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ANIMAL HELPERS

Misha Bera



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Text by Štěpánka Sekaninová
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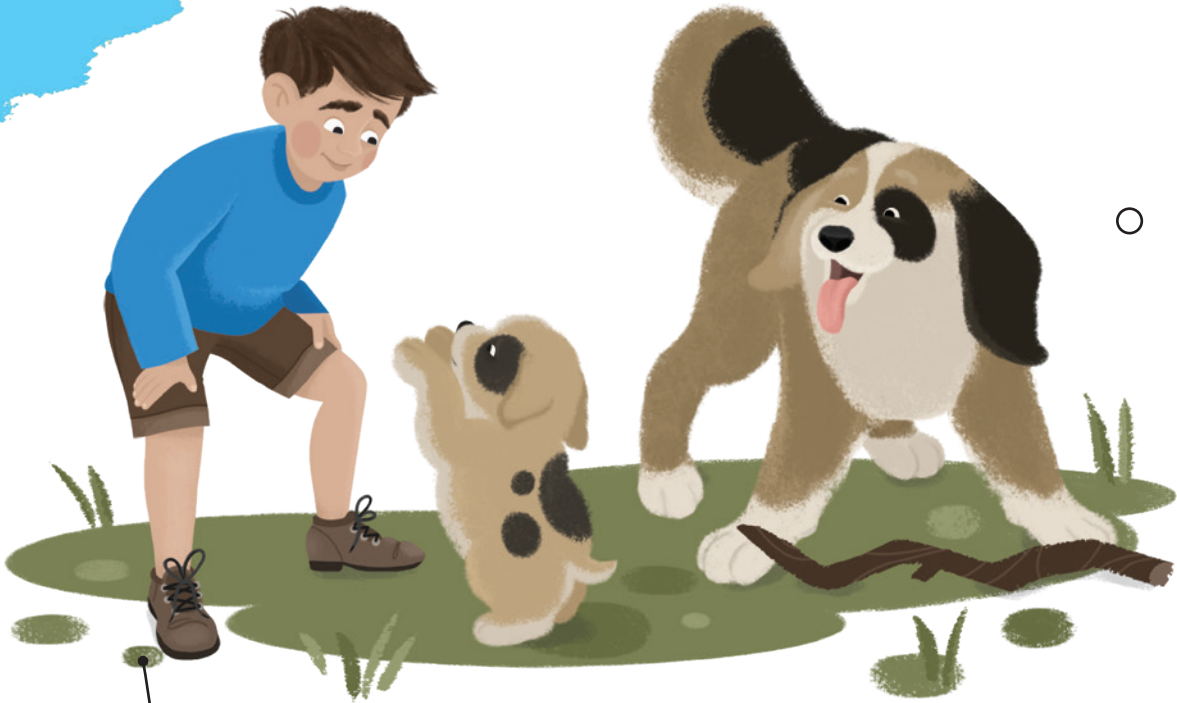


ALBATROS

1 DOGS

It barks, yaps, nuzzles, wags its tail when happy, cuddles, and shows love by licking its master or mistress all over with its pink, wet tongue. Whom do we mean? Well, the dog of, course! For us, people, dogs make faithful, lifelong friends. Indeed, the first tamed wolves walked at the side of prehistoric hunters 35,000 years ago.

With dogs, it's always fun!



WE'RE USEFUL

"That's right, we're useful." If a chorus of dogs were to bark this from dawn till dusk, it would be the absolute truth! Even the very first dogs helped humans to guard their homes and flocks of sheep and hunt game. They have always been wherever people have needed them.

