

# FLORA FAUNA NEWS

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## Animals and Politics



By Brian Kanke  
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Just as there are myriad strategies open to the human political animal with White House ambitions, so there are a number of nonhuman animals that behave like textbook politicians. Researchers who study highly gregarious and relatively brainy species like rhesus monkeys, baboons, dolphins, sperm whales, elephants and wolves have lately uncovered evidence that the creatures engage in extraordinarily sophisticated forms of politicking, often across large and far-flung social networks.

Male dolphins, for example, organize themselves into at least three nested tiers of friends and accomplices, said Richard C. Connor of the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, rather like the way human societies are constructed of small kin groups allied into larger tribes allied into still larger nation-states. The dolphins maintain their alliances through elaborately synchronized twists, leaps and spins like Blue Angel pilots blazing their acrobatic fraternity on high.

Among elephants, it is the females who are the born politicians, cultivating robust and lifelong social ties with at least 100 other elephants, a task made easier by their power to communicate infrasonically across miles of savanna floor. Wolves, it seems, leaven their otherwise strongly hierarchical society with occasional displays of populist umbrage, and if a pack leader proves a too-snappish tyrant, subordinate wolves will collude to overthrow the top cur.

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If you have a topic or a question you would like addressed in the next newsletter please email us. We always appreciate pictures of the funny things animals will do. God Bless and Keep Animals Happy and Healthy!

### Did You Know?



- There are 7.77 million species of animals.
- Cows painted with zebra-like stripes can avoid being bitten by flies.
- A group of owls is called a parliament.



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Wherever animals must pool their talents and numbers into cohesive social groups, scientists said, the better to protect against predators, defend or enlarge choice real estate or acquire mates, the stage will be set for the appearance of political skills – the ability to please and placate, manipulate and intimidate, trade favors and scratch backs or, better yet, pluck those backs free of botflies and ticks.

Over time, the demands of a social animal's social life may come to swamp all other selective pressures in the environment, possibly serving as the dominant spur for the evolution of ever-bigger vote-tracking brains. And though we humans may vaguely disapprove of our political impulses and harbor "Fountainhead" fantasies of pulling free in full glory from the nattering tribe, in fact for us and other highly social species there is no turning back. A lone wolf is a weak wolf, a failure, with no chance it will thrive.

A close-up photograph of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes, draped over a dark background. The flag is the primary visual element on the left side of the election notice.

## GET OUT AN VOTE

### NOVEMBER 8, 2022 ELECTION DAY

- **Make sure your voter registration is update (Deadline to update is Oct. 1, 2022)**
- **Request your Absentee ballot now (Absentee ballots will be mailed out beginning Oct 12)**

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