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Subject: The New York Times Magazine: What Animals Are Teaching Us About Human Health

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 The New York Times

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Friday, May 19, 2017

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“Animals don’t exist in order to teach us things,” writes Helen Macdonald, in the [introductory essay](#) for this week’s issue — “but that is what they have always done, and most of what they teach us is what we think we know about ourselves.” The stories in this issue focus on what animals have shown us about human health, but many of them also challenge how we see the nonhuman creatures around us. We asked a selection of writers — [Joyce Carol Oates](#), [Junot Díaz](#), [Mohsin Hamid](#), [Karen Russell](#), [Hanya Yanagihara](#), [Daniel Engber](#), [Moises Velasquez-Manoff](#), [Emily Anthes](#) — to look from new angles at the other beings we share our planet with: our [best friends](#), our research subjects, our nuisances, our [inspirations](#), our family.

Elsewhere in the magazine, Carina Chocano writes about the Fyre Festival — and the ways everyday life is starting to resemble a [never-ending scam](#). Gary Rivlin explores the notion of “[Grades 13 and 14](#),” time tacked onto the end of high school to prepare our students for better jobs. And Gabrielle Hamilton shares a recipe for [chowder-soaked toast](#), a dish born when she and her wife decided to run “her” restaurant, Prune, together — as “their” restaurant.

Happy reading,

Jake Silverstein

Editor in Chief

 [A family photograph of the writer with house sparrows in 1979.](#)

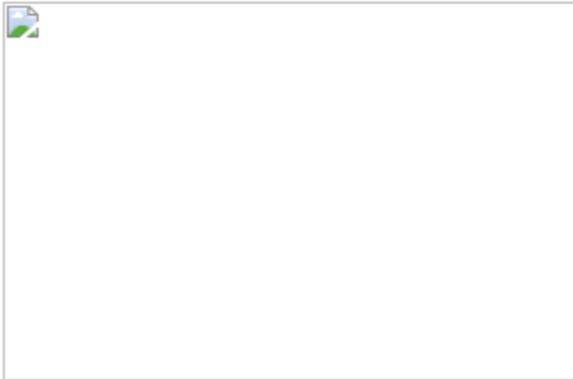
A family photograph of the writer with house sparrows in 1979. Alisdair Macdonald

THE HEALTH ISSUE

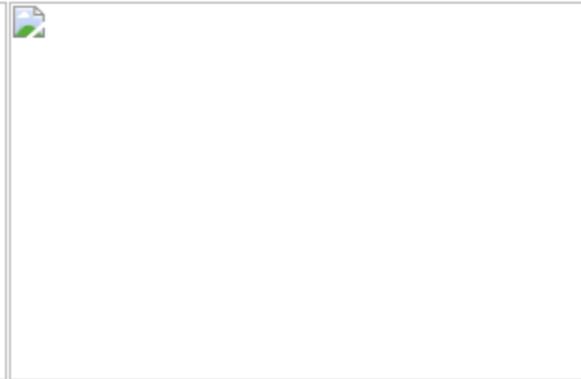
What Animals Taught Me About Being Human

By HELEN MACDONALD

Surrounding myself with animals to feel less alone was a mistake: The greatest comfort is in knowing their lives are not about us at all.



Spencer Lowell for The New York Times



Mark Peckmezian for The New York Times

THE HEALTH ISSUE

A Pet Tortoise Who Will Outlive Us All

By HANYA YANAGIHARA

It's humbling to care for an animal that reminds you, each day, of your own imminent death.

THE HEALTH ISSUE

The Mystery of the Wasting House-Cats

By EMILY ANTHES

Forty years ago, feline hyperthyroidism was virtually nonexistent. Now it's an epidemic — and some scientists think a class of everyday chemicals might be to blame.

WELL

Of Mice and Mindfulness

By GRETCHEN REYNOLDS

Putting mice into something like a meditative state may shed light on the human brain.

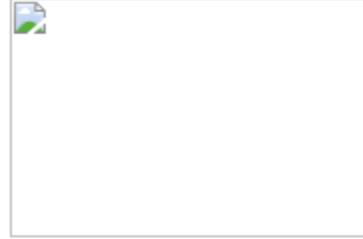


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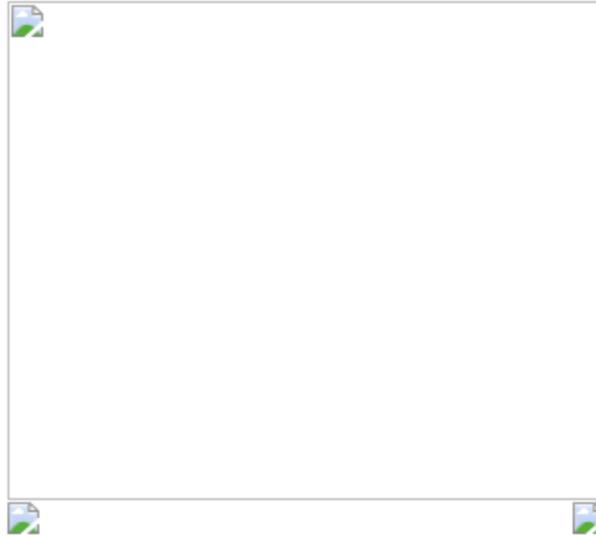
'We Choose Each Other Over and Over Because We Want to': Readers Share Their Open-Marriage Stories

By JEANNIE CHOI

More than 300 readers weighed in on whether an open marriage is a happier marriage based on their personal experience.



