

1 Editorial: Animal Cognition, Past Present and Future, a 25th Anniversary Special Issue**2 Debbie M. Kelly (University of Manitoba) & Stephen E. G. Lea (University of Exeter)**

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5 Twenty-five years ago, *Animal Cognition* released its first volume. This new peer-reviewed journal
6 sought to fill an open niche in scientific publishing for studies “investigating how animal (including
7 human) minds function and how they evolved” (p.1). The inaugural editor, Tatiana Czeschlik,
8 declared that the scope of this new journal was to publish studies that sought “to establish the
9 course of the evolution of ‘intelligence’, of the mechanisms, functions, and adaptive value of basic
10 and complex cognitive abilities – the evolution of intelligent behaviour and intelligent systems from
11 invertebrates to humans.” (Czeschlik, 1998, p.1) The manuscripts published in the first volume,
12 which comprised of two issues, supported this aim by including publications reporting on theoretical
13 positions, such as an argument by Griffin (1998) that the study of animal behaviour and cognition
14 must be expanded to include an organism’s conscious experiences or Benhamou’s (1998)
15 configuration-based model of place navigation by mammals, as well as the results of empirical
16 works, including studies examining whether stimulus preexposure would influence problem solving
17 abilities in octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) (Fiorito, Biederman, Davey & Gherardi, 1998), the tracking
18 and updating of visual information by young chicks (*Gallus gallus*) (Vallortigara, Regolin, Rigoni &
19 Zanforlin, 1998), if chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*) are capable of using human gaze when searching
20 for the location of hidden food (Call, Hare & Tomasello, 1998), and on a related topic, whether dogs
21 (*Canis familiaris*) could use cues given by humans to locate hidden food items (Miklósi, Polgárdi,
22 Topál & Csányi, 1998).

23

24 In celebration of the journal’s 25th anniversary, we (as present and past Editor-in-Chief) endeavoured
25 to invite contributions from authors who published in the first volume of *Animal Cognition* and
26 continue to influence the field, alongside researchers with international reputations as established

27 or rising leaders in the study of animal cognition. As this is a single issue dedicated to the anniversary
28 of *Animal Cognition*, out of necessity we were unable to include many deserving individuals who
29 have contributed to the field of animal cognition through their exemplary foundational or ground-
30 breaking research. We hope this issue serves as a spark that ignites submissions for further empirical
31 research articles, commentaries or dedicated special issues arising from the thought-provoking ideas
32 communicated through the publications within this anniversary special issue.

33

34 In honour of Tatiana Czeschlik's direction, we have organized the manuscripts within this issue
35 roughly in accordance with the five areas that she proposed, in her inaugural editorial, needed
36 further development. As Beran (2023) notes in his contribution to this issue, some of them call for
37 yet further development in the next twenty-five years, but we believe that we have progress to
38 report at the present anniversary, and that the papers in this issue (including Beran's) demonstrate
39 these achievements.

40

41 **1. Theoretical models and theory-derived hypotheses.** Czeschlik (1998) argued that
42 theoretical models and theory-driven hypotheses on the evolutionary roots of "intelligence"
43 was needed, and although this issue contains several manuscripts directly addressing this
44 concern, we have chosen to use a broader theme to include those that may only tangentially
45 consider evolution to permit a broad range of topics to be explored.

46 This issue starts off with a contribution authored by Michael Tomasello. Along with his
47 colleagues Josep Call and Brian Hare (Call, Hare, & Tomasello, 1998), he published a three-
48 part study investigating whether chimpanzees would use a human's gaze to find hidden food
49 items in the first volume of *Animal Cognition*. In his current contribution, Tomasello (2023)
50 reflects upon a broader theme in primate cognition through his review on the progress in
51 Great ape social cognition and metacognition. Using this foundation of knowledge,
52 Tomasello proposes a theory that describes how social cognition and metacognition may be

53 evolutionarily related. In the present issue, Benson-Amram, Griebing and Sluka (2023)
54 provide a compelling argument in their review that, although many studies of animal
55 cognition have historically focused on primates and birds (also see Section 2 below),
56 Carnivora will provide a distinct opportunity critical for testing of evolutionary hypotheses as
57 well as much needed laboratory and field comparative studies.

58 Philosophers and cognitive scientists have debated whether cognition extends beyond
59 the brain, not only to the body but the environment surrounding an organism. Questioning
60 “*what is cognition*” (and what is *not* cognition) is a fundamental question to the area of
61 animal cognition – and a topic we will return to at the conclusion of this editorial. In the
62 present issue, Lucia Jacobs (2023) adopts the 4E cognition framework of philosophy to
63 explore the implications of embodied cognition for olfactory cognition, and in doing so
64 presents the PROUST (Perceiving and Reconstructing Odor Utility in Space and Time)
65 hypothesis, which includes proposing a fifth “E” – that of evolution.

