



Bats Sing, Mice Giggle: The Surprising Science of Animals' Inner Lives

Karen Shanor , Jagmeet Kanwal

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"Amazing, moving and enlightening. *Bats Sing, Mice Giggle* presents the latest findings on the intimate lives of animals with great elegance. I recommend it wholeheartedly."—Larry King

"Did you know that spiders taste with their feet, that a decapitated cockroach can live for two weeks, that a certain type of parrotfish wraps itself in a sort of foul-smelling snot before taking a nap, and that ants play? I didn't until I read *Bats Sing, Mice Giggle*." —*New Scientist*

"Full of interesting facts . . . presented in a friendly, readable way that will appeal to most young adult and adult readers with an interest in the world around them. The authors discuss a remarkably wide range of topics [in] an easy general-reading text that introduces readers to interesting avenues of scientific research and observation."—*SB&F*

"In the delightful process of discovering the secret skills of our living cousins, so crisply and clearly described in this book, each filled with their quirky spectacular capacities (which we can envy but not duplicate) that sense of our place in the scheme of things has been infused with . . . joyful awe."—Stuart L. Brown MD, Founder and President, The National Institute for Play

Bats Sing, Mice Giggle is the culmination of many years of cutting-edge scientific research that reveals how animals have secret, inner lives of which until recently—although animal lovers will have instinctively believed it—we have had little proof.

The authors show how animals communicate; how they warn and help each other in times of danger; how some problem-solve even more effectively than humans; and how they build, create, and entertain themselves and others.

Bats Sing, Mice Giggle: The Surprising Science of Animals' Inner Lives Details

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Lives Karen Shanor , Jagmeet Kanwal**

From Reader Review Bats Sing, Mice Giggle: The Surprising Science of Animals' Inner Lives for online ebook

Victoria says

Though the adage warns readers not to judge books by their covers, there should also be a warning about not basing expectations on titles! From the rather cutesy title, I really expected this book to be filled with more adorable anecdotes on animals. There were some of these stories, but just not the quantity that I expected. It was still an entertaining read, that was rather light on the neuroscience aspect that promised to give this book its own angle. The writing was quite clear, and easy to follow - breaking down more complex scientific ideas into simple language.

The most off-putting aspect of the whole book was that the authors chose to write about themselves in the third person. It was distracting and quite distancing. I feel like they could have incorporated this in a smoother fashion. Otherwise, the book was a relatively interesting read - it just wasn't as fascinating as I had expected it to be.

Petra X says

Very enjoyable book about, essentially, how what we think of as human traits turn out to be evolutionary ones, that started way back some of them, in the lizard brain. Since I am definitely on the side of science and have no respect at all for creationists (I nearly wrote 'cretins'), which means fundamentalists of all kind of religions, I enjoyed this book.

I like to feel close to animals. I am not at all offended by having monkey cousins and orangutan ancestors. Actually it's a lovely thought that we are so connected to these gorgeous creatures whose lives we can only superficially understand. So when I read that mice giggle when their tummies are tickled, and they adore it too, I think I wonder why that trait that makes us smile got passed down to babies?

Sometimes when I'm reading animal behaviour books or watching documentaries I get very cross. We judge animal intelligence on how well they pass our human tests which is a bit odd since we can't usually do much of what they do in their lives. Sometimes the tests are very funny, because scientists like reproducible experiments and do not admit stuff everyone knows that can't be tested.

There is one classic experiment, I forget it's name, where a child is put in a room with it's mother and a stranger. The mother exits. After a while she reappears and the child runs to her. This proves attachment. A dog reacts in exactly the same way to his human 'mother'. But cats don't. They don't appear to care. Scientists say that this proves cats are less attached than dogs. But everyone knows that isn't so, it's just the cat sees itself in the dominant position of the mother and thinks that she should be running up to it! (And in real life of course she would, proving human attachment to our puddy-dats).

One of the things about living in the West Indies is that animals tend to wander around living out their natural lives and quite often they aren't anything like what is written or filmed. Chickens for instance. They live in two different ways. They either live in flocks with dominant roosters who are forever trying to have sex with the hens (who mostly give in after a bit of a chase, although it's over so fast I'm not sure why they bother). Or they get married and live long lives as a pair. I have had a rooster/hen live in the garden for years now. They raise their chicks and ones that the chicken hawks and boa constrictors and rats don't get eventually leave home and you see the husband and wife patrolling their area and going for walks together a

couple of times a day.

It's like the book says. We didn't just spring up as humans with no relationship to animals. Everything we do has been modelled before. I like that and I enjoyed this book.

