



The Life of Mammals

David Attenborough

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Of marsupials, mice and men. Evolution, and Sir David Attenborough's 23-year sequence of books and BBC television 'Life' films, have culminated in the mammals and the explosion of awareness and intelligence. In the very short period of 100 million years - a mere blink in evolutionary time - the first mammals have arrived at world dominance.

This came largely from hair and milk. Insulation and central heating made them adaptable to any surroundings. Care of the young led to learning and bigger brains. Otters, camels, lions, foxes and sheep, moles underground, whales at sea, bats in the air, polar bears, antelope, squirrels, mice, monkeys and man have exploited every habitat and every food source - the basis of this new narrative.

David Attenborough has also evolved. In his 50 years of planning, writing and making television programmes of the first quality, he has constantly deepened his and our understanding of life on earth. This new book and its accompanying series of remarkable films in many ways crown his work. Vision, enthusiasm and the ability to share knowledge in an enthralling way - the gifts of an outstanding teacher.

The Life of Mammals Details

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Author : David Attenborough

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From Reader Review The Life of Mammals for online ebook

Eilidh says

I originally got and started reading this book about fifteen years ago (when I was 13!!) as I had enjoyed the TV series of the same name. I didn't get all that far through it, so for the better part of a decade and a half it has sat unread. I'm really glad to have read it now though. There are two main selling points to this book: 1. The photography is beautiful, and 2. You can hear David Attenborough's voice in your head as you read it. It's readable, interesting and informative. Those who celebrated Attenborough's statement at the end of the recent Blue Planet II series regarding humans and our treatment of the earth will appreciate the fact that he did the same at the end of this book. As a Christian, there are things he takes as fact (specifically human evolution) that I just cannot get onboard with. Equally well as a Christian, it was fascinating and exciting to read about how bright and beautiful each creature (great and small) is. I would recommend this book based purely on the two points I made before - great photography and David Attenborough.

Nathan Sinclair says

Very enjoyable read, and written in a way that makes it impossible not to hear Attenborough in my head as I read. But I was pretty surprised to see a fair amount of errors in the text, in terms of incorrect words and sentences that were difficult to make sense of. Stuff that should have been picked up in proofreading. I expected better, to be honest.

Susan says

Of course I'm going to pick up a book with an Amur tiger on the cover...

I have not seen the 10 episode Discovery Channel series that goes along with this book, but let me tell you, the book stands on its own. The most diverse of the vertebrates, mammals include the largest animals on earth (blue whales), animals that fly (bats), and animals that can eat almost any type of food. The author makes sense of this diversity by dividing mammals into easily understandable groups and explaining how evolution has shaped the lives of each of these groups of mammals. Attenborough discusses what makes a mammal a mammal, then goes on to discuss the varying lifestyles of mammalian species.

The text itself is very easy to read. The writing style is engaging and informative, and no previous knowledge of biology or zoology is needed to understand this book. Attenborough caters to a very broad audience, and does not try to confuse the reader with lots of scientific terminology. [The Life of Mammals](#) would be very good reading for anyone interested in animals and mammals in general.

From learning about the navigation methods of bats and the special habits of meat eaters to understanding the natural history of water mammals, this book provides a focus which contrasts environments and evolutionary processes, and makes for an important and innovative guide. Heavily illustrated with beautiful photographs, this is a terrific introduction to the wonders of our hairy, milk-producing relatives.

Lavina says

Of all the people I've never met and would like to meet, David Attenborough is probably my all-time favorite. The pictures in this book are incredible (the BBC series even better). I immediately decided to buy this after seeing the photo of the pygmy anteater on page 217. It's amazing.

Drew Pyke says

This is my first Attenborough book which was a really interesting read, although some chapters more than others. The facts about why mammals get big, hairy, get big ears, smaller noses, go different colours, lose their limbs or change shape because of the food they eat and the environment they live in is very detailed without being academic. The piece about how humans had an amphibious stage in our evolution was particularly extraordinary. Well worth reading, although not ideal for the train as it's too big and the amount of photos in it suggests you're reading a picture book!

