

Which animal can understand and perform simple calculations?

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When we think of math, we often picture humans in classrooms solving equations or using calculators. But did you know that some animals can count and perform simple calculations? Scientists have discovered that many animals—from fish to monkeys to even insects—have basic numerical sense. This article explores the fascinating world of animal intelligence, revealing how some species can count, compare quantities, and actually crack simple math tasks. You might be surprised to learn how important number sense is for animals.

What is computational ability in animals?

Animals don't calculate the way humans do. They don't write numbers or use symbols. But many animals have a trait called numerical cognition — the ability to understand quantities, tell the difference between numbers, and sometimes actually do basic calculations. This skill helps them survive in the wild. For example, the ability to count can help them select larger food sources, avoid groups of bloodsuckers besieging their home, care for their young, and so on.

Animals with computational abilities

Chimpanzee

Masters of Memory and Numbers - Chimpanzees are some of the smartest animals on Earth. In studies, they have demonstrated incredible abilities in understanding numbers and memory tasks. In one infamous experiment, a chimpanzee named Ayumu was trained to press numbers on a screen in order. Indeed, despite the numbers only being shown for a split second, Ayumu was able to recall their location and order faster than most humans! Chimpanzees have also been shown to be able to add small amounts and make judgments based on comparing quantities, similar to choosing between different amounts of food.



Elephant

Elephants may not count like humans, but they do understand quantity. Research has shown that elephants can tell the difference between food that is further away and food that is lower down. Although elephants don't count, their sense of volume is really useful in their day-to-day lives.

Crow

The smartest bird with the greatest intellect - the crow. They are known for their incredible intelligence. Studies have shown that crows can count 4 to 5 objects. Understand zero. Use addition and simple reasoning to solve mysteries. Some wild crows have actually been seen using tools. All signs of a highly developed brain.

Parrot

Talking and Counting Parrots, especially African greys, are another group of whistling birds that demonstrate incredible computational abilities. A famous parrot actor named Alex was taught to count objects up to 6. Understanding the difference between 'more' and 'less', Alex could actually answer questions like 'How many blue blocks are there?' just by counting blue bones—a skill that shows a developed mindset.



Fish

Some species, such as guppies and angelfish, can distinguish between different shapes of objects. They can choose larger, shallower areas of water for safety. They also learned to associate shapes with food rewards in a famous experiment. This ability helps fish survive in the wild by choosing safer environments and better food sources.

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