



Owl

Desmond Morris

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In this small, elegant volume, Morris explores our paradoxical relationship with the owl, symbol of both wisdom and evil. He examines its depiction in mythology, literature and art and provides an overview of its fascinating biology. Beautiful photographs illustrate the allure of this mysterious creature. – Sierra Magazine

Owl is sparely and eloquently written, scholarly and highly readable . . . an entertaining and informative little gem. It will particularly appeal to the many devotees of these eternally iconic birds. – Emu-Austral Ornithology

‘The owls are not what they seem.’ From ancient Babylon to Edward Lear’s *The Owl and the Pussycat* and the grandiloquent, absent-minded Wol from *Winnie the Pooh* to David Lynch’s *Twin Peaks*, owls have woven themselves into the fabric of human culture from earliest times. Beautiful, silent, pitiless predators of the night, possessing contradictory qualities of good and evil, they are enigmatic creatures that dwell throughout the world yet barely make their presence known. In his fascinating new book, bestselling author and broadcaster Desmond Morris explores the natural and cultural history of one of nature’s most popular creatures.

Morris describes the evolution, the many species, and the wide spread of owls around the world – excluding Antarctica, owls are found on every land mass, and they range in size from 28 centimetres (the Least Pygmy Owl) to more than 70 centimetres tall (the Eurasian Eagle Owl). As a result of their wide distribution, owls also occur in the folk-tales, myths and legends of many native peoples, and Morris explores all these, as well as the many examples of owls in art, film, literature and popular culture.

A new title by an acclaimed author, and featuring many telling illustrations from nature and culture, *Owl* will appeal to the many devotees of this emblematic bird. Despite the fact that many have never seen or even heard an owl, he illustrates through this enticing read that the owl’s presence is still very real to us today.

Desmond Morris is a well-known and critically acclaimed writer and broadcaster. His many books include *The Naked Ape* (1967), *The Human Zoo* (1969), and *The Human Animal* (1994), and he has contributed to numerous natural history and scientific publications.

Owl Details

Date : Published November 15th 2009 by Reaktion Books (first published 2009)

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Author : Desmond Morris

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Genre : Nonfiction, Animals, Birds, Environment, Nature, Science, Natural History, History

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From Reader Review Owl for online ebook

Orsolya says

I am **OBSESSED** with owls. By 'obsessed', I'm talking over a decade of collecting owl memorabilia (I lost count at about 320) and I even have an owl tattoo. Believe it or not, I don't like "just any old" owls in my collection, either. Knowing this, it is safe to assume that a social/cultural/natural history book on owls is right up my alley. Enter Reaktion Books (I am a fan of their 'Edible Series'); with an installment for their 'Animal Series' entitled, "Owl" by Desmond Morris. In case you are wondering, this owl book was read while using an owl book mark...

"Owl" is a glorious social history of owls consisting of glossy pages with 123 illustrations. Although "Owl" is not a coffee table book in the sense that it isn't hardback or oversized; it is certainly a feast for the senses. However, don't assume "Owl" to be a light, fluffy read because Morris has conducted extensive research on the subject.

Morris divides "Owl" into logical chapters beginning with the natural history of owls and then advancing into the roles of owls (medicinal, symbolic, emblematic, literary, etc). The growth is natural, engaging, and makes sense while the reader is fascinated with owl knowledge (even I, being an owl whiz, learned new facts!). The text is clear, concise, and easy to retain creating excitement with the reader and encouraging page-turning.

Although the information in "Owl" is educational; Morris also infuses some humor into the text, lightening the load and also sums up each chapter's chapter content with the final paragraph. On the other hand, the book is mostly an overview on the topic designed to wet the appetite and therefore readers seeking elaboration will be disappointed (at least further investigation is sparked).

"Owl" features a heavy focus on owl symbolism with Morris stating examples of owls in cultural-historic means but also venturing into their symbolic essence. At times, the arguments are elementary and not thorough but it seems that this is due to the 'overview' format of work versus that of Morris's lack of scholarly merit.

The final chapters of "Owl" take a break from the social history view and emphasize the biology and natural science of the animals. Morris's text becomes increasingly technical and may be a bit too academic for some readers. The accompanying photos in these sections have often times been included in other owl books or field guides making them familiar to avid owl readers (which is a slight frustration) but not detrimental to the overall work. There is an issue with the captioning of some of the photos such as on pages 172-173, where a raven is called a crow. I guess the editor missed that one...