66 Studies of animal cognition often question what *representation* is present in the brain
67 that supports the behavior or cognitive processes under investigation. In the current issue,
68 Ken Cheng (2023) reflects on his research journey, which started with explorations to
69 understand the representational content of a navigating animal (initially focusing on rats and
70 pigeons), but further developed into a conceptualization of navigational servomechanisms.
71 Cheng builds on this view by proposing that these servomechanisms modulate the
72 performance of oscillators that propel movement. Exploring the interaction between
73 oscillators and servomechanisms provide fertile ground for understanding processes beyond
74 navigation.

75 The study of representations in orientation and navigation are further examined by Lee
76 (2023) in the, with an exploration of how spatial boundaries provide structure for both space
77 and time. Building on early research on geometric representations by Cheng (1986; also

78 described by Cheng 2023), Lee reviews select comparative research to elucidate the
79 connection between spatial mapping and temporal sequencing.

80 The differentiation between human cognition and nonhuman cognition is central to the
81 history of comparative psychology and continues to be evident in studies of animal
82 cognition. Hoeschele and colleagues (2023) argue in the current issue that human cognition,
83 and our own introspective experience of it, are fertile sources for hypotheses about animal
84 cognition – but that we need to use such hypotheses with an open mind, not least because
85 introspection is an unreliable guide to the facts even of human cognition. An example of this
86 process can be seen in the paper by Kacelnik, Valconcelos and Monteiro (2023) in the
87 current issue. Kacelnik et al use ideas drawn from economics and the study of human
88 decision making to devise elegant experiments that lead to clear conclusions about an
89 aspect of animal cognition, in their case showing that choices made by European starlings
90 depend on valuations learned previously, rather than value comparisons made at the
91 moment of choice. Not dissimilarly, Lemaire and Vallortigara (2023) in their contribution to
92 the current issue use the literature on the development of animacy perception in human
93 infants to guide experimentation on how newly hatched chicks respond to similar visual
94 stimuli.

95 Concept learning and categorization has certainly been an area of comparative interest
96 shared among researchers interested in human and animal cognition (e.g. Castro et al. 2015;
97 Brooks et al 2022). In the present issue, Mercado and Scagel (2023) present an argument
98 that an important component of concept learning, supporting why many species fail to show
99 a capacity to form “higher-order” relational concepts, may depend on an ability to shift
100 attention. Birds, and historically pigeons, have been the subject of considerable study when
101 it comes to concept learning and categorization. Pusch, Clark, Rose and Güntürkün (2023)
102 not only present an excellent complementary review of this literature for the current issue,
103 but they also link the perceptual and cognitive research to the neuroanatomical and

104 computational mechanisms supporting these cognitive abilities in birds; their review
 105 supports the need for ongoing comparative avian research to build a stronger foundation of
 106 knowledge informing our understanding of concept learning and categorization.

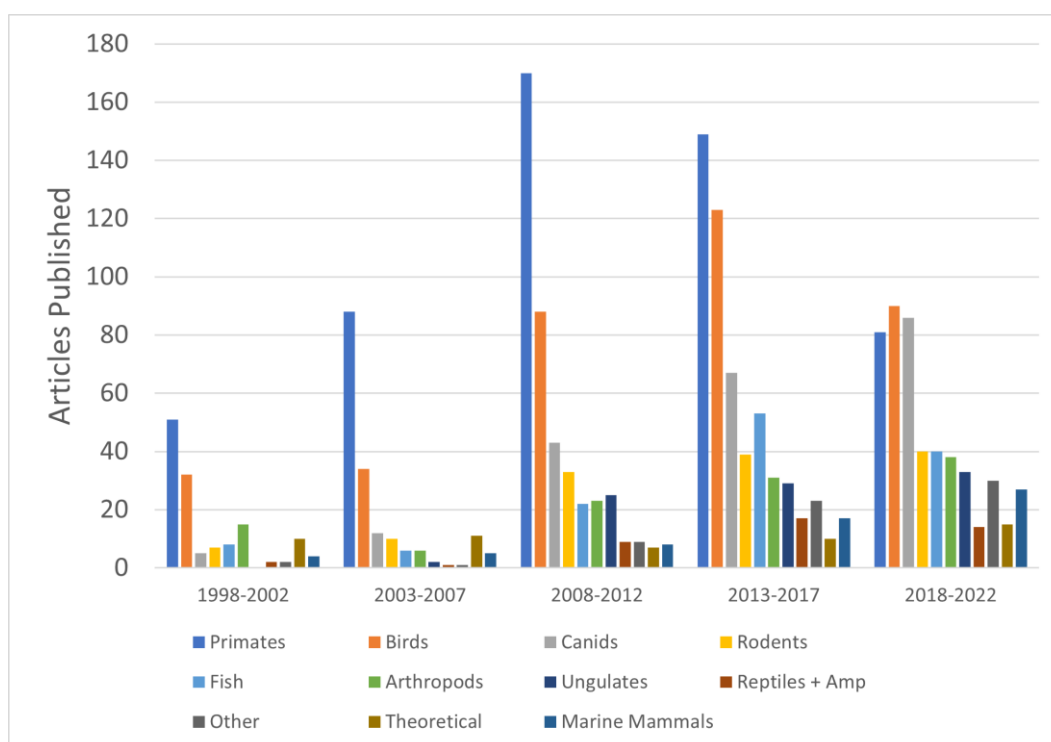
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108 **2. A larger number of species.** The study of animal cognition has historically been criticized as
 109 a field for concentrating on only a few species (e.g. Beach 1950, Shettleworth, 1993, 2009).
 110 One aim in developing *Animal Cognition* was to address this weakness.

