

RESEARCH  
ARTICLE

# After-Death Communications From Non-Human Animals: Suggestions of Post-Mortem Survival

**James G. Matlock<sup>1</sup>**  
jgmatlock@yahoo.com

**Bethany Hilton<sup>2</sup>**  
hiltonbethany@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup>Parapsychology Foundation,  
Inc. New York, NY 20021, USA

<sup>2</sup>13 Garrison Lane, St. Mary's,  
Isles of Scilly TR21 0JD, UK

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## HIGHLIGHTS

Follow-up research on a large set of alleged 'after-death communications' from animals/pets confirmed the patterns observed in an earlier study, showing that these events often linked to grief, occurred predominantly in the first week after death, and involved later visits associated with other purposes.

## ABSTRACT

An earlier study of 442 after-death communications (ADCs) from non-human animals revealed animal ADCs to be remarkably similar to human ADCs in their types. Moreover, as with human ADCs, there was a dramatic fall-off in incidence over time, with the majority of communications coming in the first days after the death of a pet, when their owners' grief was at its height. This follow-up study added 587 accounts, for a total of 1,029. The findings of the earlier study were replicated, and the combined sample permitted the investigation of several less common, although recurrent, features. The great majority of animal ADCs in both earlier and later samples were perceived externally rather than internally. A fifth (20.5%) were perceived by more than one individual, sometimes by living animals as well as by humans. Of particular note was a highly significant ( $p < .00001$ ) difference in the timing of visits associated with grief versus greeting dying loved ones, providing support in times of need, or warning of danger. Grief-related visits tended to come within the first week after an animal's death, but visits of other kinds came weeks, months, or years later. The overwhelming response to the visits was positive; in only six instances was a negative reaction reported. The study's findings are evaluated in terms of three major interpretations of ADC phenomena: (1) that they are hallucinations, produced in the minds of the bereaved as responses to their grief; (2) that they are hallucinations, informed by the psi of the human percipients; and (3) that they are actual communications from deceased animals. The findings arguably support the third interpretation, which is the one adopted by the accounts' contributors. This conclusion is consistent with recent studies of animal emotion and cognition. Shelldrake's notion of social fields is invoked in connection to a modified continuing bonds model of bereavement that acknowledges the post-mortem survival of animal consciousness.

## KEYWORDS

After-death communication, animals, bereavement, continuing bonds, disenfranchised grief, pet loss, social fields, survival of consciousness after death.



## INTRODUCTION

In an earlier paper, co-authored with Rupert Sheldrake, Pam Smart, and Michael Nahm (Matlock et al., 2024), we gave examples of after-death communications (ADCs) from non-human animals, showing them to be very similar to ADCs from humans. Sheldrake, Smart, and Nahm (Sheldrake et al., 2023) had previously demonstrated parallels between animal<sup>1</sup> and human end-of-life experiences (ELEs), such as apparent deathbed visions and terminal lucidity.

We now return to animal ADCs, dig deeper into our data, and consider how best to interpret these phenomena. Our earlier study included 442 animal ADC accounts.<sup>2</sup> For this follow-up study, we added 587 accounts, for a total of 1,029. The larger sample allows us not only to replicate our earlier study, but to examine several unusual, albeit recurrent, features of the accounts. Additionally, it places us on steadier ground in making sense of our findings.

We follow Matlock et al. (2024) in defining an animal ADC as “apparent contact with an animal after its death, without further specifying the form of that contact.” However, as previously,

We excluded animals in place-centered hauntings, in which there was no connection between the deceased animals and living human percipients. We also excluded mediumistic contacts with deceased animals, borderline accounts involving symbolic signs and synchronicities, experiences which seemed to us equally well or better interpreted as psi from living agents, and photographic anomalies (p. 62).

For this exploratory study, we did not set out to test hypotheses in a formal way. Nonetheless, we evaluate our findings in terms of three major interpretations of ADC phenomena: (1) that they are hallucinations, produced in the minds of the bereaved as responses to their grief; (2) that they are hallucinations, informed by the psi of the human percipients; (3) that they are what they appear to be, and understood by many percipients to be, communications from the deceased. These three interpretations apply equally to human ADCs (Elsaesser et al., 2021; Woollacott et al., 2022), and the animal data may shed light on issues relating to the post-mortem survival of human as well as animal consciousness, helping to reshape the continuing bonds model in bereavement studies.

## METHOD

As in Matlock et al. (2024), we collected accounts of

animal ADCs and coded them rather than utilizing a questionnaire. By this method, we avoided leading questions that could have produced an incomplete or misleading picture of animal ADCs.

Series 1 (Matlock et al., 2024) and Series 2 (the present study) consist of four sub-samples each. For Series 1, the sub-samples were composed of accounts reported to Sheldrake and Smart between 1996 and 2009 (S/S); accounts collected by us, primarily from Facebook, in 2022 and 2023 (M/H); accounts culled from periodicals and books originally published between the 1880s and 2020s (Literature); and accounts posted on the London *Daily Mail* web site in 2016 (*Daily Mail*). For Series 2, the samples consist of accounts collected from Facebook in the second half of 2023 (Facebook); accounts collected from Reddit during the same period (Reddit); accounts that reached us from other sources during this period (Other); and accounts from periodicals and books not included in the Literature sample of Series 1 (Literature; see Database Sources, following References).

Our Series 2 Facebook sample is large and varied. We posted appeals in several groups on the platform but received the best response from those groups in which we were well known.<sup>3</sup> In addition, we collected unsolicited accounts from the same groups. Signs of Reincarnation, which Matlock originated and manages, contributed the majority of Facebook accounts, 186 (61%) of 304. Another considerable number of Facebook accounts (82, 28%), all unsolicited, came in response to a single post in Dogspotting Society, a canine-focused group with well over one million members. Our Series 2 Other sample likewise derives from diverse sources, including 51 accounts from Quora (62% of 82) and 10 (12%) from ADCRF,<sup>4</sup> all unsolicited. A good number (38, 36%) of our 107 Reddit accounts come from the r/dogs sub-reddit, although the majority (61, 57%) are from r/paranormal.

In soliciting accounts, we simply requested after-death communications from animals. We refrained from explaining what we meant by this, in order to avoid biasing the responses. The great majority of accounts came from replies to the posts of others, rather than in connection with our solicitations, in any event. Because of the anonymous nature of our tabulation and analysis, we did not consider it necessary to request permission to include accounts in our database.<sup>5</sup>

Our choice of variables to code was dictated by the content of the accounts. In our earlier study (Matlock et al., 2024), where we were interested in the similarities between human and animal ADCs, we coded according to recognized ADC types.<sup>6</sup> However, we noticed several other features appearing repeatedly. We added these other features to our coding form for analysis in the

Table 1. ADCs from Nonhuman Animals in Two Series.

ADC Type / Subtype	Series 1				Series 2					Total Combined		
	S/S Sample (n = 120)	M/H Sample (n = 82)	Literature Sample (n = 163)	Daily Mail Sample (n = 77)	Combined Sample (N = 442)	Facebook Sample (n = 304)	Reddit Sample (n = 107)	Other Sample (n = 82)	Lit. Sample (n = 94)	Comb. Sample (N = 587)	(N = 1,029)	
<b>Types of ADC Account</b>												
Visual apparition	45	26	82	28	181 (25.3%)	120	29	29	63	241 (27.5%)	422 (26.5%)	
Tactile apparition	50	28	58	32	168 (23.5%)	98	30	30	24	182 (20.8%)	350 (22.0%)	
Auditory apparition	40	17	76	23	156 (21.8%)	91	41	21	25	178 (20.3%)	334 (20.9%)	
Dream visitation	12	30	28	10	80 (11.2%)	56	30	22	1	109 (12.4%)	189 (11.9%)	
Sense of presence	18	7	17	6	48 (6.7%)	32	8	13	10	63 (7.2%)	111 (7.0%)	
Psychokinetic effect	4	5	26	6	41 (5.7%)	24	10	7	3	44 (5.0%)	85 (5.3%)	
Other phenomenon	9	4	8	1	22 (3.0%)	29	1	7	2	39 (4.4%)	61 (3.8%)	
Olfactory apparition	8	1	8	3	20 (2.8%)	13	2	2	4	21 (2.4%)	41 (2.6%)	
Total ADC types	186	118	303	109	716 (100%)	463	151	131	132	877 (100%)	1593 (100%)	
<b>Subtypes of Other Phenomenon (N = 61)</b>												
Telepathic message	4	3	5	0	12 (54.6%)	8	1	2	2	13 (33.3%)	25 (41.0%)	
Electric charge felt	2	0	1	0	3 (13.6%)	0	0	0	0	0	3 (4.9%)	
Influence on living	1	0	0	1	2 (9.1%)	4	0	2	0	6 (15.4%)	8 (13.1%)	
Temperature variation	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	0	5 (12.8%)	5 (8.2%)	
Lighting anomaly	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	4 (10.3%)	4 (6.5%)	
Sign/ synchronicity	2	1	2	0	5 (22.7%)	9	0	2	0	11 (28.2%)	16 (26.2%)	
Total Other Phenomenon	9	4	8	1	22 (100%)	29	1	7	2	39	61 (100%)	
<b>Borderline/ Questionable Phenomena (N = 45)</b>												
Living agent psi	12	2	2	0	16 (66.7%)	1	0	1	2	4 (19.0%)	20 (44.4%)	
Photographic anomaly	0	2	1	0	3 (12.5%)	3	0	1	2	6 (28.6%)	9 (20.0%)	
Electronic voice	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1 (4.7%)	1 (2.3%)	
Sign/ synchronicity	3	2	--	0	5 (20.8%)	10	0	0	--	10 (47.7%)	15 (33.3%)	
Total B/Q Phenomena	15	6	3	0	24 (100%)	15	0	2	4	21 (100%)	45 (100%)	

present study and undertook Series 2 to obtain a larger sample with which to investigate them. We included in our coding all recurring features we noticed. We followed up on many reports on Facebook and elsewhere for clarifications, although we did not attempt to collect data systematically on all variables. Thus, we are heavily dependent on information that was volunteered sponta-

neously, and our coverage of some variables (especially demographic ones) is spotty. Although we did not code independently, we checked each other's work, discussing and resolving all disagreements.