The conclusion of "Owl" is abrupt with no summation and is therefore not memorable. However, Morris provides an appendix complete with an owl history timeline, species list (classification), references, bibliography, and an "Associations & Websites" list (which **also** has some editing mistakes).

Despite a few minor flaws; "Owl" is delightful, readable, and yet informative with a pleasurable writing style from Morris. Taking only about a day to complete; "Owl" is a must-read for owl-lovers and will both entertain and educate.

Tariq Alferis says

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Araz Goran says

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Kissmekate says

In diesem hübsch aufgemachten Bändchen aus der Reihe "Naturkunden" des Verlages Matthes & Seitz widmet sich der bekannte Zoologe Desmond Morris einem der faszinierendsten Tiere der Erde: der Eule.

Kaum eine Kultur, in deren Mythologie der rätselhaft wirkende Nachtvogel nicht eine Rolle spielt, oft genug eine ambivalente - Todesbotin, Unheilverkünderin, Verführerin, Teufelsvogel, aber auch Symbol der Weisheit. Morris spürt Jahrtausenden von Legenden und Göttersagen nach, die sich um die Eule ranken, führt zahlreiche Beispiele aus Kunst und Literatur an, zeigt Eulen als Wappentiere und Markenzeichen und kommt am Ende schließlich zu den Tatsachen: wie und wo Eulen leben, jagen, balzen und Nachwuchs großziehen und welche Besonderheiten ihr Körperbau aufweist.

Ein Buch voller interessanter Fakten - wer weiß schon, dass Eulenaugen länglich und nicht kugelförmig sind? - und gleichzeitig eine spannende Reise durch eine lange Kulturgeschichte, reich illustriert mit zahlreichen, meist farbigen Eulenbildern aus mehreren Jahrhunderten. Hier und da hätte ich mir allerdings mehr naturgetreue Illustrationen gewünscht statt der historischen Darstellungen, die die jeweiligen Besonderheiten der einzelnen Arten nicht immer so gut vermitteln. Aber insgesamt ist das Büchlein ein kleines Schmuckstück und für Eulenliebhaber die perfekte Lektüre.

Rehab Mousa says

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H?n? says

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Joanna says

Inhalt:

Die Eule hat in den letzten Jahren einen Aufschwung erlebt: Überall finden sich Taschen, T-Shirts und Becher mit niedlichen Eulenfiguren. Doch davor war sie jahrhundertlang verhasst und verschrien. Wieso das?

Meine Meinung:

Im Buch "Eulen" aus dem Matthes & Seitz Verlag macht sich Desmond Morris auf die Suche nach der Eule. Oder dem "Mythos Eule". Denn seien wir mal ehrlich - wer von uns hat schon mal eine Eule gesehen. Nicht im Zoo oder in einem Harry Potter-Film, sondern eine freie, in der Natur lebende Eule. Eben.

Zuerst befasst sich der Autor mit den Eulen der Antike und Vorzeit und arbeitet sich langsam in die Neuzeit vor. Dabei sind vor allem die Erzählungen der unterschiedlichen Völker interessant und wie dieser Vogel weltweit wahrgenommen wurde. Hatte die Eule früher noch einen guten Ruf (Weisheit), verschlechterte sich dieser zunehmend und immer mehr und die Eule wurde mit dem Tod gleichgesetzt. Dieser Wandlung spürt Morris nach.

Auch die Kunst und die Literatur haben Eulen hervorgebracht und werden deshalb ebenfalls behandelt. Diverse Eulenportraits runden das Buch ab. Was "Eulen" und wahrscheinlich die gesamte Reihe "Naturkunden" so besonders macht, ist die schöne Aufmachung. Sehr viele Bilder. viele in Farbe, machen dieses Werk zu einem wahren Augenschmaus. Auch der Umschlag ist wundervoll gemacht und bibliophile Leute werden ihre Freude daran haben.

"Eulen" ist kein typisches Sachbuch, das uns erklärt, dass eine Schneeeule weiss ist und eher nördlich lebt, sondern eine Spurensuche. Es ist eine aufregende Reise in die Kulturgeschichte und das Sinnbild dieses faszinierenden Vogels.

Fazit:

Das perfekte Geschenk für bibliophile Eulenfreunde. Ein wunderschön aufgemachtes Buch mit sehr viel Inhalt auf wenig Seiten. "Eulen" lässt sich gut lesen, jedoch lebt es vor allem von den vielen wunderschönen

Illustrationen im Inneren.