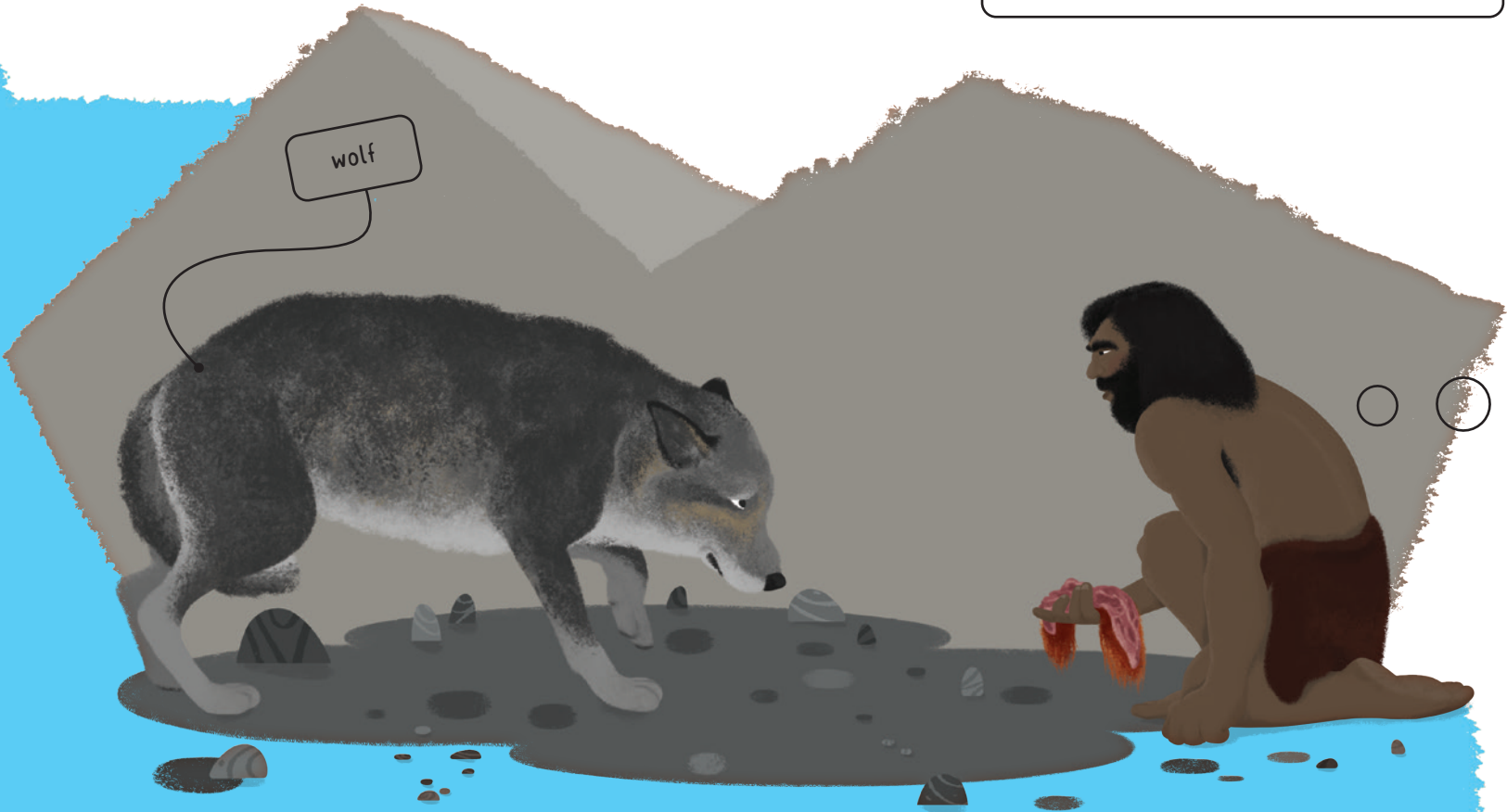
DOGS AS HUNTERS

Humans have always needed to provide themselves with food. In the past, what they didn't grow, they hunted. And with a clever dog at their side, hunting was a piece of cake. That's right—dogs, too, have performed the role of the hunter since time immemorial. What help does a hunting dog give? Well, it follows a wild animal's trail, drives it from its hiding place, attracts the attention of its master and, last but not least, retrieves the catch, delivering it to the master's feet.

Hunting dogs need a highly developed sense of smell, good temperament, agility, speed, and willingness to work.

IS IT A WOLF? IS IT A DOG? OR IS IT SOMETHING IN BETWEEN?

Here's the thing: the first household pets and people's helpers were wolves, the distant ancestors of today's dogs. As time went by, by various genetic mutations, these wolves became dogs. Unlike their doggy descendants, wolves are exclusively carnivorous, as a wolf's digestive tract can process nothing but meat. On the other hand, a hungry dog won't turn its nose up at a bowl of pasta or potatoes. This is the main difference between the wolf and the dog.



DOGS AS GUARDS

On hearing the word "dog," most people think of the words "friend," and "guard." As one of the first tasks humans gave their four-legged friends was the guarding of their property and land, this is hardly surprising. Dogs did this by barking loudly, thus making their presence known far and wide, and sometimes, by attacking intruders. From a Babylonian bas-relief from 2,200 BCE, on which one of the first guard dogs is immortalized, we know that dogs have been working as guards for centuries.



Stay with me, and I will feed you!

