

Scientist says animals have spiritual experiences, too

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Scientist says animals have spiritual experiences, too

by David Gutierrez, staff writer

(NaturalNews) Humans are not the only animals that have spiritual and mystical experiences, a growing number of biologists are becoming convinced.

Studies continue to trace many of these experiences to very old sections of the human brain, in regions shared by many other animals. For example, out-of-body experiences are associated with activity in the region of the brain that regulates states of consciousness in mammals.

"In humans, we know that if we disrupt the (brain) region where vision, sense of motion, orientation in the Earth's gravitational field, and knowing the position of our [body](#) all come together, then out-of-body experiences can be caused literally by the flip of a switch," said neurologist Kevin Nelson of the University of Kentucky, author of *The Spiritual Doorway in the Brain*.

"There is absolutely no reason to believe it is any different for a dog, cat, or primate's [brain](#)."

Mystical experiences have been linked to the brain's limbic system, another ancient region, and the removal of this region actually makes animals immune to psychedelic drugs.

Ecologist Mark Bekoff and primatologist Jane Goodall have both observed chimpanzees dancing with abandon at ephemeral waterfalls after heavy rains, working themselves into an apparently trance-like state.

"Is it not possible that these ... performances are stimulated by feelings akin to wonder and awe?" Goodall said. "After a waterfall display the performer may sit on a rock, his eyes following the falling [water](#). What is it, this water?"

"Perhaps numerous animals engage in these rituals, but we haven't been lucky enough to see them," Bekoff wrote in *Psychology Today*.

"For now, let's keep the door open to the idea that animals can be spiritual beings."

Nelson echoed that sentiment.

"Since only humans are capable of language that can communicate the richness of spiritual experience, it is unlikely we will ever know with certainty what an animal subjectively experiences," Nelson said.

"Despite this limitation, it is still reasonable to conclude that since the most primitive areas of our brain happen to be the spiritual, then we can expect that animals are also capable of spiritual experiences."

Sources for this story include: <http://news.discovery.com/animals/a...>