

Spring 2026 | Issue 64

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A Message from ISAZ President - Michelle Szydlowski

Dear ISAZ Members,

Many of us are experiencing rapid shifts between Winter and Spring weather, often in the same day! While the weather may be a little inconsistent, you can always count on the ISAZ newsletter for informative and interesting features! This issue carries information on our 2026 Paris Conference Host, The Adrienne and Pierre Sommer Foundation. This is great reading for those interested in learning how the foundation supports interspecies relationships, research, and engagement. You can also learn about our foundational and corporate sponsors through our website.



Speaking of the conference, registration is now open! Early bird member discounts are available through May 15th, and this year the first registrants will receive a special perk--free entry to the Cats and Dogs Exhibit at our host facility, the Cité des Sciences et de l'industrie. You can also register for the conference dinner and a special trip to la Villette educational farm.

The board has made an increasing commitment to fostering human inclusion and belonging, especially at our conferences. This is reflected in various ways, through the ongoing development and roll-out of the mentoring program, the appointment of a DEI liaison, and ongoing conversations with hosts, facilities, and members. Please reach out to any member of the board if you are interested in volunteering in DEI initiatives, have any questions or concerns about our DEI practices, or ideas for ways ISAZ can better support all our members.

Your ISAZ board has also been hard at work evaluating all of the amazing potential host sites for 2027, and the 'official' announcement of our next venue will happen during the annual general meeting in Paris. Don't miss the chance to meet your board members, engage with colleagues, make new friends, and find out where we will head next!

Michelle

Meet Our #ISAZ2026 Conference Hosts: The Adrienne and Pierre Sommer Foundation

Created in 1971, the Adrienne and Pierre Sommer Foundation stems from its founders' desire to share their love

for nature and animals. The Foundation pioneered and has led the development of animal-assisted activities in France for over two decades, providing funding for initiatives, research, education, and awareness campaigns. In the past three years, The Foundation has awarded over 2 million euros in grants to over 1000 projects in education, healthcare, and social service sectors.



*Engagée pour
la médiation animale
depuis plus de 50 ans*

An ISAZ member since 2010, the Foundation has repeatedly found inspiration and enrichment through interaction with HAI leaders and practitioners worldwide. In supporting the #ISAZ2026 conference, the Foundation is striving to offer HAI researchers from across the globe the opportunity to gather, share, and develop further insight about humans' relationships with animals.

While attending ISAZ 2026, participants will be able to explore one of the Foundation's flagship initiatives, the La Villette - A&P Sommer children's farm. Located within the 55-hectare La Villette cultural and recreational park, the farm and nature preserve introduces children to animals including donkeys, rabbits, chickens and goats, offering hands-on experiences that foster curiosity, empathy and understanding of animal behavior and care. The site is also home to Les Ruches Villette. The site is also home to Les Ruches Villette, an urban biodiversity initiative where bees safely pollinate local flora and produce the delicious Miel Villette. Through workshops and educational activities, visitors can learn about beekeeping, gardening and biodiversity preservation. The surrounding 55-hectare park features twelve themed gardens as well as a rich cultural program including art, cinema and outdoor activities.

Join us at #ISAZ2026 in Paris and discover the inspiring work of the Adrienne and Pierre Sommer Foundation—where science, education and a deep respect for living beings come together to strengthen the bond between humans and animals.

We are grateful to the Adrienne and Pierre Sommer Foundation for their generous support.

ISAZ 2026 Conference Updates

ISAZ '26

CRACKING CODES
AND BUILDING BRIDGES
JULY 1-3, 2026
PARIS FRANCE



Registration is Now Open!

- **Presenter Registration Deadline:**
 - April 15, 2026
- **Early Bird Deadline:**
 - May 15, 2026

The first 75 early bird registrants receive tickets to the [Cit  des sciences et de l'industrie - Cats and Dogs Exhibit](#) are available to the first registrants (we only have a few left!).

Visit the conference website for a [preliminary program](#), information about [Visiting Paris](#), details about hotel accommodations, and more!

[ISAZ2026.com](https://isaz2026.com) #ISAZ2026

Are You Interested in Hosting a Future Conference?

Paws and Persistence: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of College Students Following Companion Animal Loss (student submission)

By Kyle Johnson

As a doctoral candidate and higher education practitioner, my interest in anthrozoology is rooted in what I have repeatedly witnessed, but rarely seen named, in my professional work: college students navigating profound grief after the loss of a companion animal, often without language or institutional space to acknowledge it. This observation has shaped my dissertation-in-progress, *Paws and Persistence: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of College Students Following Companion Animal Loss*, and continues to influence how I understand student well-being, persistence, and the human–animal bond.

