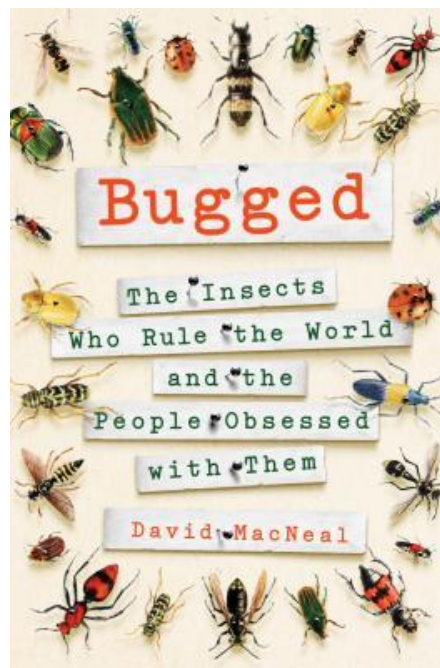




Bugged: The Insects Who Rule the World and the People Obsessed with Them

David MacNeal

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Insects have been shaping our ecological world and plant life for over 400 million years. In fact, our world is essentially run by bugs--there are 1.4 billion for every human on the planet. In *Bugged*, journalist David MacNeal takes us on an off-beat scientific journey that weaves together history, travel, and culture in order to define our relationship with these mini-monsters.

MacNeal introduces a cast of bug-lovers--from a woman facilitating tarantula sex and an exterminator nursing bedbugs (on his own blood), to a kingpin of the black market insect trade and a "maggotologist"--who obsess over the crucial role insects play in our everyday lives.

Just like bugs, this book is global in its scope, diversity, and intrigue. Hands-on with pet beetles in Japan, releasing lab-raised mosquitoes in Brazil, beekeeping on a Greek island, or using urine and antlers as means of ancient pest control, MacNeal's quest appeals to the squeamish and brave alike. Demonstrating insects' amazingly complex mechanics, he strings together varied interactions we humans have with them, like extermination, epidemics, and biomimicry. And, when the journey comes to an end, MacNeal examines their commercial role in our world in an effort to help us ultimately cherish (and maybe even eat) bugs.

Bugged: The Insects Who Rule the World and the People Obsessed with Them Details

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Curt says

Informat and fun to read but please find a way to incorporate the footnotes into the text, continuity was disrupted by constantly checking footnotes.

Troy says

This was an interesting book with a wide range of topics relating to insects. Everything from eating bugs to apiculture. I enjoyed it.

Juliet Wilson says

Subtitled The Insects that Rule the World and the People Obsessed with Them, Bugged is a fascinating look at the world of entomology (the study of insects). It outlines the history of the human relationship with insects, going back to the first cave painting of an insect. The book then looks in more detail at topics such as pest control, epidemics of diseases carried by insects, social insects, insect sex and insects as food with a whole chapter devoted to the history of the human relationship with the insect that is most important to us, the honey bee.

The book considers such vital questions as:

how can we effectively control insect pests in an environmentally friendly way?

can we save the honey bee from the many threats that face it?

is insect food the food of the future?

The author travelled a lot for this book, including undertaking a tour in Japan, trying to eat as many insect based foods as possible (which turned out to be quite a challenge!) and a trip to Greece to find the most delicious honey in the world.

It concentrates more on people than on the insects themselves, and though in parts it is quite technical, it relies more on anecdotes and human interest. This isn't a criticism, it's just to say that if you're looking for a totally serious scientific study of insects this may not be the book for you! On the other hand, with its mass of fascinating facts it's a perfect book to get you interested in insects.

Catherine Hulshof says

This book strikes a balance between personal travel memoir and popular science book. The science was much more intriguing than the anecdotal stories of the writers travels across the world seeking the history, study, and application of insects, though as a scientist I lean facts over travel diary. It's possible to skim over the anecdotes of the author's Bill "F8ing" Murray pet cockroach and gleam a few interesting ideas from the book (like details about the Japanese history of insect collection).

Ashley Kennedy says

Great read! If you enjoyed Marlene Zuk's "Sex on Six Legs: Lessons on Life, Love, and Language from the Insect World", this is right up your alley. It's similar in that each chapter explores a fascinating topic or sub-discipline in entomology (e.g., medical entomology, forensic entomology, the insect pet trade, sericulture/silk production, entomophagy, apiculture-- just to name a few), but for whatever reason I enjoyed this one even more. I'm an entomologist, but as usual (given how vast this field of study is), I learned a ton from this book-- some of it strictly scientific, some of it more under the pop culture umbrella. So whether you're a board-certified entomologist or someone who's never voluntarily touched an insect, you'll get something out of this book.

Lastly-- as someone who used to specialize in planthopper taxonomy, I love that the peanut-headed lanternfly got a shout-out (just wait til you see why...).

