signs that a bird is sick. In fact, open-mouthed breathing suggests that a bird has been sick for quite some time.

Another sign of breathing trouble in birds is known as tail bobbing. Unlike us humans, birds lack a diaphragm, and use muscles on the bases of their tails to help expand their lungs while they inhale. If they are having trouble breathing, the tail muscles have to work harder, which causes the bird's tail to bob up and down.

Both of these signs of respiratory distress are very serious, indicating the later stages of illness, and require an immediate trip to the vet, and possibly hospitalization as well.

**Birds of a Feather**

A bird's skin and feathers are also good indicators of its overall health. Normal bird skin should be free of redness, swelling, lesions, or discharge. Check the skin under the wings, the scales on the feet and legs, and the bare facial patches found in some species of birds. Bare skin that should normally be feathered is usually a sign of disease, such as mites or mange, although young birds sometimes pick at their feathers before their first molt. This should change as soon as they learn to take better care of their feathers.

Sometimes birds that pick at the feathers in a particular area are indicating a pain response to a

disease in that area, causing itching and self-trauma. A skin biopsy from your vet can determine if a bird's feather picking is behavioral or caused by an underlying infection or disease. Feathers that are clumped up or stuck together can also be an indication of sickness.

**DROPPING HINTS**

A bird's droppings can tell us a lot about how healthy it is. Fortunately bird droppings don't smell like mammalian excrement! Birds do not have a cecum attached to their large intestines, and the gas and odors that result from fermentation are not produced. Lucky for the owners, as pet birds can poop up to 40 to 50 times a day!

Normal bird droppings are made up of three parts: feces, urate, and urine. The feces are usually an even green in color, and come from the intestines. The urate is the white portion that everyone is familiar with, and is usually equal in amount to the feces, and there is usually just enough urine to make the dropping glisten with wetness. Both the urate and urine come from the kidneys. This means that each of the three parts can change with each other or independently, sometimes because of changes in diet or because of disease.

A complete lack of feces in the droppings can indicate either a lack of food intake or an intestinal obstruction, which is uncommon in birds. There may be an egg stuck if the bird is female, or a foreign body in the digestive tract.

A change in color in the urate

from white to yellowish-green, might indicate a metabolic disease, such as liver disease, or a viral or bacterial infection. This is because of the presence of bile which stains the urate. Too much urine, or polyuria, can indicate diabetes, kidney disease, or excessive water intake. However, an increase in all three portions may simply mean that the bird is holding its droppings in for a longer time. For instance, a female laying eggs will only poop two to three times a day.

Blood in any of the droppings is not normal and requires immediate medical attention.

**VETERAN VETS**

Becoming familiar with the signs that your pet bird gives you can go a long way toward monitoring its overall health. Still, there is no substitute for a visit to your local veterinarian. An experienced vet is better trained to read the symptoms of animal illness, and can cut out much of the guesswork that goes with raising a healthy, happy pet bird.

In fact, it is a good idea to take your pet bird to your vet regularly without waiting for a crisis to erupt before you go for a consultation. Many bird owners only take their pets to the vet during emergencies, which means that the vet is not familiar with the normal disposition of that particular bird and will have nothing to compare its current state with. Build your bird's relationship with your local vet. After all, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure! ■



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*Former U.S. Marine Joe Bonfiglio, 24, and his pit bull assistance dog Zen, walk in to a building on the campus of Mercy College, in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2015. Zen has allowed Bonfiglio, 24, who was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, to get back to everyday activities. The Animal Farm Foundation in Dutchess County, New York, wants to change the stigma of pit bull dogs by training and donating rescued dogs to guide the blind and push wheelchairs or help people regain their mobility and avoid falls. (AP Photo/Richard Drew)*