When contributors to our database related experiences concerning more than one animal, we assigned each animal its own account record. As in Matlock et al.

(2024), we classified accounts that seemed especially ambiguous or questionable as after-death communications as Borderline/Questionable (B/Q) if they nonetheless might have had animal agents or as Not Coded (N/C), if it did not seem likely they had animal agents, and excluded them from our pattern analyses. Such accounts were in the minority in both Series 1 and Series 2.

**STATISTICAL PROFILE**

In this section, we summarize our findings statistically. First, we compare Series 2 to Series 1 on the same set of variables we presented in Matlock et al. (2024), replicating our findings. Then, we introduce the additional variables, again comparing Series 2 to Series 1. Illustrations of ADC types appear in Matlock et al. (2024, pp. 65–74). Illustrations of the additional variables we treat in this paper are presented below.

**Replication**

Because it was only occasionally clear where account contributors lived, our data on the country is far from complete, and hence, we are not reporting statistics on this variable. As with Series 1, we believe most of our accounts came from the United States and the United Kingdom, with some from Canada, Australia, and countries in Europe and Asia. However, there may be a larger contribution from Asia and Europe in Series 2, given the international nature of the social media from which the majority of accounts derive. The great majority of contributors were female, but as noted in Matlock et al. (2024, p. 63), this should not be taken to mean that females predominate as animal ADC percipients. Husbands, sons, and other men are frequently mentioned as co-percipients of phenomena.

Table 1 compares figures on ADC types from Series 1 (Table 2 of Matlock et al., 2024) with Series 2 of the present study. The congruence between the series is striking—ADC types appear in the same order of prevalence with nearly identical percentages. The stability of the patterns across the types is so apparent that a formal statistical comparison does not seem necessary to state that we have successfully replicated our earlier findings. This conclusion takes on increased weight when one considers that we showed in Matlock et al. (2024) that very much the same patterns pertain in ADCs from humans.

The relative numbers of different species of animal are similar in the two series, although we have many more dogs than cats in Series 2 than in Series 1 (see Table 2). This may be due in part to our collecting a considerable number of accounts from the Dogspotting Society group on Facebook and from the r/dogs community on Reddit,

Table 2. Animals Involved in ADCs.

Animal	Series 1	Series 2	Combined
dog	220	354	574
cat	195	189	384
horse	5	14	19
llama	1	0	1
pig	1	0	1
ferret	1	0	1
guinea pig	1	2	3
hamster	3	2	5
rabbit	3	4	7
rat	2	4	6
mouse	1	0	1
opossum	1	0	1
wolf	0	1	1
bird	5	5	10
fish	1	1	2
spider	1	0	1
unclear	1	11	12
<i>Total</i>	<i>442</i>	<i>587</i>	<i>1029</i>

although even combined, these two sources would not explain the difference in the counts in dogs and cats between the series. Another factor may be our use of two collections of ADCs from cats (Rainbolt, 2017, 2022) in our earlier study. In any event, the different numbers of dogs and cats in the two series had no discernable effect on the patterns of ADCs, judging by the figures in Table 1.

Series 2 included a much larger number of accounts whose animals were unclear, 11 as opposed to 1. This is thanks to a large number of accounts from Dogspotting Society that did not specify the animal involved. Most likely these were dogs, but since other animals are occasionally mentioned in the accounts we took from there, we did not make this assumption in our coding.

In Matlock et al. (2024), we reported that the majority of accounts referred to ADCs in the first days after death, with a dramatic falling off over time. We see the same with Series 2. Few accounts in either series specify the precise time from death to ADC. The majority provides no indication of the interval. When time after death was noted, we coded in periods of ≤ 24 hours, ≤ 1 week, ≤ 1 month, ≤ 6 months, ≤ 12 months, and >12 months. For Series 1, we had 291 accounts, and in Series 2, 301 accounts, with sufficient information to code the length of interval from death to ADC. The results are shown in Table 3, with a line graph representing the combined sample numbers in Figure 1. The slope is similar to that we obtained with our Series 1 accounts (Matlock et al., 2004, p. 64).

We now look at the other ADC features that appeared



Table 3. Animal ADCs vs. Time after Death.

Time after Death	Series 1	Series 2	Combined
≤ 24 hours	107	91	198
≤ 1 week	76	90	166
≤ 1 month	39	38	77
≤ 6 months	32	29	61
≤ 1 year	12	9	21
> 1 year	24	44	68
<i>Total</i>	<i>290</i>	<i>301</i>	<i>591</i>

recurrently in the accounts we coded under 10 headings— timing and duration; collective percipience; animal reactions; “stranger sightings,” in which people unacquainted with deceased animals perceive them; “trailing phenomena,” in which deceased animals follow their people to distant, often unfamiliar places; “greeting phenomena,” in which deceased animals appear to welcome their humans or animal friends when they are about to die; “joint appearances,” in which two or more deceased animals, or animals and humans, appear together; “support phenomena,” in which deceased animals appear when their humans are in need; “warning phenomena,” in which deceased animals appear to protect their people from harm; and negative responses to the appearances of deceased animals. We noticed these features in coding Series 1 and added Series 2 in order to obtain a larger sample with which to investigate them.

Table 4 supplies percentages of features by series and sub-sample. This is a different arrangement than in Table 1, which shows how the types of ADC rank in frequency against each other across series and across our entire dataset. Percentages of ADC type by sub-sample may be calculated from the figures given in Table 1, but do not seem to us as interesting as the ranking of types in rela-

tion to one another. The opposite is true for the additional ADC features. As can be seen in Table 4, the Literature samples routinely have larger numbers of additional features than the other samples do. This suggests selection bias in the Literature samples, probably because many of these additional features are especially suggestive of post-mortem survival and, therefore, of greater theoretical significance.

We will have more to say on this subject later. At present, however, we wish to comment on the interval between an animal’s death and its communication with its surviving people. The periods shown in Table 3 represent intervals after death to the initial ADC, ignoring later visits if there is a series of ADCs involving the same animal. There was a single ADC in 243 (55.5%) of 438 accounts with pertinent information in Series 1 and in 276 (47.2%) of 584 accounts in Series 2 (50.8% of the Combined sample). ADCs recurred two or three times in 51 (11.6%) of the accounts of Series 1 and in 64 (11.0%) of the accounts of Series 2 (11.3% of the Combined sample). They recurred four or more times in 144 (32.9%) of the accounts of Series 1 and in 344 (41.8%) of the accounts of Series 2 (37.9% of the Combined Sample).

Recurrent visits were not always of the same kinds and did not always involve the same individuals as percipients. They went on for varying lengths of time, often for a few days, weeks, or months, sometimes for years. The reasons for stopping varied as well. Most often, no reason for the cessation of visits was known or given, or the phenomena were ongoing at the time of the report. When reasons for cessation were cited, they included asking the visits to stop, perhaps employing a ritual to get them to do so (in 3.3% of the Combined sample), and ending when a new pet was adopted (in 6.7% of the Combined sample). When recurring ADCs ended with the arrival of a new pet, contributors interpreted this to mean that their deceased companions were relieved that they had found another animal. A few respondents believed their deceased pets had led to the new animal.

As shown in Table 4, ADC initial visits coincided with the death of an animal in some instances (4.4% of the Combined sample). Visits frequently were perceived by more than one person, or person and animal, either on the same or separate occasions (20.5% of the Combined sample).<sup>7</sup> Persons unacquainted with the animals or their demise occasionally perceived them, at times when family members did not (3.7% of the Combined sample). Deceased pets were sometimes said to have found their people and appeared to them in places distant from the places they died, even when these places were unknown to them in life (7.5% of the Combined sample). At times, deceased pets were said to have made joint appearances

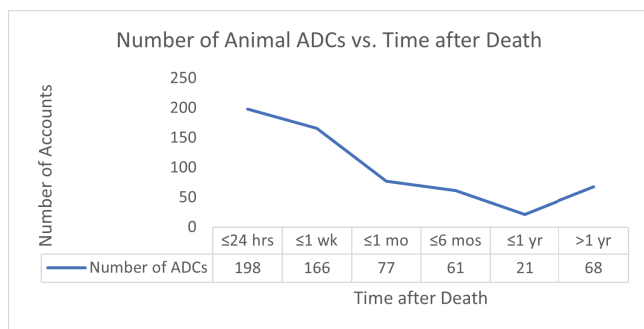


Figure 1. Number of animal ADCs versus time after death.

