Rabbit Advocates presents the Arts and Entertainment edition of The Rabbit Advocate

Revered for their symbolism for spring awakening and its attendant abundance and fecundity, rabbits are an image easy to find in art and literature. This issue of The Rabbit Advocate focuses on these images in popular culture, from ancient tales of the bunny in the moon to modern street graffiti.

Rabbits take the Web and Social Media by Storm

By Guin Boostrom

Rabbits have long had a place in our cultural history, appearing everywhere from ancient literature such as Aesop’s fable about the tortoise and the hare to modern movies such as Who Framed Roger Rabbit? Thus, it should come as no surprise that in the 21st century digital age, rabbits have taken to the newest cultural entertainment form: the internet. From Facebook to YouTube, bunnies are everywhere, showing us just how fun and entertaining rabbits can be. Below are some of my favorites. Be careful if you visit these sites – you can easily find that you’ve just spent an hour looking at pictures and videos of adorable and entertaining rabbits!

Disapproving Rabbits (www.disapprovingrabbits.com) is a blog started in 2006 by Sharon Stiteler (better known by her online handle Bird Chick, from her work in the birding community). The blog started out chronicling the chronic disapproval of Stiteler’s bunny, Cinnamon. Seizing on the fact that the way rabbits’ mouths are shaped makes them look like they are exhibiting a permanent frown, Stiteler began posting pictures of Cinnamon with comical captions, expressing Cinnamon’s disapproval of pretty much everything her human companions do. Eventually, the site evolved to also include reader submissions of their own bunny photos with amusing captions.

A recent example is the photo with caption at left submitted by “Buddy.”

Cinnamon has since passed away, but reader-submitted photos and photos of Stiteler’s new bunny, Dougal, continue to keep fans entertained. Disapproving Rabbits has spun off a book compiling many of the photos and captions from the blog and many products with Cinnamon’s image and the tagline “Nope, no sir, I don’t approve!”

Cute Overload (www.cuteoverload.com) is a website devoted to all animals cute and cuddly, but Sundays at Cute Overload have been specially designated as “Bunday” with lots of posts of charming or just plain silly rabbits. For example, Sunday, July 14, 2013 submission – a much cuter and fuzzier spoof on the SyFy channel’s movie “Sharknado”:

“Finally! Someone who can have an intelligent conversation!”

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The Internet abounds with cute and clever rabbit memes (photos, often with captions, meant for sharing on the internet). This popular meme is a play on the children’s folk song, “Little Bunny Foo Foo” and capitalizes on the fact that a bunny washing his face can look like a bunny hiding his face in shame:

You can find more bunny-themed memes online by going to Google (www.google.com), clicking “Images” and searching for “rabbit meme” or “bunny meme.”

Facebook, besides being a popular arena for sharing bunny memes like the one above, is home to many rabbits who have their own “public figure” pages. Meet Kirby (https://www.facebook.com/KirbytheBunny), a one-eyed rescued rabbit from Diamond Bar, California. His Facebook timeline chronicles his life with his awesome bunny mom and dad, and lists his interests as: “Eating, jumping on the bed, sleeping, standing still staring at nothing, laying around, being pet by anyone, cuddling, messing with my litter box.” From his zany costumes to his participation in his human mom and dad’s wedding (complete with bunny tuxedo), his story is sure to melt your heart and brighten your day.

And if looking at pictures of bunnies and reading stories about them online is not enough, you can also watch bunny videos at YouTube (www.youtube.com). A search for “Bini the Bunny” will turn up several videos of an adorable rabbit in Israel. In one video, Bini, sporting a bun-sized basketball jersey, makes lay-ups and does a victory dance at the end of his session. In another video, Bini doggedly (or should that be “bunnedly”) stalks a Roomba vacuuming robot that keeps running off with his favorite carrot treats.

In addition to providing endless hours of entertainment, the incredible presence of rabbits on the web and in social media helps educate viewers about rabbits as house pets. Seeing bunnies like Kirby and Bini who live indoors and engage actively with their human companions helps dispel the tired old notion that a bunny is a boring pet that just sits in a cage or hutch doing not much of anything. The “Comments” sections on many of these websites also serve as a springboard for people to ask questions and educate each other by sharing information about rabbits as companions.

Hoppy viewing!

Rabbit Reading Room: Five Books with Rabbits as Characters

*Watership Down* by Richard Adams
This classic allegorical novel features an unforgettable group of rabbits forced to leave their warren in search of a new home.

*The Magician’s Assistant* by Ann Patchett
A big white house rabbit is an endearing character in this story about a woman who sets off on a journey to discover her late partner’s secret past.