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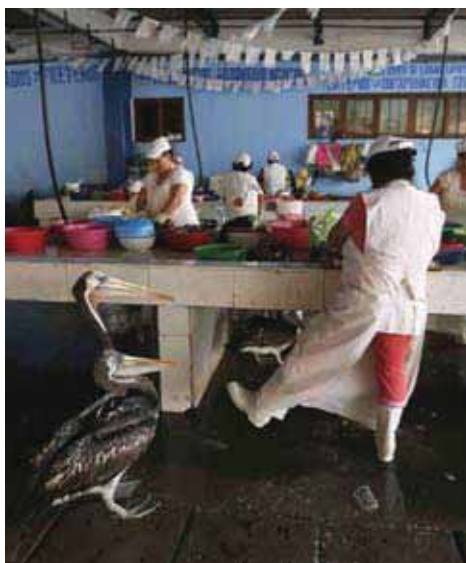
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- **CITY OF SAN FERNANDO, PAMPANGA:** St. Scholastica's Academy - January 31, 2015, 10:00 am - The Guidance Office (045) 455-3808 & 445-3467
- **PUERTO PRINCESA CITY, PALAWAN:** Palawan Hope Christian School - February 7, 2015, 10:00 am - Ms. Riza Eleazar (048) 434-2500 & (0917) 303-4479

## ANIMALS SEEN



*Bart the cat, nicknamed “zombie cat” on social media when he crawled his way out of a grave after a seemingly fatal traffic accident, is seen in a handout picture from the Tampa Bay Humane Society in Tampa, Florida February 10, 2015. Bart, who made international headlines last month when he surfaced five days after he was hit by a car and buried for dead, is now ensnared in a legal dispute over custody involving its owner and the Humane Society of Tampa Bay. Bart’s owner expected he would come home after treatment, but the Humane Society has decided to keep the cat after learning more about his home and “circumstances leading up to his burial,” the agency said on its website. REUTERS/Tampa Bay Humane Society/Handout via Reuters*



*A woman attempts to scare away pelicans, to prevent them from eating the leftovers of cut up fish, at a market in Chorrillos municipality in Lima, February 11, 2015. REUTERS/Mariana Bazo*



*This Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2015 photo provided by the Fort Worth Zoo, shows a heart-shaped spot on a yet-to-be named giraffe, in Fort Worth, Texas. Zoo spokeswoman Alexis Wilson says the marking on the animal that was born Jan. 11, has drawn attention, with Saturday being Valentine’s Day. (AP Photo/Fort Worth Zoo, Jeremy Enlow/Steel Shutter Photography)*



*A Bedouin shepherd walks with his sheep during a sandstorm near the southern city of Arad February 11, 2015. Southwest winds and dust transport from North Africa caused air pollution levels that are the highest recorded in the past five years, the Environmental Protection Ministry reported Wednesday morning. REUTERS/Amir Cohen*



*A zookeeper places a goat-shaped doll onto the back of an alpaca during a celebration event for the upcoming Spring Festival, at a wildlife park in Kunming, Yunnan province February 11, 2015. The Chinese Lunar New Year on February 19 will welcome the Year of the Sheep (also known as the Year of the Goat or Ram). REUTERS/Wong Campion*



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## THIS TIME, OUR QUESTIONS ARE TAKEN FROM LAST ISSUE, SO HAVE FUN!

**1. What breed of dog was featured on the cover of the February 2015 issue of Animal Scene?**

- a. Terrier
- b. Maltese
- c. Toy poodle
- d. Chihuahua

**2. This animal is featured on the twenty peso bill.**

- a. Whale shark
- b. Giant oyster
- c. Palm civet
- d. Tarsier

**3. This color of aquarium background is ideal for displaying the color of most fish varieties.**

- a. Black
- b. White
- c. None
- d. Blue

**4. What was the occupation of the last person featured in "Animal Person"?**

- a. Businessperson
- b. Animal breeder

- c. Student
- d. Veterinarian

**5. This is supposed to be lucky for a bride on her wedding day.**

- a. Seeing a toad run across the road.
- b. Hearing a cat sneeze.
- c. Having a hen peck at the door.
- d. Being visited by a butterfly.

**6. Which is a sign of affection from a cat?**

- a. Having it sleep near you.
- b. Having it bring you dead animals.
- c. Having it sit on your papers while you're working.
- d. None of the above.
- e. All of the above.

**7. Which of the following was NOT among our featured hero animals in the February issue of Animal Scene?**

- a. Snake
- b. Pot-bellied pig
- c. Lion
- d. Gorilla

**8. Which is a misconception about having pets and kids?**

- a. Pregnant women can coexist with pets.
- b. Pets can be protective of your children.
- c. Pets can be very patient with children.
- d. Pets are always too dirty to associate with toddlers.