Table 4. Features of Animal ADC Accounts in Two Series.

Regular Feature	Series 1					Series 2					Combined (N = 1,029)
	S/S Sample (n = 120)	M/H Sample (n = 82)	Lit. Sample (n = 163)	Daily Mail Sample (n = 77)	Comb. Sample (n = 442)	Facebook Sample (n = 304)	Reddit Sample (n = 107)	Other Sample (n = 82)	Lit. Sample (n = 94)	Comb. Sample (N = 587)	
Death coincidence	7 (5.8%)	3 (3.7%)	19 (11.7%)	1 (1.3%)	30 (6.8%)	5 (1.6%)	4 (3.7%)	1 (1.2%)	5 (5.3%)	15 (2.6%)	45 (4.4%)
Collective percipience	25 (20.8%)	6 (7.3%)	57 (35.0%)	15 (19.5%)	103 (23.3%)	33 (10.9%)	28 (26.2%)	17 (20.7%)	30 (31.9%)	108 (18.4%)	211 (20.5%)
Animal reactions	8 (6.6%)	2 (2.4%)	16 (9.8%)	4 (5.2%)	30 (6.8%)	11 (3.6%)	6 (5.6%)	5 (6.1%)	14 (14.9%)	36 (6.1%)	66 (6.4%)
Stranger sightings	0	0	8 (4.9%)	2 (2.6%)	10 (2.3%)	8 (2.6%)	1 (0.9%)	0	19 (20.2%)	28 (4.8%)	38 (3.7%)
Trailing phenomena	12 (10.0%)	3 (3.7%)	19 (11.7%)	3 (3.9%)	37 (83.8%)	14 (4.6%)	6 (5.6%)	5 (6.1%)	16 (17.0%)	41 (7.0%)	78 (7.5%)
Greeting phenomena	1 (0.8%)	1 (1.2%)	3 (1.8%)	3 (3.9%)	9 (2.0%)	15 (4.9%)	0	4 (4.9%)	4 (4.3%)	24 (4.0%)	31 (3.0%)
Joint appearances	6 (5.0%)	5 (6.1%)	7 (4.3%)	1 (1.2%)	19 (4.3%)	14 (4.6%)	5 (4.7%)	5 (6.1%)	2 (2.1%)	26 (4.4%)	45 (4.4%)
Support phenomena	4 (3.3%)	4 (4.9%)	13 (8.0%)	1 (1.3%)	22 (5.0%)	13 (4.3%)	6 (5.6%)	7 (8.5%)	5 (5.3%)	30 (5.1%)	53 (5.2%)
Warning phenomena	1 (0.8%)	0	9 (5.5%)	1 (1.3%)	11 (2.5%)	1 (0.3%)	0	1 (1.2%)	4 (4.3%)	6 (1.0%)	17 (1.6%)
Negative responses	1 (.08%)	0	1 (0.6%)	0	2 (0.5%)	2 (0.7%)	0	2 (2.4%)	0	4 (0.7%)	6 (0.6%)

with apparitions of other deceased animals or humans, even when the latter had died years before (4.4% of the Combined sample). Negative responses to the ADCs were rare (0.6% of the Combined Sample).

Three other features call for special comment. These are greeting, support, and warning phenomena. Greeting phenomena were reported in 3.0%, support phenomena in 5.2%, and warning phenomena in 1.6% of the Combined sample. Although no more common than most of the additional variables, these three features are interesting because they, in particular, imply discarnate agency on the part of the deceased pets. It is as if the departed animals were returning intentionally to greet loved ones when they passed, support their people in times of need, or warn them of impending danger. Moreover—strikingly—these kinds of visits are likely to have been reported as occurring at substantial intervals after the death of the pet, well after the percipient’s grief over the loss had faded.

We coded grief reactions as present only when contributors expressly mentioned them. Grief was mentioned in a substantial number of accounts (n = 119), 11.6% of the Combined sample,<sup>8</sup> most often within a week after a pet’s death. Table 5 shows how grief, greeting phenomena, support phenomena, and warning phenomena relate to intervals after death.

From these data, it appears there might be a statistically significant difference in the timing of reports of grief and of greetings, support, and warning phenomena in relation to the length of the interval after death. Visits look like they come after much longer intervals with greeting, support, and warning phenomena, than with grief. We examined this possibility in a chi-square test, contrasting visits that appeared within one week of an animal’s death to those that appeared more than a week after, in relation to grief versus greeting, support, and warning phenomena combined. This resulted in a chi-square statistic of 28.6745 (df = 1), producing a highly significant p value of < 0.00001, with a relatively strong effect size (φ) of 0.427364.

We noticed a problem with this calculation, however, because the figures we employed for the interval after death were the periods elapsed before the initial ADC from an animal, but greeting, support, and warning visits might come during a later series of communications. Moreover, the crucial issue for greetings was how long before the visit the greeting animal had died, not when it appeared in relation to the death of the greeted individual. The bottom section of Table 5 shows corrected figures, with intervals coded according to how long after an animal’s death grief, support, or warning visits from it came or began, and how long a greeting animal had been dead



Table 5. Grief vs. GSW

Variable	Interval after Death					
	≤24h	≤1w	≤1m	≤6m	≤1y	>1y
Series 1						
Grief	20	15	10	6	1	3
Greeting	2	1	1	0	1	1
Support	1	5	1	3	2	7
Warning	1	1	1	3	1	3
Series 2						
Grief	6	12	3	0	1	1
Greeting	4	2	0	1	0	10
Support	1	1	4	3	3	8
Warning	1	0	0	1	0	2
Combined						
Grief	26	27	13	6	2	4
Greeting	6	3	1	1	1	14
Support	2	6	5	6	5	15
Warning	2	1	1	4	1	5
Corrected						
Grief	26	27	13	6	2	4
Greeting	3	3	1	0	1	16
Support	3	2	5	5	5	19
Warning	1	1	2	4	1	5

at the time it appeared. Table 6 shows the chi-square calculation for the corrected figures. The *p* level remains unchanged at < 0.00001, but the effect size ( $\phi$ ) of 0.516362 is now securely in the strong range.<sup>9</sup>

We also noticed a strong tendency for our contributors to report a persistence in the habits or personality of their deceased pets. The animals perceived as apparitions were reported to act very much as they had in life in just over a fifth (20.8%) of the accounts we collected.

Responses to the visits were overwhelmingly positive, regardless of how long after death they occurred. Negative responses were reported in only six accounts (0.6%) of our Combined sample.

**EXAMPLE ACCOUNTS**

In this section, we illustrate the 10 additional fea-

**Table 6.** Chi-Square Test of Grief vs. Greeting + Support + Warning (GSW) Phenomena (Corrected)

	Grief	GSW	Total
≤1 week	53	25	78
>1 week	13	64	77
	66	89	155

$x^2 = 41.3276$  ( $df = 1$ );  $p < 0.00001$ ;  $\phi = 0.516362$

tures of animal ADC accounts with accounts from our database.<sup>10</sup> We requested and received permission to use all accounts collected from social media sites. In editing the accounts for publication, we have retained differences in American and British wording, spelling, and punctuation. Sources refer to our Access database, which will be shared upon request.

**Timing and Duration**

Some animal ADCs coincide with the animal’s death. Many of these appearances were unexpected because the observers did not know that the animals had died; often, observers did not know the animals were in danger. Similar phenomena have been noted with human ADCs, beginning with the first major survey of human apparitions, *Phantasms of the Living* (Gurney et al., 1886).

A tiny mouse I rescued from one of my cats died in my hands. I was sitting on my bed, praying for him, and I felt him jump out of my hand and run across the bed. I opened my eyes to see his dead body in my hand<sup>11</sup> (Series 1, S/S, Record 231).

I knew the moment one of my rabbits died. It was just after 4 a.m., and I felt him on the bed. I got up right away and looked in his hutch, and he had died<sup>12</sup> (Series 1, S/S, Account 126).

My beautiful cat Bobo was at the vets having his coat trimmed. I had returned home because they said it would be a lengthy process and he would need anaesthetic, as he was so nervous. About midday, I was making a sandwich, and as usual Bobo was winding around my ankles. I laughed and told him not to be greedy. Then I realised he was at the vets’ surgery. I looked down and there was of course no cat there. He was the only cat I had. It was so real. I’d felt the force of his head around my ankles, and the softness of his fur. When I went to collect him an hour later, they told me he’d died under the anaesthetic (Series 2, Facebook, Account 1232).

Although most such visits come in the first hours or days after death, they may occur later as well.

I never ever saw a spirit until March 2017. I lost Sammy, my cat that I had a unique bond with. A couple of weeks after he passed away, I was sitting on the couch, looked up, and there was Sammy in spirit on top of the stairs, looking forward.



Within a few seconds, he went down the stairs and disappeared (Series 1, M/H, Account 42).

I had a dog that lived to be 12 years old. Her name was Brandy, an American Eskimo Dog. She was a wonderful friend to me, a good protector, and sweet to my daughter. When she got old, she stopped eating. I tried everything I could think of, but nothing worked. I took her to the vet; unfortunately, he said it would be right to put her to sleep. Saddest day of my life.