111

112 As a proxy to visualize whether the range of species under investigation has changed, we
 113 counted the number of articles published, using general groupings (not meant to reflect
 114 proper animal classes) within a five-year period (keeping in mind special issues published
 115 during this time may cause biases in species represented for single years; see Figure 1).

116 Although the graph below is only meant to highlight patterns of changes over the years, it
 117 does suggest that the number of species is likely increasing.



118

119 Figure 1. Number of articles published, within five-year periods, from the first issue of
120 *Animal Cognition* through to mid-2022. Note that the graph is not intended to reflect proper
121 grouping, as orders and classes are presented.

122
123 Some of the papers in this special issue reflect this drive to widen the range of species
124 whose cognition we study and report the fruits of that endeavour. One can clearly see that
125 when *Animal Cognition* began studies of fish cognition were limited, but there is now a
126 substantial body of work (see Brown, 2015). Most of that was on the larger class of fishes,
127 the bony fish. However, in the present issue, Brown and Schluessel (2023) summarise
128 research on the cognition of the other class of fish, sharks and their relatives. Within the
129 present issues, one may also return to the review of Benson-Amram and colleagues (2023)
130 for another excellent of an area of animal cognition research which has seen an increase in
131 the diverse taxa under study Another way in which the range of species studied is extended
132 is by consideration of applied questions; in the present issue, Ghosh, John and Wilkinson
133 (2023) consider how the study of cognition could support the use of biological methods of
134 pest control, and that leads them to report on numerous species that are making their first
135 appearance in our journal.

136 The comparative approach is a fruitful method for increasing the number of species studied
137 (as well as for developing theory-driven hypotheses on the evolutionary roots of cognition).
138 Roessler and colleges provide an updated review of parrot cognition. Extending upon a
139 recent review in this area by Lambert and colleagues (2018), Roessler et al., report that
140 more than 50 studies on parrot cognition have been published in the previous four years.
141 Many of these studies have taken a comparative approach permitting the study of species
142 differences in areas such as inhibitory control, flexibility, memory, or problem-solving.

143 Vanhooland, Szabó, Bugnyar and Massen (2023) in the current issue likewise use the
144 comparative method to evaluate self-recognition in birds by examining three corvid species.
145 Documenting the behaviours these corvids engaged in when presented with a mirror and
146 using a modified version of the Mark task (Gallup, 1970), the results support an ongoing
147 need for comparative studies to evaluate whether current differences in self-awareness
148 among species are due to phylogeny or methodology. Our updated understanding of the
149 avian brain (see Pusch et al. 2023) will undoubtedly drive further insights into this important
150 area of animal cognition.

151 **3. Methodological improvements and innovations as well as ingenious field and laboratory**
152 **experimental setups complementing each other are needed.** Clearly related to the aim of
153 increasing the number of species represented in the study of animal cognition, is the need
154 for innovative and novel methodologies. The development of these approaches and
155 apparatuses may be for different purposes. For instance, the study of biological pest control
156 (Ghosh et al. 2023), ecological relevance (e.g., see Benson-Amram et al., current issue,
157 anthropogenic impacts anthropogenic impacts (see special issue of *Animal Cognition 2017*
158 *Issue 1: Animal Cognition in a Human-Dominated World*, introduced by Griffin et al. 2017),
159 animal-human interactions (see special issue of *Animal Cognition 2021 Issue 2: Animal-*
160 *Human Interactions*, introduced by Kelly and Katz 2021) or comparative investigations of
161 cognitive processes in natural and human-made environments to highlight only a few of the
162 many possibilities.

163 The study of avian food-storing is one such area where researchers have developed novel
164 methodologies to investigate the behaviour, cognition, and neuromechanisms underlying
165 spatial learning and memory. Healy (2023) provides the current issue with a comprehensive
166 review of this area and proposes the study of avian nest building as a fruitful area for future
167 innovative research linking the study of cognition in the laboratory and the wild.

168 A further exciting avenue for animal cognition is through insights from artificial intelligence
169 and computer science. Abdai and Miklósi (2023) argue strongly in the current issue that new
170 robot technology offers unique advantages for the study of cognition, allowing controlled
171 simulation of social situations in a way that has not been possible until now.

172 Scientific controversy is of course a great driver of methodological innovation. In the
173 present issue, Huber and Lonardo (2023) review studies of one area that has been highly
174 controversial, the capacity of dogs to understand the world from another's perspective, and
175 lay out the sequence of methodological refinements that have gradually narrowed down, if
176 not eliminated, the scope for argument between researchers on this issue. Rather similarly,
177 in their contribution to the current issue, Gazes, Templer and Lazareva (2023) show how
178 increasingly sophisticated experimental techniques lead them to the conclusion that animals
179 have available a unified, domain-independent, representation of order.

180

181 **4.** A wider range of situations demanding cognitive processing need to be sampled for the
182 same individuals, and in particular laboratory and field studies need to be linked.

