

highly strung superstar, who has a history of drug use and melancholia widely blamed on the fact that he has been travelling around the United States with a busload of hippies since 1969. "Those darn kids!" a Warner Bros executive said.

Second place in the poll went to Texas A&M University mascot Reveille, who – despite obviously being extremely important in American culture – remains unknown outside the US and is currently enjoying his anonymity while on holiday in the NSW seaside town of Port Macquarie.

"It's so refreshing not to be mobbed by fans," Reveille told *The Sun-Herald* during a stroll on the beach. "Though I am missing the free bones."

Lassie, who first appeared on the silver screen in 1943, barked furiously at journalists when asked how she felt about coming 11th in the poll.

"What's that, Lassie?" excited reporters asked. "Little Johnny's fallen down the well?"

Members of the press then ran off to find Little Johnny so they could take pictures and ask how he was feeling about his ordeal. This was unfortunate, as what Lassie had really said was that Snoopy was "smug looking" and had "little

apartment to lap some gin from her diamond-encrusted bowl and reflect on the glory days of 1944, when she was nominated for an Oscar (best cinematography, *Lassie Come Home*).

Other dogs in the top 20 included Eddie the Jack Russell terrier from the sitcom *Frasier* (fourth), Flash from the TV show *The Dukes of Hazzard* (14th) and Clifford the Big Red Dog from children's books and cartoons (18th).

Toto from *The Wizard of Oz* could manage only 24th and Benji 27th, despite being the star of no fewer than 10 movies and TV specials since his debut in 1974.

"Is it cos I is a bitzer?" asked Benji, before advising that he was retiring to his kennel to soothe himself with the dulcet tones of *I Feel Love* (*Benji's Theme*), which, he reminded everyone, won a 1975 Golden Globe for best original song.

Britain's Gromit (41st) just raised an eyebrow. He wouldn't be commenting due to his lack of mouth, said his representative, who proceeded to tuck in to some lovely cheese and crackers.

Meanwhile, a world away from the glitz and glamour of the world's most famous dogs, less well-known mutts are performing an invaluable task for the environment, reports *The Bark* magazine.

US environmental group Working Dogs for Conservation picks up unwanted high-energy

researchers study animals and plants in the wild. "It's a rare dog who doesn't love to sniff out, evaluate, roll in or coolly sprinkle over poop," says *The Bark*. Trained conservation dogs can find a grizzly bear scat or even a scary male wolf scat carrying a territorial warning and bring it to their handler's attention without damaging the specimen.

Experts say the next step is to train Sydney dogs to pick up their own poop, put it in a plastic bag and stick it in a bin. That would be really good for the environment.

Dogs are certainly in need of a green makeover following the release of a book, *Time to Eat the Dog*, last year, which claimed the typical hound had a carbon footprint of twice that of a four-wheel-drive because of all the meat in its diet. What's more, the typical hound does not have cup holders or room for seven people and a couple of bikes.

Yet the dog's popularity continues to rise. The number of registered dogs in NSW rose from 510,000 in 2005 to 808,000 last year, *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported last month in a story that highlighted Sydney pet owners having their dogs photographed with Santa.

"There has been an elevation in the social position of what I would call companion animals," social demographer Bernard Salt told the *Herald*. "I wonder whether it's a consequence of rising incidences of singledom or childlessness... If the human desire to heap love and affection on to a child is being redirected on to an animal."

This may have unexpected benefits. Studying the relationship between cuteness and caregiving, researchers at the University of Virginia found last year that people who looked at

better than people who looked at pictures of not-so-cute puppies. Exposure to cuteness made them more careful.

So if you're ever going under the knife, ask for the surgeon with the cutest dog. Or have a picture of Snoopy pinned to your gown as you're being wheeled in – just make sure the scalpel wielder isn't a die-hard Scooby-Doo fan.

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A POET'S VIEW

THE KITE

The back a separate body unfamiliar to the face ceremony of mirrors to find its graceful lace.

Winged arches with a piston grip, momentous to the eye, a notch of bone dressed buttons trace a finger down the line

to the kite of spine's skin corsetry and curves that cave behind.

This that breath cannot erase is yours and all yours to fly.

Emily Ballou

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