

18 July 2022

Annual Report 2022 for the Right Relationship with Animals Working Group

Last fall, on a nighttime Zoom call, our path as a Working Group was illuminated by two new attendees. One Friend inspired us with a story about her son, Ethan Brown, who dreamed of a better world for animals while growing up on a large dairy farm in Maryland. Today, he is the founder and CEO of Beyond Meat. On that same evening, another Friend and new member shared his view that our concern is a clear expression of Friends' belief in the Peace Testimony. We were, and are still, so very grateful.

In time for Thanksgiving, we assembled an insider's guide for creating easy, delicious, plant-based holiday meals and published it on BYM's website. It emphasized using animal-free ingredients to make traditional holiday comfort foods and featured menus, recipes, and helpful links.

This past spring, our Working Group, in concert with the Unity with Nature Committee, was delighted and honored to host a Zoom presentation, on March 20, by Jonathan Balcombe, the *New York Times* best-selling author of *What a Fish Knows: The Inner Lives of Our Underwater Cousins* (2016). Approximately forty-one people attended.

Balcombe, a biologist with a PhD in ethology, explains the purpose of his book as follows:

What this book explores is a simple possibility with a profound implication. The simple possibility is that fishes are individual beings whose lives have intrinsic value--that is, value to themselves quite apart from any utilitarian value they might have to us, for example as a source of profit, or of entertainment. The profound implication is that this would qualify them for inclusion in our circle of moral concern.*

Why bother? There are two main reasons. First, fishes are, collectively, the most exploited (and overexploited) category of vertebrate animals on Earth. Second, the science of fish sentience and cognition has advanced to a point that it may be time for a paradigm shift in how we think about and treat fishes.
(pages 6-7)

During his presentation, Balcombe debunked some of the myths about fishes that enable humans' mindless consumption of them, beginning with our convention of referencing them in the collective, as "fish," whether they are one in number or a hundred struggling for breath in a fisherman's net. Drawing on a variety of scientific studies, Balcombe fortified our understanding of what fishes actually see, hear, smell, taste, think, and feel, physically and emotionally. It was an enlightening experience. A link to the recording of this webinar, as well as many other resources created by the Working Group, can be found on our webpage: https://www.bym-rsf.org/what_we_do/committees/animals/

Presently, in July 2022, we are looking forward to our first Vegannual Challenge at Annual Session. Please join us in changing destructive norms to create peace for the animals, peace for humans without enough to eat, peace for humans suffering from lifestyle diseases, and peace for the Earth.