**9. What's the hottest new pet cafe in Japan?**

- a. Cat cafes
- b. Dog cafes
- c. Owl cafes
- d. Snake cafes

**10. What is one of the big mistakes a rookie pet owner can make?**

- a. Control your pet's diet carefully.
- b. Assume your pet doesn't need the veterinarian's services.
- c. Make time to play and bond with your pet.
- d. Don't forget about doing research on how to care for your pet before getting one.

Answers:  
1. B  
2. C  
3. A  
4. D  
5. B  
6. E  
7. A  
8. D  
9. C  
10. B



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# THEY'RE 'KNIFE' BUT THEY DON'T CUT

BY: JING T. EUFRACIO

**L**as Farolas has added yet another interesting fish species to its collection of the bizarre, huge, river monsters. The Black Ghost Knife Fish, as improbable as it sounds, is not that strange after all.

The Black Ghost Knife Fish, in all its splendor, is a slim fish – with a flat elongated body – with caudal fins that undulates. The fish effortlessly swims horizontally or stays at ease vertically, like a black rod. No, they're not dead...it's a natural movement! (clarifies Las Farolas' COO, Bernie Repalbor)

The Black Ghost Knife Fish is one of the varieties of the Apterontidae family of Knife Fishes. A truly bony fish, it can reach approximately 20 inches in length. Unlike the Brown Knife Fish kind, this one has a shorter snout and a white band that runs throughout the caudal area. The ones at Las Farolas are about one foot long; and they're handsomely black.

The nickname has an unusual story. Some tribes at the Amazon jungle believed in the rumor that the souls of the dead inhabit the fish, so the name goes (although this story has never been substantiated).

This species is nocturnal and is carnivorous. They hunt for food at night and they feed on all types of live foods, meat, chopped earthworms, shrimps, frozen and flaked foods.

They are said to be timid and semi-aggressive. Timid, when first brought to a new habitat. But may appear aggressive towards smaller fishes in the tank. However, hobbyists tell, once they get acclimatized to their new environment, their temperament changes to the usual; they become friendly and no longer pose danger to other fishes in the tank. They prefer the darkly lit aquarium environment and they



hide among the vegetation and in the fine gravel set up in the aquarium. It has been observed that when they come to the point of being trusting, they even pick food from their keeper's hand.

There is quite a condition is keeping this kind of fish, though. Being a scale-less fish, Knife Fishes are prone to diseases. Those that were just caught in the wild may carry parasites that is why they need to undergo sterilizing process. They are also sensitive to changes in water condition. That is why they require a tank set-up with good filtration. Copper is the medication they are most sensitive to. At Las Farolas,

they are kept in an aquarium that is more than big for their tank requirement. And they share the tank with friend Corydoras from South Africa.

One very good news for those who will be stunned with interest for this fish is that they are widely available from fish breeders. And, neither are they in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Fishes. The Black Knife Fish at Las Farolas originated from the Amazon.

Las Farolas - the haven for freshwater fishes - exhibits a large variety of rare, the huge and the scariest creatures only seen in the wild. ■

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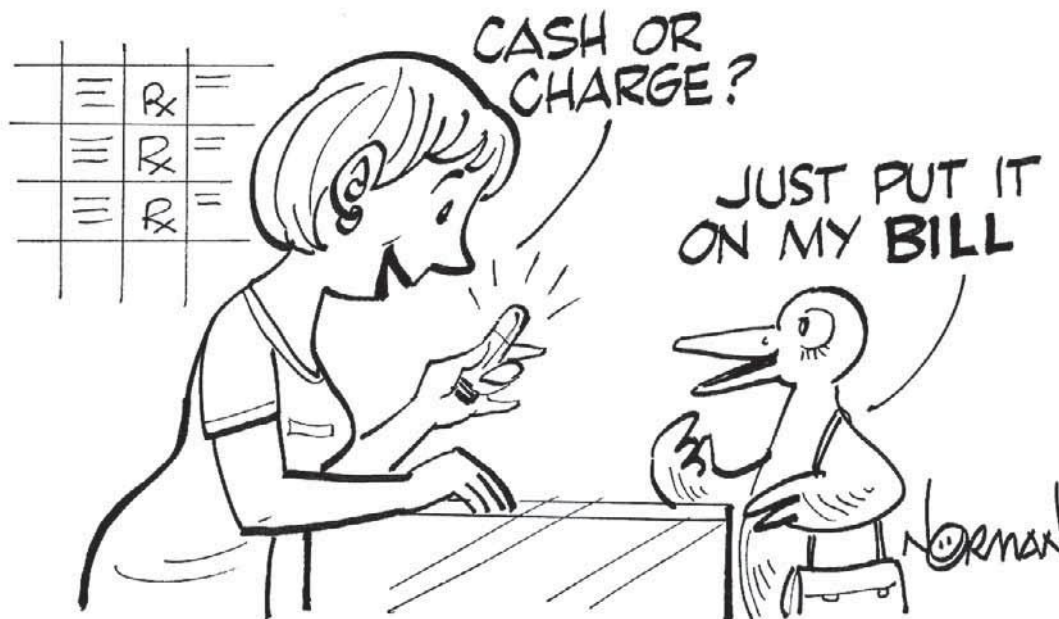
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Also out now:





