



**RESEARCH  
ARTICLE**

# After-Death Communications (ADCs) from Non-Human Animals: Parallels with Human ADCs

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## HIGHLIGHTS

Reports of after-death communications from non-human animals closely resemble those from humans, suggesting common underpinnings to these events.

## ABSTRACT

In an earlier study, Rupert Sheldrake, Pam Smart, and Michael Nahm reviewed accounts of end-of-life experiences (ELEs) involving non-human animals. They showed animal ELEs to be similar to human ELEs, suggesting common underlying processes. Here, we consider apparent after-death communications (ADCs) from non-human animals and compare them to accounts of ADCs from humans. We collected 442 accounts of animal ADCs from our own appeals and from reports in the literature. We found a close resemblance between ADCs from animals and from humans in the types of experience—dream visitations, a sense of presence, visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory apparitions, and psychokinetic effects. As with human ADCs, the great majority of animal ADCs were reported to have occurred in the first hours or days after death, with a dramatic falling off over time. Moreover, our data show that people grieve their pets in much the same fashion as they grieve their human loved ones, suggesting that human bereavement studies would do well to take into account the animal data to which we draw attention. Doing so may help clarify issues regarding the fundamental nature of the experiences—determining whether they are best regarded as internal hallucinations, as living-agent-psi-mediated subjective or objective phenomena, or as actual contacts with the deceased—which in turn carries implications not only for academic studies of bereavement but for clinical practice with the bereaved.

## KEYWORDS

After-death communication, animals, bereavement, continuing bonds, phenomenology

## INTRODUCTION

Sheldrake et al., (2023) reviewed accounts of end-of-life experiences (ELEs) involving non-human animals. They showed animal<sup>1</sup> ELEs are similar to human ELEs, suggesting common underlying processes. Here, we consider apparent after-death communications (ADCs)<sup>2</sup> from animals. Generally, these were animals that lived with

people as pets and companions—mainly dogs and cats, but also horses, other mammals, birds, a goldfish, and a house spider.

Our database comprises four distinct samples: accounts reported to Sheldrake and Pam Smart between 1996 and 2009, predominantly in response to appeals in 2003 and 2004; accounts collected by James Matlock and Bethany Hilton from Facebook groups between June 2020



and the first months of 2023; accounts culled from the scholarly and popular literature published between the 1880s and 2020s; and accounts from stories and reader responses in the London *Daily Mail* online edition in 2016.

We defined an ADC as apparent contact with an animal after its death without further specifying the form of that contact. 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 that seemed to us equally well or better interpreted as psi from living agents, and photographic anomalies. Our four samples combined contain a total of 442 accounts we judged to be apparent after-death communications from animals.

The accounts<sup>3</sup> and are largely anecdotal, although some include information from follow-ups through Facebook instant messaging or email. As our literature sample demonstrates, animal ADCs have been widely reported for some time, although as with Sheldrake et al.'s (2023) ELE study, the present study is the first to focus on this material in an academic journal. It is also the largest study of these experiences to date. Consistent with animal ELEs, we show that animal ADCs are, in many respects, remarkably similar to human ADCs in their phenomenology, again suggesting common processes underlying the experiences. Although we recognize the limitations of our reliance on anecdotal accounts and the informal and heterogeneous strategies by which they were collected, we anticipate that the patterns we have identified will be confirmed and extended in more formal surveys. After describing our methods and outlining our results, we provide illustrative examples of each account type, comparing them to human ADC types. In discussion, we treat the animal accounts within the framework of human bereavement studies.

## METHOD

Matlock and Hilton began their informal survey of Facebook groups in response to Sheldrake et al. (2023, in draft) without knowing that Sheldrake and Smart already had a substantial sample of animal ADCs. When we realized that we had two samples of the same occurrence, we decided to compare them, later adding samples of previously published accounts (one in print, the other on the web). The four samples were collected over different time periods, utilizing different protocols, and we wanted to see how similar they were. The more similarities across the samples, the more robust our conclusions could be, we reasoned.

Our Sheldrake/Smart (S/S) sample is drawn from the same large dataset from which their animal ELE accounts were taken. The majority of accounts came in response to Sheldrake's requests for animal ADCs in the London *Daily Mirror* in 2003 and 2004. Others were reported in response to articles in other newspapers, pieces in his newsletter or on his website, or his books *Dogs that Know When Their Owners are Coming Home* (1999) and *Seven Experiments That Could Change the World* (2002) between 1996 and 2009.

Our Matlock/Hilton (M/H) sample derives in the main from four Facebook groups in which Matlock and Hilton solicited animal ADC accounts between December 2022 and July 2023.<sup>4</sup> They also searched the same groups for earlier relevant postings, adding a few accounts that go back as far as June 2020. Matlock and Hilton engaged with respondents on the group pages and, in some instances, followed up accounts in instant messaging or email to obtain additional information. They did not attempt to investigate accounts through in-depth interviews, nor did they request supporting documentation, although sometimes this was volunteered.

Our Literature (Lit) sample consists of ADC accounts that have appeared in books and periodicals. Some of our sources (Bayless, 1970; Bozzano, 1950; Gaddis & Gaddis, 1970; O'Donnell, 1912/2012) compiled narratives from early psychical research publications, whereas others contained previously unpublished accounts (see Database Sources, following paper References list). A few of these accounts were investigated to some degree, but the majority are anecdotal only. This is true especially of more recent accounts in books, often self-published, intended for the general reader. On the whole, we believe our coverage of both older and newer accounts of animal ADCs is reasonably comprehensive, although we have not sought to make it definitive. With the exception of a few French cases in Bozzano (1950), all accounts were drawn ultimately from English-language sources.<sup>5</sup>

Our *Daily Mail* (DM) sample contains accounts published in an article (*Mail Online* Editor, 2016) promoting a book by Bel Mooney (2016a), along with comments from readers,<sup>6</sup> and two additional accounts contributed in comments following a subsequent article by Mooney (2016b). Mooney's own account is taken from her book and is included in our Lit sample.

From prior acquaintance with the animal ADC literature and accounts on Facebook, we had the impression that animal ADCs conformed to the same types as human ADCs (a sense of presence; dream visitations; visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory apparitions<sup>7</sup> psychokinetic effects) and we coded the animal accounts accordingly. Several respondents contributed accounts of more than

**Table 1.** Animals Involved in ADCs (Combined Sample)

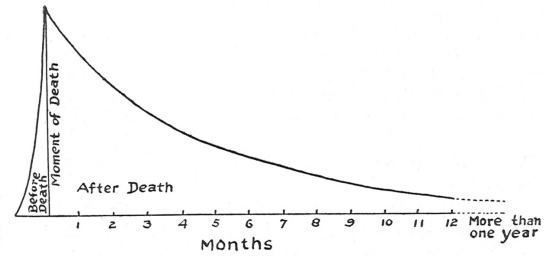
Animal	N
Dog	220
Cat	195
Horse	5
Llama	1
Pig	1
Ferret	1
Guinea pig	1
Hamster	3
Rabbit	3
Rat	2
Mouse	1
Opossum	1
Bird	5
Fish	1
Spider	1
Unclear	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>442</i>

one animal. Many accounts included more than one type of ADC, similar to human ADC reports (Streit-Horn, 2011; Woollacott et al., 2022). We assigned each animal a unique account record, with the records recording all ADC types pertaining to that animal. We grouped ADC phenomena that did not conform to one of the seven major types in an Other category. A few submitted accounts were, in one way or another, ambiguous or questionable as true after-death communications. We classified these as Borderline/Questionable and excluded them from our analysis.<sup>8</sup>

Matlock and Hilton coded accounts in each of the four samples, deciding on the assignment of type of ADC and other variables (e.g., country, animal, time elapsed between death and ADC). Although they did not code independently, they checked each other’s work and discussed and resolved all coding disagreements. Codes were later reviewed by Sheldrake and Nahm, and disagreements were again discussed and resolved so that we had a four-way agreement on coding decisions.