*Marshmallow* by Clare Turlay Newberry
A delightful “true story” about a bunny who befriends a cat, this children’s book declares: “A bunny’s a delightful habit, No home’s complete without a rabbit,” but it also includes a “solemn warning” about rabbits’ propensity to nibble just about everything.

*Bunnicula* by Deborah and James Howe
What would you expect if you found a bunny in the movie theater when you went to see Dracula? The bunny is a vampire, of course—a vegetarian vampire who sucks the juices out of vegetables. This is a fun book for middle-grade readers.

*Leo the Lop: Tales One, Two, and Three* by Stephen Cosgrove
In this nicely illustrated children’s series, a lop-eared rabbit named Leo learns lessons about self-acceptance.
RABBIT ADVOCATES REMEMBER...

JOHN MITCHELL
SEPTEMBER 14, 1948—FEBRUARY 4, 2013

In 2005, John Mitchell read the Oregonian and learned about the rabbits that had been rescued from Glendoveer Golf Course. People had cruelly abandoned rabbits at the Southeast Portland golf course and Rabbit Advocates helped to catch and rescue them and place them in adoptive homes. Moved by the plight of these rabbits, John called Metro Parks to volunteer his help. Metro referred John to the Rabbit Advocate helpline and from there, John found Tumbledown.

Tumbledown, a bright-eyed California dwarf rabbit, was John’s constant companion until his passing. John was featured on the front page of The Rabbit Advocate in the summer of 2005, just after he had opened his home, and his heart, to Tumbledown. John became a Rabbit Advocate volunteer and helped whenever he was able, including with a garage sale held in Northeast Portland.

Tumbledown survives John and lives with John’s sister Barbara, who says Tumbledown is a wonderful pet enjoyed by her grandchildren. John’s official obituary, which appeared in the Oregonian on February 14, 2013, lists Tumbledown as a beloved family member.

RABBIT ANGEL
David Pollock to wish Alese Acheson a happy birthday

RABBIT BENEFACtor
Kat Slinde

RABBIT RESCUER
Karen Stelter in appreciation of all the foster volunteers
Sheila David and Erik Bakkom
Mike and Peggy Pohl in memory of Baby Squirt
Patricia Toccalino in appreciation of Linda
Pam Wagner

RABBIT SPONSOR
Richard and Linda Aronstein in memory of Peter Rabbit
Lisa and Matt Freeland
Patricia Propper
Heather Brunelle in memory of Monty
Kristi Johnson

RABBIT FRIEND
Kathleen Kromm
Paula Buchert
Jacqueline Dyer
Barbara Silverman in memory of Duchess
Heidi Hart-Zorin and David Zorin in memory of Stella
Marika and Maya Stock
Mitzi Gerdes
Dana Waldman
Paul Collin
Erin Kavaney
Jennifer Widjaja
Joel Mathieu Babin

Donations made after June 20, 2013, will be gratefully acknowledged in the next newsletter. All donations to the Rabbit Advocates are tax deductible.
An eastern cottontail rabbit lives in the woods next to my house. For a long time, I saw evidence of the rabbit every so often—droppings in the yard, footprints in the snow—but I never saw the rabbit. Then one early morning I looked out my kitchen window and was surprised to see a little brown bunny crouched on the gravel driveway, right where I had scattered birdseed the day before. The morning was still dark, and a full moon was tiptoeing over to the western part of the sky.

The rabbit knew that I was watching him, and he froze. I glanced up at the moon and spotted the familiar image of a rabbit on the moon's surface. I looked back at the rabbit on the driveway. I was fascinated, but I didn't want to frighten him. I walked away from the window and waited a few moments. When I went back to the window, he was gone. Up in the sky, the moon rabbit danced on.

I didn’t learn about the rabbit in the moon until I met my husband, who is Japanese-American. I had heard of the man in the moon, but I never saw a man’s face when I gazed at the night sky. My husband told me about the rabbit and showed me how its ears stand up high on the lunar surface. He explained that in Japanese culture, it is believed that the moon rabbit is pounding mochi, a type of rice cake that is traditionally eaten on New Year’s day. Now I can’t look at the moon without seeing the rabbit.

People have always searched for meaning in the heavens. One moon rabbit legend appears to have originated in India and spread through Asia to China and Japan. The particulars of the story vary, but the basic premise is that a rabbit offered to sacrifice himself for the sake of a poor beggar. The beggar was actually a god in disguise, and he rewarded the rabbit’s virtue by casting the rabbit’s image on the surface of the moon. The Aztecs told a similar tale.

