



# TattleTails & Tidbits



Spring Farm CARES Animal & Nature Sanctuary Journal

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## In This Issue:

Page 2-3. Bobby - Communicating  
By Means Of Art

Page 4-5. Deeteza - Color Is  
Everything

Page 6-7. Wildlife Artists

Page 8. Evening Promenade With  
Annie Perry



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## Celebrating The Artistry In Life

In this issue, we share stories of artistry and creativity from both animals and from nature, artistry that is intentional, or created by activities, or by time. We have witnessed animals deliberately creating art with a clear understanding of what they were doing, consciously creating in order to express themselves in a unique way. And we who care for both Spring Farm CARES' domestic and wild animals have, time and time again, witnessed animals clearly enjoying colors, the beauty around them, or the beauty of an object or scene around them, be it a sunset, a flower, or a feather. They stop to savor the beauty and sometimes to take possession of beautiful things in order to decorate their own lives.

Animals have been and continue to be a true inspiration to us, reminding us of the amazing wonders that surround us, but which we seldom stop even to look at, much less appreciate. We hope that you enjoy these stories and that they inspire you, as they inspire us, to take time each day, no matter how busy we might be, to stop and appreciate the wonders of the world that we live in.

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# How to Communicate by Means of Art – Compliments of Bobby

by Bonnie Reynolds

Over the years many have heard of and seen the art works of various animal artists – Picasso, one of whose works of art sold for \$25,000 -- a dog in Europe whose art works also sold to serious collectors for big money – elephants at a sanctuary in Thailand who love to create works of art, using brushes, paints and canvases supplied by their keepers, which paintings help to pay for their own support by sales to tourists – and of course there are the paintings created by the late, beloved, Koko the Gorilla, some of which I treasure myself.

These are but a few of the animals whose works gained public recognition. In each of those cases, however, the animals were encouraged and their materials supplied by humans. And though quite a few animals and birds in the wild

demonstrate a natural appreciation of colors, textures, and designs, and use them in their courting displays and even decorate their homes with them, I have only heard of one instance in which an animal gathered his own materials and created an art work in order to emphatically communicate with a human.

Enter Bobby Three-legs.

In 1999, an Animal Control Officer called, asking us to accept a stray who had been shot by a hunter. The dog's owner had not been found and the foreleg which had been shot needed amputation. Would Spring Farm Cares accept the dog and spring for the amputation?

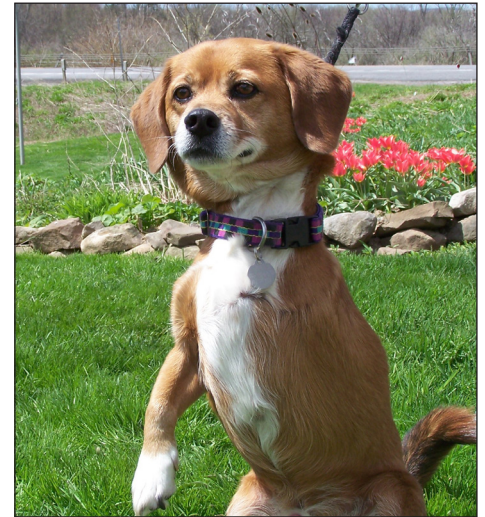
Of course we accepted him. Though he would have only three legs, we didn't anticipate any problem in finding him a home. A beagle-dachshund mix not yet a year old, he was a real charmer who sat up to beg and danced on his hind legs when invited to do so.

And indeed he did get adopted. Twice. And twice he was returned. For biting.

What we discovered was that we were never to touch anything that he considered to be his very own property, and we were not allowed to move him from a place where he wanted to be to a place where he did not want to be. Actually, we were in danger of a lightning-fast bite when doing just about anything with him.

So we were stuck with a "lifer", an "unadoptable." He had to be protected from himself, cared for only by those who were prepared to deal with his idiosyncrasies, and, very importantly, he had to be housed where there was no chance that any of our visitors could interact with him and get themselves bitten. If that were to happen, if any legal or medical authority got involved, we would probably be forced to euthanize him.