**OVERVIEW OF RESULTS**

Because we collected accounts in an open-ended way and coded them rather than using a questionnaire, our data for many variables is incomplete. Follow-up questions compensated for this incompleteness to an extent, although our questions were aimed at clarifying ambiguities and obtaining more comprehensive descriptions rather than adding data on specific variables. The obvious disadvantage to this approach is the incompleteness of the data, but there is an advantage also, in that we avoided leading questions, and the responses we received and coded were, by and large, spontaneous.



**Figure 1.** Incidence of apparitions of dying and deceased persons (from Flammarion, 1923).

Similar to reports of human ADCs, the overwhelming majority of the respondents in all five samples were women, but this should not be interpreted to mean that experiencers of animal ADCs were predominantly women. Woollacott et al. (2023, p. 426) note that although their questionnaire respondents were predominantly female, other studies have shown no sex difference in those who experience ADCs. In our collection, husbands, sons, and other men frequently figure in the accounts as co-percipi-ents of the phenomena in question.

Although we coded for country, many of the accounts we collected did not specify the place respondents lived, so we refrained from reporting this statistically. However, it is our impression that the bulk of our accounts came from the United Kingdom and the United States, with some from Canada, Australia, and countries in Europe and Asia. One account is identified as coming from Argentina.

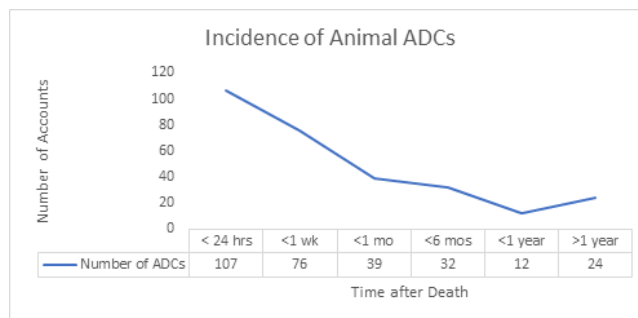
A list of the animals represented in our collection is shown in Table 1. It should be noted that this list is based on our combined sample and tallies accounts, which we located in the literature and on the web, along with accounts reported to us. Unsurprisingly, since dogs and cats are the most common pets, they are disproportionately represented in our dataset. Significantly, however, we collected accounts involving horses, a llama, a mouse, birds, and a fish. Our Lit and Mail samples contributed several mammals (rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs, rats, a pig, a ferret, an opossum) and a spider that did not appear in the responses to our own appeals.

Human ADC studies beginning with the classic *Phantasms of the Living* (Gurney et al., 1886) have consistently found that the majority of experiences occur near death, with a dramatic falling off over time. Haraldsson (2012, p. 232) found that in surveys in Iceland, 14% of respondents reported apparitional experiences within 24 hours of a death.

In the third volume of his *Death and Its Mystery* trilogy, which analyzed thousands of European human accounts and cases, Flammarion (1923, p. 299) presented

a graph that is reproduced as Figure 1.<sup>9</sup> Researchers concerned with animal ADCs have observed a similar pattern: the great majority of contacts are reported in the first days after death, which is a dramatic decline in the number of experiences over time (Warren, 2009, p. 121). The majority of our accounts do not specify a precise time from death to ADC, so we coded in periods of ≤ 24 hours, ≤ 1 week, ≤ 1 month, ≤ 6 months, ≤ 12 months, and >12 months. The results from the 291 accounts for which we have pertinent data are presented in Figure 2.

Our data show the same trend as with human ADCs, with the majority of experiences coming in the first hours or days after death. In fact, 37% of the accounts we collected were of events occurring initially within the first 24 hours, and 63% occurred initially within the first week. Some (30, or 6.3%) were coincident with the death itself. However, it is important to appreciate that Figure 2 records the date at which experiences began and does not capture their duration. ADC experiences were recurrent in 134 accounts (30.3%). When they recurred, it was usually not in exactly the same way, although this reportedly did happen on occasion. Often, various visitations appeared for days or weeks before they ceased, not to resume, whereas in other instances, they persisted for a period of



**Figure 2.** Incidence of animal ADCs over time.

time, ceased, and then reappeared at some point (often years) later. In some accounts, the experiences were ongoing at the time of the report.

Many records (103/442, 23.3%) contain reports of collective percipience, either on the same occasion or on different occasions. In 30 instances (6.8%), a living animal reacted to the perceived presence of a deceased animal. Sometimes animals reacted (e.g., by seeming to follow with their eyes, vocalizing, or otherwise responding) as if they saw something no human could see, but in the majority of animal reactions (26/30, 87%), the apparition was perceived simultaneously, or on separate occasions,

**Table 2.** ADCs from Non-Human Animals in Five Samples.

ADC Type	S/S Sample (n = 120)	M/H Sample (n = 82)	Literature Sample (n = 165)	Daily Mail Sample (n = 77)	Total Sample (N = 442)
Visual apparition	45	26	82	28	181 (25.3%)
Tactile apparition	50	28	58	32	168 (23.5%)
Auditory apparition	40	17	76	23	156 (21.8%)
Dream visitation	12	30	28	10	80 (11.2%)
Sense of presence	18	7	17	6	48 (6.7%)
Psychokinetic effect	4	5	26	6	41 (5.7%)
Other ADC phenomenon	9	4	8	1	22 (3.0%)
Olfactory apparition	8	1	8	3	20 (2.8%)
Total ADC phenomena	186	118	303	109	716 (100%)

**Subtypes of Other ADC Phenomenon (N = 24)**

Other Phenomena	S/S Sample	M/H Sample	Literature Sample	Daily Mail Sample	Total Sample
Telepathic message	4	3	5	0	12 (54.6%)
Electric charge felt	2	0	0	0	3 (13.6%)
Influence on living	1	0	1	1	3 (13.6%)
Sign/ synchronicity	2	1	2	0	5 (22.7%)
Total Other subtypes	9	4	8	1	22 (100%)

**Borderline/Questionable ADC Phenomena (N = 24)**

B/Q Subtype	S/S Sample	M/H Sample	Literature Sample	Daily Mail Sample	Total Sample
Sign, synchronicity	2	2	--	0	4 (17.4%)
Living agent psi	12	2	2	0	16 (69.5%)
Photographic anomaly	0	2	1	0	3 (15.0%)
Total B/Q	14	6	3	0	23 (100%)

**Note:** n counts are number of records in each sample. Each record represents a single animal. The totals of ADC counts exceed n counts because many records include multiple types of ADC.



by one or more human. Animals have been reported to have reacted to the apparitions of humans as well, sometimes as co-percipients (Nahm, 2016).

Respondents sometimes reported that they were in deep grief for their departed pets at the time they saw their apparitions or felt their presence. A state of grief coincident with the phenomena was mentioned in 73 accounts (16.5%). Negative reactions, such as a woman who said she would rather her cat not come back, were reported only in two accounts.<sup>10</sup>

The top section of Table 2 shows the numbers of ADCs of different types in each of our samples in order of prevalence in our Combined sample. By and large, the distribution of types is consistent across the five samples, although the proportions of visual and tactile apparitions are reversed in the Lit sample versus the others. The variations across our samples may be attributable to sampling error or (in the Lit sample) selection bias. There is considerably more consistency across our samples than across studies of human ADCs, perhaps an artifact of the different methods, questions, and sample sizes of the latter (Woollacott et al., 2022, p. 428), which was evened out by coding all accounts we collected.