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 Zoie Brogdon, Age 12: "I tried soccer, which I hated. I tried track, and there was just mean people. I tried tennis, same thing, mean people. With horses, there still are mean people, but I don't care. Because I have my horse right next to me."

Zoie Brogdon, Age 12: "I tried soccer, which I hated. I tried track, and there was just mean people. I tried tennis, same thing, mean people. With horses, there still are mean people, but I don't care. Because I have my horse right next to me." Ilona Szwarc for The New York Times

THE HEALTH ISSUE

Why Close Encounters With Animals Soothe Us

Photographs by ILONA SZWARC AND TEXT BY CHARLES SIEBERT

Compton Jr. Posse in Los Angeles, which brings inner-city children and horses together, reveals the therapeutic power of communing with fellow sentient beings.

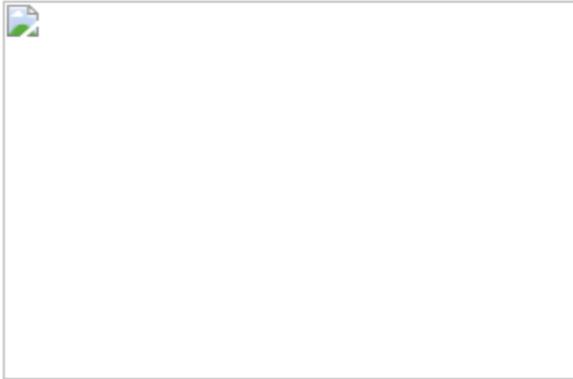


Photo illustration by Catherine Ledner for the New York Times

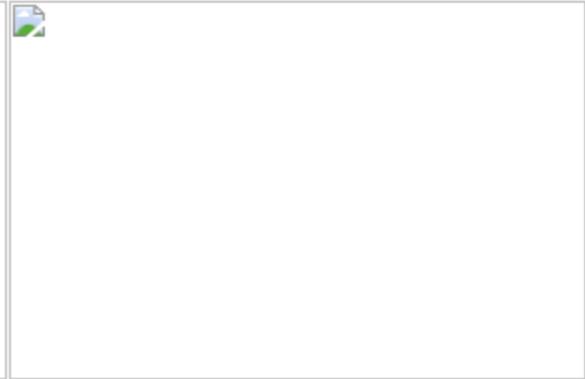


Illustration by Kelsey Dake

THE HEALTH ISSUE

The Genetics of Pooched-Out Pooches

By ROXANNE KHAMSI

A mutation in some obesity-prone dog breeds might reveal new risk factors for obesity in humans — and perhaps give rise to new drugs.

THE HEALTH ISSUE

The Self-Medicating Animal

By MOISES VELASQUEZ-MANOFF

What can we learn from chimps and sheep and maybe even insects that practice medicine on themselves?

THE HEALTH ISSUE

When the Lab Rat Is a Snake

By DANIEL ENGBER

Why Burmese pythons may be the best way to study diabetes, heart disease and the protective effects of gastric-bypass surgery in humans.



FIRST WORDS

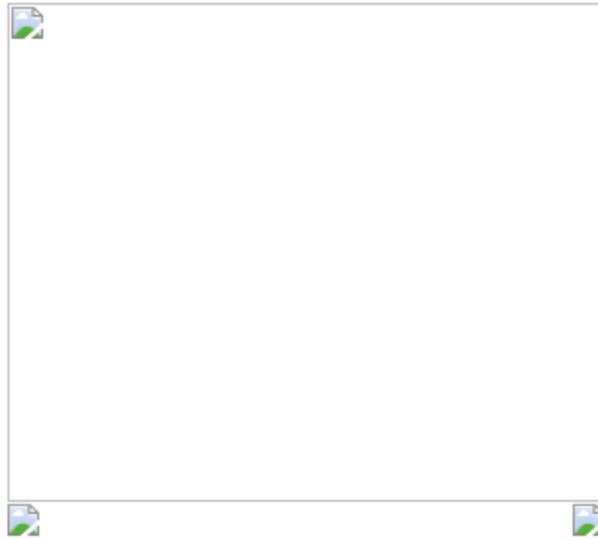
From Wells Fargo to Fyre Festival, the Scam Economy Is Entering Its Baroque Phase

By CARINA CHOCANO

We all may be losing sight of the difference between appearance and reality — between what we advertise and what we do.



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