

THEY LIVE AMONG US

# Pulitzer Prize nominee Gay Bradshaw would say, about animals, ‘We live among them’

BY DIANA COOGLE

Gay Bradshaw would like us to see animals as family members. “We may look different on the outside, but we share the same capacity to think, feel, and have consciousness,” she says.

Backed by a childhood in a family who loved and cherished animals, she came to these conclusions as a scientist. While in Africa to study lions, she learned of elephants who were killing rhinoceroses. Puzzled, she began to explore why the herbivorous elephant would start ravaging other animals. Her research led her to conclude that the elephants were experiencing PTSD from mass killings by hunters, the capture and torture of orphan elephants for use in entertainment and as draws for the ecotourist trade, loss of homeland, and cultural breakdown. These studies ultimately led to her book, *Elephants on the Edge: What Animals Teach Us About Humanity*, a Pulitzer Prize nominee. She has also written about grizzly bears, orcas, pumas, and rattlesnakes.

Now, from her home in the Applegate, Gay devotes her life to caring for animals and teaching people what animals can teach us about humanity.

“Nature is not ‘red in tooth and claw,’ as Tennyson would have it,” she says, “but a community of beings with shared principles and an ethics of calmness and coherence.” For example, she says, moose have been observed wandering with their young, safely and at ease, through a wolf compound. “In nature,” Gay tells us, “animals follow shared principles and ethics that give coherence and peace to life.”

As a child, Gay lived between Oregon and California after her parents bought Applegate property 70 years ago. Twenty-three years ago, after her parents died, she moved here to live full time in the 100-year-old cabin.

On this property, Gay founded a nonprofit, the Kerulos Center for Nonviolence, which includes an online teaching center and its sanctuary, Grace Village. The Village started with a



Gay Bradshaw, with one of her family members, devotes her life to caring for animals at her home in the Applegate Valley.

research organization asking Gay if she would take in some abused and disabled endangered desert tortoises. Gay said yes (of course) and immediately erected five geodesic domes for their comfort in our climate.

“Then someone dropped off a rabbit,” she says, “and then there were turkeys,” and then more tortoises, more rabbits—and then deer, squirrels, and skunks came ’round (see an article by Gay about skunks on page 3 of the *Applegater’s* November extra edition). Now she has 48 animals (excluding the wildlife): 14 desert tortoises, a sulcata tortoise, rabbits, chickens, turkeys, roosters, dogs, and cats—all living in community with humans. In that way, Grace Village exemplifies Gay’s mission to dissolve the boundaries that separate humans from other animals.

The Kerulos Center has recently started the Animals of the Applegate Network to connect clinics, individuals, and sanctuaries

to “help people who help animals.” Through Animals of the Applegate, Gay hopes to raise consciousness that our community includes both animals and humans. “We need to share the land and waters with our animal kin, relax, and enjoy each other in mutual respect,” she says, “and to recognize that the animals in our wilds also get PTSD, from experiences with hunters, motorcyclists, dogs on trails, and other inconsiderate incursions into their land.”

The Kerulos Center’s goals include finding more land to expand the Grace Village sanctuary so people can attend nature mindfulness retreats in the company of animals.

Gay Bradshaw has two PhDs, one in psychology and one in ecology. Her undergraduate major was in linguistics, with a specialty in Chinese. With a background in physics and math, she worked as a research mathematician for the US Forest Service, a job she quit

because “I love this place, so it was too painful to witness what was not scientific or ethical.” She has published many articles in academic and popular media and has written eight books about animals and our relationships with them (see sidebar). In a life full of honors and important work, Gay says she is most proud to be able to rescue animals and share her home with them.

To learn more about Gay Bradshaw’s work and the Kerulos Center, go to [kerulos.org](http://kerulos.org).

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## Books by Gay Bradshaw

*The Evolved Nest: Nature’s Way of Raising Children and Creating Connected Communities*, Darcia Narzaez and G.A. Bradshaw (2023)

*Talking with Bears: Conversations with Charlie Russell* (2020)

*Carnivore Minds: Who These Fearsome Animals Really Are* (2017)

*The Elephant Letters: The Story of Billy and Kani* (2014)

*Minding the Animal Psyche* (2010)

*Elephants on the Edge: What Animals Teach Us about Humanity* (2009)

*The Mountains Are in Us: Living Nature’s Ethics and Principles* (2003)

*How Landscapes Change: Human Disturbance and Ecosystem Fragmentation in the Americas*, Gay A. Bradshaw and Pablo A. Marquet, eds. (2003)

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