Elentarri says

Bats Sing, Mice Giggle; The Surprising Science of Animal's Inner Lives is an uneven collection of random animal behaviour facts grouped into themed chapters, rather than a cohesive book on animal behaviour.

I found this book to be rather frustrating and annoying. All the information presented in the book has the potential to be interesting, but a lot of the topics were only covered in passing, with little depth and the reader would really like to know more. On occasion, some of the topics would just break off. The writing style was also somewhat erratic, with some sections reading like a kiddies book, while other sections read more like a standard popular science book. Apparently, no editor went anywhere near this book!

While the book is interesting, it would probably work better as a bathroom reader or when you only have time for short sections at a go, otherwise the lists of animal facts would become rather boring.

Cindy says

This book was received free from Library Thing in exchange for review.

I love reading popular science books, and books on animal behavior are always fun. This had a lot going for it. But it also had a lot against it.

FOR: Animals are interesting. Great subject matter. All kinds of quirky bits of info I'd never heard before, which was why I wanted to read it in the first place.

AGAINST: Wow, where to start? First, the style was a little too breezy and tried too much to be funny. It was a little jarring sometimes. But that wasn't a major drawback. No, what really brought the rating down for me was two other things. First, the way the writers, especially Karen Shanor, had to insert themselves in the book at every given opportunity. I'd be reading along and suddenly, "Karen had firsthand experience of this while visiting her grandparents - while in college - when traveling Africa." What gives? I don't want her whole history; get back to the animals. If it was a story she was really anxious to include, she could simply leave herself out of it. It got so bad that I had to keep checking the cover to remind myself that yes, there was another author of this book. Didn't HE ever do anything? Yes, in fact, and there were a couple of stories about his childhood, but mostly it was about his research. Now that was worth including.

Second major problem - the organization. At least, what there was of it. There wasn't much. Sure, it was divided into chapters, but the writers tried to include too much stuff. Even in one paragraph, we'd go from one animal to the next, until I'd forgotten what the chapter was supposed to be about in the first place. It would have been so much easier to read if the writers had stuck to one animal per chapter, or at most, one

animal per section in a chapter. Then they could have really covered each one in depth. Anything else they were dying to include could have been included in some footnotes at the back of the book.

I don't recommend this book. There are better books about animals and neuroscience out there. This one was a disappointment.

Icon Books says

Did you know that bats compose their own songs? That mice giggle when tickled? That porpoises go to sleep in only one half of their brains at a time? That lizards do push-ups to seduce a mate, that elephants 'hear' through their feet, or that rats laugh?

Drawing upon the very latest scientific research, Karen Shanor and Jagmeet Kanwal show how animals build, create and entertain themselves and others; how they express grief, joy, anger and fear; how animal 'friends' keep in touch; and how some animals problem-solve even more effectively than humans. The result is a thrilling scientific exploration which unlocks for the first time the secret lives of the animal world.

'Did you know that spiders taste with their feet, that a decapitated cockroach can live for two weeks, that a certain type of parrotfish wraps itself in a sort of foul-smelling snot before taking a nap, and that ants play? I didn't until I read Bats Sing, Mice Giggle.' New Scientist

'Makes you question what we mean by the phrase 'human nature' ... a study which is both accessible to the lay reader and acceptable to the scientific community' Daily Telegraph

Amy says

I really wanted to enjoy this one but found it hard going. Lacked cohesion and some of the paragraphs stuttered - there was no continuous flow! And when there was the technical jargon was a bit much and took me out of the book so the results were the same for each chapter. As I've started to ascribe to the "life's too short to read a book you're not enjoying" I stopped and returned to the library.

Hayley says

This book is a great source of wild animal behavior facts, but it wants to tackle too much and its organization isn't great.

It also seems to stop just short of examining the most debated and human-like qualities of animals - things like love, empathy, abstract creativity...

What you *will* see is a mass of science-based stories of how elephants pick up vibrations through their feet, whales have rhythm and monkeys lie. They're all entertaining.

The authors fit these tales into "Sensing," "Surviving" and "Socializing." But the behaviors discussed in each section often seem like they could fit two or all three of those categories. The organization doesn't add much. I wonder if it would be more interesting to go by taxonomic group?

But then, some of the sub-topics (chapters) did make more sense to me - focusing on, say, sleep and hibernation, migrations...I'm torn on how it should have been organized.

The issue may be that this book tries to tackle a LOT, and thus can only afford to dip an inch into each species and topic.