Accounts assigned to the Borderline/Questionable (B/Q) category, and therefore not included in the present analysis, comprise a small minority (only about 5.2%) of the total number of accounts (ADC + B/Q) in our collection.

## EXAMPLE ACCOUNTS

Examples of the types of animal ADC in our S/S and M/H samples appear below, with citations to the corresponding record number in our database. We preface the narratives in each category with reference to human ADC analogs. In editing the narratives for publication, we have retained differences between American and British vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation.

### Visual Apparitions

Streit-Horn (2011) concluded that visual apparitions were one of the three most common types of human ADC. Indeed, almost half (46.4%) of the respondents to the survey of Elsaesser and colleagues (Elsaesser et al., 2021; Woollacott et al., 2022) reported having seen apparitions of deceased loved ones. In his literature review of animal accounts, Edward Anderson (2021, p. 167) says that visual apparitions were “by far” the most common form of ADC. Although we cannot say that visual apparitions are “by far” the most common type of ADC in our collection, they are *the* most common type, representing about a quarter (25.3%) of all ADCs. Visual apparitions frequently co-

cur with ADCs of other types, and they may be collectively perceived. Often, they are recurrent. The following narratives are drawn from our collection.

When our beloved pit bull passed away from kidney failure, we were so heartbroken. We cried like babies, we loved him so much. His name was Judge. Judge liked to go to bed, in our bed, by 9:00. If we went to bed too, then all was well. But if we stayed up later, he would go ahead without us. When you walk out of the living room and pass through the dining room, you pass by a set of windows that allow you to see the living room if you’re in the dining room, and if you’re in the living room they allow you to see the dining room. Every night when Judge went to bed early, he would stop in the dining room and look at us for a few seconds as if to say, “You sure you’re not coming?” Then he would walk on by and go to bed. A couple of days after he passed away, I saw him pass by the windows on his way to bed. I saw something and when I turned to have a better look, I saw him “going to bed,” just as clear as I see my own hands. My husband said he sees him almost every night in same place (M/H, Record 14).

The visits from my dear llama Al E. were for a time frequent and very comforting. Al E. chose to leave after his companion llama Grandpa died of old age. Al E. and I were both heart-broken. Al E. was only 7 and Grandpa had been his only friend. I quickly arranged to have two more llamas delivered to keep him company; llamas being herd animals. Al E., still grieving for his friend, would spend his days sitting on Grandpa’s grave. Two weeks after Grandpa’s death, Al E. stripped all the bark off all the cherry trees in his field and died of cyanide poisoning with me by his side. Devastated by the loss of my two best friends, I would drag myself across town early every morning before dawn to feed the new llamas. I would make the long trek through the field and up the hill to their barn. On the trip back down the hill, I would find Al E. sitting in his favorite spot under the evergreens watching me. It was such a comfort. I saw him every morning for nearly two weeks, until I guess he figured I was OK (S/S, Record 239).

Woollacott et al. (2022, p. 427) remark on the various forms visual apparitions of humans may take. Sometimes,



they look as solid as in life, whereas on other occasions, they are indistinct; they may represent the complete body or only a portion of it, and they may appear in a variety of locations. Our animal accounts reveal similar variations.

A short while after our cat Penny died, she was sleeping on our bed, then at other times licking my face and purring as usual. She visited us many times; sometimes she was solid just like in life, and at other times she was “see through” (S/S, Record 222).

Tatty was my first cat – or, rather, he adopted me. We became great friends after he used to visit me in my garden very often when I was tiny. When it became apparent that his former owners were no longer interested in him, my mum persuaded my dad to let me ‘keep’ him. He would stay very close to me and would give up whatever he was doing to come to me when I came into a room. He was a tabby, of unknown age (people in the village claimed he was over 20 when he died), and very much a ‘philosopher’ sort of cat. He gave the sense of being a very wise older soul – or to me as a toddler, he felt infinitely wondrously old and clever.

About two weeks after Tatty died, my mother and I saw his tail. This happened several times off and on for about a couple of years after he died. I only once saw the whole of Tatty many years later, in 2020, when I was ill. He stood still until I recognised him, and then disappeared. He was easy to recognise, as he had one very ginger back leg amongst his very tabby fur (M/H, Record 397).

As with humans, animal apparitions are sometimes reflected in mirrors.

My dog died after 14 1/2 years. A month or so after his death, I was looking in the bathroom mirror, and I noticed something move. I looked into the hallway, and the white shadow form of my dog walked by. He stopped and turned his head to look into the bathroom, and walked on. I thought perhaps I was imagining all this, and as I thought about what had just happened, he came back the other way – totally white form (he had been dark brindle) – stopped, turned his head to look at me, and moved on (S/S, Record 230).

I had an Eclectus parrot who was run over by a

car. He now rarely appears to me; however, after his death in early 2017, he was with me all the time for months. He was etheric and occasionally appeared visually in a mirror, at other times ghostlike (S/S, Record 259).

Woollacott et al. (2022, p. 428) received the report of an apparitional image projected on a screen, similar to the following account from our collection.

Recently my goldfish died. I found him sick one Sunday morning (he got fungus overnight) and died that Sunday afternoon. I’d had him for 6 years plus. His friend, the other fish, was very sad and lonely, and it showed. On Tuesday morning, I fell asleep on the couch and suddenly woke up around 3 a.m., still having my glasses on. Something made me look in the direction of the fish tank. I saw this “enlarged” vision of my little dead fish on the “surface” of the tank glass, as if it had been “beamed” onto it. That was there for a few seconds. It looked very peaceful, so I think it was telling me to let go (S/S, Record 268).

As reported with humans, apparitions of animals may portray the animal as younger or healthier than at death.

Our family introduced Trixie, a cocker spaniel, into our home when I was three years old. I grew up with her and became very attached to her, although she was very much my mum’s dog. After a very happy life, Trixie died when I was 16. A day or two after her death, something woke me in the night, so I got out of bed and switched on my light. Trixie, looking totally real, although much as she did when younger – her coat was glossy as it was before her illness – was sitting in the middle of my room. She was looking up at me and appeared anxious. I said, ‘It’s all right Trixie, it’s all right’, and she relaxed. Feeling that she was reassured, I switched off the light and got back into bed. To this day I really believe she was there, although I wonder why she came to me and not to my mother (S/S, Record 149).

This story doesn’t relate to a person, but to my beloved horse, Shannon, who went to sleep on 11 June 1997. I rescued Shannon when he was 24, and kept him happy and healthy for another 12 years. We spent hours together each day, as he was stabled in our garden, and out at grass in the field adjoining it. The bond between us was

incredibly close – Shannon could sense what I wanted, like which hoof to pick up as I was grooming him, or which way to stand when he was being rugged up. I always knew when he was feeling poorly, or if he wanted anything in particular for his feed – we belonged together. When he was diagnosed with cancer, it broke my heart, and I spent as much time as possible with him until the day the vet came to put him to sleep.