Anyway, I was told that all they did with the dog's body was take it to a landfill. I just couldn't get that out of my head, that my wonderful dog's body ends up in a landfill. About four months later, one morning, I was sitting on my bed, putting on my shoes, getting ready to start the day, and then right in front of me, Brandy appeared. She was lying on the floor, definitely breathing, looking around. I knew she had passed, but she did NOT look like a ghost. Immediately in my head, I thought, this is cool! I just sat and watched her. In a couple of minutes, she disappeared. I felt so blessed that she came back, even though it only lasted two minutes. I think she came back because I felt guilty that she was put in a landfill (Series 1, M/H, Record 20).

Not infrequently, ADC experiences occur repeatedly. Some recurring ADCs appear over a few days, but others continue for months or years before declining in frequency or ceasing altogether. Generally the animals in recurring experiences are seen, heard, or felt to be performing habitual actions almost by rote, but at other times, no pattern to their behavior can be discerned, similar to human apparitions (Gurney et al., 1886).

My dog, Oscar, had a chain collar. I always knew when he was nearby, because I could hear it clinking. After he died, I took the collar off and put it on the mantlepiece. That evening after he died and for several more evenings, I heard the chain clinking (Series 1, S/S, Account 153).

I had an old calico cat who had renal failure and I took her to the vet, who euthanized her. I brought her home and buried her in the garden. She would sleep at the foot of my bed, and for two weeks after her death, I would feel her jump on the foot of the bed. After those two weeks, I didn't feel her anymore (Series 1, M/H, Record 13).

Bentley was an Old English Sheepdog who I had for the seven years of his life. I lost him very suddenly to heart disease. I have had animals all my life and have been attached to each and every one of them. Maybe because Bentley was so young when he died, or because he went so suddenly, I had a lot of trouble accepting he was gone. About three days after he died, I 'saw' him sitting by the gate where he always waited for me. I then started 'seeing' him in a number of familiar places around the farm I lived on. These places were not always the same and were not always necessarily his normal favourite places (Series 1, S/S/ Record 125).

The reasons for the cessation of recurring events vary. Sometimes, they stop for no apparent reason, and at other times, after intervention. Frequently, they halt when a new pet joins the family.

My much-loved black and white male cat Socks disappeared one night. For weeks afterwards, I could feel him jump on the bed and sleep with me. I normally sleep on my side with my legs bent at an angle – almost curled up. Socks would sleep curled up in the space between my derriere and lower legs – behind my knees. For several months following his disappearance, I would feel him jump on my bed at night and curl up behind my legs as he always did. The bed springs would actually move. Sometimes I would say hello and it seemed that he would snuggle closer. I can't really remember when he stopped coming to visit me – I just remember that one point, I realized he wasn't visiting any longer (Series 1, S/S/, Record 182).

My old dog had to be put down. He always barked, whined, et cetera, to wake me up every night at 2 a.m. to go outside to potty. Three nights after his passing, he woke me up with his sounds to go potty. I was startled; I sat up in bed, looking around. I didn't see him, but heard his distinctive bark and the whistling sound he made. I acknowledged him, but told him to go to bed. He stopped. Several nights later, it occurred again. I told him he was in the afterlife and in the Heaven for dogs. He stopped. But it started up again, and this kept happening for two months! I finally prayed to whomever his Guardian was, letting them know that he was slipping out of

his realm to come whistle and bark at me. I suggested that he needed some help to stay on his side, not mine, and asked that he be healed. With that, it finally stopped for good (Series 1, M/H, Account 88).

I lived in this house where a cat lady must have lived. When I was in bed, invisible cats would jump on the bed and walk across it. The mattress would sink, so I could feel them. They did this every night and it was eerie. I got my own cat and it stopped just like that<sup>13</sup> (Series 1, M/H, Record 16).

### Collective Percipience

Collective apparitions of humans have been widely reported and well-studied (Gurney et al., 1886; Hart & Hart, 1932–33). Our sample includes several examples of collective apparitions of deceased animals, involving a variety of ADC types, and a variety of animal species.

In collective percipience, often the same animal is perceived on separate occasions by multiple individuals, but the sighting may also be witnessed by multiple people on the same occasion.

Both my husband and I have seen our little guinea pig Fluffy. Fluffy was a house pet and lived with us for about two years. He would follow you around the house, sit by your feet in the evenings, shout when he wanted feeding, and made a wonderful pet to all the family. When he died suddenly from illness, we were devastated, and missed him terribly. We have pictures of him around the house still. Both my husband and I, on separate occasions, have heard Fluffy, caught glimpses of him, and felt him next to our feet. All this made us very happy that he was still with us and that he obviously loved us too (Series 1, S/S, Record 150).

Our hamster passed last week. Ever since her passing, my wife and I have noticed many signs that she is still around, including scratching in her house, her ball rolling on its own, and then this morning, a piece of paper she had chewed appearing on my desk (Series 12, Other, Record 839).

My sisters and I would hear a couple of my horses after they were put down, one or two or more times, while caring for the remaining ones. I re-

member pausing while scooping feed into buckets for their dinners, listening to the distinctive sound of a horse tail smacking the wall between me and the nearest stall—which was empty, as the horse had died the day before. I looked at my sisters and asked if they could hear that, and they nodded. Then we would hear a snort or a sigh from the stall. We felt it was kind of a goodbye (Series 2, Reddit, Record 751).

Occasionally, deceased animals appear in shared dreams.

My dog passed away last year. Shortly after, I had a dream we were all in the car on a road trip, and she was so excited. I was hugging her. I woke up. I didn't think anything about it, except that I miss our dog. I took my kids to school that morning and my youngest was telling me she had a dream about our dog. How we were on a road trip and I was hugging her (Series 2, Reddit, Account 769).

Our dog Max knew when a family member was coming home—he would stand by this window looking at the road about 20 minutes before they would cross the bridge into the grounds where we live. He died, but came and said goodbye about a month after he left us.

I was asleep, but I got up to go to the deck off our bedroom. I guess I was in two places at the same time; in bed, and by the sliding doors to the deck. Anyway, there was Max, all wet in the rain. Steam was rising from him, and he had this great smile on his face. He said, "I have come to say goodbye and I'm so happy because I can run everywhere—you see, that was the one thing while I lived with you that I could not do." He understood that we could not let him loose because he would have been shot by our gun-loving neighbors. Taking him for long walks in the woods was alright, but not like running.

Now I'm in bed shoving my husband, "Wake up, wake up, George. Dear sweet Max has come to say goodbye." "What's wrong with you?" George says. "Well, it was Max out there. I know it was!" At the table in the morning, I'm telling our daughter Christina, and her mouth drops. "Mom, I had the same dream," she says. Max was an Afghan that we got from the pound. We all miss him (Series 1, S/S, Record 136).

## Animal Reactions

Nahm (2016) describes cases in which living animals responded to apparitions of humans. Living animals also sometimes act as if they have seen deceased pets.<sup>14</sup>

I had a little pure white cat, Tizzy, who was five years old. She had been in a car accident a couple of years previously, and she sadly died from a combination of that accident and heatstroke; she used to love lying in the sun. I was heartbroken when I found her dead—she had crawled under a van to die. Anyway, about three days later, I was up in my bedroom (on the computer as usual!) and my other cat, Tabitha, who is 12 years old, started acting very strangely indeed. She kept staring at the sheepskin rug on which Tizzy used to love lying, then she went over to the precise spot where Tizzy would lie and sniffed it. I just knew that Tizzy had come back to say goodbye (Sample 1, S/S, Record 270).

My deceased dog had a very distinctive bark. I would be able to recognize her with my eyes closed. My grey parrot can do her bark with absolute accuracy. Every once in a while, the bird will stop a few feet from the sofa, stand stock still staring wide-eyed at something, then break into Clancy's bark. I swear she can see her, though I can't (Series 2, Facebook, Record 1254).

Living pets sometimes perceive apparitions collectively with humans. Our first example involves another parrot.

For a year or so after he died, we got the sensation of the sofa dipping behind our heads in the evenings. It didn't actually dip, it just felt like it, like our cat was there. Hubby also felt it, and he's a very rational person. It only happened occasionally, but we are both convinced it is our beloved cat checking in. Interestingly, we haven't sensed it with any of the other three cats, even though one of my hubby's cats acted more like a dog, and was his shadow. As a spooky bonus, our parrot occasionally randomly calls that cat's name and makes the kissing noise you do to call your cat over. The parrot tends to use his repertoire of words and phrases intelligently and in the correct context, so I wonder if he's actually seeing something (Series 2, Reddit, Account 732).

My cat Jinx was elderly and was beginning to have trouble seeing. For the last couple of years, whenever she wanted to drink water, she would hit her water dish in order to gauge the level of water in it (rather than just stick her face in). She died at home and for three days afterwards, I repeatedly heard her hitting the water dish. My dog heard it also, because he would charge into the kitchen, expecting to see her (looking surprised because he knew she had died) (Series 1, S/S, Record 148).