Iskreads says

A forest is a mysterious place of wonder. Accompanying the smell of rotting bark and the setting sun shining through the leaves, you hear a soft hoot. You think of an owl, a bird with large eyes that hunts at night. But did you know that some owls are smaller than a dollar bill? Or that Pablo Picasso kept an owl as a pet? If you didn't, you should try Desmond Morris' Owl.

Owl is part of the enormous Animal series, a series of books each featuring a certain animal, all written by different authors. The series stretches from ants to whales, though I shall be discussing Owl.

Owl begins with a dramatic introduction in which Desmond Morris states both the fame and the obscurity of the owl, and recounts a moment during his childhood where an owl...well, that would be spoiling it...though this incident is probably what persuaded him to write the book.

The book has several chapters but I see four main sections of the book. The history of Owls, the symbolic role of owls, the personality of owls, and owls today. The first chapter begins with the author giving us some background information of prehistoric owls, with some fantastic pictures of ancient cave paintings. Then, we launch into part 2, of the book; book, legends, stories and myths involving owls. Then Mr. Morris begins to discuss owls today, appearances in pop culture or otherwise, types of owls and how they behave.

Some of the pictures in this book are really amazing. Mr. Morris has clearly only chosen the very finest photos and drawings of owls, which does in fact really add to the experience.

I have also noticed, while reading, that Mr. Morris has undoubtedly taken his time and been serious with this book. Probably the event with the owl in Morris' early life affected this. Maybe not. Either way, plenty of detail is included in the chapters of this book. Every African tribe, every totem pole, every key chain used for good luck. Desmond clearly wants to preach what he knows to us, and that truly is important in a book; that the author is keen to teach. All in all, this is an extremely accomplished book, and a fantastic way to look at one of the world's best loved birds from any angle you could imagine. Whether you are very knowledgeable about birds, or just interested in a slight way, Owl sure is a fantastic achievement.

aljouharah altheyyb says

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Mark says

Lovely little reflection on the history of the owl through culture and in nature. Easy to read, lovely to look at and quite informative though this book brings up the knotty problem for me of evolution and don't worry i am not denying evolution but only the struggle I still have with the by chance part of the theory. At one point Morris remarks how some butterflies have developed eye markings on their wings which they flutter so as to make predatory birds think they are owls and thus scare them away. I in no way deny the truth of this fact but its the whole process of how that came about. How does a butterfly decide ? I realize the argument is couched in terms of a freak accident which then, because it succeeds, becomes the norm because the freak butterfly reproduces whilst others get ' scoffed ' before reaching maturity. However this amount of chance and perfect environmental freakery coinciding at exactly the right time and in exactly the right place across the board in so many other species which developed and changed and became perfect for their various environments seems to me to involve more ' leaping in faith ' than does accepting the idea that there might be a higher power who is, if not steering and planning every alteration and change, at least involved. I have absolutely no problem with the theory of evolution and I am perfectly happy to accept and acknowledge that the wonder of our world has developed and changed over millions of years but personally i do not understand why this is seen as excluding the idea of a God who watches and guides. If you heard a noise then that was me climbing down off my soapbox...apologies

dejah_thoris says

Owls are interesting birds because most of us learn what they look like when we are children even if we never see one in real life. (I hear them at my house, but I've only seen a few in rehabilitation centers and none in the wild.) There is also very little confusion what characteristics make an owl an owl even despite the world having a wide variety of owl species. Morris explores both the light and dark sides of owl mythology as well as how we anthropomorphize animals in general. Morris also describes the natural lives of owls including the bizarre "mobbing" behavior exhibited by other birds towards owls that appear in the daytime. I definitely would recommend this book to anyone curious about owls and their ties to wisdom and witchcraft.

Benjamin says

I admit my personal bias had me on the owls' side before I ever read the first page. An owl lived in the oak tree outside my bedroom window when I was a kid. I have a cheesy owl coffee mug. I like owls as much as the "I like turtles" kid likes, well, turtles. Regardless, this volume from Reaktion (one of about thirty on different animals as diverse as fleas and sharks) traces not only the evolutionary trajectory of the owl, but its relationship with humankind from Owlie's first appearance in cave paintings. The author does an impressive job of contextualizing the mythological, literary, cultural, and artistic significance of the owl as well as noting a few of the more odd species and their behavior. Gorgeous photographs are scattered throughout the text as well. The only criticism I have is the author sometimes discusses a given work of art where Owlie makes more than a cameo, such as a painting or etching, but did not include an accompanying photograph. It was noteworthy enough that I began to wonder why Morris included some photographs and not others. Overall, this is a minor blip in a work I otherwise highly recommend.

