

CURRENT ISSUES IN COMPARATIVE PSYCHOLOGY

RECOGNITION OF HUMANS BY ANIMALS

Editorial Comments

Many "higher" animals are commonly assumed to distinguish between individual humans. This belief is based largely on anecdotal reports. In reality, there is little empirical evidence to support human recognition in non-human species. In the following paper Taylor and Davis report evidence that llamas can recognize individual humans. Although the data are preliminary, they suggest an important cognitive ability in a species whose behavior remains largely unexplored. Moreover, they raise the issue of the possible influence of familiar versus strange handlers on research and on animal management in zoological gardens or on farms. We hope that this preliminary set of observations will stimulate further discussion about the possibility of human recognition by animals. In order to evolve a comparative psychology of human recognition, Taylor and Davis would like readers to share similar evidence, especially in cases involving relatively uncommon species. Studies involving so-called "lower" species (invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians) would be of particular interest.