In 1986, I'd been sitting up late watching TV. It was about 1 a.m., and as I came out from the living room with my cat Tommy following close behind, something made me look down the hallway to the spare bedroom, which was the very end room. I could see a dim light around the bottom of the door. As I looked, a black cat with a blue collar ran out from the half-closed door. I recognized him immediately as my cat Goosey, who had died in that room two years previously. As I looked at him, he was perfectly clear and real in every way. But then he vanished through the wall opposite. I might have thought I was imagining this, but by now Tommy was howling and spitting. Goosey was Tommy's father, but the two cats never got along. Tommy ran into the spare bedroom with his fur standing on end, scrabbling at the floor and wardrobe. He was very distressed. I couldn't understand how a human and a cat could both see what appeared to be a ghost at the same time. This was the only time I saw the ghost of Goosey and I moved shortly after that. It really was a strange incident that I couldn't explain (Series 2, Facebook, Record 1243).

## Stranger Sightings

With stranger sightings, someone not familiar with an animal perceives its apparition, often when its erstwhile owners do not. Stranger sightings may occur as part of a collective perception, or they may occur on their own. Again, this phenomenon has been reported with human apparitions also (Gurney et al., 1886).

I'm a caregiver for an elderly woman. One day, I was upstairs cleaning, when I thought I heard a cat meowing. The woman does currently have a cat in the house, so I didn't think much of it at first, except that it didn't really sound like him. He's very skittish, and had never come upstairs

before while I was there. A few minutes later, I heard it again, and it still didn't sound like him, so I got concerned that maybe something was wrong with him, or he had gotten himself stuck somewhere. I didn't see him anywhere, so I checked downstairs, and he was lying on her lap. I kind of dismissed it in my mind and went back to cleaning. As I was walking by her bedroom, I happened to glance in and there was a white cat lying next to the dresser. It was on its stomach, kind of balled up with its front feet tucked under its chest, in a typical cat position. I only got a quick glimpse of it because I wasn't expecting it. When I turned back to look again, it was gone. I made a joke about it later, telling the woman I must need more sleep or something, because I had seen a white cat in the bedroom. And that is how I learned that years and years back she had had a white cat named Snowball who was now buried in the yard (Series 2, Facebook, Record 916).

Nine years ago my husband and I were walking our four dogs when we saw a lady approaching with two black labs. The dogs were not on leads, and as we chatted, they wandered around. I noticed one of the black labs wasn't anywhere to be seen. I mentioned this, and the lady said she only had one. But you had two coming up the path, I told her; I saw them! I looked to Andy for support, but he didn't say anything. The lady then burst into tears, saying she had lost a black lab six weeks before. I met her again a few weeks later, and she said she had felt so much at peace following our first meeting. I feel so lucky to have experienced this (Series 2, Facebook, Account 877).

When my favourite horse passed away at 24, I was extremely upset. About a month later I was down in the field feeding the sheep at 6.30 am and I heard as clear as day his whinney. There were no horses within three miles and his snicker was distinctive. Then about a week later, I was on a team call with my colleague who also is a practicing medium. She said, 'Whoa, you have a beautiful white horse behind your head.' There was no way she knew I had lost a white horse a few weeks previously (Series 2, Facebook, Account 980).

## Trailing Phenomena

In a phenomenon resembling the "psi trailing" that allows living animals to track their people to distant places (Rhine & Feather, 1962; Sheldrake, 1999), deceased animals appear in new locations, even ones unknown to them in life.

I had a wonderful cat, Nini. She was my soul-mate. We were moving house. She became ill and I told her that she had to live so she could come with me to our new house. She didn't live. But at our new home, I often saw her walking up the hallway or in the driveway, and once in the garden. She was letting me know that she had come anyway. She was a Burmese cat and was very talkative, with a very distinctive meow. She has talked to me in each of our new houses since, and she even sat in the garden of our present house. She died in 1987 (Series 1, S/S, Record 229).

After my 20-year-old cat passed, I felt her jump on the bed and felt pressure on my stomach where she used to sleep. I haven't stopped seeing her out of the corner of my eye, walking or running by. I look straight on when I think I see something, and then see nothing. The other day, I saw (from the corner of my eye) what looked like a short spurt run. I looked up. I didn't see her, but I saw through the open blinds a live cat walking outside. When my cat was alive and detected another cat outside (looking out a window), she ran inside the house in short spurts, like they do on alert. Interestingly, she has been deceased since February 2022, and after that I moved far from where we lived together. It's like her spirit is still with me. I wonder if she can stay attached to me. I hope so. She was with me a long time (Series 1, M/H, Record 21).

I've had a number of pets over the years, but there was only one that I know for sure came to visit me after he passed. I was 16 at the time and my dog, Max, had passed away about a year prior. He wasn't with us at the time that he passed, as we were moving to a new home, and my grandparents were taking care of him. I found out later that my parents had my grandparents put him down because he was very old and suffering, but at the time, I thought he died of a broken heart, thinking that we had abandoned him. I was dev-

astated and had never gotten over it. One day, I was sitting in the recliner in the living room with my eyes closed and just relaxing, and I felt a dog come up to the left side of the recliner where my elbow was and sniff at it the way Max always did when he was alive. He would do that when he wanted to go outside, wanted food, or simply wanted me to pet him. When I felt this, I instantly reacted by sitting up and looking at my elbow, but there was no dog there. I looked all around, but nothing. We had two other dogs at the time, but they were outside with the rest of the family, so I'm certain it wasn't them, and they didn't do that the way that Max did, either. I felt the sensation of a dog sniffing, but it also uniquely felt like Max himself (Series 2, Reddit, Account 758).

### Greeting Phenomena

Sheldrake et al. (2023, pp. 53–54) described instances of dying animals seeming to perceive apparitions. We collected several accounts of animal apparitions perceived by humans, apparently having come to greet people when they passed.

A friend of mine had an older sister who passed in her 80's. Just before she passed, she saw their family dog, from childhood, come to visit her (Series 2, Facebook, Record 992)!

When my mother was dying in hospice, I slept at her house. I felt her dog, who had passed, come to me. I felt his breath and tail wag. I was almost asleep, so in between realms. I literally was trying to pet him. I felt him there so much. I felt as if he came to me to tell me, "It's okay. Mom will be with me again and I'll protect her and help her transition to the other side." That's the message I got. It felt so real (Series 2, Facebook, Record 981).

My toy-terrier-mix dog died in 1971. He was never allowed in the house, because my mother didn't like animals in the house. We moved to a new house in 1974. My dad passed in 1993. A day before my dad passed, I saw this dog quickly, out of my peripheral vision, sitting up with his front paws on my parents' bed. Then he was gone in a flash. My dad always was an animal lover. I think my little dog came to accompany Dad on his journey the next day (Series 2, Facebook, Record 1240).

It is not just people that deceased animals seem to greet on their deathbeds; they come to welcome animals, too.

When we moved to Kansas, a stray cat found us. He was pretty feral. I had been feeding him outside until one day he just strolled into the house. I was lying on the sofa. He came over and lay on my chest. My husband Michael went crazy, thinking this was not a sweet cat—except he was. He became a treasured member of our household. Years later, we were back in Phoenix. Bogie would literally lie next to anyone sick, cat or dog. He leapt into my arms one day, and died. We got him to a vet within minutes, but it was too late.

We also had a little West Highland Terrier named Ian. He and Bogie loved each other, and would curl up together. From age 9 on, Ian had everything imaginable go wrong with his health. We got him through all of it. He was going on long walks every day. We even got him through cancer, but the end was coming, we knew. The night before he died, about a month after Bogie, Michael and I were in the master bedroom. I looked down the hall to the bedroom where Ian slept, and saw a grey shadow cat walk through the closed door. Michael saw it too. Ian died the next day, and Bogey was with him (Series 2, Facebook, Record 891).

I kept this to myself for fear of ridicule, as not many people tend to think of smaller animals as something that could possibly have souls. I had two guinea pigs, Bella and Swift. I fought to keep Bella alive, spending thousands for the best specialist care when she became ill, as I loved her so much. Unfortunately, she passed, but I still had Swift, who lived for over another year after Bella's passing. At the end, I was told there was nothing more I could do for Swift, and basically had to spend time with her before taking her to the vet to cross the rainbow bridge.

I was devastated, I loved my guineas so much. Bella was more anti-social, but Swift was very cuddly, so I would sit in her darkened room with soft lights and soft music whilst stroking her in my lap, telling her how much I loved her, and basically saying goodbye. I was interrupted a few times by the noise of her water bottle. The first time I heard it, I forgot for a split moment that Bella was no longer there. I kept hearing the

water bottle rattling like they were drinking from it, so that I came to expect the noise whenever I sat with Swift in my lap.

When Swift passed too, I took a while to go back into their room to clear their bedding, et cetera, for good. I went in the room and sat on my knees and shed a few tears, as it felt so final. Again, I heard the water bottle, clear as day, so that it made me turn around to look at it. I have to add that I live in a very quiet part of Scotland where there is no traffic, or anything that could cause the water bottle to shake (I also have a detached home). I felt zero vibrations. I've never heard it again. That was the last time. I feel Bella was there to take Swift and was showing a sign, to say goodbye. Not as exciting as others' stories, but it's my little story, and it meant something to me. I know what I heard, but I kept it to myself (Series 2, Facebook, Account 887).

## Joint Appearances

On other occasions, deceased animals are said to appear together as if they have found each other after death.

Three years after my move to France, Raffy (a female cat whom I'd adopted after my male cat Wellington's death) was killed on the road. On the day of her death, I took a long walk in the mountains. Raffy came with me, in spirit: I could see her, and presumed that her death had been so sudden that she didn't really understand it. However, I was too distressed to be able to tell her to go towards the light until the following day, after which she no longer appeared.

