Flies, Birds and Baby Bears: How Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Jimmy Fallon Have Handled Animals on TV



Animals can be wonderful but unpredictable and distracting. Here are five examples of how public figures have reacted to critters on TV in the past few years.

October 9, 2020 4 min read

Within minutes of its appearance on the Wednesday night vice presidential debate, the fly that landed on Mike Pence‘s head was trending on social media. Memes were made en masse and group chats were filled with fly-talk until the most memorable moment of a night between two American leaders was not about policy, temperament or suitability for the job of vice

president. Instead, it was about an animal so small that Vice President Pence seemed not to even notice it was there.

Related: Pence and the Fly: How to Swat Distractions as a Public Speaker

Whenever you're dealing with animals, there's always an air of unpredictability. Several years ago I attended a Broadway play that included a trained dog, rather than an actor in a costume, and five seconds into its big scene, the pup wandered off in search of treats as its fictional owner did his best to catch it and get it back on script. No matter how well you prepare, no matter who you are, there's always a chance that an animal might just steal the show – and not always for the reasons you'd hope. Here are some recent examples of how public figures have handled animal appearances in widely viewed forums.

Barack Obama and the fly

[embedded content]

During an interview with CNBC, Barack Obama encountered a more obvious and persistent fly, which began distracting him during one of his answers. Rather than ignore it and continue with the interview, President Obama attacked the problem head-on – literally, by swatting the fly when it landed on his hand and saying, "Now, where were we?"

Donald Trump also faced down a fly during one of his speeches at the White House. President Trump shooed the fly away with a hand, saying, "Whoops! How did a fly get into the White House?"

Donald Trump and the bald eagle

[embedded content]

Perhaps President Trump's most famous animal interaction came during his time just before the presidency: During a photo shoot for *Time*, President Trump posed with a bald eagle. During one shot, while trying to move aspirin out of the camera view, President Trump reached out and the bald eagle seemed to snap at him, as if it might attack. President Trump managed to keep a fairly calm demeanor, teasing with the crew in the moment but later saying, "What you will do for a cover … this bird is seriously dangerous, but beautiful."

Bernie Sanders and the bird

[embedded content]

During his 2016 presidential run, Bernie Sanders found himself upstaged by a bird, which drew the audience's attention by landing on the stage and then, in a surprise move, flying directly to the podium. The crowd all cheered for the bird, and even Senator Sanders couldn't help but laugh and actually used the bird to his advantage, saying, "I know it doesn't look like it, but that bird is really a dove, asking us for world peace! No more wars!"

Jimmy Fallon and the baby bears

[embedded content]

No article about animal TV appearances would be truly complete without mentioning a member of the Irwin family, and Robert Irwin has taken on his father Steve's tradition of going to late-night shows like Jimmy Fallon's. Fallon plays along in this video as Irwin brings out a venomous scorpion, baby black bears and legless lizards.

"They're so cool, aren't they?" Irwin says of the lizards.

"No!" Fallon protests, flinching away from creatures named Lulu and Fluffy. "These are the creepiest things."

Related: How to Dazzle Your Audience in the First 7 Seconds of Your Speech

https://www.entrepreneur.com/video/357528