Mosaics surviving from Pompeii provide clear evidence that in ancient Rome, it was quite normal to have a guard dog.

WORKING DOGS

As the years passed, humans' most faithful friend came to provide ever more services. Dogs could do so much more than just guard and hunt! Police officers appreciate a clever dog at their side—a dog that will obey their every word, be their faithful protector, detect explosives, and track down drugs, thieves, and other rogues. Such specially trained dogs are known as working dogs. As well as serving the police, working dogs help customs officials too.



DOG RESCUERS

In the First World War, many soldiers were wounded. And who helped their friends search for lost comrades on the battlefield? Well, dogs, of course! They came to serve yet another function—that of dog rescuers. The Second World War was even tougher. Bombarded cities fell like houses of cards. “Let’s use dogs!” people cried, and their clever four-legged friends rescued unfortunate citizens from the rubble. Since the last world war, people have used the services of dogs in the mountains; having succeeded in tracking down people in the ruins of buildings, sniffer dogs have no difficulty in rescuing tourists trapped by an avalanche.

SLED DOGS AND MUSHERS

Dogs have been helping people pull sleds for 4,000 years. In regions with harsh conditions all year round, archaeologists still find in the snow remnants of the first sleds to which dogs were harnessed. The heavier and bulkier the sled’s load, the greater the number of dogs needed to pull it. At the end of the 19th century, there was a sudden rush for gold in the harsh conditions of Alaska. As the search for gold nuggets was often boring, prospectors competed against one another with their packs of dogs, thus inventing a new sport known as mushing.

Dogs that can become sled dogs: Alaskan Malamutes, Siberian Huskies, and Greenland Dogs—all of them have robust constitutions, are good-natured, and like to pull.

Lead dogs steer the team and set the pace. They must also be able to find a trail in bad conditions.

Sled dogs help people in the polar regions carry heavy loads.

musher

sled

lead dog

swing dogs

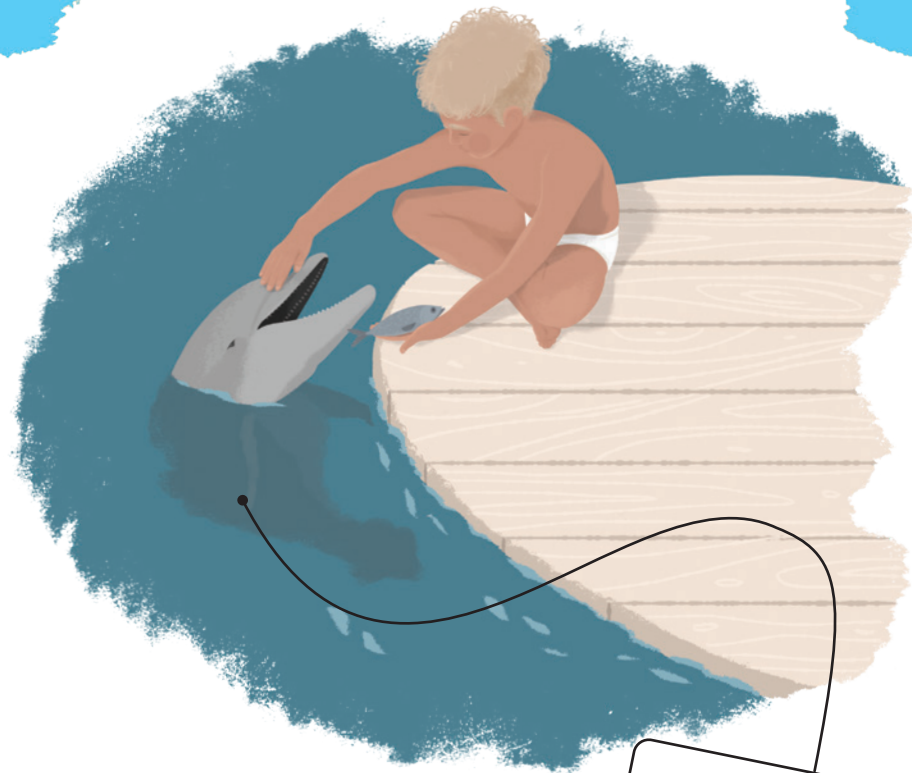
wheel dogs

Wheel dogs must have a calm temperament. They pull the sled and navigate around trees or tight curves.

The two dogs behind the leader are called swing dogs—they help “swing” the team at turns.

