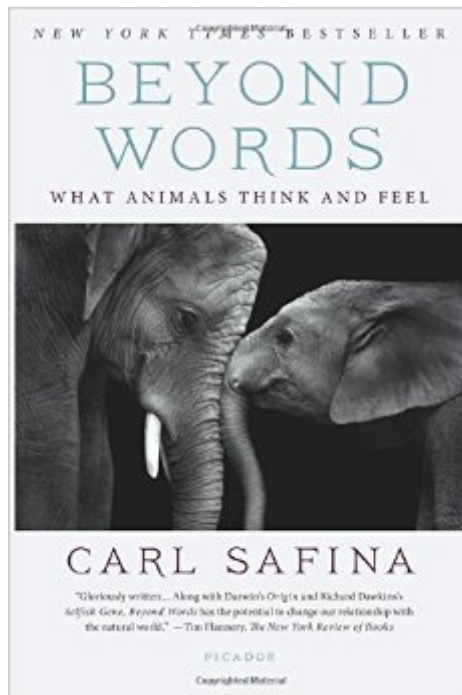


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# Beyond Words: What Animals Think And Feel



## Synopsis

I wanted to know what they were experiencing, and why to us they feel so compelling, and so-close. This time I allowed myself to ask them the question that for a scientist was forbidden fruit: Who are you? Weaving decades of field observations with exciting new discoveries about the brain, Carl Safina's landmark book offers an intimate view of animal behavior to challenge the fixed boundary between humans and nonhuman animals. In *Beyond Words*, readers travel to Amboseli National Park in the threatened landscape of Kenya and witness struggling elephant families work out how to survive poaching and drought, then to Yellowstone National Park to observe wolves sort out the aftermath of one pack's personal tragedy, and finally plunge into the astonishingly peaceful society of killer whales living in the crystalline waters of the Pacific Northwest. *Beyond Words* brings forth powerful and illuminating insight into the unique personalities of animals through extraordinary stories of animal joy, grief, jealousy, anger, and love. The similarity between human and nonhuman consciousness, self-awareness, and empathy calls us to re-evaluate how we interact with animals. Wise, passionate, and eye-opening at every turn, *Beyond Words* is ultimately a graceful examination of humanity's place in the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is one that I literally think every human being on the planet without exception should have to read. When you realize what we humans are doing to the world, building and drilling and polluting and killing every last thing we can get our hands on without any restraint or limit, it's of great

concern, or should be. This book shows, by observation and fact, that animals are not "just animals" (whatever that means anyway), or things to be used to make money, but thinking, feeling creatures, not human but not all that different. If you think otherwise, you are simply wrong and possibly resistant to the inconvenient truth, in which case I hope you can't vote or reproduce. The book follows a few animals and clearly shows how animals think thoughts, develop relationships, experience fear, terror, pain, depression, mourning for the dead, etc. Yeah, inconvenient but clearly and factually true. We can't avoid killing animals for food and self-defense and such, but there are some animals that we kill for "sport" or fun (Cecil the lion), for money (poachers for ivory), and there are events in some countries that actually torture animals as if it's a celebration, etc. We've hunted animals to extinction, we are fishing the oceans out and catches diminish, and we hack up and fragment wild areas without realizing (or perhaps troubling ourselves to care about) the implications. So much for our higher intelligence and awareness. Animal lovers are not little old ladies with thirty cats, they simply see and understand what is there.

As biologist Carl Safina shows in *Beyond Words*, many animals have complex emotional and intellectual lives. Safina invites readers to view animals as individuals who have their own personalities (who, not what). The chimps and dolphins in *Beyond Words* are even more interesting than anything in the *Uplift* novels - and they happen to be real! I'd read Jeffrey Moussaieff Mason and Susan McCarthy's *When Elephants Weep* years ago, as well as Cynthia Moss' books about the Amboseli elephants, so was already on board with the idea that many animals have complex social lives. So, to some extent, I was probably not Safina's target audience as he spends a considerable amount of time trying to convince readers that animals are individuals. Nevertheless, I found myself in awe at all that we'd learned over the past few decades about animal behavior. Safina does an excellent job conveying the personality of individual animals, noting how they react to humans and putting their emotional responses into words that we can understand. *Beyond Words* is divided into four parts. Three sections focus on elephants, wolves (including dogs), and dolphins (particularly orcas). Researchers have spent decades studying individual behavior amongst these animal groups, so Safina can tell the stories of individual animals in a way that he simply couldn't with giant squid or even many lesser primates. Reading about orcas who interacted with different humans differently based on the human's personality was humbling in that they seem to have mastered social skills I and many other people lack. Although *Beyond Words* isn't limited to these charismatic megafauna, I would have preferred if the book had spent less time with the usual suspects.

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