I cradled Shannon's head in my lap as he started to pass away, and whispered to him that I'd always be with him, and I knew he'd also be with me. He let out a little whicker, and his heart stopped. I spent hours each day at his grave, as he was buried in our field next to our house. I still left him a biscuit on the paddock fence every morning because I couldn't bring myself to stop the routine, which had been with me every day for 12 years. A month or two after he passed away, I was in the kitchen and glanced out of the window and saw him, clear as day, standing under his favorite tree, looking over at me, ears pricked up and looking as beautiful as ever. I blinked, and when I looked again, he was gone. I know how much I wanted to see him, and thought I might have conjured the image up, but when I mentioned it to my mum, she told me she'd also seen him in the field – same place, looking at the kitchen window where I used to call him from on my way to feed him (S/S, Record 225).

## Tactile Apparitions

Tactile apparitions involving humans have not been reported as commonly as visual apparitions (Strait-Horn, 2011), but almost half (47.8%) of the respondents to the survey of Elsaesser et al. (2021) reported being touched by the deceased. We defined a tactile apparition more broadly than Elsaesser and her colleagues did, to include any tactile sensation, not only direct touch. Tactile apparitions represent over a fifth (23.5%) of the ADCs in our collection of animal ADCs.

When I was a child my dog was hit by a car and died. That night in the wee hours of the morning I awoke to my dog sticking his snout into my armpit, which was something he did to get your attention. I was shocked and began to cry and gave him a snuggle, then I fell back to sleep (M/H, Record 50).

My Wee bird came back and pecked me on the face hard. Before he done that I was in a hell of grief. I didn't know where he was and was way too heartbroken (M/H, Record 48).

After an address on animal ELEs in Germany in 2023, an audience member told Nahm of an incident combining a tactile apparition with a sudden surge of energy before death (a type of ELE Sheldrake et al., 2023, termed a "last rally"). A moribund cat that had been too weak to move much had managed to jump onto its owners' bed while they slept. The woman awoke when she distinctly felt something moving around on the blanket. At that time, however, the cat had been dead for several hours, its cold body lying beside her husband across the bed.

Many of our accounts include mentions of phantom cats and dogs jumping on beds at night and snuggling up to their people, just as they did in embodied life.

I had an old calico that 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 (M/H, Record 13).

I would like to tell you a story about our long-haired dachshund, Bobby. We had to put him to sleep 25 years ago, because he suddenly could not walk anymore. My parents and my son, then 13 years old, were able to say good-bye to Bobby, but my daughter, then 16, did not have the opportunity, and always felt hurt somewhat.

About five years later, my daughter came to me tear-stained and perturbed and told me that Bobby had been lying on her bed in the morning and she had felt him. The first thing I asked her was whether she was awake or had been dreaming. She wept and said that she was certain that she was awake because the dog had huddled against her and this was the second time already. I told her that if it happened again, she should use the opportunity to say good-bye to him, because this must be the reason for his appearance. And this is how it came to be—when he was there the third time, she said good-bye to him, and he never came back (S/S, Record 215).

## Auditory Apparitions

Auditory apparitions occur frequently with humans,

although they are not among the most common types of apparition (Strait-Horn, 2011). In the study of Elsaesser et al. (2021), 43.4% of respondents reported auditory apparitions, placing them in fourth place in terms of frequency. Auditory apparitions ranked third in our Combined sample, accounting for 21.8% of animal ADCs.

My cat Oreo was hit by a car and I heard his very distinct meow three times in the week after he died. He got hit and his kitty spirit just kept on running, not knowing he was dead (M/H, Record 17).

We lost our cat just before Christmas last year. Then just recently I've heard her bell and I swear I've seen her in the kitchen (M/H, Record 75).

My dog Hardy comes around. I've had a lot of pets; Hardy could be the annoying one. I spent too much time and money trying to save him, but when he died, I put him in his little bed. Set him on a table. That was 7 a.m. I left him 'til the next morning. Talked to him, crying. Then prepared his grave, set his bed, covered him with his blanket. Less than a week later, he was running around as usual, and barking. I thought I was grieving, but it's happened too many times. People don't believe me, but I KNOW WHAT I see and hear! Then he just goes away♥ (M/H, Record 95).

## Dream Visitations

The appearance of deceased humans in dreams is one of the earliest recognized types of ADC, as reported by many indigenous tribal societies (Lincoln, 1935). In his classic *Primitive Culture*, Tylor (1871) proposed that these dream visitations were one of the bases for a belief in post-mortem survival. Dream visitations also appear prominently among modern populations. Almost two-thirds (62%) of the respondents to the survey by Elsaesser et al. (2021) said they had experienced ADCs during sleep. Dream visitations appear in our samples, although less frequently than some other types of ADC. Dream visitations from animals account for only 11.2% of the ADCs we collected.

Tuppance was an Old English Sheep Dog mix. He was owned by my best friend, who lives about a half an hour from my house. After all the children had moved away and it was just Jim and the dog, she and I became very close friends. When she died, she was at the vet's where she was merci-

fully put down with Jim and me in attendance. I had this huge sense that she was so happy that we stayed until the end as we know it. One week later, I was at Jim's house sleeping and I dreamt or felt or saw her walking towards me with a happy expression on her face, tail wagging. I believed I could even hear her panting. The vision was so real that I reached to pet her, and as soon as I did, she disappeared. I woke up and sobbed. It really was like she was right there, as if to say thank you for everything and be happy, as I am happy (S/S, Record 147).

In my most recent dream of my dog Wheels, I remember being lost and her encouraging me to follow her. We travelled a long way together, and when we reached the end of the journey, she left. I subsequently told someone in the dream how much she had helped me and what a great visit we had had. This person scoffed at me, telling me that she was dead, but I was able to point her out to this person as she ran across an open field with her fur flying, as if she was flying herself. In reality, she had been killed by being run over by a car. It was particularly comforting to see her running again. This was a feeling I had in the dream. I knew throughout the dream that she had been killed, but that she was alive again (M/H, Record 34).

In some dream accounts, the animals are represented as talking. We coded these as telepathic messages, although separate from the telepathic messages classed as a subtype of Other ADC Phenomena (see below).

In 2006, my old White Shepherd passed away. He came in my dreams the following three nights. He was sitting on his grave in the free spaces of the wood. He had on an old man's hat, like my grandfather had many years ago. He explained so many things, like why he passed away, why he had to leave me, why he was my special friend, why he wore a green scarf, and so on. He visited me three nights in a row. I can visualise him in a minute, how I was with him in the dark woods, and how he sat on his grave with the hat on. His voice was a wise man's voice (M/H, Record 3).

I was 15 and Puss was my first cat. She bonded to me intensely as a kitten. I had her until my 30s, so she was my familiar through all the good and bad of my 20s. Within a few months, I had a se-



ries of visitation dreams. First one, I see her still ill and her thoughts are, “Do you really want me like this?” I said yes. Second one, I find her running round my house. I grab her and hug her. The message this time is, “You are not supposed to see me.” Third dream, she shows up glowing and healthy and walking down a hall to me: “Just visiting.” Then something regularly started jumping on my bed for quite a while. A big thump! Nothing there (M/H, Record 22).

The next dream is unique in our collection in that it apparently represents the deceased dog’s point of view.

My father and his wife had a big dog named Panda (a Bernese Mountain Dog) who died of a brain tumor while still a fairly young dog, but I knew her from when I’d visit my father and his wife. The dog died shortly before one of those visits.