6 DOLPHiNS

They whistle, sing, and laugh—indeed, they love communication of all kinds. Humans have had a fascination with these merry sea- and ocean-going swimmers since ancient times. As our ancestors believed that a dolphin was a reincarnated god, it is hardly surprising that a much-revered Greek deity—Apollo, the god of the Sun—was dedicated to this creature.



You can become friends with dolphins!

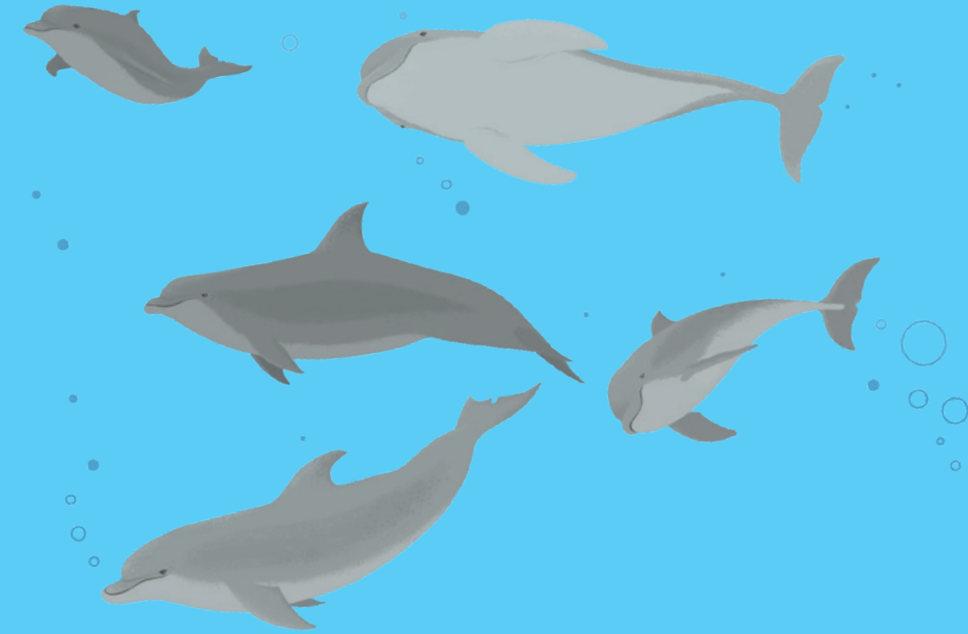
Without dolphins, the crew of this shipwreck would perish in the sea.



sailor

COME AND STROKE ME

Dolphins enjoy human attention and like to be stroked. In the 1970s, several dolphins settled in Australia's Shark Bay, where they would literally reach out to curious human visitors—naturally, people were very keen to stroke them and throw fish into their mouths. As the kind and intelligent dolphins wished to be in no one's debt, they returned the favor by offering the humans fish they had caught.



HELP ME, I'M DROWNING!

We will perhaps never know for sure whether these sensational events truly happened. They were maybe produced by the vivid imaginations of ancient chroniclers. But we know for sure that in recent times, dolphins used their bodies to push a drowning swimmer into shallow waters.



rescuer

I promise to learn to swim before I go to the sea again.

TRUE OR FALSE?

Sources from antiquity tell us that these friendly, charming creatures saved shipwrecked, drowning sailors and seafarers more than once, teaming up to carry them ashore and drive away blood-thirsty sharks.

6 DOLPHiNS

THE WORLD'S BEST NAViGATORS

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a dolphin would swim alongside naval ships, accompanying them through dangerous waters, making their journey as smooth, fluent, and safe as possible. This dolphin became known as Jack. Every time sailors in the waters of New Zealand spotted Jack swimming up to their ship, they would be mightily relieved. Sadly, this super-intelligent animal died in 1903, after 40 years of loyal, voluntary service for humankind. He was killed by a shot from the gun of a drunken passenger.

