

# Cognition in Carnivores: They Are What They Eat

Hillary Fruge

12/10/2021

The Psychology Department Colloquium Series Presents Dr. Jennifer Vonk:  
"Cognition in Carnivores:  
They Are What They Eat"

January 11th  
9:00 am  
via Zoom

Join the USU Psychology Department and Dr. Jennifer Vonk from Oakland University for our monthly colloquium series.

Advanced registration is required.  
Please register to attend here:  
[bit.ly/3pPOc0O](https://bit.ly/3pPOc0O)

Emma Eccles Jones  
College of Education & Human Services  
UtahStateUniversity.

Dr. Jennifer Vonk is a cognitive psychologist and professor with Oakland University. Her research interests overlap in two areas 1) animal cognition and 2) cognitive development. Dr. Vonk's research goal is to examine cognitive continuities and discontinuities between humans and both closely and distantly related species.

Free CEUs available for licensed Utah psychologists.

**January 11, 2022 at 9:00 am  
via Zoom**

The Utah State Psychology Department and Dr. Jennifer Vonk from Oakland University present *Cognition in Carnivores: They Are What They Eat*.

Despite the inherent challenges of inferring thought processes in species that cannot communicate using human language, researchers have made considerable strides in testing increasingly diverse species to gain insight into their cognitive states. Canids have become a focal point of comparative cognition research with frequent comparisons being made between the cognitive abilities of canids, primates, and even corvids. These studies have often been divided into tests of social and non-social cognition. I argue that dichotomizing social and non-social species and social and non-social cognitive processes will be unproductive, as is delineating associative from 'higher-order' cognitive processes. I will discuss the importance of comparing diverse species with particular attention to specific aspects of foraging strategies and social structures. I will present some new data on behavioral flexibility (inhibition and innovation) collected with a large number of carnivorous species and argue why it is a useful tool for comparative cognition. I will advocate for a more nuanced, continuous approach to categorizing species as "social" and "complex" and call for a shift to studying species that have been historically neglected.