Tra-Kay says

The Life of Mammals is not a difficult book. It took me two days to read it in my spare time, despite its 300+ pages and large size. It is extraordinarily rich in photographs: almost one for every two pages. It is very well-written and gosh, it's such a relief to find a book on animals that doesn't use complex scientific language! It begins with a chapter titled, "A Winning Design", and discusses the origin and characteristics of mammals, followed by a pattern that will continue for the rest of the book: the introduction of a kind of animal, followed by information on it and possibly an anecdote, among other things.

From the start it is absolutely wonderful and fascinating, introducing the habits and appearance of the echidna, which to my astonishment is an ancient egg-laying mammal that resembles a hedgehog. This leads to the platypus and we sort of carry on from there, spending at most three pages on any one species, but usually only about 1/2 a page. As you can image, quite a lot of startling habits and new creatures are introduced!

The only complaint I have I will address now, and that's that every animal is described as if it's new to us. This is cool for things like the African civet or Eastern quoll, but it is kind of annoying for well-known animals like leopards, wolves and pandas. However it is only mildly annoying since there's something new to be learned about everything.

My favorite characteristics of this book were the occasional discussions of evolution - the REASON behind an animal having a certain intelligence or design, etc.; the very easy-to-follow organization (beginning with chapters like "Chisellers" or "Meat-Eaters" but later branching into things like "The Opportunists" and "The Social Climbers"); naturally the plethora of photographs; and the abundance of great descriptions of behaviors. Also quite fun was the way the author talks as if he saw all of this stuff himself. At one point he was describing how a person by themselves simply cannot pull a certain animal off a branch...as soon as you get one leg free, it grabs with another. I had to wonder, "Did you TRY it??"

The Life of Mammals ends with too many pages on monkeys for my tastes, but I was really thrilled with the final chapter on Earth's most complex animals: us!

Attenborough approaches human beings as if they were just another mammal, describing not us city-dwelling peoples (just as he does not describe the housecat but the wild cat) but tribal and ancient peoples. I was really fascinated by the explanations for why WE are built like we are. Altogether it's a fun, quite informative, and easy read that anyone from age 12 to 100 could enjoy.

Lastly: an excerpt, as example (and because this is crazy):

"The European stoat is not a large animal, only about a foot long from the tip of its nose to the end of its slim, sinuous, softly-furred body. It is brown above and cream beneath, with a short four-inch-long black-tipped tail. It weighs only about a tenth as much as a rabbit. Yet it hunts them. Crouching in the long grass, it creeps close to unsuspecting victim sitting not far from its burrow. Once within range, the stoat deliberately shows itself. It starts to dance, leaping up and down apparently chasing its own tail. It somersaults. It bounces up again and makes a back flip. The rabbit, maybe only a couple of yards or so away, is transfixed. It stops nibbling and stares with bulging eyes at this extraordinary performance. Suddenly the stoat bursts out from the grass, stabs its teeth into the back of the rabbit's neck smashing the rear end of its skull. The rabbit's legs twitch for a few moments. Then it slumps motionless. It is dead and the stoat begins the laborious business of hauling the great slack body back to its burrow."

Cleo Logue says

Gorgeous. Wonderful.

Devilyn (Emily) says

A book based on the TV documentary series by David Attenborough, it was a must have. And i wasn't disappointed. Easy to read and the beautiful pictures make it simple for children and enjoyable for anyone who likes or is interested in knowing anything about animals.

Greg says

Karen gives great gifts!!

She gave me this book along with a fox bookmark for my birthday last year, and it only took me about fifteen months to read through the book in its entirety! Here is my copy of the book and the bookmark:

I love this book so much!! and like most things I really love, I am terrible about bringing myself to enjoy them. Instead of just gulping it down I drag out my enjoyment, or think, "no, now is not the right time to dip into this book again, you'll enjoy it sometime more in the future." This method of prolonged gratification works ok with books, it doesn't work so well with other things, like food, that I have an awful tendency to never get around to enjoying before time has rendered it inedible.

