

INTERSPECIES COLLABORATION HOW-TO

Preparation

- Identify potential non-human collaborators.
- Investigate aesthetic expressions and play behaviors of your potential collaborators.
- Set up a collaborative situation and/or make contact with potential collaborators. Investigate their possible interest in collaborating. (See *Collaborative Forms*)
- Ask for permissions from humans (such as farmers, pet owners, zoo managers, etc.) who claim ownership of your potential collaborators.
- Study and assess the senses of the collaborator: How do they see, smell, hear, etc.? And what senses do they have beyond the human senses?
- Remove any preconceptions about the species you are working with.
- Investigate possible mediums and materials.
- Devise precise but flexible methods for process and documentation.

Project Development

- Establish trust between you and the collaborator(s). (Trust functions differently depending on your *Collaborative Form*.)
- Put yourself in the collaborators position. At times, become animal.
- Work from questions, don't expect answers.
- Show affinity and respect towards your collaborator.
- Be receptive to the collaborator and sensitive to their sensing thresholds.
- Be quiet - listen, see, sense.
- Be patient.
- Be open to change.
- Document the process, it might be more interesting than any "results."
- Share the project/experience/result/documentation with an audience!

On interspeciescollaboration.net you can blog about the process and upload images, video and soundfiles to document both your process and the project.

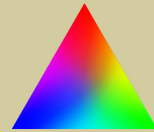
QUICK START PROJECT IDEAS

- Build a sculpture together with Ants or a Beaver.
- Make a site-specific installation with a Mole.
- Dance together with Sea Lions or Bees.
- Sing together with a Coyote or a Cat.
- Perform spoken words with a Scrub Jay or a Dog.
- Make drawings together with a Snake.
- Do a conceptual performance with an Octopus.

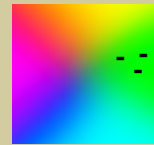
Color Vision



Dichromats (two color receptors):
Most Mammals



Trichromats (three color receptors):
Many Primates including Humans

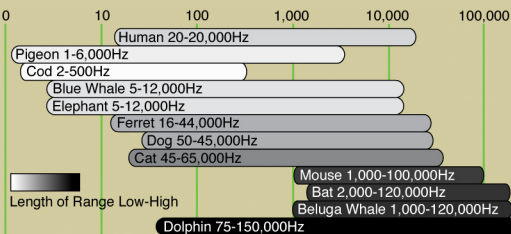


Tetrachromats (four color receptors):
Many Birds, Fishes, Reptiles, Crustaceans and Insects
- Colors Not Visible for Humans

There are Birds, Fishes, Insects and Crustaceans that have more than four color receptors. The Mantis Shrimp has twelve! In addition many of them can see Ultra Violet light and some can see Light Polarization. For more information about animal vision see zoomorph.org

Hearing

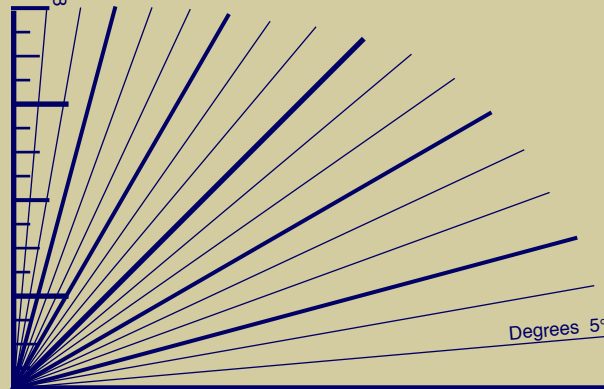
There are interesting variations between species in terms of what pitch we can perceive.