Some months later, when driving to work, I glanced at the passenger seat and was amazed to see Wellington sitting there, looking at me, with Raffy next to him. I was astonished – not just because I could see them, but also as Wellington in life would not tolerate any other cat on his territory. I blurted out, 'I'm surprised to see you sitting there like that, with Raffy!' His calm answer came into my mind: 'Why not? You loved us both.' I believe he wanted to show me that he was taking care of Raffy, in much the same way as relatives take care of those who have recently died. Wellington's choice of time and place to contact me was perhaps not the safest, but it certainly helped me (Series 1, S/S, Record 235).

My German shepherd died just before Christmas

last year. He was 6 years old and had had cancer of the bone. I was very grief-stricken because in life we had an extraordinary bond. I could send him a command or thought from a considerable distance and he would respond! Three days after his death, in the middle of the night, I was awoken up by a presence in the room. There he was, absolutely magnificent to see, showing me his four legs (he had had an amputation of the rear left leg). Four days after his death, my cat died also, and he appeared with the German Shepherd three nights later. It was really beautiful (Series 1, S/S, Record 227).

Deceased animals may make joint appearances with deceased people. When the deceased person, rather than the animal, acts as the apparent agent, we did not code the accounts as animal ADCs, although we recorded them.

Ten years ago, while grieving my husband's premature death, he came to me in the middle of the night. At first I was a little frightened, but I immediately noticed he was very happy and laughing. He ecstatically announced, "I have them! I have them!" I asked him, "Who do you have?" He impatiently said, "Honey Bear and Mandy!" Our Malamute and German Shepherd (Series 2, Other, Record 1407)!

I adopted a Border Collie mix named Buddy. After he died, he appeared with my deceased sister, who loved animals. It was a couple years after he died, and after I had gotten a Bichon Frise. I was out in front of the house, sitting in a chair with my two-year-old pup on a leash. All of a sudden, he started pulling and prancing. I looked straight towards him and saw my sister with Buddy wagging his tail, and my sister said, "Thanks for the dependent." That was the same thing she said when I took her a goldfish for her backyard pond when she was alive (Series 2, Other, Record 1408).

A week after my grandmother died, I had her in my dream holding a black dog. The dog was jumping up and down on her and she waved to me. I told my sister about the dream, and she asked me to describe the dog (she is seven years older than me). I said it was a black mid-size lab. She said, "Oh my god, it was Pretinho. That miserable dog waited for her all this time!! You were a baby when he died. He was awful. He didn't let

anyone go close to her. I don't know how many times he bit me." She said Pretinho died in the 60's, so he waited three decades for my grandmother. I was happy he found her again (Series 2, Facebook, Record 670).

### Support Phenomena

Deceased pets sometimes appear as if to support their people in times of need, especially during health crises.

My beautiful friend, a white cat called Fluffy, passed away, and, of course, I was grief-stricken. So a few months later, I decided to go and see a 'psychic' who claimed she could communicate with pets who had died. I was due to go to her (having made an appointment) after finishing work this particular day and was the only person left in the office by that time. I thought I'd go to the bathroom, then collect my bag from my office, lock up, and leave for the day. But as I returned from the bathroom to walk into my office, I was absolutely ASTONISHED to see Fluffy hovering just above my desk. I stared at him in disbelief, saying to him, "Fluffy!! You've come back!" He then literally disappeared before my eyes!

I was bewildered by the entire experience and just stood there, when suddenly he appeared again for about ten seconds, then again disappeared. Unlike his very sick countenance just before he passed away (cancer), when I saw him, he was completely glowing with good health—and, I'll never forget, he had a pink and gold aura around him. What I'm saying is the absolute TRUTH. I realized that day that he must have known my pain and knew why I was going to visit this psychic (which I then cancelled as it simply wasn't necessary). He came to show me himself that he was indeed still alive and healthy, and to put my mind at ease (Series 1, M/H, Record 2).

My Shih Tzu died 16 years ago. A few weeks past, she came to my side and I felt her on my lap. I knew she was comforting me but for what?? A few days later, my brother had a serious stroke. She kept popping in my mind until he was out of the woods. I know she was there to get me through. My little Jack and I will meet again (Series 1, M/H, Record 49).

My deceased angel dog, Meg, came to me in the

ER when I was very ill. She calmed me by lying on my feet. My husband and my doctor were stunned by the change in my condition. I've seen her several times since. She comforted me in life and I believe she is waiting for the day we are reunited (Series 2, Other, Record 831).

### Warning Phenomena

Sometimes, apparitions of deceased animals make appearances seemingly to keep their people out of danger. Our first example is from Pam Smart, whose dog Jaytee performed experiments Sheldrake (1999) described in *Dogs Who Know When Their Owners are Coming Home*.

Thought I would give you this snippet of an event that happened late last night. I was tired and fixing to go to bed, boiling water for my hot water bottle. Out of the corner of my eye, I thought I saw Jaytee! I've had a lot of electrical activity, which makes me feel he's still around, from time to time over the years, but never before had he actually manifested. I shouted 'Jakes!', then I said to myself, don't be ridiculous. He seemed to have followed me from the front room to the kitchen. As I was thinking how ridiculous, I somehow had to check that he wasn't around, and found myself back in the front room looking for him. Then I laughed to myself, feeling stupid, thinking I must have been mistaken and the light was playing tricks.

A couple of minutes later, putting my hot water bottle in my bed, a huge firework went off somewhere in Ramsbottom, making a lovely sight but a big bang. It was around 11.30 pm, and I thought it was a bit late for such a bang, but it was only one. Potted through towards the bathroom and heard an almighty crash, bang coming from the bathroom. Clearly something had fallen. I opened the door very carefully to see a huge mirror smashed all over the room, with glass everywhere. It took me an hour and a half to carefully clean it all up. When I eventually climbed into bed, exhausted, especially as bending still hurts my sciatica, it suddenly struck me that I could have been injured quite badly had I opened the door about five seconds earlier! It's all very strange, and hopefully you know me not to be fanciful or over-dramatic about things, but it felt very spooky (Series 1, S/S, Record 253).

Our Blue Merle Collie Jess got cancer of the back

legs and had to be put to sleep. We were all so devastated. One day four or five months later, while walking in the woods, I found the whole root of a tree. I wanted to take it home, as it would be a fantastic garden feature, but suddenly the rain pelted down. I tried to carry my prize, but it was far too heavy, so I rolled it to the base of a tree. Thunder was loud and quite frightening along with the lightning, and as I stood wondering what to do, I saw Jess just sitting, not even looking my way. I walked towards her, temporarily losing sight of her, but she wasn't there where I had seen her. We all hurried back to the car. I thought I would fetch my husband back later to collect my tree root. This we did, and there was my root, with the top of the tree lying across it! It had been struck by lightning. Jess had somehow got us out of the wood and to safety. Even in spirit she was some dog! Thank you, Jess (Series 2, Facebook, Record 876)!

I had a beautiful black dog who followed me around and saved me from being robbed one night. When he died, I heard his bark three nights in a row when thieves tried to break into our house. He guarded us even after death. RIP Ruff, we miss you (Series 2, Other, Record 1396)!

## Negative Responses

Negative responses to visits from departed pets are rare in our samples, but we heard of a few.

My pet rabbit had an adorable habit of doing Figure 8s around my legs. She would race around and around my legs really fast and it was the cutest thing. I would stand perfectly still until she wore herself out. She died during a routine surgery and I was incredibly sad. When I was home, I silently stood in the living room staring at where her cage used to be, and sure enough, I felt the familiar softness on my lower legs of "her" doing the Figure 8s. I kept brushing at my legs, thinking there was actually something there, and again, nothing. This went on for weeks. Once or twice a day, I would feel her, and then I started to hear her. I could hear scurrying noises throughout the house. It started to become unnerving; it was happening much too often, and I didn't think it was so cute anymore.

I consulted a friend who was a "ghost hunter." She was doing something different regarding

spirits of animals haunting their owners. She and her crew came over and interviewed me for her radio broadcast and internet podcast. The crew consisted of her, psychics, and sensitives, and they all claimed they could sense there was an animal (and other spirits as well) in my home. Regardless, it all ended shortly thereafter. I honestly don't know what it was. I can't say for sure. All I can say is that it really happened and I am glad it stopped (Series 2, Other, Record 852).

My Springer Spaniel, Hoover, bit me very badly five days before Christmas. He was my soul friend for eight years and three months and I can still not stop crying about it. I saw him everywhere. When I was in hospital after two operations for the bites I had, I saw him in my hospital room. I was in a room of my own, as the bites were quite bad. He was lying there just staring at me, having been put down the day before. I dismissed it, as I was afraid, not of him, but of what I was seeing, and I started to shake quite a bit. I saw him in the reflection of the TV in the room, which was turned off, and then in the reflection of my make-up mirror. I can't explain this and it still makes me afraid. He stayed in the hospital room all the time with me and would walk on my bed at night to settle behind my head as he always did. I called the nurses, as I was so scared. They were lovely and let my husband stay overnight to comfort me. He never saw anything, but it happened when he was there, while I was trying to sleep.

