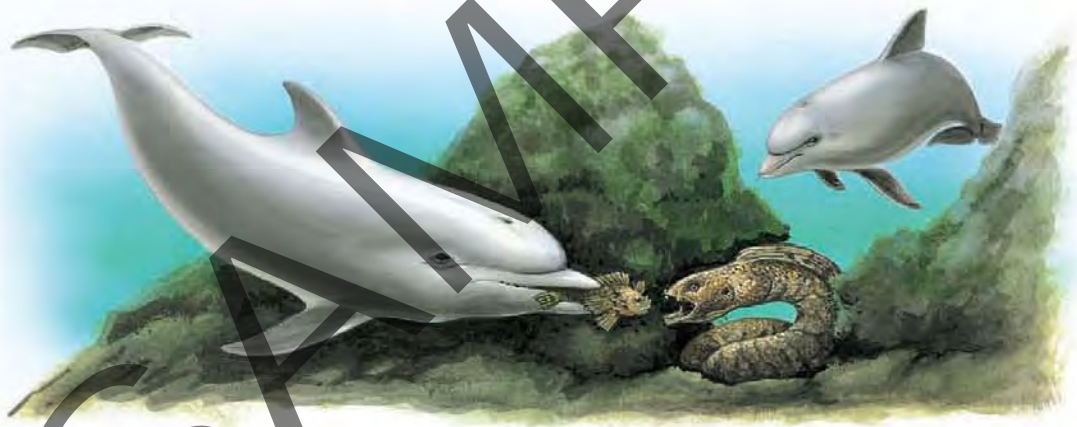


# ANIMAL CHATTER



Kenna Bourke

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Front cover photograph by Telegraph Colour Library/G. Shumway

Illustrated by Martin Aston, Stefan Chabluk, Michael Courtney, and Roger Gorringe

U.S. edit by **Alison Auch**

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This Americanized Edition of *Animal Chatter*, originally published in England in 2002, is published by arrangement with Oxford University Press.

08 07

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Published by

**Pacific Learning**

P.O. Box 2723

Huntington Beach, CA 92647-0723

[www.pacificlearning.com](http://www.pacificlearning.com)

ISBN: 978-1-59055-439-5

PL-7523

Printed in China through Colorcraft Ltd., Hong Kong

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# Introduction

The seventeenth-century French thinker and writer René Descartes believed that animals were incapable of thoughts and feelings. His point of view was that they didn't have language and were therefore just "machines."

If you compare a baby chimpanzee with a human baby, the differences are not that significant. Both babies grab at objects, smile at friendly faces, and scream when they're hurt, hungry, or upset. Neither the chimpanzee nor the human baby has language, yet nobody would say that human babies were machines.

More than three centuries after Descartes, with advances in science and animal research, we now know much more about how animals communicate.



▲ René Descartes thought that all animals were just "machines," because they lacked language.

▼ Human babies and baby chimpanzees communicate in similar ways.



The one thing animals don't do is talk in the way that humans do. One of the reasons for this difference is that they don't have the same **vocal** equipment as we do. Human mouths, lips, and tongues are ideal for forming words. The **larynx** and **epiglottis** (the flap that keeps food from going down your windpipe) control the flow of air as it is exhaled from the lungs, which also helps you to speak.

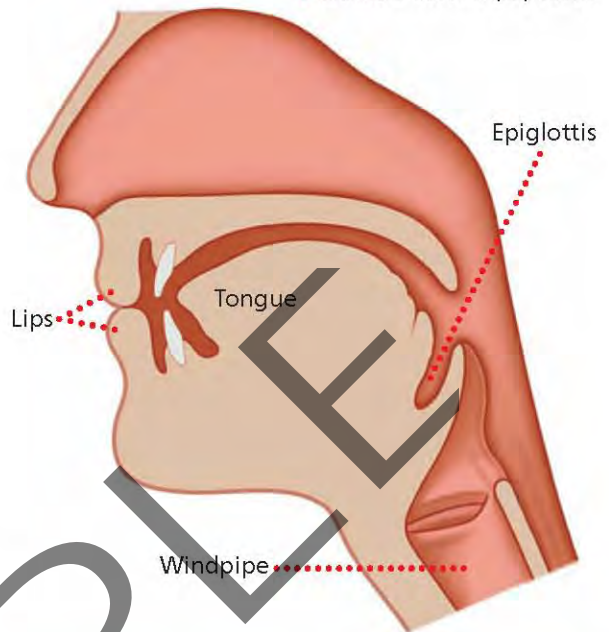
Nevertheless, like humans, animals communicate in a variety of ways. You may look sad when something upsets you, and so does a dog. You may shout to alert a friend to danger, and so does a vervet monkey. You may attract your friends' attention by changing your appearance – by dressing up for a party or painting your face – and the peacock, using his magnificent tail feathers, exhibits the same kind of behavior.

See pages 9, 14

Dogs that are angry or frightened bare their teeth.



▼ Human vocal equipment



▲ Apes and monkeys are among the most intelligent **species** on Earth.

This book looks at a number of **mammals**, birds, and insects and explores the amazing ways they have of “talking.” Birds, dolphins, whales, and apes are the four groups of animals that have been studied the most. As you will see, their intelligence and ability to communicate with one another, and with humans, is remarkable.