

# Gifts from Animals to People

*Dogs, cats, and other pets, as well as farm animals such as cows and horses, are familiar parts of our lives. With the advent of zoos, moreover, animals that were once seen only in the wild can now be observed quite close-up. We all go through life with various relationships to animals. In this issue, we report on the relationships between people and animals in Japan through a close look at the country's zoos and pets.*

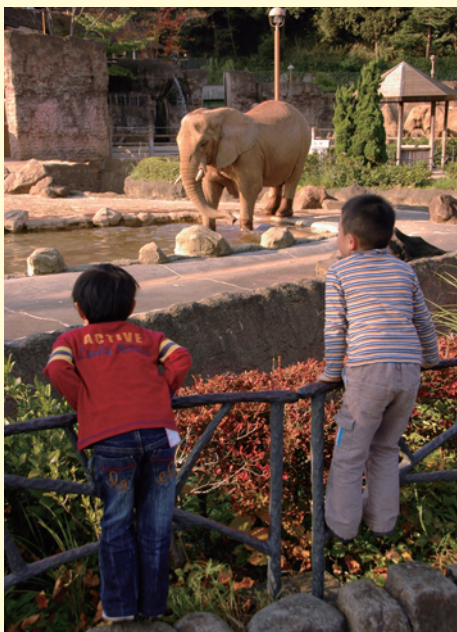
## Life in Zoos

Ueno Zoo, the first zoo in Japan, was founded in Tokyo in 1882. Zoos subsequently opened in big cities such as Kyoto and Osaka. After World War II, zoos were built all around the country, creating the so-called "zoo boom."

Every rare animal to arrive in Japan captured public attention. In the 1990s, however, the number of visitors to zoos dropped and some were forced to shut down. With a declining birthrate, the number of children in Japan has decreased and there are also many more entertainment options available today. Some say that zoos lost their popularity because of the unappealing way the animals were seen, confined to small and unattractive cages.

In recent years, however, we have witnessed a renewed interest in zoos. Asahiyama Zoo, which has employed a method of showing the animals that brings out their best side, was responsible in no small part for bringing about this revival. Other zoos followed its lead in implementing better ways of exhibiting animals. Zoos are changing from what were once mainly facilities for entertaining children to places where both children and adults can enjoy learning about animals.

Today, there are close to 100 zoos throughout the country. Ueno Zoo (Tokyo), the busiest one in Japan, has 3.5 million visitors a year.



## History of Japanese Zoos



### A History of Zoos in Japan

1882	Japan's first zoo, Ueno Zoo, opens in Tokyo
Early 1900s	Zoos open in large cities such as Kyoto and Osaka
Mid-1900s	Zoo animals are ordered put down during World War II
1948	"Children's Zoo" (petting zoo) opens at Ueno Zoo
1949	30,000 children visit Higashiyama Zoo on the "elephant trains"
1950	Ueno Zoo operates a "moving zoo" across the country, leading to a nationwide "zoo boom"
Mid-1950s	Zoos open around the country
1972	Pandas arrive for the first time in Japan, creating a panda frenzy. On the first day to see the pandas at Ueno Zoo, the line of visitors was two kilometers long.
1980s	Recreation, education, environmental conservation, and research become widely recognized as part of the mission of a zoo
1984	Koalas arrive for the first time in Japan, creating a koala boom
Early 1990s	Increase in entertainment options and declining birthrate lead to a drop in zoo visitors
Early 2000s	Asahiyama Zoo gains popularity with its "ethological exhibits"

## Children's Petting Zoos

In 1948, Ueno Zoo opened the Children's Zoo, where children are given the chance to pet animals. Today, seven out of every ten zoos in Japan have such petting zoos. In addition, some local governments run parks where visitors can play with animals. The purpose of these facilities is to familiarize children with animals, allowing them to gain a better understanding of life. The most common animals at such petting zoos are rabbits, guinea pigs, and goats.



"Children's zoos" where children are allowed to touch the animals are very popular.