Sounds like I'm nuts now, but please believe me, I saw him, and he stayed with me all the time. He came home with me when I was discharged. It was Christmas day afternoon when I left the hospital. I went on the internet to see if I could release him and immediately found a way. After a very sorrowful two hours, he was gone. You will probably not believe me at all, but I can only tell you what actually happened to me. I will never want that to happen again in my lifetime. It was not comforting and has made losing my beloved, darling friend even harder (Series 2, Other, Record 863).

## DISCUSSION

How do our findings bear on the three main interpretations of ADCs—(1) that they are internal hallucinations of living people; (2) that they are living-agent psi medi-

ated; or (3) that they demonstrate the survival of consciousness after bodily death?

Marwat and Klass, who helped construct the “continuing bonds” model in bereavement studies (Klass et al., 1996; Klass & Steffen, 2017), considered ADCs to constitute “inner representations of a deceased person.” These inner representations included “the sense of presence, hallucinations in any of the senses,” and “beliefs in the person’s continuing active influence on thoughts or events” (Marwat & Klass, 1996, p. 298), exactly the sort of phenomena we have been considering.

Woollacott et al. (2022) concluded their study of human ADCs by rejecting the “internal representation” interpretation of ADCs. They achieved this in part by asking how internalized or externalized the ADCs seemed to their respondents. Because we coded the animal accounts we collected rather than utilizing a questionnaire, we do not have similar systematic data to go on, yet it is clear from our accounts that our contributors also regarded most of their ADCs to be objective and externally perceived, rather than hallucinations internal to their minds. Moreover, some internal impressions, such as a sense of presence and dreams, were shared between percipients. Not infrequently, apparitions of different types were perceived by multiple individuals, sometimes by animals as well as by humans. Objectively observable psychokinetic (PK) effects were also reported. The internal-hallucination model fails in the face of ADC accounts, those involving animals as much as those involving humans.

The second interpretation - that ADCs are living-agent psi-mediated events suffers other problems. There have been attempts to reduce apparent survival phenomena to living-agent psi ever since *Phantasms of the Living* (Gurney et al., 1886). In that work, Gurney argued that apparitions perceived within 12 hours of death could be the results of a clairvoyant or telepathic awareness by the living percipient. Gurney’s explanations for apparitions appearing long after death and for collectively perceived apparitions were more involved, although he and others have done their best to show how psi acquisitions might spread from one percipient to another so that there need be but a single living agent for the latter (Braude, 2016b).

Braude (2016a) expanded living-agent psi into what he called “super-psi,” a hypothetical ability that has no definable bounds and is capable of explaining away all phenomena suggestive of discarnate agency.<sup>15</sup> But if living persons possess psi abilities, must we suppose they cease to function when they die? Could we not suppose that psi abilities belong in the first instance to the discarnate mind? Psi functioning in living humans is supplementary to the body’s senses, and there has never been a satisfactory explanation for why the faculty exists. Perhaps psi’s

principal value is not to the embodied mind but to the disembodied, and in that case, given the evidence for animal psi (Sheldrake, 1999), is there any reason to doubt that deceased animals, as well as deceased humans, would be able to wield it? Not only is the living-agent super-psi idea unfalsifiable as a scientific postulate, it does not stand up to logical scrutiny.<sup>16</sup>

The third view, that ADCs indicate the survival of consciousness after bodily death, is the interpretation embraced by our contributors, who also accept its corollary, that after death, animals knowingly interact with their living human companions and animal friends. This position cannot simply be accepted at face value, as a default, however. In order to make it credible, it must be shown not only that post-mortem survival is a reasonable conclusion to reach, contra skeptical arguments about its a priori unlikelihood (Augustine & Fishman, 2015),<sup>17</sup> but that animals experience emotions and think and act much as humans do.

We will take up the latter issue first. Recent decades have seen considerable work on animal cognition and emotion that has shown these to be present (and strikingly humanlike) in many different animal species (e.g., de Waal, 2019; Godfrey-Smith, 2017; Masson & McCarthy, 1995; Sachser, 2022). The accumulating evidence led a group of researchers (cognitive neuroscientists, neuropharmacologists, neurophysiologists, neuroanatomists, and computational neuroscientists) gathered at the University of Cambridge in 2012 to issue a declaration regarding the consciousness of animals in relation to humans. They wrote:

The absence of a neocortex does not appear to preclude an organism from experiencing affective states. Convergent evidence indicates that non-human animals have the neuroanatomical, neurochemical, and neurophysiological substrates of conscious states, along with the capacity to exhibit intentional behaviors. Consequently, the weight of evidence indicates that humans are not unique in possessing the neurological substrates that generate consciousness. Non-human animals, including all mammals and birds, and many other creatures, including octopuses, also possess these neurological substrates (Low, 2012).

A similar declaration was made by New York University in 2024 (Andrews et al., 2024; Falk, 2024).

Which animals have the capacity for conscious experience? While much uncertainty remains,

some points of wide agreement have emerged.

First, there is strong scientific support for attributions of conscious experience to other mammals and to birds.

Second, the empirical evidence indicates at least a realistic possibility of conscious experience in all vertebrates (including reptiles, amphibians, and fishes) and many invertebrates (including, at minimum, cephalopod mollusks, decapod crustaceans, and insects) (Andrews et al., 2024).

The last few years have seen the introduction of the concept of “basal cognition” (Levin, 2021; Lyon et al., 2021; Lyon & Cheng, 2023), which concerns strategies by which even single-celled prokaryotes, such as bacteria, are able to learn (hence demonstrating the capacity to remember). In his theory of the cellular basis of consciousness, Reber (2019) imputes subjectivity, phenomenological experience, and sentience to prokaryotes. He posits a “cognitive unconscious” at the cellular level for all life on Earth, then adds: “It is possible, in fact I think it’s likely, that life and sentience co-occurred back when the prebiotic soup was transformed into a biotic chowder roughly 3.7 billion years ago” (Reber, 2019, p. 191). If Reber is right, in the beginning, consciousness would have been restricted to the unconscious or subconscious stratum of mind. We do not yet know at what stage conscious awareness arose phylogenetically, but it may be a feature to some degree of all complex animals, and have a super-eminent function.<sup>18</sup>

Now, affirming that consciousness came into being with the origins of life is not the same as holding that consciousness can exist independently of physical form or that it can survive bodily death. Reber (2019) proclaims his adherence to materialist ideas; even though he rejects the assumption that consciousness is an effluence of the brain, his stance remains unabashedly reductionist. Nonetheless, tracing consciousness back to the “biotic chowder” that gave rise to life as we know it would appear to enhance, rather than diminish, the possibility that consciousness enjoys an existence independent of physical form. Perhaps, as Matlock has suggested (2016, p. 200; 2019, pp. 258-259), individual consciousness streams are drawn from an amorphous, impersonal consciousness that stands in the background of the universe. If that is so, the separation of consciousness from physical form could be a trait of all kingdoms of life.

Dogs and cats not only predominate in our samples, but they are the most engaged with human percipients and are associated with the greatest variety of ADC types. However, we collected accounts involving several other

mammals and other vertebrate classes as well (Table 2). In Matlock et al. (2024), we gave examples of a deceased bird pecking its owner on the face (p. 67), a deceased fish projecting its image on the glass of the tank in which it had lived (p. 66), and a possible death-coincident communication from a dying or deceased snake (p. 74). We also reported finding the account of a spider (an invertebrate) on the London *Daily Mail* website:

Here’s a bizarre one; even spiders have souls, it seems! I was caring for a house spider we named Horace, which lived in a small glass fish tank. The spider had only three legs left, having had the rest chewed off by one of our cats. Sadly, one day I managed to squash poor Horace, whilst carrying his tank. Something rolled on him. I was very upset and guilt ridden about my carelessness. A few days later, while laid in bed, I saw a little white light, about the size of a penny, alight on the pillow beside me. It only alighted for a few seconds, then whizzed off vertically and vanished. When it whizzed off there was a whirring noise like tiny wings fluttering. I just instinctively knew it was Horace come to say a final goodbye. It had taken a lot of courage to care for Horace, as I have a big spider phobia, but I had become very bonded to him with time. I think he came back to thank me for having the courage to overcome my great fear and care for him (Series 1, *DM*, Record 511).

A prominent feature of animal ADCs is the bond between human percipients and their deceased pets. This is mentioned again and again in our accounts, and it may be a key factor in them.<sup>19</sup> Sheldrake (1999, pp. 23–26) discussed social bonds between humans and animals as a variation of the social bonding important to many animal species. In terms of his hypothesis of formative causation, social bonds are a reflection of social fields, a type of morphogenetic field (Sheldrake, 1988). Social fields connect individuals during life, providing a channel for (regular) psi, which undergirds group and family bonds. In our ADC accounts, we see social fields established in life persisting after death. The persisting social fields allow animals to stay in touch with their people, even if they move; to return to support them in times of need, even after years apart; or to warn them of impending danger.<sup>20</sup> But our accounts suggest that social fields are not alone in surviving death—they are accompanied by memory, personality, emotion, and other aspects of personal identity, likely recorded in the older subconscious stratum of mind (Matlock, 2019). Moreover, the accounts suggest that a discarnate animal consciousness is capable of thought

and deliberative action. In sum, if we take the accounts as literally as our contributors do, animals are capable of much more than our sciences historically have given them credit for.