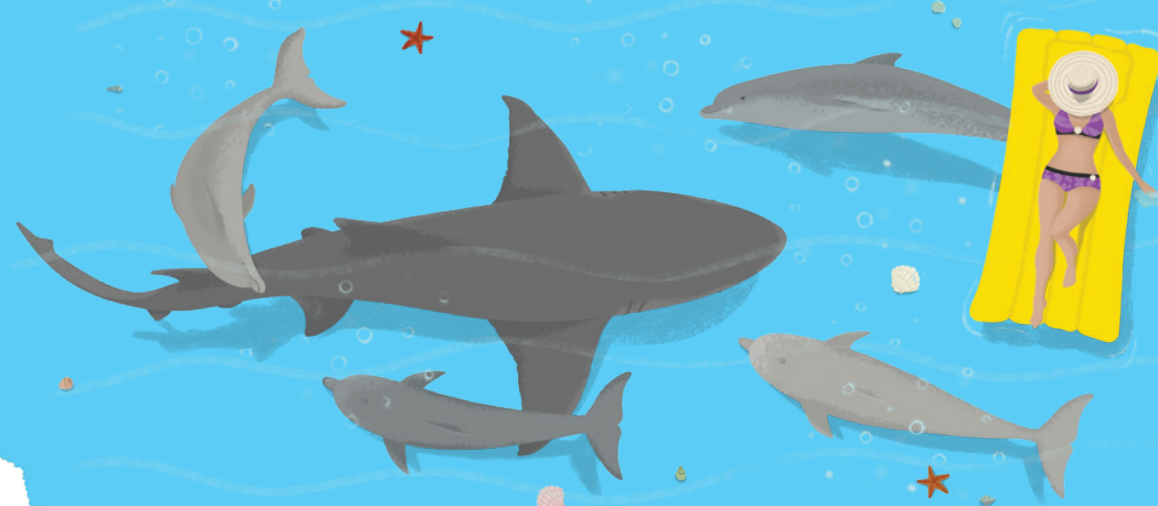


DOLPHiNS iN SERViCE

Incorrigible humanity thinks nothing of dragging a kind, friendly creature like the dolphin into its hostilities. An army of trained dolphins can be used to detect mines in parts of a ship that are underwater and to monitor the approach of hostile divers or submarines; dolphins are also trained to locate explosives that have been laid at sea.

LET'S BUILD UNDER THE SEA

So far, we've only talked about untrained dolphins. Specially trained ones help with underwater construction work by sending messages between ships and carrying on their backs injured workers in urgent need of help.

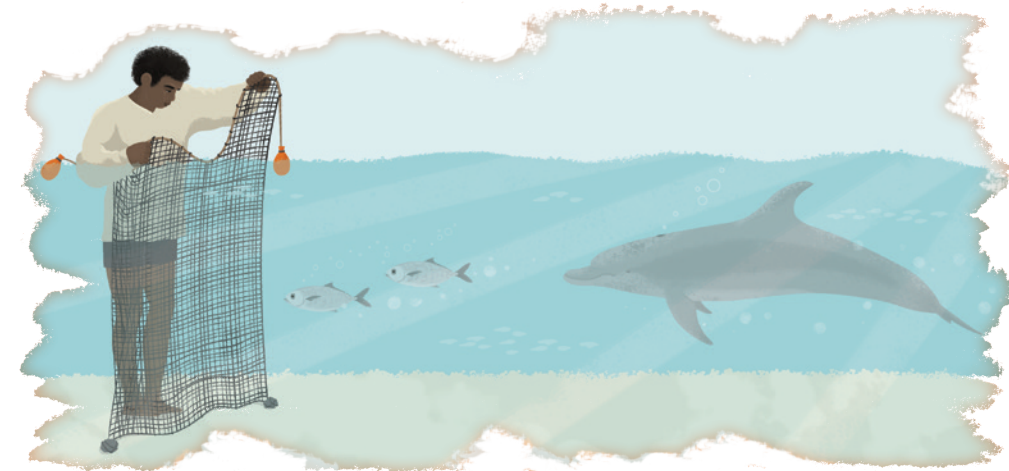


BEWARE OF SHARKS!

Do you know how dolphins save swimmers from sharks? Well, they swim around the person in ever narrower circles, until the lurking predator loses interest in the prey or a lifeboat arrives to fish the poor human out.