## A Place to Learn about Life

Research is being conducted to enrich zoo life, which can easily become a monotonous routine. Various methods have been tried. Why do some animals exhibit abnormal behavior in zoos? One explanation is the lack of things to do. Animals in the wild must deal with harsh natural conditions to acquire food. For example, polar bears cover great distances looking for food, spending the majority of each day hunting. In a zoo, where they are fed at set times everyday, however, there is nothing for them to do. To remedy this lack of activity, their keepers sometimes hide apples and bananas in blocks of ice or conceal the food in different parts of the pens each day. This means the polar bears have to expend some time and energy in finding their food.

In addition to zoos that take steps to ensure that animals are getting what they need, certain non-profit organizations keep tabs on zoos to make sure they are providing healthy living environments for the animals. The Network for Zoo Enrichment is an NPO dedicated to promoting zoos not only as places for enjoyment, but as places for examining the relationship between animals and humans. It supports zoos in their efforts to improve their environments, and since 2002, has been presenting the Enrichment Award to zoos that have demonstrated their commitment to this cause.

## For Happier Lives in the Zoo



The orangutans at Tama Zoological Park (Tokyo) display their skills on special apparatus rigged in their pen. Visitors can watch the orangutans swing on a 150-meter long rope hung 15 meters above the ground.



A clear capsule juts out of the ground in the bears' pen. Visitors can witness up close the dynamic power of the polar bear.



Seal swimming in a cylindrical part of its tank.

© Asahiyama Zoo

## Zoo Animals Messengers of Peace

After World War II, learning of children's hopes to bring an elephant to Ueno Zoo, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India presented Ueno Zoo with an elephant named after his daughter, Indira, in 1949. In a letter he sent to the children of Tokyo, Prime Minister Nehru said, "... I hope that when the children of India and the children of Japan will grow up, they will serve not only their great countries, but also the cause of peace and cooperation all over Asia and the world. So you must look upon this elephant, Indira by name, as a messenger of affection and goodwill from the children of India . . ."

In 1972, the year Japan and China normalized diplomatic relations, China presented Japan with two giant pandas, Kan Kan and Ran Ran, as symbols of friendship.

The Japanese people understood the message behind these gestures, and the animals were well loved. Many people did feel affinity for each other's countries through these animals.



*Kawaiso na zo*

©Yukio Tsuchiya & Motoichiro Takebe, 1970. Published by KIN-NO-HOSHI SHA Co., Ltd.



*Zo-ressha ga yattekita*

©Takashi Koide & Genjiro Mita, 1983. Published by IWASAKI Publishing Co., Ltd.

Zoos were the site of many tragedies during World War II. In addition to the lack of food, the military ordered zoos to slaughter animals to prevent them from escaping and hurting people, and many animals were killed as a result. However, two elephants at Ueno Zoo refused to eat the poison-laced feed they were given. Instead, they performed tricks to try their keepers to give them their usual food. *Kawaiso na zo* (Faithful Elephants) is the story of these elephants.

After World War II, the only elephants that remained in Japan were the two at Higashiyama Zoo in Nagoya. Special trains called "elephant trains" were arranged to bring children from all over the country to Higashiyama Zoo. Over 30,000 children took these trains to visit the elephants. *Zo-ressha ga yattekita* (Here Comes the Elephant Train) is a book about this story.

These two picture books teach us about the preciousness of life, the responsibilities human beings have toward animals, and the gifts animals pass on to our children.

## "Faithful Elephants" and the "Elephant Train"

# Animal Companions



Asahiyama Zoo in Hokkaido has attracted quite a bit of attention in the past several years. Japan's northernmost zoo, Asahiyama first opened in 1967. When the number of visitors dropped from nearly 700,000 in the 1970s to 250,000 in the 1990s, Asahiyama Zoo was criticized as having lost its public purpose. The zoo's director, Kosuge Masao, studied the role of zoos and arrived at the conclusion that they should be places where visitors gain an appreciation for the wonders of animal life.