The continuing bonds model is not committed to viewing ADCs as internalized, as framed by Marwat and Klass (1996). In a seminal paper, Field and Filanosky (2010) considered a larger array of bonding expressions and classified ADCs (characterized as “illusionary and hallucinatory experiences”) as externalized, in comparison to mentation like, “I thought about the positive influence of the deceased on who I am today,” which they conceived of as internalized. This formulation has been adopted by other researchers (e.g., Black et al., 2022; Golbeck, 2024; Ho & Chan, 2018), but because it shares with Marwat and Klass (1996) the view that ADCs are figments of percipients’ imaginations, it does not represent much of an advance on the original idea. The continuing bonds model continues to reject ADC percipients’ assessment of their experiences in favor of a materialist evaluation that assumes those experiences to be illusory. This has the effect of doubly disenfranchising grief over pet loss, by denying the percipients’ experiential assessment on top of the disrespect accorded those who mourn their departed pets as if they were human family members.<sup>21</sup>

The continuing bonds (CB) model would do well to recognize that not only do recipients of after-death communications feel bonds with the deceased, but the deceased also feel bonds with the percipients; the continuing bonds are mutual. From the perspective of the continuing bonds model, percipients hallucinate the presence of their animal companions out of their deep grief. But this is not what our contributors say they experienced. Our contributors say they believe their deceased pets are appearing to assuage their grief. Studies like ours have looked at the response of percipients to after-death communications and have found much the same as we have. The respondents of Packman et al. (2011) “reported a tendency to experience CB as more comforting than distressing” (p. 341). Golbeck (2024) says that in her study, “the vast majority of reported feelings (74.6%) were positive, bringing people comfort, reassurance, and a sense of protection” (p. 1). Interpreting these findings as reflecting perceptions born of a desire to make oneself feel better strikes us as perverse, the product of an intense impulse to deny not only the possibility of post-mortem survival, but animal consciousness and discarnate agency along with it.

## IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

This contribution is part of a series of studies that

seek to open up new areas for exploration by focusing on the evidence for animal consciousness and its post-mortem survival, emphasizing commonalities with human experiences of the same. Next, we plan to examine animals seen during near-death experiences (NDEs), out-of-body experiences (OBEs), and other putatively discarnate states, followed by accounts of intra-species reincarnation and inter-species transmigration involving animals. Although this work is still in its exploratory phase, we believe that our findings carry important lessons not only for grief counseling but for a range of empirical disciplines, including parapsychology, consciousness studies, evolutionary biology, and ethology. The issues we raise are significant for philosophy as well. Finally, it is to be hoped that a greater appreciation of, and respect for, animal minds leads to the more humane treatment of animals, as proclaimed in the third paragraph of the New York University Declaration on Animal Consciousness:

Third, when there is a realistic possibility of conscious experience in an animal, it is irresponsible to ignore that possibility in decisions affecting that animal. We should consider welfare risks and use the evidence to inform our responses to these risks (Andrews et al., 2024).

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

**James G. Matlock** (ORCID: 0000-0003-1280-2476): Conceptualization, methodology, data collection, coding, writing – first and final drafts. **Bethany Hilton** (ORCID: 0009-0009-6259-4696): Data collection, data curation, coding, database queries.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Henceforth, we use “animal” in the sense of non-human animal
- <sup>2</sup> We follow Matlock in distinguishing an account from a case. In Matlock’s terminology, a case is “a set of events that have been investigated or closely observed.” By contrast, “an uninvestigated account is a story or anecdote about whose reliability we can say nothing”

- (2019, p. 91). Matlock here is concerned with cases and accounts suggestive of reincarnation, but the same applies in principle to any realm of experience.
- <sup>3</sup> The Facebook groups in which we posted appeals or gathered accounts include Afterlife of Animals, Dogspotting Society, Pet Reincarnation, Reincarnation, and Signs of Reincarnation. Our requests to post in several animal specialty and grief-related groups were rebuffed by group administrators.
  - <sup>4</sup> ADCRF is the Afterdeath Communication Research Foundation, <https://www.adcrf.org/>.
  - <sup>5</sup> Golbeck (2024) reported a similar use of social media posts on Twitter and Instagram. She analyzed responses to the question, "If you've lost a dog, have you had an experience like seeing their ghost, receiving a sign, did they communicate with you?" The University of Maryland Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that this did not constitute human subjects research and her study was approved for publication. Although neither of us has institutional affiliations and our study was not subject to IRB approval, we have made an effort to operate in conformance with IRB ethical standards.
  - <sup>6</sup> Golbeck (2024) utilized a more complex process to decide on her coding categories but ended up with a set very similar to ours: "Physical interactions," which included sound, sight, and physical touch (our auditory, visual, and tactile apparitions), and "Interpreted interactions," which included "ghostly activity," "dream," and "signs" (our psychokinetic activity and sense of presence, dream appearances, signs and synchronicities). Additionally, Golbeck has a sub-category of "dog interaction" (under Interpreted interactions) that includes "sent new dog," "passed on trait," and "reincarnation," all features we captured as well, although we are holding animal reincarnation accounts for a later study.
  - <sup>7</sup> Surviving animals in the family sometimes reacted to the appearance of their departed friends (6.4% of the Combined sample). This statistic does not include 9 accounts (2 in Series 1 and 7 in Series 2) in which animals were the sole percipients.
  - <sup>8</sup> Curiously, grief was acknowledged far more often in Series 1 than in Series 2. Account contributors mentioned their grief in 73 (16.5%) of the 442 accounts of Series 1, but in only 46 (7.8%) of the 587 accounts of Series 2.
  - <sup>9</sup> With Yates's correction, the chi-square statistic is 39.2654. The *p* level remains unchanged at < 0.00001.
  - <sup>10</sup> We requested permission to quote all accounts we collected ourselves. Those collected by Sheldrake and Smart in response to Sheldrake's appeals are used with permission assumed.
  - <sup>11</sup> In addition to the tactile feeling of the mouse jumping out of the percipient's hand, this account includes a subjective impression we coded as Other: Internal impression. We discuss the subjective factor in the first part of our Discussion section below.
  - <sup>12</sup> We coded this Borderline/Questionable due to the possibility of it being due to the percipient's psi (living-agent psi) rather than a communication from the rabbit's discarnate consciousness. As in Matlock et al. (2024), we did not include such accounts in our statistical analysis. We have more to say about them in the second part of our Discussion section, below.
  - <sup>13</sup> This is an example of an animal haunting which we collected but coded as N/C and did not include in our pattern analyses.
  - <sup>14</sup> Because the ADC aspect of animal reactions has to be inferred if there are no human percipients, we did not include animal reactions that occurred by themselves in our ADC counts, although we tracked them for the purposes of analysis.
  - <sup>15</sup> Braude's (2016a) "super-psi" is an upgrade of the term "super-ESP" introduced by Hart (1959), which has much the same meaning.
  - <sup>16</sup> Braude (2009) argued that to grant discarnate psi abilities would be to acknowledge the possibility of super-psi among the living, but this is not self-evident. Most, if not all, psi activity attributed to discarnate minds requires no more than regular psi, the existence of which among the living is not in dispute among parapsychologists (Matlock, 2019, p. 248).
  - <sup>17</sup> Augustine and Fishman (2015) calculated the cost of reconciling claims of post-mortem survival with the findings of materialist neuroscience to be unreasonably high, based on a Bayesian analysis. Bayesian analyses are sensitive to starting assumptions, though, so if, in setting up a test, one disregards all evidence contrary to one's expectations (e.g., that assembled by Kelly et al., 2007), it is not surprising that the test outcome confirms one's expectations (Matlock, 2016a, p. 200). Garbage in, garbage out. In an energetic reply to Matlock, Augustine (2016, pp. 216–218) protested that he and Fishman had not wrongly weighted the priors in their Bayesian test; nevertheless, they left out a good deal of evidence for survival they could have included (Matlock, 2016b, pp. 242–243).
  - <sup>18</sup> Or, perhaps, if conscious awareness is a product of the brain, as materialist neuroscientists maintain, then it might have arisen with the development of brains. At any rate, conscious awareness distinct from the subconscious would explain the "reset" in self-awareness and memory observed in reincarnation cases, when a new body is acquired (Matlock, 2019, p. 252). It would also explain why, with some organ transplants and with certain rare reincarnation phenomena involving

apparent merged and divided consciousness streams, there is never the transmission of a full self-awareness and personal identity (Matlock, 2019, pp. 264-270; see also Matlock, 2021, 2023). These ideas will be explored in greater detail on another occasion.

<sup>19</sup> Indeed, attachment and bonding are thought to play important roles in explaining the intensity of grief, with animals as well as humans (Field et al., 2009; Jordan & Jennifer, 2024).

<sup>20</sup> Warning phenomena suggest a precognitive awareness. This might seem a departure from the hypothesis of formative causation, which is primarily concerned with influences of the past on the present, but in a dialogue between Sheldrake, Terence McKenna, and Ralph Abraham (Sheldrake, McKenna, & Abraham, 2005, pp. 137-138), Abraham suggested that morphic resonance be thought of as having a wave structure spanning space and time, its leading edge extending into the future.

<sup>21</sup> The concept of disenfranchised grief was introduced by Doka (1989) and explored further in Doka (2002).

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