But we loved Bobby! We, and all the staff. Trying to make what was going to be his fairly lonely life as happy as possible, we introduced him to a lady beagle stray. Snuffy. And they bonded immediately, became inseparable. (Which of course made Snuffy another SFC lifer.) For a couple of years they lived in my office/bedroom in Kigercat Hall, lounging on the bed, with plenty of company as staff members came and went. Then, however, we took in a dog who was even more of a problem than Bobby. She, herself, needed my office/bedroom in order to be kept from the public. So Bobby and Snuffy were moved down to the red house where, at the time, about 22 cats and two other beagles were kept, and the Office Manager, Bookkeeper, and Project Coordinator had their offices. Because of Bobby's temperament and for the safety of the office staff, we couldn't give them the run of the house. Additionally, both dogs had shown themselves to be cat-chasers -- maybe worse for all we knew. So we put them into a small utility room at the back of the house. That room connected to an enclosed utility porch, the floor of which is partially cement, partially crushed stone and dirt. The floor-to-ceiling door and windows enclosing it look out on the gardens and driveways. The two of



them could see people coming and going, but they had nowhere near the visitors to which they were accustomed, their visitors now being mostly their caretakers. Those caretakers tried to give them extra attention and long walks, but we all worried that they would grow depressed in that semi-isolation.

Then one day caretaker Heather was talking to them while returning from a walk. She had just taken one of Dawn's Animal Communication Workshops and was trying out her skills.

"Bobby, are you and Snuffy happy enough in your new quarters?" She thought that he replied, 'Yes, we're very happy.' She asked again and thought that she got the same answer. But she wasn't sure. She didn't trust her new ability as yet. Leaving them on the porch, she went to the kitchen to do some work.

Sometime later she went back to the porch to get something and found Bobby's dish in the middle of the floor.

"I let out a screech! Bobby just stood there, wagging his tail. And I knew that I had heard him right. He was making sure that I knew."

The photo of Bobby's work of art shows how he had used materials available to him there on the porch to construct his unmistakable answer. The food bowl was a perfect frame for a face, two little stones were just right for eyes, a stray piece of cat kibble, conveniently triangular and placed ever so carefully, made a perfect nose. And for the mouth? On the dirt floor among the crushed stones Bobby had found a dried, shriveled-up worm.

So. Accident? Coincidence? Just a dog playing mindlessly with things laying around?

Bobby loved cat kibble treats. How strange that he did not eat that one piece. Those two little stones. They were so nicely matched.

But the worm is the corker. Suppose the worm had turned so to speak. What if the worm had been placed the opposite way around?

Heck, all Lassie could do is run for help. Our Bobby was a creative genius!

The reader will be pleased to know that eventually we were able to give Bobby and Snuffy the run of the house. By trial and error we learned that, though they would chase cats, they wouldn't hurt them. Neither did Bobby endanger the office staff.

And after all, we did have to keep our little genius happy.



# Deeteza - Color Is Everything

by Dawn Hayman

Deeteza was a granddaughter of one the greatest champion Arab stallions who ever lived. Witez II was among a small group of prized Polish Arab breeding stock – Arab royalty -- that survived the Allied bombing of Dresden at the end of WWII. With the Russians then approaching Dresden from the east, horse-lover General George Patton gave orders to save that group of royals. They were ridden 200 miles to safety and then shipped to the US. Witez II's story and his rescue is recounted in the book, *And Miles To Go*.



Deeteza was, therefore, an Arab Princess. She knew it, and made sure that those around her knew it as well. Such a valuable horse came to us only because she was beyond the breeding years that made her valuable to her owner and that owner had also fallen onto hard times. And at first it seemed that Dee was a “problem horse”. When one began to understand her though, and she knew that you were trying, she became not only a willing partner, but, in my case, the most important teacher that I have ever had. As well as the most sacred friend that I have ever had.

The key to understanding Deeteza was to know how deeply she felt things. And one of those things was color. I first learned

this because it was so difficult to halter her. Then one day, frustrated after failing to halter her, I yelled, “What do I need to do to get this halter onto you!”

‘Well look at it!’ she snapped. I did. Really looked at it for the first time. She had come to us wearing it. Leather, worn, shabby really. Not at all suitable for an Arab Princess. ‘A nice new pretty-colored halter might make haltering me easier,’ she suggested slyly.

“We need to get Dee a new halter. A nice color,” I told Bonnie. Just at that point, leaving me to care for the animals, she was heading for Massachusetts to take a three-day T.E.A.M Workshop with Linda Tellington Jones. Linda always had various equipment for sale at her workshops, so Bonnie said that she would find Dee a beautiful new halter.

Indeed, Linda had an array of colored halters for sale. All nice. But there was a purple one that Bonnie especially liked and was leaning toward buying. She wasn't sure, though, so on the last morning of the workshop she called me. This was 1987, before cell phones. We had a phone in the stable. I was there doing the morning chores for Dee and the other five horses that we had at that time. “Please ask Dee to tell you what color halter she'd like to have,” she said.

Dee's stall was right next to the phone. I asked her. Bonnie had only seconds to wait for her answer. “Dee says, ‘Anything but the purple.’”

