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# BIG BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE

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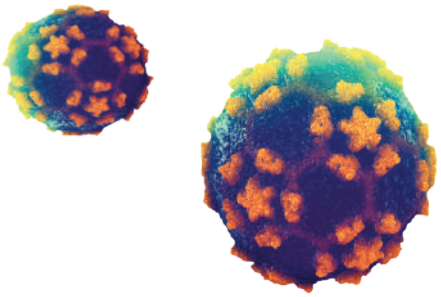

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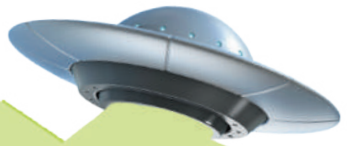


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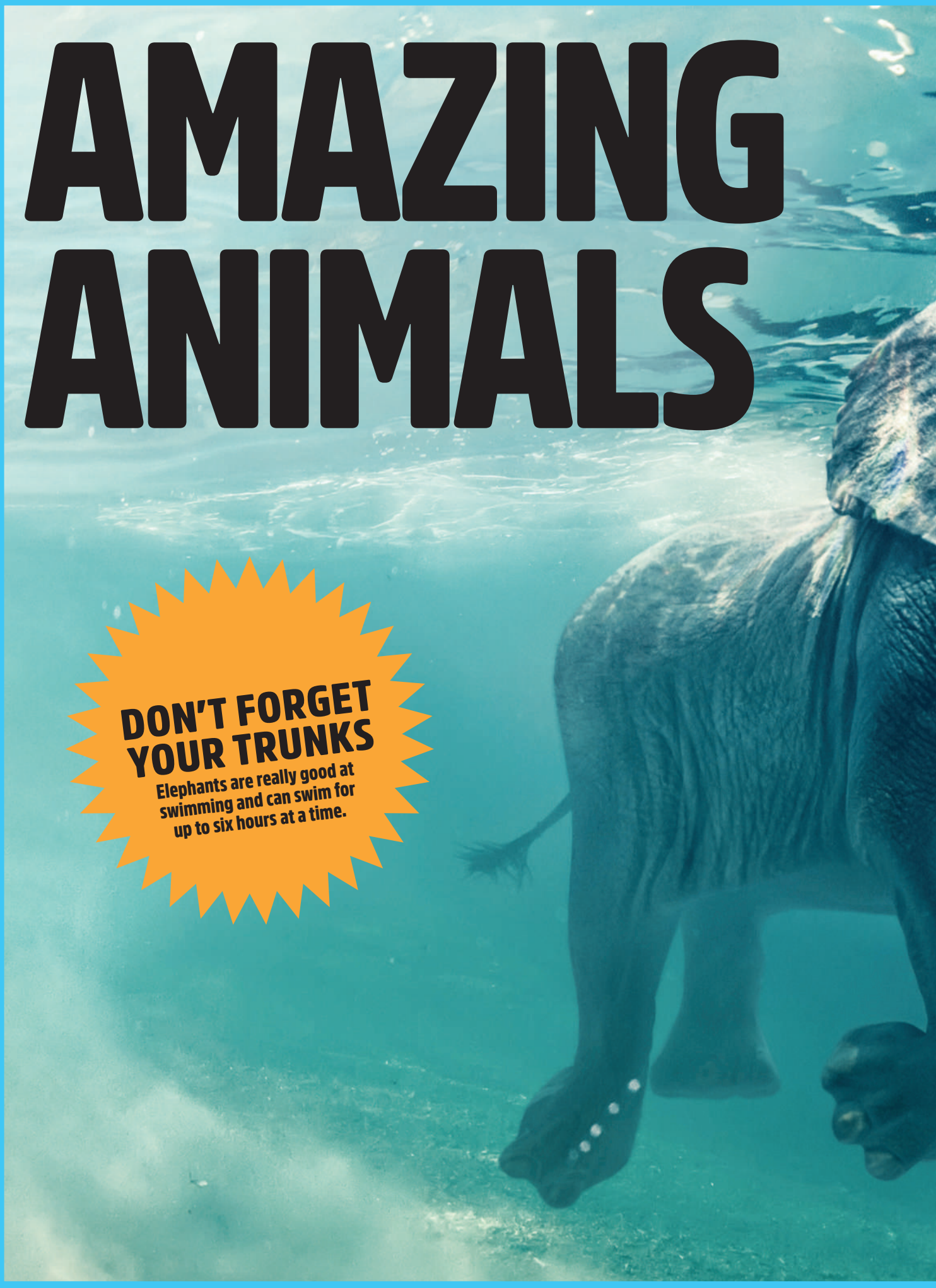
# AMAZING ANIMALS



## DON'T FORGET YOUR TRUNKS

Elephants are really good at swimming and can swim for up to six hours at a time.

# ANIMAL ACHIEVEMENTS

**Animals can be surprisingly artistic and amazingly athletic – just look at this talented trio.**

## Dogs perform with orchestra

Three new members of the Danish Chamber Orchestra unleashed their talents at a performance in 2023.

Before playing Leopold Mozart's *Hunting Symphony*, the orchestra introduced three paw-some soloists: dogs named Cookie, Sophus and Sica. Each talented pup had learned to bark or howl when the conductor gave special **cues**.

Cookie's owner said the pup "had a blast".

# Athletic bird scoots to success

A cockatoo in Bulgaria has learned to impress audiences by riding a bird-sized scooter.

Chico rides by holding the handlebars in his beak while pushing off with his foot. The sporty bird can complete a five-metre course in under 15 seconds.

Chico can also pedal a tiny bicycle and dunk mini basketballs. "He is a natural talent," his owner said.

# Painting pig amazes with artwork

Would you pay for a painting by a pig? One swine in South Africa creates works of art that have been sold for over £21,300.

The pig, who goes by the name "Pigcasso", was rescued by an animal shelter in 2016. The shelter's founder, Joanne Lefson, noticed that Pigcasso ate or destroyed just about everything in her path – except for some paintbrushes.

Lefson put a canvas in the pig's stall and encouraged her to paint. The 680-kilogram hog has now created more than 400 works of art.

Lefson believes that the painting pig's popularity is a sign of how amazing Pigcasso and other farm animals are. "You can't look at it and not place greater value on their intelligence … and creativity," she said.

# FUZZY FEELINGS

**Animals can also be amazingly affectionate. The way some creatures act around humans has made researchers curious to learn more about them.**

## Can meerkats read moods?

Scientists are trying to find out if meerkats can detect emotions in humans, such as happiness or anger.

The experts look at how the meerkats act around zookeepers and visitors, and check to see if the meerkats show **empathy**. The findings will be used to make meerkats more comfortable around humans, and could affect how meerkats' zoo homes are designed.

# Horses hear human emotions

From *Black Beauty* to *The Chronicles of Narnia*, films and books have often shown the friendships that can develop between humans and horses. Lots of real-life stories confirm that horses seem to have a special understanding of humans.

However, until a study in 2023, nobody knew if horses really recognised different human emotions.

Researchers used a test that usually measures how much babies understand. One by one, 28 horses were shown a happy or sad human face. At the same time, a recording of a happy or sad voice was played.

The test showed that horses can match the two up. When the face and voice didn't match, the horses seemed to be puzzled. They looked at the picture for longer, as if they knew that something wasn't right.

The researchers still don't know if the horses understand what being sad or happy means. However, horses seem to prefer spending time around happy people because they spent longer looking at those pictures.

The researchers now want to see if horses can recognise other human emotions.