183 The natural bridge between field and laboratory studies is the field experiment – creating
184 artificial cognitive challenges for animals living in their natural environment. Such
185 techniques were in use well before we began to think of them as involving animal cognition
186 (e.g. Croze, 1970). Throughout its existence, *Animal Cognition* has published many such
187 studies, on species ranging from chimpanzees (e.g. Biro et al. 2003) through songbirds (e.g.
188 Tvardikova & Fuchs 2010) and lizards (Pérez- Cembranos & Pérez- Mellado, 2015) to
189 arthropods (for examples see the special issue of *Animal Cognition 2020 Issue 6, Arthropod*
190 *Spatial Cognition*, introduced by Pfeffer & Wolf 2020). In the present issue, these links are
191 perhaps best exemplified by Freas and Spetch's (2023) review of spatial navigation in

192 insects, which highlight the ingenious studies reporting the flexible and adaptable use of
193 spatial cues for orientation and navigation.

194 **5.** Studies with larger samples are also needed to assess the extent of inter-individual
195 differences in cognitive abilities.

196 Individual differences in animal cognition have become a major field of study during the
197 lifetime of the journal, particularly with an ongoing search for any kind of general
198 intelligence that might underlie performance in multiple cognitive challenges (see Shaw and
199 Schmelz 2017; Cauchoix et al 2018). In the present issue, we see attempts to go beyond
200 merely establishing that such consistent differences exist, whether on a single task or in a
201 correlated fashion on many, to the arguably more important question of what causes them.
202 One stellar example of this initiative is Brubaker and Udell's (2023) work to consider how the
203 style of relationship between dogs and their owners might influence the dogs' performance
204 in cognitive tests. Many investigations into animal cognition must contend with the
205 challenge of sample sizes, which may limit the study of inter-individual differences or cause
206 concerns or replicability; we return to this topic below.

207

208 The process of co-editing this anniversary issue not only provided us with an opportunity to reflect
209 upon empirical research, theoretical approaches, and area reviews presented by our colleagues. This
210 process has also permitted us the venue to consider these works within the wider perspective of the
211 field as a whole. In particular, several of our authors posed the question, implicitly or explicitly, of
212 just what we mean when we use the phrase "animal cognition"; and in reviewing their contributions,
213 we found ourselves asking the same question. This anniversary issue seems a good moment to try
214 to answer it. To do so, we look first at some history, and then at some possible definitions –
215 particularly definitions that have implicitly guided us, and might help guide future authors and
216 editors, as to what belongs in our journal.

217 **A bit of history**

218 If we go back not 25 years but 50, to when one of the present authors was a PhD student, no-one
219 was using the phrase “animal cognition”. Nonetheless, there was and had been for a long time a
220 conflict between what we would now call more cognitive and more behaviouristic accounts of
221 animal learning, particularly focused around animal problem solving. That conflict goes back at least
222 to the different approaches of Conwy Lloyd Morgan (1852-1936) and George Romanes (1848-1894):
223 the history has been well described by Boakes (1984). The fundamental difference of approach
224 between these two pioneers continued to structure research on animal learning throughout the first
225 half of the twentieth century, with the debate between different theories of learning, from the more
226 behaviouristic such as those of Hull (e.g. 1943), Spence (e.g. 1956), and Mowrer (e.g. 1960) to the
227 more cognitive, such as those of Krechevsky (1932) and Tolman (e.g. 1932). Fifty years ago, there
228 were still echoes of these disputes. But by then, the big theoretical debate lay between Skinner’s
229 “radical behaviourism” (e.g. 1950, 1969) and anyone who wanted to say anything at all about the
230 processes underlying animal behaviour.

231 To someone coming into the study of animal learning at that time, this seemed a lopsided and
232 frustrating situation. No coherent alternative framework to radical behaviourism was on offer, and
233 attempts to show that particular phenomena in animal behaviour could not be understood in
234 behaviouristic terms seemed negative and, ultimately, sterile. And yet radical behaviourism seemed
235 unable to capture some of the most interesting phenomena that could be studied, and were already
236 being studied – even though a large majority of researchers were using essentially Skinnerian
237 methodology, rather than the mazes and puzzle boxes that had been the common tools of earlier
238 decades.

239 The 1980s saw a sudden change of direction. In a short space of time, a number of books with
240 rather similar titles appeared, such as Mellgren (1983, *Animal cognition and behavior*); Walker
241 (1983, *Animal thought*); Roitblat, Bever & Terrace (1984, *Animal cognition*); Pearce (1987, *An*

242 *introduction to animal cognition*); Gallistel (1992, *Animal cognition*); Vauclair (1992, *L'intelligence de*
243 *l'animal*; English translation 1996, *Animal cognition*); Zentall (1993, *Animal cognition*); Gould &
244 Gould (1994, *The animal mind*); Balda, Pepperberg and Kamil (1998, *Animal cognition in nature*);
245 Roberts (1998, *Principles of animal cognition*); Shettleworth (1998, *Cognition, Evolution and*
246 *Behavior*); Wynne (2001, *Animal cognition*); Bekoff, Allen & Burghardt (2002, *The cognitive animal*).
247 Small wonder, then, that 1998 also saw the first issue of this journal.