Bonnie let out an exclamation. “How the heck ... .. !!!???” Well, she came home with three halters, two shades of yellow and one a bright, rich gold. I took them and held them up in front of Dee. After looking at all three she touched her nose to the bright, rich gold. ‘This one,’ she said. And we never again had haltering trouble. An Arab Princess finally had a proper halter.

Years later, staff came to me concerned that Deeteza hadn't drunk from her water bucket for over a day. Horses can dehydrate quickly. Concerned, I ran to the stable. She was ok, but she directed my attention to the water bucket. 'Anything seem out of sorts to you?' Yes! The bucket was red! Someone had taken her yellow bucket out of her stall and given it to someone else. I ordered the staff to find that yellow bucket (there was only one on the whole farm) and get it back to Deeteza pronto! And soon Deeteza was contently drinking from a properly colored bucket.

Our horses are buried here on the farm when they die. The day that we buried Deeteza, someone came running out of the barn with her yellow water bucket. "Wait," they yelled, "this has to go with her." And so it did.

## About TattleTails & Tidbits

TattleTails & Tidbits is a free bi-monthly journal of Spring Farm CARES Animal & Nature Sanctuary. We have an amazingly talented group of Directors and Staff and we started this journal to share both creative writing, inspirational stories of the farm, educational articles, and artwork just to name a few. The purpose of our journal is to give you helpful information and to touch your heart and stir your soul.

There will be stories shared through animal communication with the many animal teacher residents of the farm as well. We hope that each issue gives you a variety of topics from both our animal and nature sanctuaries.

TattleTails & Tidbits is available only in electronic form. You can [sign up for our email list](#) to receive it directly in your In box and/or you can [download your copy directly from our website](#).

[Donations](#) are gratefully accepted and we hope you will share this with those you think would be interested as well.

# Wildlife Artists

by Matt Perry



*A Pileated Woodpecker*

Just about all wild animals can be considered artists. Nearly every species leaves a pattern somewhere—on soil, on bark, on water, in grass. Many create beauty as a byproduct of feeding, of building, and of communicating. Birds are especially inventive -- not only in the unique architecture of their nests and their choice of materials, but in the way that some species decorate the finished structure. Sometimes this serves as camouflage; other times it serves their courtship. In these last two cases there is unmistakable room for individual expression. Different birds interpret the same task in strikingly different ways.

Most of what we might call wildlife art is inadvertent. Animals are not creating for art's sake. They are feeding, building homes, marking territory, or signaling to one another. Yet intention is not always required for true beauty to emerge.

Male White-tailed Deer rub their antlers against trees, ripping into bark and leaving behind bold vertical scars. These “rubs” are often infused with scent from glands on the deer’s face and forehead, messages to rivals and potential mates. At first the torn bark appears raw and unimpressive. But as years pass and the tree attempts to heal, the wound folds inward and thickens. What began as a territorial announcement becomes something akin to modern expressionism -- a collaborative effort between deer, tree, and time.

Woodpeckers are artists of incision and excavation. The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker drills neat rows of sap wells into the bark of living trees, creating geometric patterns that resemble carefully measured designs. Many sapsuckers favor straight horizontal lines; some return repeatedly to the same trunk, adding row after row until the bark resembles a neatly drilled pegboard. Each individual sapsucker seems to have subtle preferences -- spacing, symmetry, repetition -- resulting in patterns that are both functional and aesthetically compelling. The crow-sized Pileated Woodpecker is more sculptor than draftsman. With a bill shaped like a chisel, it tears into dead wood in search of carpenter ants. What it leaves behind can be monumental -- cavities eight inches wide and three feet tall, sometimes multiple excavations on a single trunk. The result is abstract and dramatic, great vertical excavations in dead wood. No carved likenesses of prominent birds emerge from these trees, yet the scale and boldness of the works rival anything found in a person's sculpture garden.



*Beaver Sculpture*

Among mammals, the Beaver may be the most ambitious artist of all. Much of its artistry is incidental -- the result of felling trees, stripping bark, or constructing dams and lodges. Yet anyone who has observed a long-established colony knows that individuality is present. No two dams are exactly alike. Each lodge bears the imprint of its builders' decisions -- the angle of branches, the layering of mud, and the shaping of an entrance. Occasionally, however, Beavers appear to cross into something purely decorative. A special stone placed atop a dam crest. An interesting piece of human refuse -- an aluminum can or glass bottle -- positioned prominently, but where it adds nothing to structure. At our Nature Sanctuary, following a dam



*Tree Swallows decorate their nest with feathers*

wooden sculptures. When chewing through a trunk to topple a tree, they make art. Most impressive are the multi-tiered stumps, shaped by repeated attempts to cut down a single tree from different heights; these become abstract columns or totem poles. Over time, fungi may tint the surfaces with ochres and blues; decay softens edges into flowing forms. What began as sustenance becomes something unexpectedly beautiful.