When I went to bed the first night of the visit, I had a vivid dream that I was a dog. I don’t know what kind of dog, because in the dream I was the dog, so didn’t see it from an observer’s perspective. Or, seemingly, from a human perspective, as it was an experience different from any dreaming I’d had before. In the dream I was in the bedroom (the same in which I was sleeping), but my view of it was from dog-height, beside the bed. I remember things feeling very weird, starting to blur; feeling scary; anxiety, my head not right, my body losing coordination and feelings; flashing on an image of my dad’s wife. Then everything going black. I pulled myself out of the dream and woke up feeling disoriented and strange. Next morning I told my dad and Louise (his wife) about the dream and learned from them that Panda had gone into that bedroom (a guest room) and died there, at the same place beside the bed that I had been in my dream (S/S, Record 263).

### Sense of Presence

In her review of 35 studies of human ADCs, Streit-Horn (2011, p. 51) determined a sense of the presence of the deceased to be one of the three most common types of experience. About a third (34%) of the respondents to the more recent survey conducted by Elsaesser and colleagues (Elsaesser et al., 2021) reported a sense of presence. By contrast, a sense of presence figures in only 6.7% of our Combined sample, making it one of the less frequently reported types of animal ADC. This may be

because we coded a sense of presence only when respondents explicitly stated that they felt a presence distinct from other types of ADC.

Just thought I’d let you know that after my 6-year-old mare died, she stayed ‘connected’ with me for quite some time. She was my best friend, a kindred spirit, someone I could trust and depend on. Lacey was always there for me when I needed a shoulder to cry on. We knew each other’s thoughts and emotions and although she’s been gone now for two years, I can still feel her gentle soul near mine. When I’m sad or lonely, her soul lovingly comforts me and she reassures me that, although she is gone physically from my life, her spirit is with me always.

Last summer, while I was out in the pasture fixing a fence, I thought one of the other horses had come up behind me (to see what I was doing, of course) so I turned around to see which horse it was, and there was no one there. I saw the other horses—they were half a pasture away—and then I felt Lacey’s presence. It was so strong that I could even smell her sweet horsey scent. She put her head over my shoulder and I wished that we could have hugged, just as we used to do. I closed my eyes and just enjoyed that peaceful moment with her (S/S, Record 130).

Our beloved pet cat Thompson died of a tumor. Three days after he died, my husband, not a man to believe in the supernatural, was upset. He swore he saw Thompson run across part of the room behind the settee. Two days later, I was ironing, when suddenly, without thinking, I put out my arm as if to push a cat down from trying to jump up onto the ironing board. I was shocked; there was nothing there, yet I felt sure Thompson had come. I felt it; the sense was too strong. I loved Thompson, but I don’t want him to come back (S/S, Record 205).

One of our dogs came for walks with us for about two years after she died. I found I was continually counting four dogs (three live and one in spirit), as her presence was so strong. I never saw her, but could somehow tell where she was (M/H, Record 47).

### Psychokinetic Effects

Psychokinetic (PK) effects apparently have not been

reported in questionnaire surveys of human ADCs (they are not mentioned by Strait-Horn, (2011) or by Elsaesser et al., 2021), although they figure in the accounts collected by Guggenheim & Guggenheim (1996, pp. 195–210) and in some investigated cases. Green and McCreery (1975, pp. 204–210) devoted a chapter to the subject, furnishing several examples from publications of the Society for Psychological Research (SPR). Although not a major type of animal ADC, apparent PK effects were reported in 5.7% of our Combined sample.

Phenomena we coded as tactile apparitions might equally well be considered PK effects, as might some of the claimed ADCs we have classified as Borderline/Questionable. In coding PK effects, we were careful to avoid double-coding the same phenomenon, as in the following account, which we coded as tactile but not as PK.

In the mid 90's, my cat disappeared. One evening I saw him walking down the lane, and that was the last time I saw him. I searched everywhere. Several months later, on a hot summer night, as I was lying in bed, I felt something walk up my bed, and pull up the sheet. I felt spooked at the thought of something invisible on my bed, but my dog was lying asleep in the room, so I thought I'd imagined it, and lay down. As soon as I was comfortable, something pulled at the sheet, brushing my cheek as it did so. I froze, then suddenly realised it was Jim, my cat, come to tell me he was dead, and I didn't need to worry anymore (S/S, Record 204).

Phenomena we coded as ADC PK effects included impacts on the material environment.

My son was playing with the dog, with two balls attached to a rope, and he threw it so high that the toy ended up tangled on an electric wire way up high. That was 5 years ago. When the dog passed 6 months ago, I found my son crying. He said that the dog went up high to the electric wire and got the toy down for him after the dog was dead (M/H, Record 54).

Several accounts describe the manipulation or materialization of objects associated with the animals in question.

When my mother's German Shepherd dog, Lady, passed away, my mom would awaken in the morning to find the oven mitt that Lady often chewed on or snuggled with lying in the middle

of the kitchen floor. My mother always made a point of putting it away at night to make sure it wasn't a fluke, but lo and behold, there it would be in the morning. This went on for a long time after Lady died (M/H, Record 51).

I lost my dog baby June 17th of 2021, due to diabetes complications. She was my soul dog, that once in a lifetime dog. We had a very strong bond that I believe could not be broken. Even after death she has sent me so many signs, and I still receive many. At times, I even feel her presence. The first sign I got a month after she passed. I was awoken by her bark, and believe me, it was very real. I receive signs of randomly finding—still to this day—blood glucose strips like the ones I used to check her blood sugar levels. And we had we cleaned every one of those out of our house, as it was too painful to have those reminders of her being sick (M/H, Record 5).

A large subgroup of PK effects are indentations on a bed or other surface. Often, these indentations are said to be warm to the touch.

When my dear Puss cat died, a long time ago now, I just couldn't get over the grief that I felt for her. I thought about her all the time, and used to get very sad. After a couple of years of this, and not being able to get over it, one afternoon I lay on the bed for a nap, and dreamed strongly that Puss was cuddled up to my side. When I woke up, my arm was bent in a curve, as if wrapped around Puss; there was a dent on the bed as if she had been lying there, and the spot was warm. I feel absolutely that she came for a visit, and although I was still sad, was able to try and put things into perspective (S/S, Record 176).

No one can see the cat in the traditional sense, but everyone in the house is aware of what it does. I can let all the cats outside and we'll still feel a tail brush against the back of our legs. Or I'll shut all the cats out of my room and still feel paws walk across my back when I lie down, or feel random warm cat-sized spots on the bed, or hear a purr with no cat visibly present. I believe it is either my mom's old cat Opal from before I was born or a cat that was here before any of us moved here, but the temperament reminds mom a lot of Opal (M/H, Record 32).

## Olfactory Apparitions

Olfactory apparitions are an unusual, although far from unknown, type of human ADC. Some 27.6% of respondents to the survey of Elsaesser et al. (2021) reported having experienced an olfactory apparition. Olfactory apparitions account for only 2.8% of animal ADC phenomena. Smells frequently accompany other types of ADC, as described in previous accounts. Here are some additional examples:

Recently my dog (who had been living with my son and his wife for a few years) died of old age. I was sitting at home on my new sofa and I smelt the smell of a dog very strongly. I sniffed all around and there was no other odor, but I thought of Rosie. A few days later, I smelt it again (not as strong this time), but I felt sure it was Rosie that had come to visit and say she was happy – we all loved her so much, she was a very special animal. At the time, I was not thinking of her, so I don't think it was as a result of my wishful thinking, but instead it was a real visit. It was very comforting. (S/S, Record 132).

We had a dog called Kelly who died in August and on Christmas Eve I 'dreamt' she came into my bedroom and stood by the bed wagging her tail. I stroked her and ruffled her behind the ears. I didn't feel asleep and could feel her fur and smell her. The next morning my dad told me he had the exact same experience that night (S/S, Record 129).