248 Obviously, these books had considerable overlap in content; indeed, several of them were edited
249 books, and there was overlap in contributing authors, too. Nonetheless, this burst of publishing
250 bore witness not just to a substantial and widespread upsurge in activity, but also to a widespread
251 reconceptualisation of what researchers were doing. It bore, in fact, a lot of the marks of the kind of
252 scientific revolution discussed by Kuhn (1970), where once a new way of looking at a scientific
253 problem is formulated, many researchers realise that what they have been doing for some time fits
254 that new paradigm.

255 As you would expect, however, what all these authors had been doing beforehand differed, and
256 accordingly what they described as “animal cognition” also differed. For example, Pearce, coming
257 from a background of theoretical modelling of classical conditioning (e.g. Pearce and Hall, 1980)
258 dwelt on the need to include representations of stimuli in such models; Vauclair, coming from the
259 francophone environment and work in developmental psychology (e.g. Vauclair, 1984), stressed the
260 role of Piagetian tasks in assessing animals’ cognitive performance; while Shettleworth, coming from
261 research on biological constraints on learning (e.g. Shettleworth, 1975) looked for the evolutionary
262 origins of such performances.

263 So why did these different approaches cohere so quickly into a recognizable field of study, with the
264 common label, “Animal cognition”? We suggest there were two reasons. First, that label offered a
265 way out of sterile debates with ideologically committed radical behaviourists, and the unanswerable
266 question of whether behaviour is simply governed by conditioning, or whether more complex

267 processes need to be invoked. Taking the label “Animal cognition” signalled that we were setting
268 that debate aside in order to look at the phenomena with an open mind. Secondly, it suggested a
269 general methodological approach: to take performances that we label as cognitive when humans do
270 them, and see whether animals of different species can do anything similar – either in their natural
271 environment, or after specialist training. This approach has wide applicability, and further
272 circumvents any debate with radical behaviourism – because a rigorous behaviourism believes that
273 what is described as cognition in humans can also be explained by conditioning processes (e.g.
274 Skinner, 1969).

275 A third factor was also important. Revolutions do not occur in isolation. The emergence of animal
276 cognition followed shortly after, and built upon, the widespread realisation that there was a need to
277 bring together historically biological, and historically psychological approaches to animal behaviour.
278 Some of the first encounters between these two approaches were confrontational; Lorenz was
279 frequently highly critical of hypothesis-driven laboratory science and comparative psychologists’ lack
280 of expertise in the animals they studied (e.g. Lorenz, 1950, 1979). But later generations of behaviour
281 researchers, schooled in both approaches, soon realised that there were important synergies
282 between them (Lea, 1985; Balda et al, 1998). To study animal cognition is to recognize that it may
283 look different in different species, and that those differences may have an adaptive explanation. The
284 idea of such “niche-specific cognition” has remained controversial (e.g. Macphail & Bolhuis 2001;
285 Bolhuis 2015), but it is still regularly deployed (e.g. Lucon-Xiccato & Bisazza 2016; Pull et al. 2022), as
286 it is by authors in the present issue, e.g. Brown and Schluessel (2023). And the general proposition
287 that different evolutionary niches set different challenges is unarguable, and studying cognition has
288 therefore become an important part of understanding how animal species are adapted to their
289 unique ecological niches.

290 Thus, there were good reasons why a field of study called animal cognition could emerge in the
291 1980s. It would hardly have done so, however, if there had not already been a field of study called

292 “cognitive psychology”, and it may be surprising to realise that that term was also the product of a
293 Kuhnian revolution, and one that had occurred not many years before. The phrase was scarcely in
294 use until Neisser (1967) published a book with that as its title: a book that, as the author recognizes
295 in his Preface and Introduction, is as much a manifesto as a textbook. The speedy adoption both of
296 the term and of the research approach Neisser advocated was recognized as revolutionary almost
297 immediately (Gardner, 1985).

298 That is not to say that no-one had been studying cognition, of course. Indeed, the term “cognition”
299 has a long history in philosophical psychology, as part of a tripartite classification of psychological
300 phenomena into those to do with affect or emotion, conation (will or motivation) and cognition.
301 Hilgard (1980) traces the history. He shows how, in the 18th century Scottish and German mental
302 philosophers thought of these as three distinct faculties or capacities of the mind, but by the end of
303 the 19th century authors like Alexander Bain (1818–1903) and William James (1842-1910) were using
304 the terms simply as a convenient classification of mental phenomena. Perhaps not recognizing the
305 revolutionary effect of Neisser’s work, Hilgard argued that the usefulness of this tripartite
306 classification had come to an end; in fact, however, it is still regularly referred to; a search in Web of
307 Knowledge revealed nearly 400 papers referring to it that had been published since Hilgard claimed
308 it had been laid to rest.

309 The wide acceptance of the term “cognitive psychology” has been essential for the development of a
310 research field called “animal cognition”. All definitions and classifications are apt to leak around the
311 edges, and there are certainly psychological and behavioural phenomena that bridge between
312 affect, conation and cognition, and others that do not fit easily into any of those categories. But to a
313 great extent, we can recognize what kind of phenomena we label as cognitive in humans; and that
314 opens the way to asking the question of what kind of behaviour we see when we expose other
315 animal species to the same tasks or problems.