Swallows, too, are skilled artisans. Cliff Swallow nests are well formed mud pots -- gourd-shaped chambers meticulously assembled beneath bridges and eaves. Tree Swallow nests are simpler cups of grass hidden inside cavities or nestboxes, but the artistry begins after construction. Males gather feathers -- sometimes traveling miles to find just the right ones -- and arrange them across the nest rim. The feathers add nothing to the nest's structural integrity. They are decorative flourishes meant to impress. Some male swallows are modest, adding only a few white feathers; others layer dozens, including long, curved plumes from waterfowl that arch over the nest like a canopy.

Art in wildlife is not limited to birds and mammals. Insects may rival them all. Bark beetles engrave elaborate galleries beneath tree bark, radiating in symmetrical patterns. Paper wasps like Bald-faced Hornets fashion their own paper from wood and saliva, constructing tiered combs concealed inside a turban shaped capsule that is both utilitarian and strikingly elegant.

Perhaps what moves us most about these creations is not whether the maker intended to be an artist, but that beauty emerges from their work. Survival leaves a signature. Hunger etches a pattern. Courtship arranges a feather just so. Across forests, wetlands, and meadows, wild lives are constantly shaping the world -- leaving behind forms that remind us that art is not confined to museums. It is embedded in bark and mud, in tooth marks and sap wells, in dams that hold back water and nests that cradle life.

To walk attentively through the natural world is to step through an ever-changing gallery -- one curated not by human hands, but by the countless quiet creators whose lives, though practical in purpose, are rich with undeniable beauty.

breach, I once found a reflective silver knife centered at the exposed entrance of a lodge passageway. The placement was too precise to be accidental, and the object had been kept conspicuously clean -- even as it lay in a bed of mud. It did not reinforce the architecture. It did not serve as food. It seemed instead to be a chosen ornament -- a gleaming accent greeting every arrival and departure from the lodge.

Beavers may create intricate designs when stripping a downed tree of its bark. Their incisors create patterns, repeating tooth marks that resemble script -- hieroglyphics etched into pale wood. Beavers also create remarkable



*Bark Beetle Gallery*

# Evening Promenade With Annie Perry

by Dawn Hayman

Among the things that I cherish here on the farm are the amazing sunrises and sunsets that we are wonderfully positioned to see. And what has struck me many times is how much the animals – domestic and wild – can be seen enjoying them as well. A remarkable instance stands out.

One fall evening I was standing outside of the barn. It was such a beautiful evening. The leaves were just beginning to turn their spectacular colors, and I had grabbed that opportunity to just stand there, relish the peace, quiet and beauty, and watch the cloud formations as the sun prepared to set over the western hills. I was doing just that when the peace and quiet was broken by a surprising chorus. Out of the stable behind me, leading our five Muscovy ducks, came our Toulouse Goose, Annie Perry. Moving along in a what seemed a well-organized line, they waddled right past me, honking and quacking, heading down the driveway.

“Hey! Is this a parade?” I called. “Where are you all off to?”  
‘It’s the Evening Promenade,’ Annie replied.  
She had my attention. “What is an evening promenade?”

They all just kept waddling until they reached a spot on the lawn beside the red house. There they lined up side by side, facing the western skyline – lapsing into silence.

And now Annie answered me. ‘If you want to know, join us. Keep quiet though. You ask so many questions.’

I joined their line-up. They remained riveted to the horizon, watching the sunset, motionless, totally silent. (And if you’ve ever been around a group of ducks or geese you understand how rare their silence was.) The changing colors in the clouds as the sun sank below the horizon were magnificent. And the feeling that the animals were sharing enveloped me. It was sacred.

We watched until the sun was gone, the colors faded. Then, as if on cue, they all returned to the driveway and, still in formation, waddled silently back to the barn.

Now I could ask questions. “Annie, do you do this every night? What’s the purpose?”

‘Yes. We do it every night when we can. If we can’t come out here, we do it from the barn. It’s our thanks for the gift of having had another day and our hope for a new one tomorrow. It’s a time of gratitude. You should try it.’

I was blown away by the sacred simplicity, and so pleased to have been included. Another question popped into my head and I just had to ask.

“Annie, is there a Morning Promenade as well?”

‘Well of course! And whoever wants to watch the sunrise with us is welcome.’

“So tomorrow at sunrise if I come down to that spot where you were tonight I’ll find you all standing there again?”

A wise goose was patient with a silly human. ‘Hardly, dear. The sun rises from the other direction. You’ll find us up the hill behind the barn. You’d better just stick with me.’