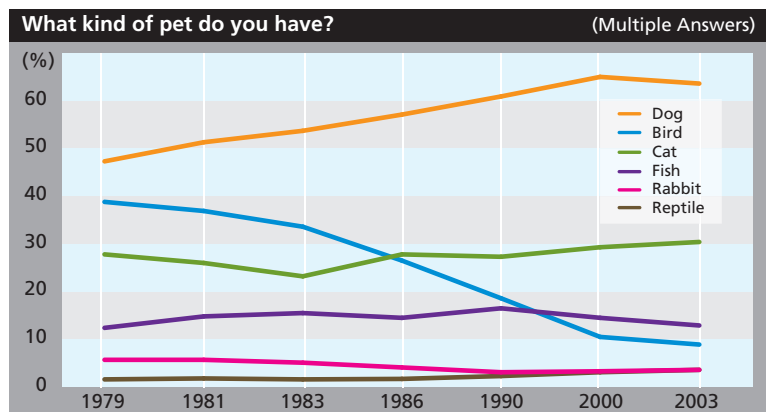
To achieve this purpose, Asahiyama Zoo decided to employ the "ethological exhibit" method of showing the animals. Based on the understanding that each animal has its own behavior and characteristics that are unique and compelling to visitors without relying on tricks that people train them to do, this display format seeks to put the animals' innate attributes on display. For example, in a cylindrical part of the tank, visitors can observe up close a seal's skill at maneuvering vertically in a narrowly confined space.

This new method of exhibiting animals has led to renewed interest in the zoo, which attracted over three million visitors in 2006, second only to Ueno Zoo.

Nearly 40 percent of all families in Japan have pets. More families in provincial areas own pets than in large cities like Tokyo or Osaka. Pets range from dogs, cats, birds, rabbits, and hamsters to fish, various kinds of reptiles, and insects, but dogs and cats are the most popular.

Urban families and even single apartment-dwellers who keep dogs and cats as indoor pets have recently increased. Few apartments permitted residents to have pets a decade ago, but today, over half of apartments allow residents to keep animals. In addition, there has been a rise in pet hotels, and hotels, cafes, and restaurants that allow customers to bring their pets with them.

As people have come to accept that dogs must be house-trained in order for them to be accepted by other people in the community as bona fide family members, the number of dog training schools has also risen.



Source: Cabinet Office, "Basic Poll on Animal Protection," 2003

## Popular Pets

## From Stray Cats to Community Cats

As the number of pet dogs and cats increased, so did the number of abandoned pets. This causes various problems; there are conflicts between people who, unable to turn a blind eye to strays, feed them, and others who are troubled by strays leaving droppings and the resulting odors on their property. Prefectural animal protection centers (*dobutsu aigo senta*) pick up stray dogs and cats, but they are put down if no one adopts them after a certain period of time, 400,000 every year, it is said.

An increasing number of communities have launched "community cat" activities as an alternative to killing strays while keeping them from inconveniencing residents. Local residents work together in getting the cats neutered, feeding them at specific times and places, and cleaning the places where they defecate. Some local governments provide these volunteers with funds for sterilization operations. Shinjuku ward, Tokyo, is one of them.

The Shinjuku ward public health center has established a forum for those who feed stray cats, those who suffer damage to their property by strays, and others in the community to identify and discuss the problems surrounding stray cats. "The problem of stray cats often turns out to be a problem between people," says Takagi Yuji of the Shinjuku ward public health center. "That's why we organize these discussions. And only when everyone in the community—not just the people who like cats—are involved can we say that our 'community cat' activities have succeeded."