Both my wife and I have felt the presence of our first cat. Waking up one morning I could feel her sitting on my chest purring away as she used to; I could also smell her. My wife has also felt her on the bed. It gave great comfort to know that Teddy was still about (S/S, Record 127).

## Other ADC Phenomena

Although the foregoing types are the main types of ADC with both humans and animals, Woollacott et al. (2022, p. 428) received a few reports of other phenomena in addition. Similarly, we received 22 reports (3.0% of the total) of ADC phenomena that do not fit under one of the major headings. We classed these together under Other ADC Phenomena.

A large group of these other phenomena are apparent telepathic communications between deceased animals and living humans. In order to avoid double counting tele-

pathic messaging, we excluded telepathic interchanges in dreams from the Other category. A major characteristic of these telepathic messages is their representation in words, as if the animals had spoken to or carried on conversations with our respondents. Interestingly, Woollacott et al. (2022, p. 429) report that, in some of their cases, an apparitional communicator had not spoken during his or her lifetime. For example, "A mother noted, 'My daughter died at the age of two days, so she didn't yet know how to speak; the voice that I perceived seemed neither masculine nor feminine' (F363)." Telepathic messages accounted for 54.6% of ADCs in the Other category, about 2.7% of ADCs overall.

I meditate a lot, using 432hz music to relax. Several weeks after my dog's death, he appeared in my mind while I was meditating. He looked great, like a healthy young dog, told me don't worry, don't be sad, everything is OK. He had to go. That he will be back again as a dog somewhere and his name will be Sam. Then he showed me a beautiful place but hard to describe, with a lot of dogs who all seemed happy. Before I could ask the question, he told me that the same place existed for horses. I just looked back to see a beautiful pasture with a lot of horses (M/H, Record 6).

I lost my beloved pet dog Rex, over ten years ago now. When he died, I was distraught. I was in the bath crying my eyes out, when all of a sudden Rex came to me and I heard him saying, 'It's alright now, I'm not in pain. I'm happy, so don't worry.' And I felt so calm by that. I still grieve for Rex, but thinking of that night, I feel better. The calm I felt that night I'll never forget (S/S, Record 272).

In one account, the ADC was conveyed through a burst of energy, similar to the pre-mortem burst of dog energy in the account collected by Nahm, quoted above.

My friend drove us to the Meeting for worship and brought me home afterward. As I unlocked the kitchen door, I felt deep sadness: Maxie wouldn't be there to greet me. I opened the door and stepped in. I was shoved against the cabinet at my back with a tremendous burst of dog energy: Maxie! She was bouncing and joyous. To my astonishment, with her were the five children she and I had gotten to know while we were living alone in my cabin in Petrolia CA. These were children who were in what are called the astral planes, now they were joined with Maxie. The

combined energy was literally stopping me from moving in the narrow corridor. I laughed in delight. Maxie was asking me if she could go with the children (S/S, Record 216).

A third sub-group of other ADC phenomena consists of the feeling of electric currents coursing through the percipient's body. Woollacott et al. (2022, p. 429) comment on the "flow of energy" that sometimes accompanies visual apparitions. "One woman shared, 'I felt most profoundly in all my being an enormous energy moving through my spine' (F152). Another said, '[There was a] wonderful flooding of energy all over, and on specific body parts when touching, caressing, kissing me' (E211)." This flow of energy was reported in several of our accounts, sometimes accompanying the sense of presence of a deceased pet.

My husband and I experienced the presence of our cocker spaniel after her death last November. She had lymphoma and after doing chemotherapy, she relapsed. After much soul searching, we had her put to sleep when she started having problems. Even though we knew it was the right thing to do at the right time, we struggled with the decision.

She had been gone about 2-3 weeks. I was standing in the living room talking to my husband, who was in the next room, when I suddenly became very aware of a presence beside me. I stopped mid-sentence and turned around, but I could not see anything. Yet I felt a familiarity with everything in me that it was Ali. The presence seemed to radiate upward from the floor, beside me to almost eye level, then I felt her energy flow through me. The only way I can describe it is to say that it was an overwhelming sense of being with her, and a sense of nothing but love and peace. I felt a warm, tingly, heavy feeling pass through my body. I have never experienced anything like it. I was immediately brought to tears. This warm feeling lasted about 20 minutes, fading gradually until it was gone (S/S, Record 141).

I want to tell you about my pet cat, Perky. We were very close and had 17.5 years together. I had someone else take him to be euthanized, as it was too painful for me. He had developed a cancerous tumor. I was at work for the day, teaching Grade 3. All day I was very irritable and struggled to keep my patience. At 1:20 pm, I felt a cleansing

rush of energy from my legs up through my body and out the top of my head. Then I felt peace and I knew he was sending me his relief from pain. (S/S, Record 146)

A fourth sub-group of other reported ADC phenomena concerns the supposed influences of the dead animal on the behavior of the living, either humans or another animal in the family. The following example continues the story of Perky.

Perky sent us two homeless kittens. My daughter found them wandering in a field. When we had had them for three years, I was feeling ill and lay down. The male cat came and jumped up on the bed and lay by my legs. Then, I thought, "Perky, I miss the way you would curl up by my neck to comfort me when I felt ill." The male cat, Kipper, got up and came to my shoulder. Then, he curled up by my neck and stayed with me for a while. I knew Perky had heard my prayer and encouraged Kipper to lay the way he used to (S/S, Record 146).

A fifth sub-group of phenomena we assigned to the Other category consists of events that are recognized as signs or synchronistic occurrences. We coded most signs and synchronicities as Borderline/Questionable, but when they were reported along with other ADC phenomena, we coded them as a subtype of Other in order to avoid double coding ADC and B/Q reports.

My cat, Salem, was seriously my soul mate. We shared such a pure bond and connection. He seemed to love the song, 'Sky Full of Stars', by Coldplay. I lost him in 2015 to congestive heart failure; he was 14 years old. The night we buried him, I begged him to send me a sign that he was okay. As I turned to walk away from his resting place, I saw a shooting star. Mind you, I'd never seen a shooting star before that moment. I went in the house, sobbing and exhausted. Before I went to bed, I stood in the window, staring at his grave, still inconsolable, when I saw another shooting star. Two shooting stars on the very night that he passed away and we laid him to rest. I haven't seen a shooting star since. I have seen him and felt him many times since. My Salem watches over me. I just know I'll hold him in my arms again (M/H, Record 55).

Two years ago I had to let my dog die. He had



been sick for a very long time and suffered a lot. After his death, it was as if I tripped over him in the house. Sometimes I had to make a sudden strange move to 'avoid' him, that's how it felt. I went to see a friend to meditate together to lessen my grief. The moment I thought about my dog, he jumped at me and started to lick my face. That was strange, because it was a Tibetan Mastiff and those dogs (and mine) never act like that. It became very clear that he wanted to thank me for making the decision to let him die. For me as a Buddhist that was a great comfort, after months of considerations. He stayed with me to comfort me and was now free to go.

I noticed after a while that his 'presence' in the house was gone after that day. Months later in my garden (at the spot he was buried) grew two big, flat, bright orange mushrooms, very beautiful. I had never seen them before nor afterwards in my life. I like to look at this as a gift from Buddhi (my dog) to me (S/S, Record 220).

We assigned all of our Other ADC phenomena of to one of these five sub-groups.

### Borderline and Questionable Accounts

The following accounts were submitted to us as ADCs, but we consider that interpretation particularly uncertain or dubious, so we have set them aside. We provide examples here so that the difference between B/Q accounts and accounts we included in our ADC analysis can be seen. We classified 24 accounts as B/Q—about 5.2% of the total number of accounts we collected if combined with the ADC accounts summarized in the top section of Table 2.

