

Making Ripples

The Luckiest Animals

by Amanda Bancroft

Unlucky animals are generally well-known, such as the infamous black cat. Although it's just superstition, their bad-luck reputation hurts. The ASPCA claims that black cats are the least likely to get adopted year-round in shelters (which could be due to the higher intake of black cats and dogs in shelters, according to some studies that show they are eventually adopted). Less known are the lucky ones, and the unlucky which are actually considered lucky in some contexts and cultures.

For lucky black cats, we go back to Egypt in 3,000 BC, when according to the Animal Foundation "black cats were actually held in the highest esteem and to harm one was considered a capital crime. Sailors also believed in having a black cat onboard their ships to bring good luck, and some fisherman wives would keep black cats at home to influence the safe returns of their husbands." Animals that don't seem lucky to us are very lucky to someone, somewhere.

To many Native American tribes, bears are very lucky and they are sometimes believed to have supernatural powers. Scarab beetles represent solar power and rebirth to ancient Egyptians (so you might want to visualize them if you desire solar panels!). Tiny crickets are lucky musicians in China and other cultures, even alerting people to intruders by going silent at a prowler's approach. Another Chinese symbol of good fortune is the deer, thought to represent prosperity and longevity.

We may fear spiders, but according to Christian legend, spiders saved the Christ child from Herod by spinning a web over the entrance to the cave where the family was hiding. It's considered very unlucky to kill a spider. And you may love bacon, but some Irish carve lucky charms with pig images on them due to Celtic lore concerning pigs that could heal themselves. Goldfish are well-known as good luck symbols and are one of the Buddha's sacred symbols of fertility and harmony. Koi are also very symbolic in Asian cultures, along with frogs and bats. Some people in India believe that the bull embodies virility and strength. Sacred cows are not an uncommon site on the streets.

Albatross, butterflies, chickens, badgers and many more animals are thought to be pretty lucky, but perhaps the luckiest animals of all are the people in Northwest Arkansas. Fayetteville was recently ranked as the 3rd best place to live in the country by US News and World Report. We can enjoy access to terrific outdoor areas like Devil's Den State Park and Hobbs State Park Conservation Center or bike along the Razorback Regional Greenway (visit NWATrails.org for maps and info). The culture, arts, sports, and nightlife are all pretty good here. With spring on the way, there are plenty of exciting events and great locations that may make you feel like the luckiest animal alive!

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist building an off-grid earthbag cottage for land conservation on Mt. Kessler. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer a solar-hosted online educational center on how to make a difference with lifestyle choices at: www.RipplesBlog.org.