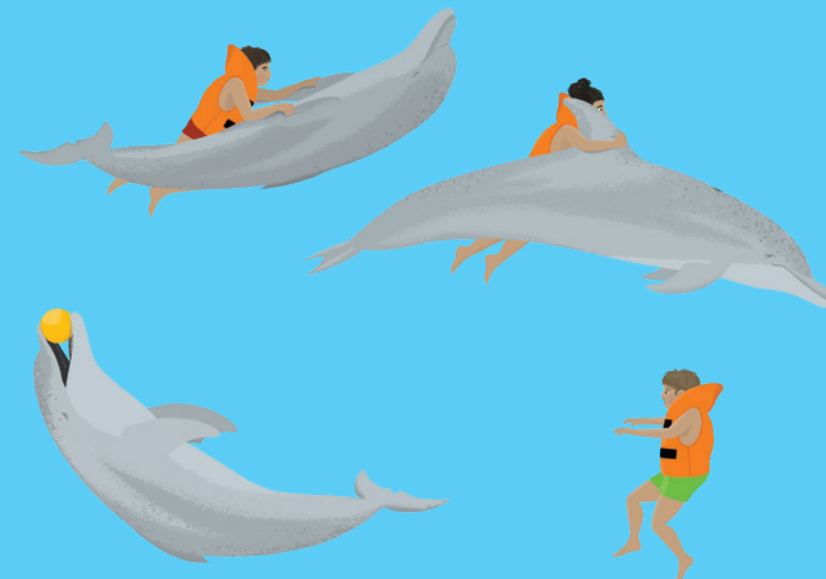
FiSHiNG WiTH DOLPHiNS

Friendly dolphins are naturally very fond of humans. We know this because they help fishermen lure fish into their nets. In return, the fishermen give the dolphins a part of the catch, and both parties end up satisfied. We're talking about ordinary dolphins in the wild, not trained ones. This happened in Brazil.



DOLPHiN THERAPY

They are very good at recognizing the client's state of mind and treating them accordingly. As the patient plays with the dolphin—throwing and catching balls and riding on its back, for instance—they learn to accept the animal's love, thus regaining trust in themselves and the world around them.