© Shinjuku Ward Public Health Center



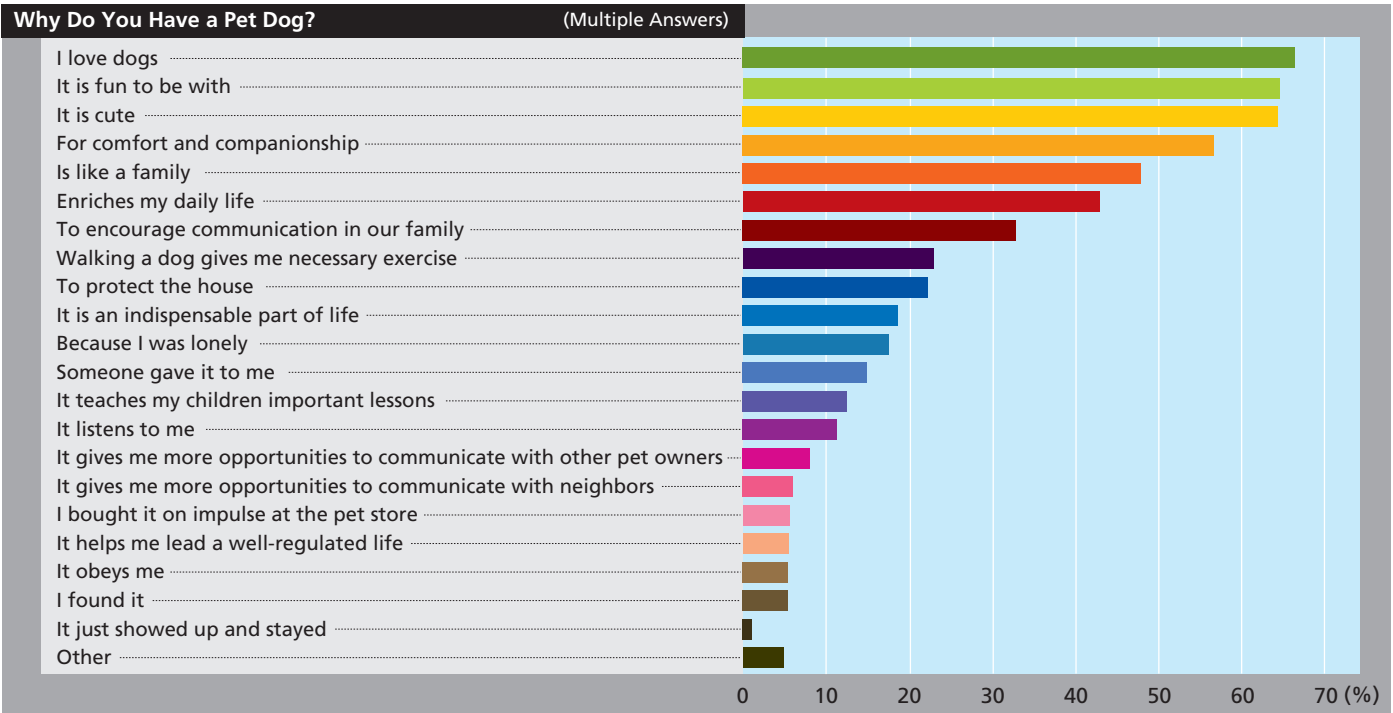
Children take turns cleaning the cage and feeding the animals kept at their elementary school.

Community cats gathering at a feeding station in a park.

## Reasons for Owning Dogs

The psychological and physical benefits of interacting with animals have become widely accepted. Many nursing homes and other such care facilities employ animal therapy, creating opportunities for clients to play with animals.

According to a certain study, many families say they acquired pets because their children had asked for them. They add, though, that the pets have had the effect of calming their families and increasing conversation among family members. Moreover, in urban areas where community ties are sometimes weak, pets have been effective in creating opportunities for neighbors to communicate with each other.



Source: Pet Food Manufacturers Association, "2006 National Survey on the Percentage of Pet Ownership"

## School Pets



Many elementary schools in Japan keep pets such as rabbits. Traditionally, animals were kept as a part of science classes, but nowadays, the emphasis is on teaching students the value of life. Usually, students on the "animal care committee"\* take care of these animals. In some schools,

however, the entire student body participates in these chores. There are some schools where individual homerooms have pet hamsters or goldfish.

\*Older elementary school children are members of at least one committee (*kakari*). In addition to the animal care committee, there are committees such as the "environmental beautification" committee, AV committee, newspaper committee, and health committee.

## Popular Dogs

The dog breeds that are most popular differ from year to year. In recent years, small dogs have consistently been the most popular. What kinds of dogs do your friends and family have, and why?