Beyond the Human Senses

- Echolocation (Bats and Cetaceans)
- Electroreception (Fishes, Platypus)
- Magnetoreception (Some Birds)
- Pressure Detection (Fishes)
- Current Detection (Fishes, Amphibians)
- Infrared/Heat Sensors (Snakes and Bats)

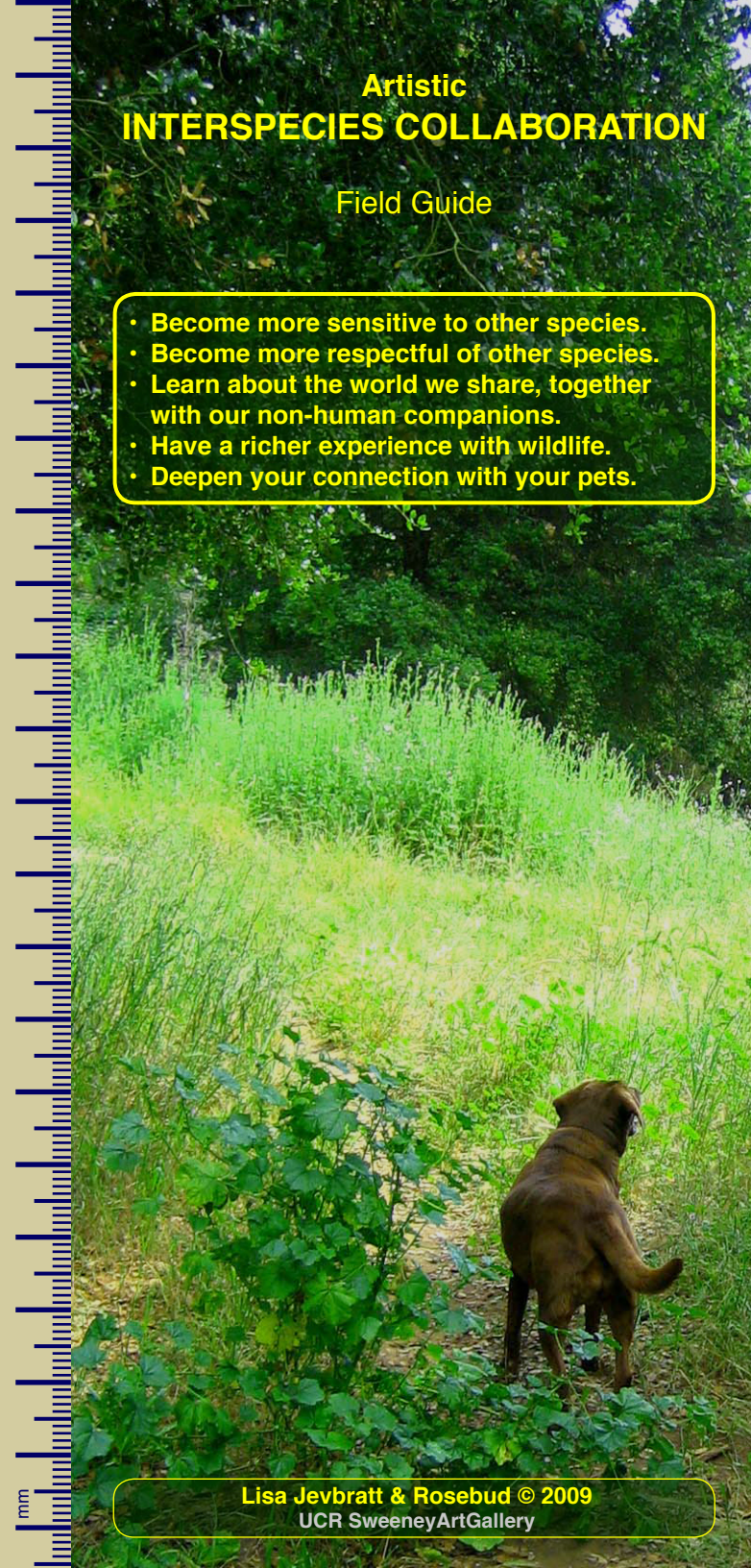
Inches 1/8



Artistic INTERSPECIES COLLABORATION

Field Guide

- Become more sensitive to other species.
- Become more respectful of other species.
- Learn about the world we share, together with our non-human companions.
- Have a richer experience with wildlife.
- Deepen your connection with your pets.



Lisa Jevbratt & Rosebud © 2009
UCR SweeneyArtGallery

INTERSPECIES COLLABORATION

Judging from extensive circumstantial evidence and recent scientific research, human and non-human animals seem to want to help each other out. Maybe this willingness to support each other across species can be formalized into collaborations? Can we work on scientific or artistic projects together with other species and become intellectual, emotional and spiritual partners with the species around us? The gains would be tremendous. Imagine all the things we could learn about the world by experiencing it with/through a profoundly different being, and how that knowledge could be utilized in the quest for a sustainable environment for all of us to thrive within.