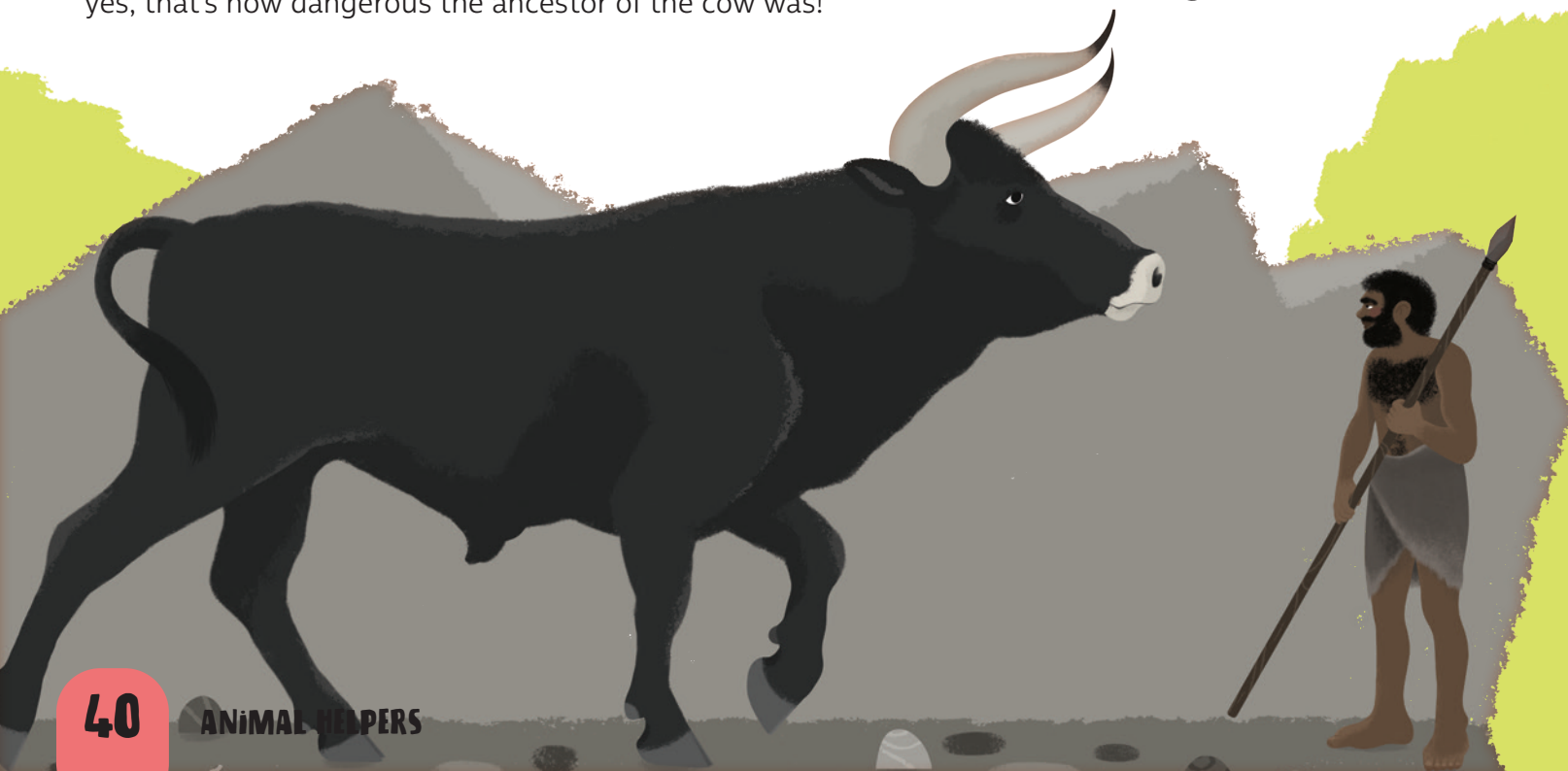
8 COWS

It moos, provides milk, and looks at humans with big, honest, lovely eyes. Today, it is a gentle, calm creature—no one would dream of being afraid of it. After all, it's had lots of time to get used to humans—8,000 years, to be exact. What are we talking about? Well, *Bos taurus*, the cow, of course! The cow was one of the very first animals to be domesticated by humans.



MY WILD ANCESTOR

But don't think that taming the cow 8,000 years ago was an easy matter. In those days, the cows that ran about the meadows were aurochs, the wild ancestors of the cows of today. The aurochs was almost six and a half feet in height, strong as an ox, and armed with a large, menacing pair of curved horns. In their ongoing search for pastures new, the nomadic shepherds of those times took their lives into their hands in trying to tame the aurochs—yes, that's how dangerous the ancestor of the cow was!



Tame me
if you can
but it won't
be easy!

END OF THE AUROCHS

Although the aurochs was a truly terrifying animal, over time, our ancestors succeeded in taming it. By doing so, they launched humanity into a new orbit, where further progress could be achieved. Not only did the cow become the first draft animal, but also the first animal to be ridden, making distant places much easier to reach. No, we're not mistaken—people in Africa really did ride cows before they got around to taming horses.

It's a wonderful
view from the
cow's back!



It doesn't look like it,
but even a cow can be
ridden like a horse.

DRAUGHT COWS

Cows, bulls, and oxen are so strong that they can pull loads of several tons; they can also drag a plow across a field. Very often, cows, bulls, and oxen were yoked in pairs, side by side or one in front of the other; they were in the charge of a so-called drover. Although slower and more easily tired than the horse, the cow has made a great contribution to humankind's economic progress.