A large subgroup of B/Q accounts are those that involve purported symbolic signs or synchronistic occurrences. Elsaesser et al. (2021; Woollacott et al., 2022) did not include questions about these in their survey, but they were reported to Guggenheim and Guggenheim (1996, pp. 211–228), and Strait-Horn (2011) acknowledged signs as a type of human ADC. Vlahos (2023, pp. 34, 40) describes two examples.

Signs and synchronicities figure large among animal ADC signs in the popular literature (e.g., K. A. Anderson, 2017; Gutro, 2017; Ragan, 2015), but we passed over these in building our database. The numbers in the bottom section of Table 2 and therefore, omit the Lit sample. None of the accounts with signs and synchronicities we have classified as B/Q include ADC phenomena other than the perceived signs and synchronicities.

When my dog went missing for 7 weeks and turned up dead in someone's pool, I was inconsolable. Every day I cried over everything, but my heart was broken and I blamed myself. One afternoon after Lockdown, I was stood out front, crying and missing my girl as usual, when suddenly a beautiful red admiral butterfly (my favourite) landed on my top and just stayed there, looking at me. I thought it was just having a rest and I stared at it and said, 'Kizzy, if that's you, please open your wings', and it opened them really wide. I felt elated, and it just stayed there for ages (M/H, Record 63).

My beloved Airedale, Daisy, was hit by a car one evening. By the loud sound (as if a big tree had been hit), I knew it would be fatal. She wasn't allowed near the road, but was allowed back in the meadow behind my house. This is where I found her, barely standing. I carried her home and comforted her for a few minutes while we said our goodbyes. The next morning I awakened very, very early. I went out on the back step and a very large gray dove slowly flew down right in front of me. Then it slowly flew away. I felt instantly comforted and knew it was Daisy in symbolic and non-frightening form, back to give me a moment of comfort. There wasn't another bird awake or chirping, too early. And I have never ever seen another dove around here (S/S, Record 273).

About one week after my dog died, I was driving my car. I didn't want to hear the radio, but thought, "What if Feisty is trying to get a message to me through radio waves?" So I turned the radio on. It was music I didn't like. So I said to myself, "Okay, one more try and if there is no message from Feisty, I will just turn it off." In my heart I knew there would be a message on the next channel. Sure enough, the next channel was a woman singing a song named "I Love my Dog." I felt a wave of peace come over me while I drove listening to it. I used to always tell my dog I loved him at least ten times per day. He knew what it meant; his eyes would half shut in response and a grin would come on his face (S/S, Record 267).

If not simply coincidence, some uncertain ADC claims, such as the last, might be mediated by the per-  
cipient's psi.



I had two part-Burmese sister cats, Rocher and Koo Koo. I had had them for about ten years, since their birth to my ex-boyfriend's cat, their mother. There came a stage where I had to move to a place where I could not have cats and my step-mother said that she would mind them for me. I probably left them too long with her, but she professed to being a great animal lover all the time and seemed happy to have them. However, she wasn't. I dreamt that they were in great danger and awoke in a sweat. I rang her the next day and said that I can take the cats off her hands now, because my then-boyfriend would take them, but she said that it was too late, that she had given them away to a nice old lady. But because I had the dream, things started to click in my head. I called her vet and I found out that she had had them put down. (I haven't spoken to her since, by the way) (S/S, Record 187).

The deceased animal's PK might be responsible for the following account, but because it could also be due to the human experiencer's PK and is accompanied by no other ADC types, we have classified it as B/Q.

My email to you relates to a powerful experience I had a year ago when I euthanized my dear horse. We had a strong bond developed over 11 years. Without going into unnecessary detail, the experience I am "haunted" by occurred some moments after the vet declared him dead. I walked alone back to his stall and suddenly there was a substantial temperature drop, followed by a sudden and strong wind gust which unhooked his upper stall door and slammed it shut with some considerable force. Nothing else was affected by the wind, which subsequently disappeared. It was notably odd because of the protection that his stall was afforded by a tall hedge, low overhanging roof, etc (S/S, Record 278).

An important kind of potentially living-agent-psi-mediated ADC occurs coincidentally with deaths. We coded 30 accounts (6.8%) as having death coincidence. Most of these accounts include elements that seem to direct attention away from the percipient's psi as a factor, but there are exceptions.

I am 14 years old, from Austria. I had a hare all my life. Her name was Schneeflöckchen. She was old and weak and I knew she would not live much longer. A year ago, she died. One night I dreamed

of my friends, and in the middle of the dream, a picture of my Schneeflöckchen appeared like a flash. Then it was gone and my dream continued. When I woke up in the morning, I knew that she had died. I went out to her hutch and saw it was true (S/S, Record 366).

I seemed to achieve excellent rapport with one indigo snake, an elderly creature that just did not move except for me. Then in the early hours of January 1st, 1995, I awoke from a very vivid dream of this creature, in which it was plainly trying to tell me something. Having had just the same experience with my brother when he passed away in June 1989, I guessed what the snake had been telling me and, sure enough, when I next visited the zoo a few days later, I was informed that it had died in the early hours of January 1st (S/S, Record 365).

I was deeply connected to my cat Brigit, who died in 2005. Four years ago I was leaving the country for a number of months and a friend who loved Brigit adopted her. Upon my return to Canada, I moved 2,500 miles away from Brigit. One night last year, I was awakened in the night from a dream with an explosion of light, bolting upright from a deep sleep. I then felt pain throughout my body, but I had no sense why I had such an experience. The next day, I experienced diarrhea and actually lost control of my bowels. That had never happened before. That day my friend e-mailed me to tell me Brigit had not come home from her nightly roaming. She never returned. I feel that that Light was Brigit communicating her sudden death to me. The loss of bowel control was due to the shock to my system, for I was so deeply connected to her (S/S, Record 274).

We collected three accounts with photographic anomalies believed to be related to deceased pets. Due to the considerable controversy surrounding photographs with anomalous features, we feel it is better to classify these accounts as B/Q rather than under Other ADC Phenomena.

We were able to assign all of our B/Q accounts to one of the three sub-groups: Signs and Synchronicities, Living-agent psi, and Photographic anomalies.

## DISCUSSION

The similarity between human and animal ADCs is

remarkable. Not only are the experiences of the same general types, but the relative incidence of the types follows the same pattern, with visual apparitions among the most common and olfactory apparitions among the least common. Several ancillary features, such as apparent telepathic communications between the dead and the living and strange electrical sensations in association with the phenomena, appear in both human and animal ADCs. Additionally, both human and animal ADCs have a strong tendency to appear in the first hours or days after death. Deceased pets have sometimes been perceived during near-death experiences (NDEs) as well. Examples are given by Atwater (2007), Randall (1950), Rivas et al. (2016), and Serdahely (1990). Occasionally, animals perform the same role as human loved ones in directing the NDEr to return to his or her body before it is too late (Serdahely, 1990, p. 34). These NDE animal encounters may be considered another form of ADC, thus highlighting the interrelatedness of different death-related phenomena, although we have not extended our coverage to include them here.