I recently gave much better ratings to a science / nature book called "The Botany of Desire." Its author looked at the histories of four types of plants. He wove together myths, history, science, consumer culture and more but did it VERY well. I think choosing four plant types (representing four plant traits that humans crave) was a smart way to boil it down. "Bats Sing, Mice Giggle" didn't boil it down.

Its writing style was also schizophrenic, perhaps a result of having two authors. It went from witty to too-scientific-for-lay-readers and back again. The authors threw in one of their toughest topics - quantum physics in animal sensing - early in the book before much more approachable stuff. That might deter some.

Again...organization.

Still, I've got some facts in my brain that I didn't have before (if I can manage to remember them). But I don't feel much artistic contentment.

Maxwell Hayden says

The book presents very interesting anecdotes and animal studies. The book is very concise and does not use much, if any flowery language which is nice considering the content matter. It doesn't make many connections between the studies but is rather organised like a series of short, non-critical scientific literature reviews. Although this was frustrating at times it makes this book easy to pick for a few minutes at a time without getting trapped in a story for hours. That being said I would recommend to anyone with an interest in animal behavior or biology.

Colleen Wu says

Interesting, but more a listing of random animal facts grouped into themed chapters than a cohesive book on animal behavior. The book also seemed to jump around in regards to reading/knowledge levels, at times assuming a high level of knowledge by the reader and at other times a low level. All of the information presented was intriguing and I would want to learn more, but did not really feel like this book had depth.

Miranda says

This is a great review of research in the animal world. It really makes you think about how much we don't know about our non-human animal friends. Great, easy read that will make you smile, laugh and think about the world we inhabit.

Jennifer Osterman says

When I started reading Bats Sing, Mice Giggle, I think that I anticipated something along the lines of Bill Bryson's "A Short History of Nearly Everything" about the science of Animal Behavior and Neurobiology. I was quite excited about the topic, as animal behavior is quite fascinating. However, while I enjoyed this book, I felt that it wasn't sure just what it wanted to be - a lighthearted romp, or a detailed overview for scientists. In some areas, I thought that the scientific detail was too technical for the topic being covered (this from a licensed veterinary technician with a BS in zoology and neuroscience), and in other areas, I found myself wishing that the authors had gone into more detail about certain topics. Other times, I found myself feeling that a portion of a chapter was lacking in cohesion and was just listing various interesting findings within a certain category of animal behavior without a well-defined organizational theme.

I wouldn't totally discount this book due to the aforementioned flaws, however, as much of the book is quite interesting. I think that people well-versed in the subject may find the book a bit lacking, and newcomers may feel a bit overwhelmed, but if either type of reader sticks with it, I think they will not feel they have wasted their time in reading it.

I received a review copy of this book through the LibraryThing Early Reviewers giveaway.

Batgirl13 says

50 Book Reading Challenge 2015: A book with bad reviews

Ok...so I am aware that this book doesn't have terrible reviews on Goodreads, but its lower than what I normally read and I am not much of a fan, so I classified it as my "book with bad reviews". If not for the information about bats sprinkled throughout the book, I may have stopped reading. It contained good information, but usually just teased the reader. They would introduce an animal or topic and then only spend 3 sentences describing it and move on. It was also written like a college essay. Some of the end of chapter reviews didn't make much sense. I had high hopes for this book, but sadly it did not live up to them.

Carroll Straus says

Bad editing-- frustrating and irritating. Every time they start to discuss something fascinating they break off and leave you hanging. Some of it seems to be written for third graders. I would say it was awful but there some of it that is POTENTIALLY terrific.

This book desperately needs a new editor!

Damian Neri says

3.5/5 - Evitando caer en antropomorfismos, este libro recopila muchos de los comportamientos que solemos llamar "humanos" y que también están presentes en una gran variedad de animales, volviendo insostenible la creencia de muchas personas de que somos los únicos animales con complejas vidas mentales, emocionales y sociales. Un libro muy ilustrativo y entretenido.

Jo says

This one came up when I was looking for a book on bats to give to my brother for Christmas. It actually discusses the bats singing and the mice giggling rather briefly, but I found it all so fascinating that I don't care. While some of the science at the beginning gets a little dense, I found the book overall to be accessible for the average reader (AKA: people who aren't scientists), and the dense first section was made perfectly digestible by reading in small segments instead of gobbling it all up in one sitting. I particularly like that the authors use personal anecdotes and refer to themselves by first name. It helps to keep the writing from getting bogged down in science and titles and egos. (Now, if I can just figure out how to change my DNA on purpose for a certain result, and I'll be the happiest girl on the planet.)