316 **The broad sense and the narrow sense of “animal cognition”.**

317 When we apply the tripartite distinction between affect, conation and cognition to animals other
318 than humans, it leads to a broad sense of the phrase “animal cognition”. In this broad sense of the
319 word, animal cognition encompasses everything that enables past experience or current perception
320 to guide behaviour. In many ways adopting this broad definition is in tune with Abdai and Miklósi’s
321 (2023) call in this issue, echoed by Kacelnik et al. (2023) also in this issue, to focus not on the
322 mechanisms underlying behaviour, but the problems that the behaviour solves. And obviously,
323 many of the problems animals face can be solved by simple mechanisms such as classical and
324 operant conditioning; indeed, it has been argued that the reasons these mechanisms are so
325 widespread in the animal kingdom is that they solve a key problem that almost all animals face, the
326 need to forage approximately optimally (Lea, 1982). If this is our definition of animal cognition, it
327 makes no sense to ask questions like, “Is it cognitive or is it just conditioning?” Conditioning is just
328 one mechanism – maybe an all-pervasive mechanism, maybe not – underlying animal cognition in
329 this sense of the phrase.

330 There is a danger in such a broad definition. It risks a degree of “cognitive bloat”, to borrow a term
331 from Kaplan (2012), discussed by Jacobs (2023) in this issue. Kaplan was concerned with the risk
332 that “extended cognition”, which takes account of the effects of environment, sensory and motor
333 capacities would end up with everything, and therefore nothing, being classed as cognition. The
334 same could be said of including even the most obvious cases of conditioning within animal cognition.

335 But, in any case, if this broad sense is all that is meant by “animal cognition”, it would be hard to
336 explain the surge of books with that phrase in their title during the 1980s, or the need to found a
337 journal with that as its title in 1988. There was no shortage of books about how animals learn, and
338 no shortage of journals where studies involving conditioning could be published. We suggest that
339 this minor revolution was due to a widespread impatience with the need to explain everything that
340 animals do in terms of conditioning, or even to discuss whether it could be explained by conditioning
341 at all – an impatience that is still felt, as by Beran (2023) in this issue. There was and is a feeling that,

342 in some situations where animals solve problems, something other than simple association is going
343 on.

344 That feeling derives, at least in part, from our subjective experience as humans. Humans can
345 certainly undergo both classical and operant conditioning. But, subjectively, we also experience an
346 active mental life, in which we are aware of how we are solving problems and of what problems we
347 have solved. There are many situations where humans seem to have two modes of response in an
348 experiment, one of which can easily be described in terms of associative learning, and the other of
349 which cannot (e.g. Meier, Lea & McLaren, 2016). Outside the realm of science, people regularly
350 attribute the same kind of mental life to animals. Within the realm of science, it has been an
351 enduring question whether such attributions can be justified. This suggests that a narrower
352 definition of “animal cognition” might be that it studies those means other than conditioning by
353 which animals solve problems.

354 Two warnings need to be heeded before we adopt such a definition. The first is well expressed in
355 this issue by Hoeschele, Wagner and Mann (2023). Human subjective experience is a good source of
356 hypotheses about animal cognition but a poor source of data about human cognition. Cognitive
357 psychology is replete with examples where people’s introspection comes up with completely false
358 descriptions of how they were solving problems: although the pioneering studies of Nisbett and
359 Wilson (1977) have been criticised, the general phenomenon stands (e.g. Johansson et al., 2006).
360 Secondly, the opposition “association vs cognition” is potentially naïve. Often when human
361 behaviour differs from what is predicted from simple conditioning, it is because humans are using
362 symbolically expressed rules to determine their behaviour (Penn, Holyoak & Povinelli, 2008). But a
363 sufficiently determined associationist can adopt such rules as discriminative stimuli in a conditioning
364 process (e.g. Skinner 1969). It seems it would be poor tactics to restrict the realm of the truly
365 cognitive to phenomena where no trace of conditioning can be postulated.

366 But if we follow the positive side of Hoeschele et al.'s recommendations, what hypotheses might we
367 come up with? How might we define "animal cognition" in a way that does not rely on excluding
368 conditioning, but does capture our intuition that there are processes more complicated than
369 conditioning going on when some animals solve some problems? Reflecting on the history of studies
370 in animal cognition, both before and after the term "animal cognition" came into wide use, we
371 suggest that an interesting candidate would be the use of what we humans call "reflection": the
372 capacity to weigh up a situation in our minds, and try out possible solutions. This seems to call for a
373 capacity which, mischievously, we shall call a Cartesian Theatre, though not quite in the sense in
374 which that term was contemptuously used by Dennett (1991, Chapter 5). For Dennett, the Cartesian
375 Theatre was the (in his view, non-existent) point in the mind/brain where "it all comes together".
376 For us, it is the capacity of the brain/mind to see (or, more generally, sense) and manipulate events
377 that are not currently happening. You might call it "thinking" or "reasoning"; or, if you were Tolman
378 (1938) you might call it "Vicarious trial and error" or even "non-practical runnings-back-and-forth
379 (Tolman, 1932, Chapter XIII). You might think of it as what is happening in episodic memory (Tulving
380 1972) or episodic future thought (Atance & O'Neill 2001).