The legend of the moon rabbit lives on in modern times. In the Chinese version of the legend, the moon rabbit is said to be the moon goddess’s companion, and it pounds a mortar and pestle to create a life-giving elixir for her. This story came up at an historic moment shortly before Apollo 11 made the first lunar landing. Houston told the Apollo 11 crew about the legend, and Buzz Aldrin replied, “We’ll keep a close eye out for the bunny girl.”

Legend or no legend, I like the idea of a rabbit looking down on us from the surface of the moon. The wild rabbit in the woods near my house doesn’t know it, but on moonlit nights a good and generous rabbit connects him—and all of us—to something greater in the universe.

Editor’s Note: The graphic at the top of the page was designed by Kevin Yasutake. The photo of the moon, so clearly depicting the Moon Rabbit, was taken by a friend of article’s author.

Rabbit parody ~ a tribute to beloved original song

Rabbit Advocate Volunteer Sarah Baran recently hosted some young friends who helped groom her pet rabbits. While they brushed Sarah’s bunnies, they made up the words to this song, sung to the tune of the “Grease” classic “You’re The One That I Want.” Thanks to Elizabeth and Joey Eberhardt for rewriting the words to this song.

“You’re The Bun That I Want”
You've got fur
And it’s flying....
Cause you’ve blown... your summer coat
And the brush I’m applying
It’s fluffifying!

You better hop up
‘Cause I need a bun
And my “nose” just “witched” for you....
You better hop up

You better understand
To my ears I must be true....
Nothing left
Nothing left for me to do

You’re the bun that I’ll groom
Oo-oo-oo, bunny
The bun that I’ll groom
Oo-oo-oo, bunny
The bun that I want
Oo-oo-oo, the bun I need
Oh, yes indeed
Rabbits and Hares: ancient and modern symbols

Editor’s note: This summary is based on an exhaustive article by Terri Windling, entitled The Symbolism of Rabbits and Hares and published by Endicott Studio. Find the complete article at www.endicott-studio.com. Special thanks to Rabbit Advocate Volunteer Sarah Baran for securing permission to use this copyrighted material.

In many mythic traditions, rabbits and hares were archetypal symbols of femininity, associated with the lunar cycle, fertility, longevity and rebirth. But digging deeper finds that they are also contradictory, paradoxical creatures: symbols of both cleverness and foolishness, of femininity and androgyny, of cowardice and courage, of rampant sexuality and virginal purity.

In the naming of the 12 lunar cycles, Chinese legend tells that Buddha summoned all the animals before him but only 12 representatives came including the hare. He rewarded these 12 by naming a year after each one, repeating the cycles through eternity.

In Egyptian myth, hares were closely associated with the cycles of the moon, which was viewed as masculine when waxing and feminine when waning. Hares were likewise believed to be androgynous, shifting back and forth between genders.

In Greco-Roman myth, the hare represented romantic love, lust and abundance. Hares were associated with the Artemis, goddess of wild places and the hunt. Rabbits were sacred to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, beauty and marriage. In Greece, the gift of a rabbit was a common love token. Carvings of rabbits eating grapes and figs appear in both Greek and Roman tombs, where they symbolize the transformative cycle of life, death and rebirth.

In Teutonic myth, the earth and sky goddess Holda, leader of the Wild Hunt, was followed by a process of hares bearing torches. Freyja, the headstrong Norse goddess of love, sensuality and women’s mysteries, was served by hare attendants. She traveled with a sacred hare and boar in a chariot drawn by cats. Ostara, the goddess of the moon, fertility and spring in Anglo-Saxon myth, was often depicted with a hare’s head or ears, and with a white hare standing in attendance. This magical white hare laid brightly colored eggs which were given to children during spring fertility festivals—an ancient tradition that survives today in the form of the Easter Bunny.

As Christianity took hold in western Europe, hares and rabbits, so firmly associated with goddesses, came to be seen in a less favorable light; they were looked at suspiciously as the familiars of witches or and hares, so firmly associated with goddesses, became to be seen in a less favorable light; they were looked at suspiciously as the familiars of witches or witches themselves in animal form. Hares were sometimes associated with madness due to the wild abandon of their mating rituals. The expression “mad as a March hare” comes from the leaping and boxing of hares during their mating season.

Despite this suspicious view of rabbits and their association with fertility and sexuality, Renaissance painters used the symbol of a white rabbit to convey a different meaning altogether: one of purity and chastity. It was generally believed that female rabbits could conceive and give birth without contact with the male of the species, and thus virginal white rabbits appear in biblical pictures of the Madonna and Child.

Rabbits and hares are both good and bad in trickster tales found all the way from Asia and Africa to North America.

African hare stories traveled to North America on the slavers’ ships, mixed with rabbit tales of the Cherokee Nation and other Native American tribes, and were transformed into the famous Br’er Rabbit stories of the American South. These stories were passed orally among slaves and in them Br’er (Brother) Rabbit was a perfect hero, besting more powerful opponents through his superior intelligence and quicker wits.

