

Peter Gabriel wants to talk with animals online

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British singer Peter Gabriel performs during the first day of the Hop Farm music festival in Paddock Wood, Kent, on June 29, 2012. Gabriel joined big thinkers and one of the Internet's founding fathers Friday in launching an "Interspecies Internet" for animals to communicate with us and each other.

Peter Gabriel joined big thinkers and one of the Internet's founding fathers Friday in launching an "Interspecies Internet" for animals to communicate with us and each other.

"Perhaps the most amazing tool man has created is the Internet," the famous British singer said.

"What would happen if we could somehow find new interfaces—visual, audio—to allow us to communicate with the remarkable beings we share the planet with?"

His allies in the effort include Vint Cerf, a revered father of the Internet, along with a [cognitive psychologist](#) and a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor.

Gabriel showed a video of a jamming session he had with a bonobo playing the keyboard. The

[bonobo](#) used one finger to improvise a tune that the singer overlaid with his distinctive voice.

"She did good," Gabriel said with a smile.

He told of growing up on a farm and often looking into the eyes of animals and wondering what they were thinking.

"What was amazing to me was that they seemed a lot more adept at getting a handle on our language than we were at getting a handle on theirs," Gabriel said.

"I work with a lot of musicians from around the world... Often we don't have any common language at all. We sit behind our instruments and it's a way to connect."

His curiosity led him to Diana Reiss, a psychologist known for dolphin intelligence research.

"Animals are conscious. They have emotions. They are aware," Reiss said. "One of my biggest dreams is that we give them the respect and attention they deserve."

MIT professor Neil Gershenfeld signed onto the effort after seeing a video of Gabriel's jam session and concluding that leaving the rest of the planet out of the Internet was an omission in need of correction.

"What is important about what these people are doing is they are beginning to learn how to communicate with species who are not us but share a sensory environment," said Cerf.

"These other sentient species should be part of the network too."

Cerf, now chief Internet evangelist at Google, spoke of an inter-species Internet as a test run for communicating with life encountered while

exploring space.

"These interactions with other [animals](#) will teach us, ultimately, how we might interact with an alien from another world," he added. "I can hardly wait."

Seed money for the project will be used to develop a touchscreen device that dolphins can use to connect to the Internet.

"We want to engage people here to make smart interfaces to make this possible," Gabriel told a TED audience known for brilliant scientists and exceptional entrepreneurs.

"We are almost ready to turn it on."

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