Except for the last chapter and a half that I read today, I've gone back and read parts of this book multiple times. It's not the most in-depth foray into animals out there, but it's charming, interesting, and photograph after photograph is amazing.

The book is a companion to David Attenborough's documentary of the same name, and if you've seen the documentary, you have already seen and heard everything in this book, but that didn't diminish my enjoyment one bit. I could at any time go back and watch some of the episodes from the documentary on

Netflix, or I could just dip into these pages to re-visit, say the story about the elephants who make the nighttime journey to caves to lick salt off the walls (I don't know why I like that particular story so much, but it was a highlight of the documentary for me).

So, I'm finally actually done with the book, but I'm sure I'll be leafing through the book again soon. Now I need to find another animal book to read for the next year and a half!

Thank you again, Karen!!

AND HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!! EVERYONE SHOULD GIVE YOU PRESENTS AND VOTES TODAY!!!

Lucinda says

This beautiful book is filled with universal knowledge and understanding on Marsupials, mice and men which is brought vividly to life with the most stunning photographs. It is an explosion of awareness and intelligence that has been culminated through David Attenborough's twenty three year sequence of books and BBC television 'life' films, that cannot fail to astonish and blow you away. This book and its accompanying series of remarkable films contain vision, enthusiasm, passion and the ability for the author to share his knowledge in a most enthralling way that presents itself to the reader as a gift from an outstanding teacher. As an animal lover I fell in love instantly with this book which has a tremendous amount of information crammed into one small single volume, that was truly inspired and so intriguing that I was completely captivated by it. David Attenborough is a natural historian who doesn't just inform you on the world but rather he takes you on the most exciting journey of discovery where you can literally see, smell and hear what he is describing in a most vivid way that demonstrated such energy; created by the writer's passion and enthusiasm. From the young being born, how they adapt to life around them and evolution, this book contains everything that you will need to know on such dominating creatures on planet Earth. Otters, Camels, Lions, Foxes and Sheep, Moles underground, Wales at sea, Bats in the air etcetera and man have exploited every habitat and every food source hence being the basis for this new narrative. This is such a great book by one of the most influential, admired and best-liked figures in English television, who loves to travel the world looking at the natural world surrounding us and trying to understand it. This has to be a must have book for any animal lover, that opens a door onto the world around us and as you step through I guarantee that you will be completely shocked, stunned and blown away by what you read about in a whole new light that goes into so much detail as to empower those readers who love wildlife and who are proud of our planet. A remarkable book by a completely remarkable man, and one that I intend to re-read again and again thus taking a trip of discovery and enlightenment.

Claire says

Une inconditionnelle de Sir David Attenborough. Excellent comme a son habitude.

Mallory says

A great, easy to read book about many types of mammals and their strategies for survival. These books are written as a possible guide for the "Life of Mammals" documentary series, but they boast a lot of added

information and unique photographs. Besides all this, I love me some David Attenborough.

Ikhwanussafa Sadidan says

GREAT

Sam says

This is a thorough and comprehensive look at the evolution of mammals and how this has controlled their diet and visa-versa. Each chapter looks at a different mammal group showing the interconnections between them, their diet and their surroundings. As ever Attenborough manages to make sure that no reader is left behind on this epic journey through the world of mammals, including us as animals too (hate to break it to ya, but we are). Not to mention plenty of amazing photographs throughout to show just what each section is talking about, and to fully illustrate the diversity of this awesome group of animals.

Lucy says

Attenborough, a highly acclaimed TV documentary presenter and naturalist, lets his findings, and those of experts all around the world, flourish in this book on mammals - a written version of his nature documentary series with the same title. From the great blue whale to the tiny pygmy shrew, Attenborough's book covers many corners of mammals' lives (individually and collectively): adaptation, reproduction, social and foraging behaviour, evolution and more. Ultimately, we are led to question not only the history of our species but also the impact we have on the vitality of the future for all life on earth.