**1.** A man walks into a pet store looking for a bird. He sees parrots, finches, doves, and many other species; at the back of the counter though is a what looks like a beautiful hawk in a cage, priced rather high. He goes up to the salesperson and asks, "Let me guess, that bird is more expensive because it's a bird of prey?"

"No, sir, but you'll see why in a moment," says the salesperson.

The bird then throws its wings into an unmistakable praying position and bows its head.

"You see sir, it's a bird of pray," says the salesperson.

**2.** One morning, a duck walks into a drugstore and buys some lip balm. When it comes to the counter, the clerk asks if the duck will be paying by cash or charge. The duck says, "Just put it on my bill."

**3.** A woman isn't feeling well and is told by her company nurse she needs to go to a veterinarian. Puzzled, she asks why.

"Because you may have either swine flu or bird flu," says the nurse. "If you have the former, all you need is oinkment, but if it's the latter, you'll need full tweetment."

**4.** The HR head of a company was surprised when a small finch turned up to apply for the position of receptionist. Not wanting to seem discriminatory, she let the finch take the aptitude test—and the finch passes with flying colors.

A bit surprised, she tells the finch, "You need to be able to type 60 words per minute..." and the bird demonstrates the ability to type 100 words per minute. She then tests the bird on dictation, and the finch surpasses all other candidates. Not wanting to hire a bird, she finally tells it, "You need to be bilingual for the position."

Whereupon the finch opens the window and goes, "Meow, meow!" bringing cats running from every direction.

**5.** A magician with a show keeps getting his act ruined by his new parrot, who keeps saying, "It's up his sleeve!" or "It's in his pants!" when he does sleight of hand. Nonetheless he takes the bird along when he performs on a cruise ship—and on the first night, the ship sinks.

The magician is able to get to a lifeboat in time, accompanied by his parrot. They've been drifting for three days when the parrot turns to him and says, "I give up...so where did you hide the ship?"

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# ANIMAL HEALING

**I**'ve always heard many beliefs about how animals help with healing those of us who are sick or injured—and I have always been a believer in their power to do so. There are so many touching stories in print and online of pets who stay loyal and who give strength to depressed, injured, incapacitated, and ill owners, and many a time we read about animals being there when other humans cannot, or will not, do the same. In fact, we featured

two miniature horses which performed comforting and cheering-up duties at local hospitals in a recent *Pet Bulletin*.

When I was in California several years ago, I met an Iraqi war veteran who preferred to live on the street instead of in military housing so that he would not lose his two cats. He let people pet the cats on the street, and we donated to their care. I asked why he preferred to live that way and he answered simply, "I can't give them up. They are my life."

And those of us who love animals will understand why—because so many animals bring the gift of truly unconditional love, the kind that heals

the spirit and the heart.

There are many decades-old studies by reputable institutes that show the connection between humans, animals, and healing. Simply petting your dog or cat can bring down your blood pressure; those who have other types of pets can derive a relaxing kind of pressure from merely watching them swim, move around, sing, or just be. Petting a pet is also proven to raise levels of oxytocin, a hormone crucial for healing and growing new cells.

I am learning a lot more about the healing connection between animals and humans. As I am still in the process of recovering from what was a life-threatening illness, I've found that the animals around me seem to have upped their comforting skills. They hover around me; the cats curl up to me when I work on my laptop and purr mightily, and the dogs have taken to staying around me in turns. While we cannot speak, I am very grateful for their kindness and concern for me.