381 The intuition that lies behind all these different approaches is that, to a limited extent, we humans
382 can view our current behaviour as if we were outside it; we can replay our past behaviour; we can
383 imagine what we might do in future; we can view situations we have never been in and indeed
384 situations that could never exist. And all that without moving a muscle. It is important to realise
385 that this does not involve positing a homunculus who views current sensory input and decides what
386 to do about it, falling into the trap of an infinite regress. The intuition is agnostic as to how we deal
387 with current sensory input; it merely asserts that we can deal with imagined sensory input in the
388 same way. It is also agnostic as to whether associative learning plays any role in the process, at any
389 stage. What matters, as Hoeschele et al. recommend, is that we can use this intuition about human
390 cognition to formulate hypotheses about animal cognition: do other animals appear, by their
391 behaviour, to be using any of these kinds of reflective process when they are solving problems,

392 whether those are the problems posed by their inherited ecological niche, or by us as
393 experimenters?

394 An important aspect of our human intuition about the Cartesian Theatre is that we can view
395 ourselves acting within it. However, analysis suggests that this possibility is logically separate from
396 the capacity to reflect on states of the world that do not currently exist. Indeed, Hofstadter (1979,
397 chapter XII) argues that using a symbol for the self involves significantly greater complexity than
398 using other symbols. So we should not be surprised that the investigation of self-concepts in
399 animals, in the tradition of Gallup (1970), is a distinct field of animal cognition, and that the
400 existence of self-concepts can be seriously doubted in species to which we unhesitatingly ascribe
401 other advanced cognitive capacities (Gallup & Anderson 2020).

402 To conclude our discussion of definitions, we believe that there are two useful, and usable,
403 definitions of animal cognition. Unsurprisingly, the journal *Animal Cognition* has used both of them.
404 One is broad, and it encompasses all the ways in which animals modify their behaviour as a result of
405 experience. Such a definition is particularly useful when we are beginning the study of a new
406 taxonomic group, a new problem (whether artificial or natural) or a new ecological niche, and the
407 journal has been and should be hospitable to such investigations. But a narrower definition can also
408 be useful, and we believe that “reflection” provides a useful cue to it. In this narrower sense,
409 animals are using cognition when they are reviewing information that is not available in their current
410 environment. And the journal has been and should be hospitable to investigations that are trying to
411 find out whether particular animals use such reflective capacities when they are solving particular
412 problems.

413 **New methodological challenges**

414 The problem of defining animal cognition is much older than the wide use of the phrase, and
415 therefore older than our journal. But we turn now to mention briefly some methodological

416 problems that have come to prominence within the lifetime of the journal. Like all problems, these
417 are also opportunities – opportunities for research leading to new understanding.

418 **Replication.** A neighbouring field of research, social psychology, has suffered what has become
419 termed the “replication crisis”: it has appeared that some highly newsworthy and much-cited results
420 do not reappear when the procedures are replicated (Pashler & Wagenmakers 2012). While the
421 interpretation of single failures to replicate is complicated (Maxwell, Lau & Howard 2015), the most
422 robust response to the apparent crisis has been to launch large-scale projects in which many
423 different laboratories attempt replications of the same studies (Klein et al., 2014). While animal
424 cognition has not yet suffered high profile failures to replicate, our field is clearly vulnerable to
425 them: we do often produce newsworthy results, and our sample sizes are often unavoidably small.
426 Some attempts have already been made to address this issue (e.g. Szabó, et al 2017). But it is
427 therefore encouraging to know that the “many labs” approach of Klein et al. is already being
428 adopted in our field, the first examples being the ManyPrimates, ManyBirds, and ManyDogs
429 projects, which several of the authors of papers in the current issue are involved in (Many Primates
430 et al 2019; Miller et al., 2021; ManyDogs et al, accepted). Beran (2023) in this issue suggests that
431 the principle will be used on many other species in future. Alongside multiple-lab replication, pre-
432 registration of studies, followed by publication regardless of whether positive results were obtained,
433 has been strongly urged as a precaution against the “file-drawer” effect, including in animal science
434 (e.g. Parker, Nakagawa & Gurevitch 2016). An additional means of enhancing transparency is
435 making fuller details of experimental and observational procedures and results openly available,
436 through data repositories, it is to be hoped that as digital storage becomes ever cheaper and more
437 flexible, that will come to include complete video records, as advocated by Kamps et al (2010).

