



# Travelling Species: Animals Moving in Different Contexts

LEEDS INTERNATIONAL MEDIEVAL CONGRESS, 6 – 9 JULY 2026

Session(s)  
sponsored by:

**Medieval Animal  
Data-Network  
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Medieval history teems with animals, creatures both mundane and fantastic. None of these species are fixed. They ‘travel’: between geographies, minds, professions, cultures, and temporalities. Between these varied contexts, a given animal’s (imagined) appearance, behaviour, and meaning often differs. This panel seeks to assess these processes of differing and shed light on how these forms of movement render the idea of what it means to be a particular kind of animal flexible. Take, for example, the medieval bear: heraldic icon of strength, fearsome adversary in the wild, marvellous gift among Eurasian aristocrats, progenitor of humans in exempla and chronicles, bridled travel companion in hagiography, fiercely devoted parent in the Torah and Christian bestiaries, and more. Another example is the ‘three hares’-motif, which took on various meanings as it was depicted in Buddhist caves, Jewish manuscripts, and Christian monasteries throughout the Middle Ages.

How did different cultures make meaning with (or about) particular animals? And how did animals themselves move—physically, imaginatively, and temporally—across the medieval world? In response to IMC Leeds 2026’s ‘Temporalities’ theme, we welcome proposals for 20-minute papers on any aspect of animal movement in and across different spatial, temporal, and/or cultural contexts.

## Potential themes include (but are not limited to):

- \* Animals ‘travelling’ between medieval artworks, literary expressions, socio-political or religious discourse, and/or material culture;
- \* Animals that move across different temporalities;
- \* Diachronic changes in how certain animals were perceived;
- \* Tensions between a ‘real’ animal and how it was understood by humans;
- \* Varied cultural meanings of animals (e.g. Judaism, Christendom, Islam);
- \* Comparative, multi-, trans- and interdisciplinary approaches to animals;
- \* Postmedieval explorations of medieval animal heritage;
- \* Animal movement(s) in any of the above;

## SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

**Please send a title and abstract of your paper (250-300 words), some keywords, and a short biography to Sven Gins ([s.gins@rug.nl](mailto:s.gins@rug.nl)) by Wednesday, September 10th, 2025, at the latest.**