### Breeds of Registered Dogs

	Japan	U.S.	U.K.	Australia
1	Dachshund	Labrador Retriever	Labrador Retriever	Labrador Retriever
2	Chihuahua	Yorkshire Terrier	Cocker Spaniel	German Shepherd Dog
3	Poodle	German Shepherd Dog	English Springer Spaniel	Staffordshire Bull Terrier
4	Yorkshire terrier	Golden Retriever	German Shepherd Dog	Cavalier King Charles Spaniel
5	Papillon	Beagle	Staffordshire Bull Terrier	Golden Retriever
6	Pomeranian	Dachshund	Cavalier King Charles Spaniel	Poodle
7	Shih tzu	Boxer	Golden Retriever	Border Collie
8	Miniature schnauzer	Poodle	West Highland White Terrier	Pug
9	Welsh corgi pembroke	Shih Tzu	Boxer	Boxer
10	French Bulldog	Miniature Schnauzer	Border Terrier	Cocker Spaniel

Source: Japan Kennel Club 2006 (Japan), American Kennel Club 2006 (U.S.), The Kennel Club UK 2006 (U.K.), Australian National Kennel Council 2006 (Australia)

# Valuable Lessons from Monkeys



**Saki**  
second grader Hyogo, Japan

*Built 40 years ago on a mountainside on an Inland Sea island, the Awajishima Monkey Center provides food for 180 wild monkeys. The monkeys arrive at the Center around nine o'clock in the morning and stay until they go back up the mountain around five in the afternoon.*

*The Center is run by the Nobuhara family. Nobuhara Saki has become very friendly with the monkeys, and her relationship with the monkeys has been featured numerous times on television, their heartwarming interaction leaving a deep impression with viewers. For this issue, we talked to Saki and her parents.*

**Q: When did you start playing with the monkeys? What do you do together?**

**Saki:** I probably started playing with them when I was one. I've been with monkeys for as long as I can remember. We splash each other with water, or see who can find nuts the fastest. We look for nuts that Mom hides, and I usually win. That's because I'm always secretly watching where Mom's hiding the stuff . . . [laughs]. It's fun to play with the monkeys, but what I like best is feeding the babies.

**Q: Most of the monkeys here have names, but can you tell them all apart? Who names them?**

**Saki:** Yeah, I know who most of them are. I can tell because their faces are different. When a baby monkey is born, Mom or Dad or I give it a name. I've given them names like "Ribbon" and "Cake." I like all the monkeys and think they're cute, even if I've named them or not.



Saki and Tororo. Saki sometimes quarrel with him, but they are very close. Tororo doesn't mind Saki touching his face. He is the only one that will let her touch him like that.

**Mother:** Saki is the best at telling the monkeys apart. We didn't teach her how; she just figured it out on her own.

**Q: What was the best thing that's ever happened to you with the monkeys?**

**Saki:** It was when I held a baby monkey when I was five. The baby's mother was right behind it, but it was so cute that I picked up the baby.

**Father:** Usually, mother monkeys get really upset if a human being touches their babies. Not just the mother, but also the other monkeys would normally get upset. But since Saki's been around them since she was young and she's still small, they probably just let it go. There have been other occasions when I feel that the monkeys are more generous towards Saki than they are with other people.



The first time Saki held a week-old baby monkey in her arms.

**Mother:** Saki looked so happy when she held that baby monkey in her arms. She held on to it for a pretty long time. Also, she seemed to be really happy when Tororo let her touch him for the first time during a television shoot. When I saw the footage, Saki just had the most satisfied look on her face. Wild monkeys usually don't let people touch them.

**Q: What was the saddest thing that's ever happened?**

**Saki:** I was taking a walk with Grandma when I was six, and there was a dead female monkey about 50 cm long. I think she fell from a tree or was attacked by a dog. Dad buried her. It was really sad. Also, when I was seven, I was looking for nuts with Dad to give to the monkeys, when we found a monkey skull. The skull was just lying there. I was really shocked. I dug a grave for it.

