

**Book Club Questions for *Meet the Neighbors***

Who are the wild animals who've meant the most to you (or who captured your heart or imagination, or got on your nerves....)? Are there wild animals you often see in your everyday life?

The first several chapters discussed the science of animal intelligence. What was most interesting to you?

It has long been said that only humans have language. Human-style language is exceptional, but many animals communicate in ways that have elements of language—and much of our communication with one another is non-linguistic. If you could only use gestures, touch, and a handful of words, what sort of life and relationships could you have?

Brandon Keim argues that while people see their pets as thinking, feeling individuals, they don't usually see wild animals that way. Do you think that is true?

Chapter 5 discusses the idea of legal rights for animals. Do you think that animals should have legal rights? If so, what rights might these be? Would these be the same for each species? Would they differ depending on whether an animal is domestic or wild?

Chapter 6 explores the idea of representation for animals in political and social institutions. Could you imagine this happening? What would it look like if animals were represented in, say, a neighborhood association? A city council? A shoe company?

Keim writes about the social construction of animals: How we think about them differently, and treat them differently, depending on the category to which they are assigned. (Some animals are used for food; others for research; others for labor; some are companions. Then there are wild animals, who can be common, threatened, or endangered; so-called game or non-game; invasive, alien, feral, or native; and so on.) Is this something you had thought much about before? Do you think it's fair?

After the first four chapters, every chapter includes at least one animal character. Were any of these characters especially compelling to you?

Animals considered non-native or invasive are sometimes killed in order to help native species. What do you think about this? Are there times when you feel it's justifiable? Or that it's not?

The activities of wild animals allow the natural world to flourish: by creating soil, planting seeds, pollinating and fertilizing plants, and so on. What do we owe them in return?

What does it mean to be a good neighbor — to other human beings, and also to animals?