Among the many different Native American story traditions, trickster tales featuring Coyote or Raven tend to be better known, but many tales feature a trickster Rabbit or Hare, particularly among the people of the central and eastern woodland tribes. The jackalope legends of the American Southwest are stories of a more recent vintage, consisting of purported sightings of rabbits or hares with horns like antelopes. The legend may have been brought to North America by German immigrants, derived from the Raurackl (horned rabbit) of German folklore. The jackalope legend might also derive from actual horn-like growths found on the heads and faces of rabbits infected with Shope papillomavirus, a rare, disfiguring disease found among the wild rabbit population.
Rabbit Advocate artist Lorraine Bushek educates through paintings

by Leann Bleakney

It is said that an artist can be considered to have truly mastered her chosen subject when she has painted it 100 times. Only then can the artist truly know and understand the subject sufficiently to have become an expert on that painting. Rabbit Advocate Lorraine Bushek knows she has painted at least 100 rabbits, which is a testament to her love for her subject.

Last March, Lorraine held a workshop for fellow artists at the Oregon Society of Artists and talked about her rabbit paintings. She began painting the motif of rabbits a few years ago with a series called “Rabbits Belong on Chairs” to demonstrate that rabbits should be considered companion pet rabbits and live in the home with their caretakers. The series was a hit with Rabbit Advocates because the organization’s mission was so beautifully communicated. It was a hit with willing purchasers, too, and Lorraine has completed commissioned work for clients all over the world.

While Lorraine worked on a painting and talked about her techniques, Rabbit Advocates talked about rabbit care and their small charges. Volunteer Lesley McMorris brought her rabbit Squirrel and Kari Masterson brought her rabbits Toshi and Claudia. Volunteers Mary Thompson, Mary Marvin, Elizabeth Olson and Leann Bleakney were on hand as well. Members of the audience were enthusiastic about both painting techniques and the lives of and care for rabbits.

Lorraine studied fine art at Oregon State University and has both her own rabbits and foster rabbits. She is a past member of the boards of directors for both the Oregon Society of Artists and for Rabbit Advocates. She continues to volunteer for both organizations.

For more information about Lorraine and her art, see www.lorrainebushek.com.
“Found” rabbit art delights

Finding rabbit art in unexpected places is a particular pleasure. Here are three examples of bunny art found in the unlikeliest of places.

“Food Bowl Miracle”
Brian Grosklos couldn’t believe his eyes. In his rabbit’s empty food bowl was the perfect outline of a rabbit. He took a photo of the image, created by the remnants of his rabbit’s previous meal. He and his partner Liesl Vorderstrasse call this image the “food bowl miracle.”

Photo by Brian Grosklos

“Alberta Street Graffiti”
This charming stencil can be found on the side of a building on Northeast Portland’s Alberta Street. Some may call it graffiti, but Rabbit Advocates call it art.

Photo by Leann Bleakney

“Long-eared tomato”
Rabbit Advocate volunteer Joan Gilbert is particularly proud of this long-eared tomato she grew in her garden this year. She now wonders how she can grow an entire crop of bunny tomatoes.

Photo by Joan Gilbert
Upcoming Meetings & Events 2013

General Meetings

Rabbit Advocates monthly meetings are held the third Sunday of each month from 3:30-5:30pm at the Courtyard Manor Assisted Living, 6125 SE Division St., Portland. Meetings begin with a “Bunny Basics” Q & A session where we invite your questions about any aspect of rabbit care. The public is welcome.

2013 Dates

- Aug 18
- Sept 15
- Oct 20
- Nov 17
- Dec 15 (RA Holiday Party)

2014 Dates

- Jan 19
- Feb 16
- March 16
- April 20
- May 18
- June 15

Bunny’s Best Bites

Hay Packing Parties

Join a Bunny’s Best Bites Hay Packing Party. To volunteer, view the available packing dates and shifts, and learn more about our BBB hay, please visit our BBB volunteer signup page: rabbitadvocates.net/volunteer/bbb/

2013 Dates

- September 7
- October 5
- November 2
- December 1

2013 Dates

- November 10
- December 8

Education & Adoption Outreaches

Rabbit Advocates sponsors educational events featuring adoptable foster rabbits along with tips on rabbit handling, diet, housing, health and general care. Experienced volunteers provide grooming and nail trimming services for rabbits (donations appreciated). Outreaches are usually held the second Sunday of each month from noon-3pm at the Tigard Petco, 11705 SW Pacific Highway, Tigard, Oregon 97223.

2013 Dates

- September 8
- October 13

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