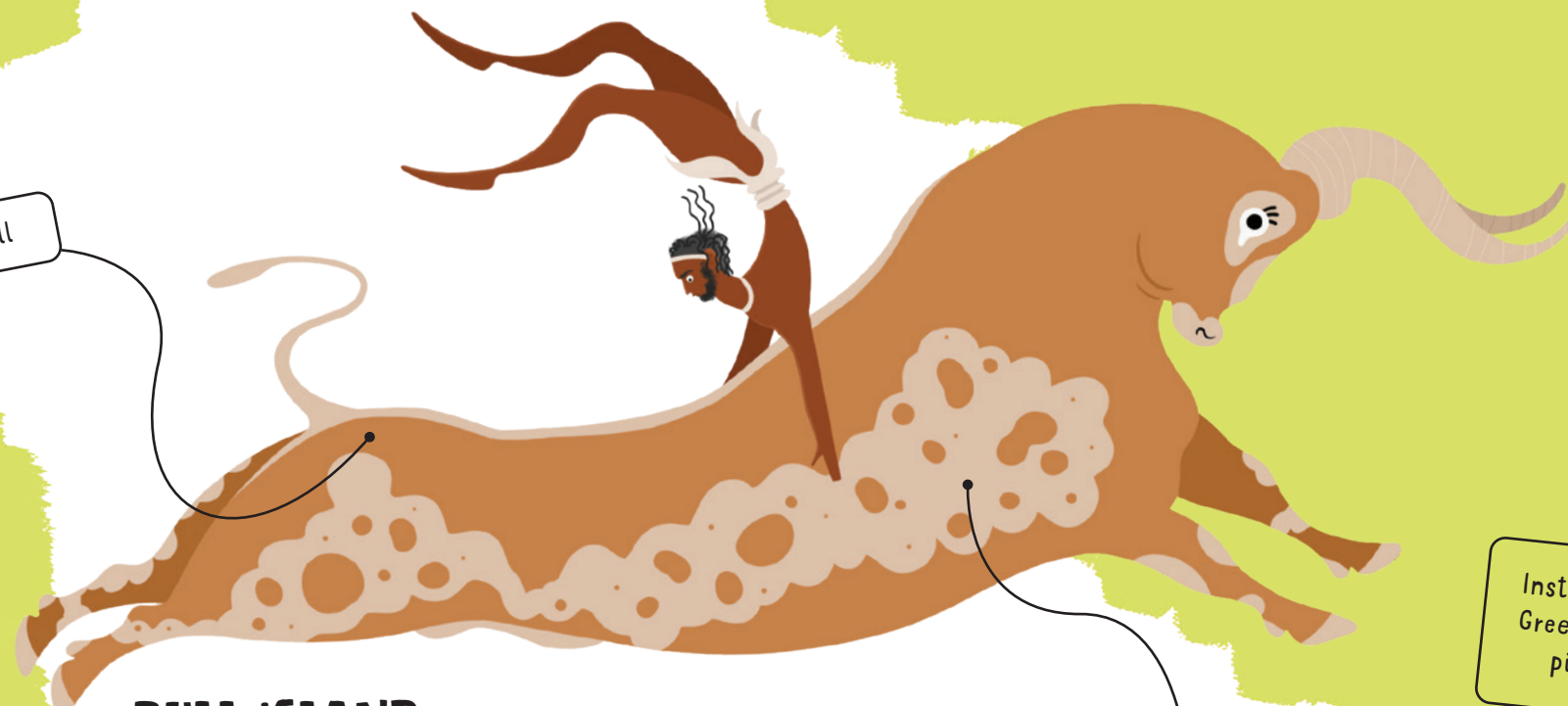
THE COW AND RELIGION

When we hear the word "bull," we think of something enormously strong. It will come as no surprise to learn that the ancient Egyptians took the bull as a symbol of strength and fertility. The pharaohs, who longed to possess at least a little of the bull's greatness, took titles such as "Mighty bull" and "Bull among the stars." Meanwhile, the goddess Hathor was often depicted as a cow, a source of milk rich in fat.



BULL ISLAND

Crete was so keen on the bull, it became the central figure in this Greek island's Minoan civilization. Here, too, the bull was a symbol of strength, fertility, and abundant harvest. Bulls would be sacrificed on important Cretan occasions, and special bull tournaments would be held, during which people would ride on bulls and jump from one animal to another. Such events symbolized the process of taming these super-strong creatures.



BARBELL OR COW?

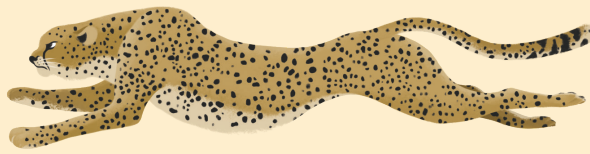
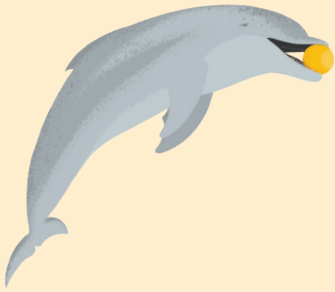
It may be difficult to believe, but in ancient Greece, the cow was used as a weight for lifting. A strongman and many-time Olympic champion called Milo of Croton would train for a wrestling match by carrying a cow on his shoulders. It's no wonder that Milo was unbeatable—an adult cow weighs up to one ton.



THE MINOTAUR—THE BEST KNOWN BULL OF ALL

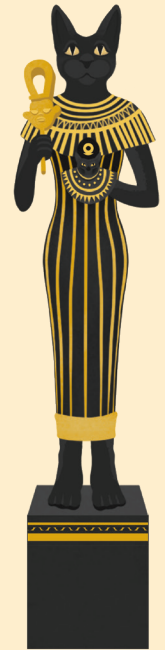
Further evidence of the close connection of the cow/bull and the island of Crete is found in Greek mythology. The story goes that the wife of the Cretan king Minos fell in love with a white bull and bore him a son—a monster with the body of a human and the head of a bull. The Minotaur (so the love child was named) was imprisoned by Minos in a labyrinth, to which every nine years, seven Athenian maidens and seven Athenian youths would be sent.





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They have been with us since time immemorial. Some are close to us, others we treat with great respect. And they help us. Who are we talking about? Well, dogs, cats, pigeons, elephants, fleet-footed cheetahs, and even apparently super-ordinary geese! Everyone knows that dogs and horses give humans important help, but how about geese, cheetahs, and dolphins? To find out more, open this book, feast your eyes on its beautiful pictures, and read the stories about how wild animals became true friends of humans.



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