



Five Animals Frolicking with AATC's Rod Ferguson

Visualise the animal or bird and its characteristics, fitting the movement to the animal stereotype. Start slow and rhythmic, building up to the more complex characterisation.

Repeat each exercise several times in both directions as appropriate.

Eagle

The eagle is alert and far-seeing, also perhaps appears a bit arrogant. The hands assume the shape and actions of powerful wings with the fingers serving as the wing tips. The eagle movement is powerful and alert.

Start feet apart and relax, begin similar to wild goose flapping wings. Knees bend slightly for bottom of sweep with wing tips behind back. Raise arms up above head, head held high and alert, eyes only looking side to side.

Gradually bend body and knees forward as flapping continues until in a crouch position with wings around knees. Then gradually resume upright position through several flaps.



Continue flapping but shift weight to one side and hold at top of flap, balance on the side and raise knee. Hold posture on one leg, head up, roll eyes only side to side. Continue flapping to return to horse-riding position, shift balance and flap/hold other side. Continue switching from one leg to the other in

time to the extended flapping.

Monkey

The monkey is agile, inquisitive and very flexible. Hands are prehensile, 'hook' over branches for

hanging/ swinging from one hand or lifting the body. They are also used for searching for body lice and other vermin and eating. The monkey movement is deliberate and active but has the potential to be distracted at any time by scratching for vermin.



Stand comfortably with the feet slightly apart with a tendency to lightly working on the balls of the feet. Commence slowly but deliberately with arms rotating out and up, perhaps repeating on one side, then the other, before coordinating alternate reaching movements.

Gradually move to pluck fruit (peach/ mango) by reaching up and plucking a peach, deliberately smelling the fruit (deeply meditative) and throwing away (if unripe), eating or passing to friend. Visualise both sight and smell.

Switch to a loose high reach, one arm at a time, forming hand in a climbing attitude. First arm circles high to stretch, then stop to shade eyes and look for predators. Other hand circles higher and both arms are used to 'pull' the body up until the first hand is chin height and the other shields the eyes (ie visualise pulling the body up as the hands are lowered into position). Shift weight to balance on foot on lower side, raise the opposite knee (high hand side) and hold in balance.



Repeat with other side.

Deer

The deer is prey, thus somewhat timid. Initially the deer looks for predators, then moves slowly away,

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and finally runs away. The deer movement is graceful and alert.

This is a shibashi-like variation on the tai chi walk emphasising the tail. Be alert and looking for predators, pausing at the end of each move to look in the distance for motion.

Start in bow position with hand movements only, then start walking. Step forward in bow stance, opposite hand behind back with thumb up to represent tail (twitching), forward hand out in front, elbow down and with fingers splayed upwards (antlers), turn waist and look to leading side/behind, holding pose at limit.



Shift antler hand to back and step out, raising leading hand into 'antlers up' position; continue waist turn to side/back and hold pose at limit.

Bring the feet together and the arms down, hands splayed outward for the running away movement and hunch; then press the arms down and straighten as if jumping but remain in the one

spot. Repeat.

Tiger



The tiger is a predator who stalks and then leaps upon prey, sometimes after a short chase.

The tiger's stripes provide good camouflage as long as the tiger moves slowly and gracefully through the grasses or bushes.

The tiger movement begins 'cat graceful' but becomes aggressive, with visualisation and facial movements to match.

Start feet apart and arms loose at side; sink down in horse riding stance with arms raised and fingers extended as 'claws'. Loosely alternate swinging arms in a gentle 'cat' swatting motion.

Remain standing still and stalk along the ground using hands in a clawing motion to 'pull' the body along. Alternate hands for flow.

Become slightly more aggressive. Arms go out and up and down, lift chest with head up as if 'scratching' down a tree trunk like a cat. Arch back by lifting chest and chin.

Step out, opposite hand reaching out and pulling down. 'Pull the body forward', this is not a normal weight transfer. Step opposite side and repeat. Weight down and back, head high and alert.



Finally, reach out and 'leap' forward. Imagine one leg up and cat stretched out, then step up and come up. Powerfully aggressive but gentle/soft; not a 'Skippy' motion.

Bear

The bear is heavy, slow and ponderous, yet playful as it scratches its back or shakes a tree to get at the honey. The bear has paws, rather than talons, and doesn't need to use its claws in this exercise. The bear movement is loose and powerful but relaxed.

Start feet apart, relax with arms/hands moving at waist level in small, loose circles. Weight shifts side to side as motion and circles size increases, eventually becoming a waist movement as well. Repeat other side.

Increase size of circles and coordinate with weight movement and knee flexi to 'rub shoulder or scratch back on tree'. This involves both a circling of hands/waist and a one-sided up and down 'pumping' to scratch one shoulder blade with an oval pattern. Repeat other side.

Increase focus to one side and weight transfer to 'hit tree with shoulder'. Repeat other side.