

Seven-Year-Old Accidentally Becomes World Famous Artist

The Sun

Many adult professional artists struggle for years to receive the recognition achieved by a seven-year-old child.

It all began in 2009, when Leilah Poulain drew a picture of a penguin. Her mother scanned the drawing into a computer and, by error, uploaded it to one of the world famous art galleries in London.

The mother forgot about her mistake and went on with life. Two years later, the family

received a letter from the art gallery informing them that Leilah's drawing had won a national contest.

Mrs. Poulain did not even immediately grasp the significance of this achievement. Speaking to her brother, a graphic designer, she casually mentioned the letter. Her incredulous brother nearly fell off his chair.

"You can't be serious," he shrieked. "Are you sure about this?"

And so it was. Leilah's drawing had been chosen from among 1,700 competing drawings. Most of the others were drawn by professional artists who had been in the field

for many years, and had labored for decades to achieve the recognition Leilah achieved at the age of seven.

The penguin drawing was displayed in the gallery alongside the drawings of the greatest artists from around the world.

Mrs. Poulain remarked to one journalist, "This all happened because I am such an idiot. I had no idea what I was doing."

When Leilah was told that her drawing was selected from a competition with professional artists, she responded with a question. "Does that mean that I am now a world famous artist?" ■



The seven-year-old's drawing which accidentally achieved fame.

Raised By Wild Animals

Aryeh Cohen

Although there are many myths, legends and fictional stories depicting children reared by wild animals such as dogs, wolves, apes and bears, modern evidence suggests that at least some of those legends may have been based on true accounts. As surreal as this may seem, there have been documented instances where children, for various reasons, have been adopted and raised by animals. Here are a few of the more famous ones.

Much like spooky houses and ghost towns, the very notion of a human child being raised by animal parents creates chilling goose bumps. We dismiss the thought as absurd and

can't even empathize with victims of such unlikely circumstances. Yet, incredibly, such conditions do exist. There have been several documented instances where animals—*wild* animals—have at times raised and nurtured

human children... and done so with extreme devotion.

Surprisingly, these children rapidly adapt to their new environment and human behavior is eventually relinquished in favor of animalistic behavior and mannerisms. In due course, the children adopt animalistic means of eating, movement and communication.

When these children are discovered, it is not so easy or even possible to return them to normal human behavior. Many of these children resist acclimating to human life and may even attempt to escape their "captivity" to the relative safety of their previous animal home. They feel as intimidated by their unfamiliar human surroundings as we would be, living in, well, a jungle....

One such case in point is Ivan Mishukov who wandered away from home in 1996 at the age of four. Mishukov was adopted by a pack of wild dogs. He shared food and shelter with them and even became their virtual leader.

In 1996, when Mishukov was six, police



Mishukov, after being discovered with the dogs, was brought back to live among humans.

heard of the dog-child and laid plans to rescue him. However, with the help of his dog-friends, he managed to elude his well-intentioned, would-be captors. Eventually, though, the police succeeded in trapping him by setting out food behind a restaurant kitchen. He was captured and ultimately re-integrated into human society.

Medical journals refer to this as the "Mowgli syndrome," named for a fictitious character in a famous novel, the young boy Mowgli, who developed close ties with animals. Psychologists maintain that the chances for effective physical and emotional recovery from Mowgli syndrome are very low. Nevertheless, there have been instances, though few, where the perseverance and courage of experts in the field (which field: human resources? animal rights?) have led to the gradual, albeit moderated, mainstreaming of these "humanimalistic" creatures into general society.

Here, then, are some of these incredible-but-true stories.

Forgot That She's Human

Oxana Malaya was born in the small Ukrainian village of Nova Blagovishchenka to two alcoholic parents. A very neglected child, one night, when she was three, her drunken parents left her shivering outside, alone in the cold. Following her instincts, she crawled over to the nearby dog shed and hunkered down with the friendly dogs.

Oxana's absence went unreported by her parents. So there she remained in the warmth of the dog shed, sustained by the kindly dogs who shared with her their raw meat and garbage. Over time, Oxana completely forgot about her previous life among humans and had no recollection of the human language.

She spent *five* years living a dog's life before a neighbor finally alerted authorities. When officials discovered her in 1991, when she was eight, Oxana was crawling about on all fours, barking like a dog, and drooling, with her tongue hanging loosely from her mouth. She would dip her head into a bowl of



Mishukov in 2004, in an elite school for children of navy members, showing off his skills working with dogs.

water to drink then toss her head back and forth rapidly in doglike fashion to shake off the remaining drops of water.

Clearly, Oxana must have seen human beings—if only from afar. After all, the dog shed was situated in an inhabited area. She also sometimes darted into her former home much like rats or mice would. Nevertheless, she had disassociated herself emotionally from the human race—creatures who had so ruthlessly abandoned her.

The story generated a wave of interest among psychologists. However, much to their chagrin, the local authorities had been remiss in recording vital details, effectively precluding accurate documentation of this strange dog-child phenomenon for future analysis. It is believed that this "oversight" was a deliberate attempt by the authorities to cover up their own ineptitude.

Oxana was placed in an orphanage, where the staff worked tirelessly to mainstream her into human society. They taught her how to talk instead of bark, walk on two feet instead of all fours, and eat with her hands instead of ripping food apart with her teeth.

According to psychologists, children must learn to speak before they are five. After that the brain is less likely to grasp the concept

of language. Oxana was taught to talk, but she speaks in a mechanical monotone like a computer programmed robot; questions and answers are similarly intoned. She has no social skills and furtively hides everything she is given, much like a dog would hide a bone.

Oxana can count but she cannot add or subtract. She cannot spell or write her own name or even tell time, and whenever she's upset she retreats into the woods where she feels at ease. All attempts to integrate Oxana, who has the mental capacity of a six-year-old child, into society, consistently failed and she had to be committed to a mental institution.

Eventually, she was dispatched to a desolate farm on the outskirts of Odessa where she spends her days tending the cows. As bleak and inhospitable as the terrain is, it is a virtual paradise for the dog-child Oxana.

Dog Boy

On a frosty winter day in February 2002, a peasant walking along a narrow trail in a wooded area of Transylvania came across a scene that made him stop dead in his tracks.



The shed where the little girl lived together with dogs.



The villagers did not pay any heed to the child who lived among dogs.