Working in higher education, I regularly encounter students managing multiple transitions at once: academic pressure, separation from home, identity development, and shifting support systems. For many of these students, I often hear how their companion animals serve as emotional anchors. Pets can be confidants, sources of comfort, and symbols of continuity during periods of uncertainty. When a companion animal becomes ill, dies, or must be left behind, students often experience grief that is intense yet difficult to articulate within academic environments that tend to recognize only a narrow range of losses.

As I began shaping my dissertation, anthrozoology provided a critical interdisciplinary lens through which to better understand these experiences. The field's emphasis on the depth and complexity of human–animal relationships validated what students were already expressing: that the loss of a companion animal can be as emotionally disruptive as more socially recognized forms of grief. This realization has been both intellectually grounding and personally affirming as I prepare to undertake narrative inquiry research that centers student voices.

My planned study will invite undergraduate students to share personal narratives of companion animal loss experienced during their college enrollment. Rather than seeking to quantify impact, I am interested in how students make meaning of their loss, how they navigate academic expectations while grieving, and how institutional responses, or silences, shape their experiences.

This dissertation process has also prompted me to reflect on my own professional practice. Preparing to conduct this research has sharpened my awareness of how institutional policies, support structures, and cultural norms can unintentionally marginalize certain forms of grief. It has reinforced my belief that student persistence cannot be fully understood without attending to emotional experiences that fall outside traditional academic metrics.

I hope not only to contribute to anthrozoological scholarship but also to continue my own development as a scholar-practitioner. This work represents an ongoing effort to bridge research and practice by honoring the human–animal bond as a meaningful dimension of student life and advocating for more inclusive, grief-informed approaches within higher education.

Author Bio

Kyle Johnson is a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Administration program at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C., where he also serves as the Director of Residential Education, overseeing the residential experience for more than 7,000 students. Their research lives at the intersection of anthrozoology and student support practice, with a particular focus on narrative inquiry and grief-informed institutional approaches. When not writing or working, Kyle can often be found alongside their goldendoodle, Fitz, working out, or trying a new brunch spot.

Photo Essay: Therapeutic Cat Café (student submission)



Author Bio:

Stéphanie Cavard is a psychotherapist based in France and a psychoanalysis student. She practices in a cat café she created, where she welcomes groups of older adults and young people with disabilities, as well as individuals in therapy. Cats are integrated into sessions as calming, grounding presences that support emotional expression. Her current interests focus on the role of feline presence in psychoanalytic therapy, particularly on how patients project, identify with, and make meaning through their observations of cats.

Website:

<https://www.latelierdeschats43.fr>





Are you a student interested in having your work highlighted?

To send us your submission, [complete this form and upload the related files](#). We will review your submission for consideration against the Submission Categories and Guidelines as listed above. Incomplete forms will not be reviewed.

For questions, please email ISAZCommunications@gmail.com.

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A multidisciplinary journal of the interactions
between people and other animals

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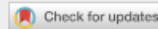
Research Articles

Exploring Emotional Attachment to Non-Traditional Pets Using the Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (LAPS)

Diane J. E. Sturgeon , Zachary T. Steele  & Elizabeth F. Pienaar  

Pages 299-313 | Published online: 29 Jan 2026

 Cite this article  <https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2026.2614161>



Research Articles

Look, He's Smiling! Children's Misinterpretation of Dogs' Facial Expressions

Kerstin Meints  & Anaïs Racca

Pages 315-342 | Published online: 13 Oct 2025

 Cite this article  <https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2025.2551434>



[Read the newest issue of Anthrozoös, Volume 39, Issue 2](#) (available free to ISAZ members)!

Interested in submitting your work to Anthrozoös? [Click here.](#)

Employment, Funding, & Student Opportunities

Employment Opportunities

Access this content by becoming a member!

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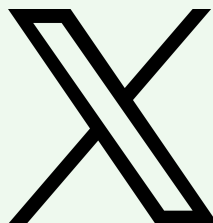
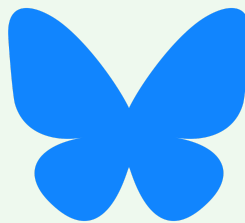
We are eager to greet new members from around the globe to build an even stronger network!

We now offer **new membership categories & discounts**, including:

- Discount Type 1 & Type 2 (for individuals residing in low-income and lower-middle income economies),
- Early Career (recent graduates within 5 years of their terminal degree), and
- Retiree (former Individual or Affiliate members with at least 10 years of previous membership and over 70 years of age).

To learn more about our other membership options and how to apply, visit our [Membership page](#).

Follow ISAZ on Social Media





For your safety and privacy, please remember to avoid sharing any personal information, such as addresses, phone numbers, or financial details, unless you have verified the recipient's identity. It's always best to exercise caution and ensure that you are communicating with trusted individuals or entities before exchanging any sensitive information.

Thank you for helping to keep our community secure!

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