Do you have an animal healing story? It would be wonderful to hear about it from you. ■

**"I CAN'T GIVE  
THEM UP. THEY  
ARE MY LIFE."**

# LAMB PRO BRAND DOG FOOD

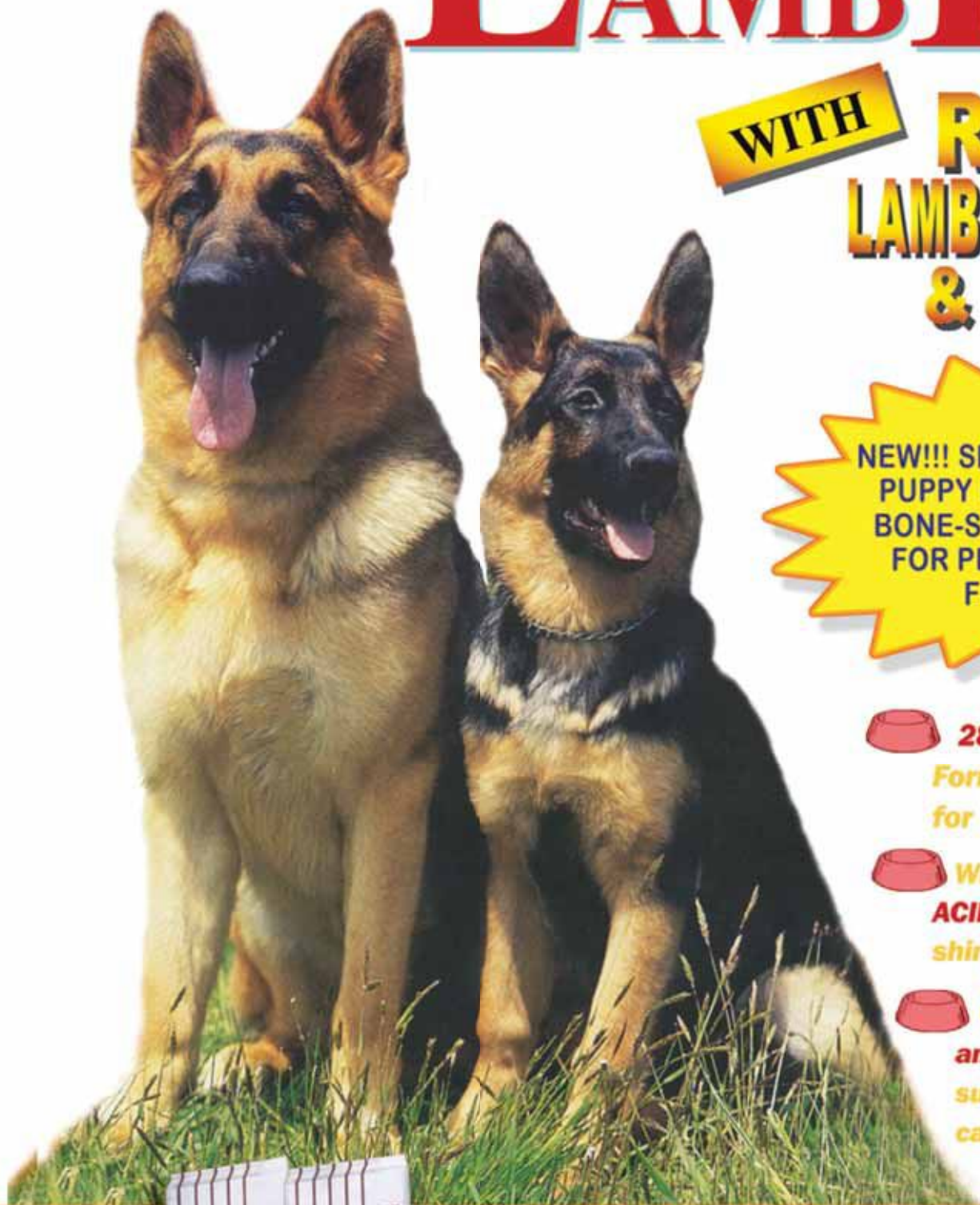
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**NEW!!! SMALL BITES FOR PUPPY FORMULA AND BONE-SHAPED KIBBLE FOR PERFORMANCE FORMULA**

 **28% protein for Puppy Formula and 27% protein for Adult Formula**

 **With OMEGA 3 & 6 FATTY ACIDS to help promote a shiny coat and healthy skin**

 **Contains GLUCOSAMINE and CHONDROITIN to help support joint flexibility and cartilage development**



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