

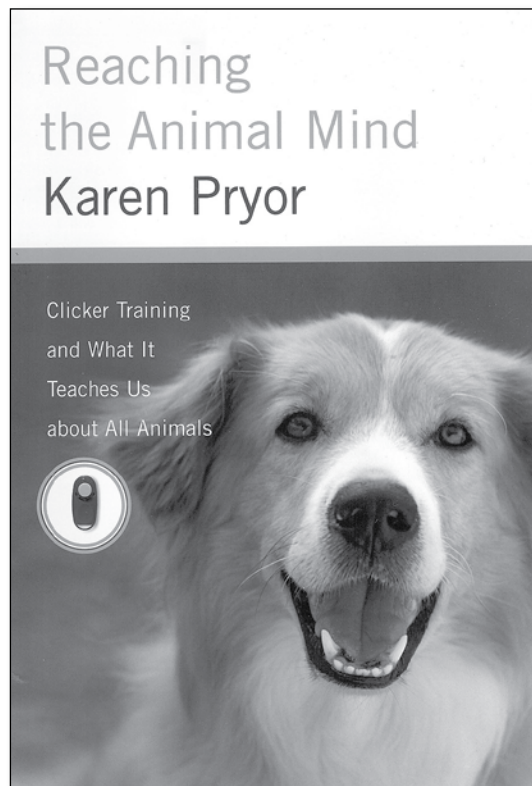
Reaching the Animal Mind

Clicker Training and What it Teaches Us About All Animals

By Karen Pryor

Reviewed by Lynn Loar

Is your copy of *Don't Shoot the Dog!* worn out? Have you lent it to so many people that you can't remember who forgot to return it most recently? Don't despair – Pryor's new book, *Reaching the Animal Mind*, is here and it's a gem. Packed full of cutting edge science on neurology and interspecies communication, Pryor's clear, witty and engaging writing entices readers to learn about shaping, communicating, feelings, creativity, attachments, fear and the neuroscience underlying it all. The last two chapters present innovative work with human learners, called tagging (TAG is



an acronym for *teaching with acoustical guidance*), and the development of TAGteach methodology. Appendices include a glossary, suggestions for further reading, a how-to for cats, dogs, coaches and other adults. Throughout the book and in the appendix, "Find Out More," the reader is directed to videotaped illustrations of key points at www.reachingtheanimalmind.com and to additional references and resources.

The prose sings. Let me put this another way, when was the last time you read a glossary with rapt attention and marveled at the precision and elegance of the language? And the humor? Yes, humor. Here's how Pryor introduces the glossary and a sample entry:

Dear Reader,

This is my book, so this is my dictionary. I have attempted to define terms that pertain to the topics in this book as I now use them. (p. 238)

Operant conditioning: *Reinforcement of conscious behavior deliberately offered by the learner. (p. 240)*

In the interests of full disclosure, let me state that Karen Pryor and I are friends, and that, for more than ten years, I have shared conversation with her and furniture with her dogs. She, Barbara Boat and I comprise the Board of Directors of the Pryor Foundation, the organization's name not mere coincidence. My boundless enthusiasm for this book is not because of our friendship, but somewhat despite it. You see, I had heard many of the stories before and read an earlier draft of the manuscript. So, I was expecting an excellent book and was looking forward to rereading the history and science of clicker training and reacquainting myself with the characters, by now more than acquaintances, in the myriad anecdotes. Yet, the freshness and power of

the writing drew me in and held me in suspense as I read, even when I already knew the outcome of the anecdote or understood the scientific principle – Can she really get that wolf to go around that tree and come back? Wow! She did.

Reaching the Animal Mind will thrill and enlighten you. It will motivate you to notice and reinforce the detail necessary to be a better teacher, trainer, coach, parent and human being. While you're waiting for your copy to arrive, do the exercise that concludes the book:

During the day, make a point of noticing something someone else is doing that you like. It need not be something unusual. It could be something you already expect the person to do. At the end of the day, find time to tell the person he or she did that thing right. Avoid the word I. 'I liked the way you...' is all about you, not about the behavior. Just name the behavior. 'It's good that you finished your homework.' 'You handled that phone call well.' Then do it again the next day, for a different behavior. (p. 255)

Even if you feel awkward at first, stick with it. The people you're addressing will respond once they're convinced you are genuine and are going to stick with the program. Better still, you'll notice a shift in yourself, in what you observe and how you experience those around you. And, then, you'll get your treat – your copy of *Reaching the Animal Mind*.

Reaching the Animal Mind: Clicker Training and What It Teaches Us about All Animals

Karen Pryor

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