**Father:** At the time, Saki didn't really show how she felt. She doesn't like to expose her weaknesses to others, and has a tendency to act strong. But seeing that she made a grave for the skull, I think she experienced some shock. It's not often that we confront a monkey's death, because they don't die at the feeding stations. Now, when monkeys that used to come for food stop coming, Saki may not think much of it. Eventually, though, she'll realize that not coming for food means that they've died. How

will she deal with that fact, and how will she overcome it? It's an important lesson to learn, but I'm a bit worried.

*There are a lot of malformed monkeys on this mountain, and about 30 of the 180 monkeys have some sort of abnormality. Around the time the Center first opened, the first director, Saki's grandfather, found a monkey carrying a baby monkey that had been born without any limbs. Witnessing the mother monkey almost drop the baby from a tree from exhaustion, since she had had to hold the baby all the time, Saki's grandfather decided to raise the baby himself, naming it Kota. In memory of Kota, a statue of him was built and placed at the Center.*

**Q: Do you know about Kota? There are a lot of monkeys here without legs, but what do you think about that?**

**Saki:** I think Grandpa was a great person to raise Kota himself. But when I heard about him, I was worried that Kota might not be able to make friends because his mother didn't raise him.

**Father:** Saki doesn't see monkeys with abnormalities as any different from the other ones. I think it's normal for her not to see them as special. The monkeys here accommodate those that have disabilities, changing their behaviors and lifestyles accordingly, like by dropping their pace when moving from one place to another. Monkey societies function well. A hierarchy definitely exists, but the stronger monkeys help the weaker ones. They don't cut them off or abandon them. The monkeys with abnormalities are a part of their pack, their society. In that sense, I feel like there's more merit to the way monkeys operate in packs than people do in society.

**Q: Does your association with the monkeys every day make you think about anything in particular, Saki?**

**Saki:** Nothing in particular! It's just ordinary for me.

**Q: What do you, Mr. and Mrs. Nobuhara, want Saki to learn from her daily interactions with monkeys?**

**Father:** There isn't anything specific that I want her to learn. Saki has had experiences that not many children have, but I don't know if it's been a good thing. But I do think that it hasn't really been a bad thing. She knows from experience what it means to



The monkey all come when Saki calls out, "Boss! Boss!" Her job at the Center is to feed monkeys and change their water.

go through life helping each other. She doesn't say much, but through her actions I can tell that she's thinking about a lot of different things. Like when she buried that monkey skull. Or when witnessing births, which happen a lot, Saki has the most serious expression on her face. And when other people become too excited, she'll ask them to quiet down.

**Mother:** I don't have anything specific in mind that I want her to learn, either. I think she'll learn what she needs to know naturally. She might reject our suggestions if we try to direct her learning in a certain direction.



There are sometimes news stories about monkeys causing trouble in residential areas and snatching bags from tourists, so some people are under the impression that wild monkeys are dangerous and a nuisance. However, the monkeys at Awajishima Monkey Center are all very quiet. When people approach them, they seem neither intimidated nor intimidating. The Center has a rule that visitors



This cage is for the people, who are feeding the monkeys outside.

cannot feed the monkeys or have any visible food with them without authorization from the Center management. When people feed the monkeys, they themselves must enter a cage and feed monkeys peanuts that they've bought on the spot. Since the monkeys have learned that they will be fed only by people in cages, they do not beg people outside cages for food. Nobuhara Kazutoshi, Saki's father, says, "My hope is that through media coverage of Saki, people will learn our way of interacting with monkeys, and change their prejudices toward wild monkeys. I also hope that this will help people to think more deeply about the plight of wild monkeys, nature, and each other." He continues, "The original thinking behind the Center was to feed the monkeys in one place, thereby preventing them from damaging people's farms. Of course, it's much better not to have to feed wild monkeys at all. But right now, it's not possible to return them to the wild. The mountain is not safe for monkeys to live on their own . . . Hopefully one day, humans will have to go deep into the mountains to get even a glimpse of a wild monkey."