However, the prospect of interspecies collaborations seriously questions our leading scientific and artistic paradigms. First, how can we conduct research in collaboration with someone whose experiences, sensations and communications are not well understood? Second, both the scientific community and the art world have a long tradition of using animals. How do we transition into collaboration? How can we interact meaningfully with an "other" that has been conditioned for centuries, if not millennia, to mistrust us?

Use this guide to get your own collaborations started, and find your own solutions to these questions.

COLLABORATIVE FORMS

You can participate in a collaboration in many ways, some are direct, and others are non-explicit. Here you find four suggestions of collaborative forms that can be used as inspiration to create your own collaborative relationships.

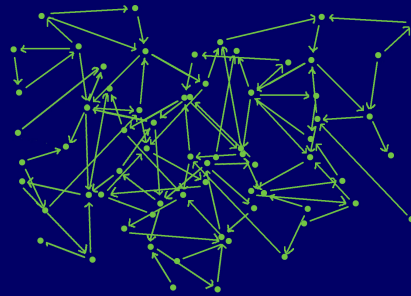
ATTENTION!

- Never harm or disturb a non-human animal in pursuit of collaboration.
- Be respectful of your collaborators, remember, no means no.
- The non-humans you pursue for collaboration might not only be uninterested in working with you, they might be willing to use their fangs, claws and poisons to express it!
- Laws apply to interactions with some non-human animals. Check for laws applying to potential collaborators in your [area/park/city/county/state/country](#).

interspeciescollaboration.net

Photograph by Laura Hyatt from the project *Ode To Richard Long* by Laura Hyatt and Dru.

PROTOCOL



The World Wide Web is a huge project created by millions of people together. However, we don't sit down and discuss what needs to be done, or what our goals are. Instead we create and respond to protocols such as IP, HTTP, HTML and various website guidelines.

Make a **protocol** or rule system that formalizes the interaction between you and an animal and generates some output. You are in good company; artists such as Yoko Ono have been creating rules as art for a long time. Respond to the behavior of an animal in a determined manner: if my collaborator does this, then I do that. Or think about an environment as a protocol. Invite an animal to respond to objects and spaces you make for them, or respond to objects they created.

COMMUNICATION



By using methods developed by **animal communicators** you can discuss project ideas with potential collaborators.

1. Relax. Use your favorite relaxation exercises.
2. Be aware of images or sounds that appear in your mind or sensations in your body that could be representations of communication from the animal.
3. Send your reply to the animal in images.
4. Repeat step 2 to 4.

This process requires a lot of focus and time. It can be very rewarding in itself regardless of whether a collaboration evolves.

LIMBIC RESONANCE

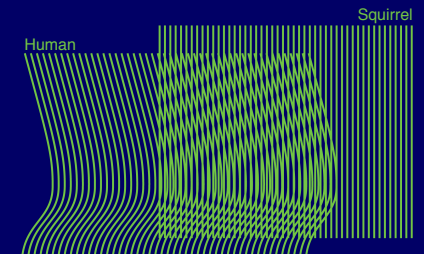


This is a kind of collaboration that springs out of being very close to someone, when you feel that your brains have merged into one brain. When you and your pet are finishing each other's sentences you have **limbic resonance**.

If you don't feel that you have these experiences, think of the times when an idea seems to appear out of nowhere. Where were your pets at the time?

When you have limbic resonance with someone, artistic collaboration is an obvious step to take. Just spend a lot of time together and let the creative ideas flow between you. Don't be surprised if you find yourself in the role of an assistant, working away under the leadership of your companion animal.

INTERFERENCE PATTERN



You have a specific experience of the world that is constructed from the culture and nature you grew up within, your own personal makeup and who knows what else. Now think of that experience (or Umwelt as the nineteenth hundreds biologist Jacob Von Uexküll called it) as a grid. Then imagine the Umwelt of another being as a grid as well, different than yours. Now overlay those two grids and you get a (**interference**) pattern that is not in any one of the separate grids but created by the difference between the two of them.

By overlaying your experience of the world with the experience of another being for a moment in time, something new is created in collaboration between the two of you.