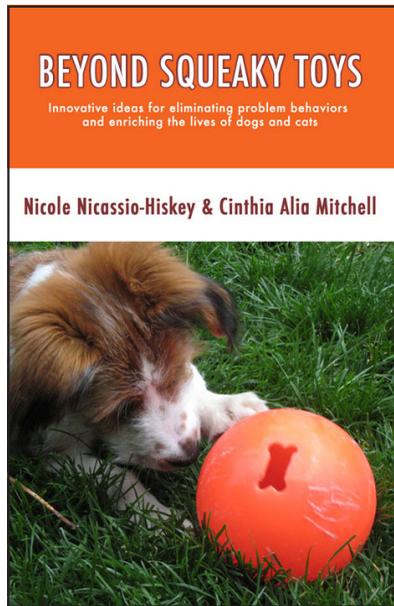


# Environmental Enrichment: The New Movement in Pet Care

## Local authors enrich pets lives with new book

Environmental Enrichment is the new “buzz word” in the companion animal field. Zoos and aquariums have been using environmental enrichment methods for over 30 years to enhance the quality of life of the animals in their care. It is only recently making the commute to the pet animal industry. Environmental Enrichment is any artificial or natural item that stimulates, enhances and improves the welfare and quality of life for any animal - companion, farm, laboratory or zoo. Researchers such as David Shepherdson (conservation curator at our own Oregon Zoo), Hal Markowitz and Jill Mellen have spent decades studying environmental enrichment and have proven it is essential to the health and wellbeing of all animals domestic and exotic.

Cynthia Alia Mitchell, owner of Doggone Fun! Doggy Daycare Center in Tualatin and Nicole Nicassio-Hiskey, Senior Keeper of Marine Life at the Oregon Zoo, have co-authored a new book called, *Beyond Squeaky Toys: Innovative ideas for eliminating problem behaviors and enriching the lives of dogs and cats*. It is the first book of its kind that looks at the importance of environmental enrichment in caring for and training pet dogs and cats. Cynthia and Nicole are pioneers in the field of environmental enrichment and have over 50 years of combined practical, hands on experience training, enriching and caring for both exotic and domestic animals.



Their book *Beyond Squeaky Toys* is for the pet owner who wants to live in harmony with their pet and is in search for options that do not take a lot of skill, time, money or in-depth understanding of advanced science and techniques. Best of all, the ideas in their

book can instantly be implemented and produce immediate, positive behavior changes in pets. Boredom is one of the most common contributors to problem behaviors in dogs and cats. A dog that is bored, may become destructive, bark incessantly or dig up the back yard. A cat that is bored may scratch and bite, claw on furniture and urinate in the house. As humans we find these behaviors to be inappropriate and annoying, but for dogs and cats they may be traits of their natural breed-specific behaviors. Our pets are members of our families

but we also must respect the fact that they have unique qualities and behaviors that are different from their human companions. Providing pets with the appropriate outlets to display their natural breed-specific behaviors is the best way to eliminate what many pet owners consider to be “problem behaviors”.

In *Beyond Squeaky Toys* Cynthia and Nicole explain how enrichment offers exercise, mental and physical stimulation, learning opportunities, entertainment, fun, and bonding time for pets and their owners. They assure pet owners that many of their pet’s behaviors are natural, and help is out there that is easy, takes no skill, no weekly class commitment, is inexpensive and most importantly WORKS!

*Beyond Squeaky Toys* is filled with real life scenarios, basic concepts, over 100 unique and innovative enrichment options and the tools to develop and implement an environmental enrichment program immediately. Many of the enrichment items in the book can be made right in your own home with things you use on a daily basis: such as empty water bottles or juice jugs filled with kibble; a hollow bone packed with wet food and put in the freezer; or a sock with a tennis ball tied inside. These items can provide hours of entertainment, are inexpensive and can reduce or eliminate the onset of problem behaviors.

If you would like to learn more about environmental enrichment or would like to set up an enrichment program for your pet, Cynthia and Nicole’s new book, *Beyond Squeaky Toys: Innovative ideas for eliminating problem behaviors and enriching the lives of dogs and cats* is available on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and [Dogwise.com](http://Dogwise.com). You can also visit their website at [www.beyondsqueakytoys.com](http://www.beyondsqueakytoys.com).

**Nicole Nicassio-Hiskey** has a Bachelor degree in Psychology and Zoology. For the past 20 years she has worked for zoos & aquariums training and enriching marine mammals including Keiko (Free Willy) the killer whale. Nicole is the Senior Keeper of Marine Life at the Oregon Zoo and also runs her own animal behavior and training consulting business.



**Cynthia Alia Mitchell** has a Bachelor degree in biology. She worked for 17 years training birds and marine mammals including Keiko the famous killer whale. In 1999 she opened Doggone Fun! Doggy Daycare Center, one of the first dog daycares in Portland. She offers her years of experience through training, behavior counseling and providing a fun, safe and enriching place for dogs to play and socialize.