438 **Subject-experimenter relationships.** When we are looking not at the cognition animals show in the
439 wild, but at what they can be trained to do (perhaps educated would be a better word), some of the
440 most spectacular claims involve single subjects, or small numbers of subjects, with whom the

441 experimenters have a close social relationship. This was true of most of the early attempts to teach
442 apes language (e.g. Hayes & Nissen, 1971; Gardner & Gardner, 1969; Savage-Rumbaugh et al., 1986),
443 and also in Pepperberg's work on language-trained parrots (e.g. Pepperberg, 1981). But it is also a
444 feature of much of the work on cognition in cetaceans (reviewed by Herman 2010) and other sea
445 mammals (see the special issue of *Animal Cognition 2022 Issue 5: Cognition in marine mammals: The*
446 *strength of flexibility in adapting to marine life*, introduced by Hanke et al, in press), and in some of
447 the most impressive demonstrations of dog cognition (Kaminski, Call and Fischer, 2004; Pilley & Reid,
448 2011). It is strongly and plausibly argued by experimenters using such procedures that the social
449 bond between experimenter and subject is essential to the success of training (see, for example,
450 Fouts & Mills, 1998 chapter 4; Pepperberg, 1999, chapter 2): without flexibility, social
451 responsiveness and empathy in the teacher, animals' full potential as learners will never be
452 manifested, just as children's would not be. But precisely those properties of sociality and flexibility
453 make it very difficult to exert normal scientific control over the situation, and to ensure that
454 artefacts such as the Clever Hans effect are excluded – even if, as scientists, we can avoid attributing
455 more than the data strictly justify to animals with whom we have an emotional as well as a practical
456 relationship. And though all the studies we have referred to have used carefully controlled test
457 procedures to evaluate the effects of training, animals that are used to flexible, sociable interaction
458 during training will not necessarily show their full ability when put into a more sterile test
459 environment. Anyone who has ever sat an unseen examination should be able to understand that.
460 It seems to us that this will always be a challenge when we are pushing animal cognition beyond its
461 previously known limits. This means that as a scientific community we should be sympathetic to the
462 pioneers, but also that we must accept that there may have to be follow-up studies with more
463 closely-defined procedures, and that sometimes exciting pioneering results may be cast into a colder
464 light when that is done.

465 **The “natural” environment:** The strong evolutionary emphasis within the animal cognition research
466 community, exemplified by Shettleworth's (1998, 2010) influential reference text, has directed our

467 attention to the cognitive feats animals show in their natural environment. But over the lifetime of
468 our journal, the question of what some animals' natural environment might be has become crucial.
469 Even when one of us was a PhD student, long ago, it was a standard joke that the natural
470 environment of the laboratory rat is the laboratory. But it can be argued more interestingly that the
471 natural environment of a pet dog is a human household, and working dogs and even street dogs (the
472 majority of the world's dogs) live in some kind of mutualism with humans (Coppinger & Coppinger
473 2016). And dogs do not just live among humans, they have adapted to doing so, and it has been
474 strongly argued that those adaptations include cognitive changes (e.g. Hare et al 2002; Kelly & Katz
475 2021). All farm animals also live mutualistically with humans, and some of the same processes may
476 be at work in them; and as Figure 1 shows, it is not just research on dog cognition that has grown
477 during the lifetime of our journal, but also research on cognition in groups like ungulates which
478 include most of the species of agricultural importance. More widely, however, many animals now
479 live in anthropogenic environments especially towns and cities, and the cognition of urban animals
480 has been a rapidly growing research field (see Griffin, Tebbich & Bugnyar 2017). We also need to
481 consider the cognition of animals that because of human activity find themselves in new
482 environments, whether as invasive species (such as the Eastern grey squirrel, see for example Leaver
483 et al 2007), or because humans introduce them to serve as pest controllers, as reviewed by Ghosh et
484 al (2023) in this issue.

485 **A conclusion for the time being**

486 *Animal Cognition* has witnessed remarkable strides in our understanding of how animals reflect
487 upon, respond to, and modify their behaviour based on experiences. The selection of articles
488 presented in this issue and our own reflections reveal that the field has made considerable advances
489 along the themes suggested by Tatiana Czeschlik 25 years ago. Several avenues continue to need
490 attention, such as the study of inter-individual differences or comparative work of individuals across
491 environments such as the laboratory and the wild. However, the field is witnessing the development

492 of clever methodological procedures, advances in technology, and creative insight, which is allowing
493 researchers address these issues. The trends that have been visible over the past 25 years of
494 research in animal cognition will, without much doubt, continue into the next 25 years – as Beran
495 (2023), in this issue has humorously explored. And yet, the future is necessarily unpredictable: not
496 just because it always is, but because some of those trends themselves imply constant change.
497 Continuing to expand the range of species we study, and the range of problems we challenge them
498 with; continuing to exploit new methodologies and expanding technologies; and continuing to seek a
499 deeper theoretical and conceptual understanding of what we mean by animal cognition – any one of
500 those could lead to new information that provokes a revolution as significant as the one that led to
501 the foundation of our journal. Perhaps the seeds of such a revolution are being sown even now;
502 perhaps, indeed, within the papers that we have collected for this issue.

503 Inevitably, there are important topics, questions, and contributions that we have been unable to
504 touch upon within the constraints of this editorial and the invited manuscripts published within the
505 special issue. Nonetheless, we are honoured to present the work of our colleagues, who offer their
506 expert studies, reviews, and thoughtful insights into the past, present, and future of animal cognition
507 – both the field and our journal.

508

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