Elentarri says

I have mixed feelings about this book. Some of the information was interesting and informative (if superficial), some less so. However, the writing style was overly chatty and erratic, with various anecdotes jumping around all over the place and no real flow to the book. It reminded me a lot of a Mary Roach book, with the forced humour, over chattiness, disjointed subject matter and too much interview details in comparison with actual information. This is especially problematic with the first 3 chapters which tend to read like a collection of random facts. Later chapters are an improvement but could still use some work and less forced humour. I found the final chapter on bees and apiculture to be very interesting. This book also contains a vast number of, usually irrelevant, footnotes.

MacNeal focuses more on the "people obsessed with bugs" than the actual bugs, so if you are looking for information on insects specifically you aren't really going to find it in this book. If you are looking for information on humans and their strange interactions with bugs, then this book may be for you. The author covers such topics as genetically modified mosquitoes, cyborg cockroaches, assisted spider sex, insect taxidermists, insect farming and processing for human consumption, insect smuggling, bedbug extermination, dung and corpse "removal" services of bugs, and medicinal uses of bugs.

So, in conclusion, the book is interesting but could really use an editor, better structuring and focus, and less chattiness.

Kyla says

It's a fun and informative read for anyone who's remotely interested in the insects with which we share the planet and the uses we have from for them

Genetic Cuckoo says

Disclaimer: I was provided with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review

If I am honest at first I really did not like this book. I did not like the way the story jumped around from different anecdotes with no real flow. One minute he is talking about crickets, the next it is a completely different topic, with no idea how he got there. It felt like the first section was a bunch of random facts about insects thrown together.

The later chapters are much better, although the forced humor is still bad. I was getting seriously frustrated when he would say something, there was an asterisk to explain what was meant or to give further clarification, but instead this was a way to force more jokes. Like on page 126 where there was a German word, I look at the asterix to get clarification and instead he states 'say that three times fast'? That almost made me give up on this book!

I did enjoy the beautiful images at the beginning of each chapter, and the actual feel and style of the book was lovely. The book looks a little like the style of typewriter written name tags from insect mounts, and so this really links well with the subject matter. So the book looks beautiful and is a lovely size.

The later chapters when he is in Japan is much better, they make sense and have a flow and story, and I was able to appreciated much more of what he was trying to achieve with this book. I thought it was interesting, the beginning is just full of anecdotes and facts, but it was still an interesting read. I would not recommend this book for everyone, I think you would need more than a passing interest to get through the book. This might be good for a younger reader interested in insects, as the images and jokes might work better for this audience.

Mike Clay says

Excellent science writing about our insect world.

Terralyn Brown Barfield says

I like bugs. I liked this book. What would have sent it to the top of the charts would be high resolution photos of all the bugs cited as they are cited. Quite informative and entertaining. I particularly enjoyed the section on bug-love in Japan.

Batsheva says

Cute vignettes about how we interact with arthropods. My favorite was the scientist breeding spiders. She checked in the enclosure where there were once two spiders (one male and one female.) There was only a gravid female remaining. "You ate your boyfriend, didn't you?" the scientist remarked.

Themightyx says

Very fun, broad topic that is extremely accessible to all readers. Really good!

Jacquie says

While I can't say I hated this book, I had a hard time with it and expected better. However, the things that didn't appeal to me personally, I imagine would very much appeal to another reader. I thought it would be easier to list them:

- 1.) This really did focus a lot more on the people who interact with bugs.
- 2.) It had miles of footnotes.
- 3.) It had a similar style to a Mary Roach book.

A different reader might very much enjoy this book.

Lesley says

The writing style was slightly meandering, but it was interesting and included a fair dose of humor too. I enjoyed the historical references from an insect perspective, and the amazing things that scientists and hobbyists have learned from studying and observing insects.

Cynthia Egbert says

I do love bugs and this one was full of intriguing facts, stories, and ideas. I have a high creep tolerance and there were a couple of things that caused a chill up my spine. I loved it! And I learned a great deal and I am even more enamored of insects.

Here are a few interesting facts and thoughts:

"In terms of systematics, Aristotle is largely considered the first to view entomology as a distinct science by separating what he called 'bloodless animals' from the rest."

"Countries that took part in the slave trade, and thus transported mosquito vectors, were the ones most likely to experience yellow fever." (I liked this karma.)

"According to Michael Specter's 'Mosquito Solution' article in the New Yorker, 'Researchers estimate that mosquitoes have been responsible for half the deaths in human history.'"

"As the lovely old-timer Aristotle mused: 'If one way be better than another, that you may be sure is Nature's way.'"

"Honey was so critical that King Alfred demanded bells be rung at the sight of a swarm so that it could be hived."

"Speaking of minding one's own beeswax, the childish taunt stems from olden days when women smeared wax on their face. If standing too close to a fire, they were warned to 'mind' it." (This really struck me as somewhat akin to the mote and the beam idea in the scriptures.)

"People think interesting species exist but not usually where they live or in their national parks. Whereas, wherever you're living - if that's North America or Europe, Australia, Africa, South America - you can go outside and you can see honeybees foraging within yards of where you're living. And I would say that that common animal is the world's most interesting species. Maybe second to humans." -Francis Ratnieks (University of Sussex)

"It's true the world can be lonesome. But sometimes you life your head, or travel halfway around the world, and there's somebody there. Sometimes you talk to them. Sometimes you just share a moment. And the moment is well worth all of it."