Since the pioneering paper of Rees (1971), much human ADC analysis has focused on the experiences of widows and widowers, who frequently report the sense of presence and apparitional encounters. Still, the dominant position in bereavement theory (and grief counseling) for much of the 20th century was the idea that the surviving spouse needed to cut ties to their departed loved ones, the better to invest in new relationships. Klass et al. (1996) made a theoretical advance with the concept of “continuing bonds,” according to which ADCs are normal and healthy. Marwat and Klass (1996) stated that “the role(s) played by the inner representation of the deceased provides a theoretical framework for thinking about the place of the deceased in the ongoing lives of the living,” making clear that “inner representation” included “a sense of presence, hallucinations in any of the senses,” and “belief in the person’s continuing active influence on thoughts or events” (p. 298). Silverman and Nickman (1996) remarked that the relationships thus constructed “can be described as interactive, even though the other person is physically absent” (p. 349).

The continuing bonds model was developed further in a collection edited by Klass and Steffen (2017). Elsaesser et al. (2021) cite the model, adding that the ongoing contact :

is typically interpreted by the recipient as conveying (explicitly or implicitly) one or more of the following sentiments (which we have termed the ‘four Rs’): ‘reassuring’, ‘I’m fine, don’t worry about me, the troubles I had at the end of life are

now behind me; ‘resolving’, settling old conflicts, allowing space for apologies and providing closure; ‘reaffirming’, continuing bond, affectionate, I love you, I will always be by your side, we’ll meet again one day; and ‘releasing’, don’t be sad, pursue your life, don’t hold me back by your suffering (Elsaesser, 2001, p. 2).

It is easy to identify examples of each of the four R’s in the animal ADC accounts we collected. Grief over the loss of an animal to which one was tightly bonded closely resembles grief over the loss of a spouse. Rees (2001, pp. 256–262) made this point in a chapter on “The Death of a Pet,” although he supplied no ADC examples. Kowalski (2012) reported that for some people, the loss of a pet can represent the greatest loss they have ever encountered.

We are not aware that the depth of grief in connection to ADCs has been investigated with either humans or animals, but from the accounts we collected, it would appear that the people most likely to experience animal ADCs are those who feel the loss of their pets most keenly. This association may be interpreted in one of two ways—either the humans’ grief caused them to hallucinate visits from their animal friends, or the animals responded to their humans’ emotional state by coming to ameliorate their suffering. Several of the narratives presented above demonstrate that percipients understood visitations in the latter manner. Nonetheless, in some of the accounts in which ADCs seemed to coincide with deaths (which we coded as B/Q and excluded from our ADC analysis), the content of the experience is different and often described as unsettling or frightening—just as it is the case with ADCs among humans (Nahm, 2011). These cases can plausibly be regarded as “crisis telepathy” initiated either by the dying animal or living human agents, and this raises the question of whether all ADC accounts might best be regarded as grounded in the percipients’ psi (Nahm, 2010).

Woollacott et al. (2022) discussed the bearing of their findings with human ADCs on three hypotheses: ADCs (1) occurred internally in the minds of the percipients as hallucinations; (2) were mediated by the percipients’ telepathy; or (3) were “perceived as being sensed externally through the senses or through extra-sensory means in the physical environment” (p. 430). Woollacott et al. (2022) concluded that all things considered, their findings were “more compatible with hypotheses 2 and 3 than hypothesis 1” (p. 430). The authors of Klass et al. (1996) and Klass and Steffen (2017) appear to be committed to Hypothesis 1, however. Their version of the continuing bonds model takes ADC experiences into account but assumes them to be internal hallucinations—albeit non-pathological

ones—rejecting and trivializing the perspective of the experiencers themselves. The continuing bonds model thus formulated remains the dominant position in human bereavement studies, but there are dissenters (e.g., Fenwick & Fenwick, 2008; Guggenheim & Guggenheim, 1996; Vlahos, 2023), primarily from the clinical side, who take the view that these experiences signal the survival of human consciousness after death, and the theoretical consensus may eventually shift again.

Given the many parallels between human and animal ELEs documented by Sheldrake et al. (2023), it is perhaps not surprising to see the parallels extend from peri-mortem to post-mortem phenomena. ADC accounts raise the same questions about the nature and evolutionary development of consciousness as the ELE accounts, elevated to a new level by the suggestion that animal as well as human consciousness survives bodily death. In a follow-up paper, Matlock and Hilton (forthcoming) will delve deeper into our data and consider implications for the understanding of consciousness and the prospect of post-mortem survival of animals as well as humans.

## IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Sheldrake et al. (2023) showed that the end-of-life experiences of animals are very similar to those of humans. We have taken the next step, demonstrating a close resemblance between after-death communications from animals and from humans. That people grieve their pets in very much the same way they grieve their human loved ones suggests that human bereavement studies would do well to take into account the animal data to which we have drawn attention. Doing so may help clarify issues regarding the fundamental nature of the experiences—determining whether they are best regarded as internal hallucinations, as living-agent-psi-mediated subjective or objective phenomena, or as actual contacts with the deceased—which in turn carries implications not only for academic studies of bereavement but for clinical practice with the bereaved.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

James Matlock (ORCID: 0000-0003-1280-2476): Project conceptualization, data collection for M/H and Lit samples, coding, writing – first and final drafts. Bethany Hilton (ORCID: 0009-0009-6259-4696): Data collection for M/H and Lit samples and integration with S/S sample, combined data curation, coding, database queries. Rupert Sheldrake (ORCID: 0000-0001-8814-4014): Project conceptualization, data collection for S/S and PL samples, comments on paper draft and substantive contributions to revision. Pam Smart: Data curation and categorization of S/S sample. Michael Nahm (ORCID: 0000-0003-1930-9692): Project conceptualization, data collection for Lit sample, comments on paper draft and substantive contributions to revision.

## Supplementary Materials

A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet containing the essential data of this study is available on Sheldrake's website at <https://www.sheldrake.org/research/ADC>.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Henceforth, we use “animal” in the sense of non-human animals.
- 2 The term “after-death communication” was introduced by Guggenheim and Guggenheim (1996).
- 3 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.
- 4 These groups were Afterlife Awareness and After-Death Communication, Re-incarnation, Pet Reincarnation, and Signs of Reincarnation.
- 5 Although Bozzano's book is written in Italian, he translated most of the accounts and cases from English-language sources.
- 6 Ten accounts were taken from the blog posting, and 65 from the associated comments
- 7 Elsaesser et al. (2021) say that they use “hallucination” in an “ontologically neutral” sense, but since this term more commonly implies illusion, we prefer “apparition” as the more neutral term, following Streit-Horn (2011) and the bulk of the ADC case literature. Apparitions in our terminology are externalized perceptions that may have a visual, auditory, olfactory, or tactile basis. Apparitions contrast with the more internalized ADCs involved in dream visitations and the sense of presence. Woollacott et al. (2022) employ the term “perceptions” to cover both

internalized and externalized ADCs. Gurney et al. (1886) appear to have been the first to contrast internalized and externalized hallucinations or apparitions.

- <sup>8</sup> Accounts we classified as Borderline/Questionable included those consisting exclusively of symbolic signs or synchronicities, phenomena that seems equally well or better interpreted as mediated by living-agent psi, and accounts relying on photographic evidence.
- <sup>9</sup> Flammarion's (1923) graph was inspired by an earlier and simpler version of such a graph contained in Frederic W. H. Myers' monumental treatise on the human survival of bodily death (Myers, 1903, vol. 2, p. 14). Apparitions perceived "before death" were of individuals in a weak or comatose state but not yet deceased.
- <sup>10</sup> We coded grief as present only when respondents said they were grieving. We did not code grief as present in instances in which it could be presumed. It should be remembered that these figures represent only what was recounted spontaneously. The true figures for grief and relief were almost certainly higher, or would have been, had we asked about these factors in a questionnaire format. Rather her cat did not come back, were reported only in one account.

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