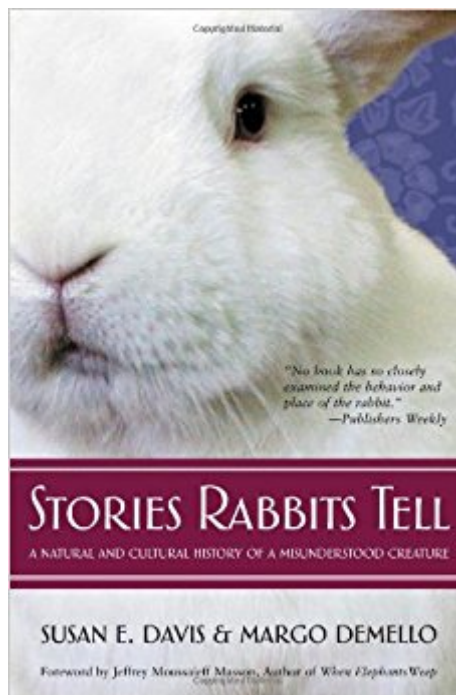




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Stories Rabbits Tell: A Natural And Cultural History Of A Misunderstood Creature



Synopsis

Revered as a symbol of fertility, sexuality, purity and childhood, beloved as a children's pet and widely represented in the myths, art and collectibles of almost every culture, the rabbit is one of the most popular animals known to humans. Ironically, it has also been one of the most misunderstood and abused. Indeed, the rabbit is the only animal that our culture adores as a pet, idolizes as a storybook hero and slaughters for commercial purposes. *Stories Rabbits Tell* takes a comprehensive look at the rabbit as a wild animal, ancient symbol, pop culture icon, commercial "product" and domesticated pet. In so doing, the book explores how one species can be simultaneously adored as a symbol of childhood (think Peter Rabbit), revered as a symbol of female sexuality (e.g., Playboy Bunnies), dismissed as a "dumb bunny" in domesticity and loathed as a pest in the wild. The authors counter these stereotypes with engaging analyses of real rabbit behavior, drawn both from the authors' own experience and from academic studies, and place those behaviors in the context of current debates about animal consciousness. In a detailed investigative section, the authors also describe conditions in the rabbit meat, fur, pet and vivisection industries, and raise important questions about the ethics of treating rabbits as we do. The first book of its kind, *Stories Rabbits Tell* provides invaluable information and insight into the life and history of an animal whom many love, but whom most of us barely know. As such, it is a key addition to the current thinking on animal emotions, intelligences and welfare, and the way that human perceptions influence the treatment of individual species.

Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Lantern Books (August 1, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1590560442

ISBN-13: 978-1590560440

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.9 x 8.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 49 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #660,348 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #131 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Pets & Animal Care > Mice, Hamsters & Guinea Pigs #151 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Pets & Animal Care > Rabbits #213 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Zoology > Mammals

Customer Reviews

"Most people approach rabbits as if they were stuffed animals: cute, but not capable of much except, maybe, eating carrots and twitching their noses," note Davis (writer and rabbit owner) and DeMello (president of the House Rabbit Society), who present quite a different picture: rabbits (and hares) are complex, social creatures intertwined with human culture. To date, no book has so closely examined the behavior and place of the rabbit-as pet, prey, pest and mythic figure-in history. As the only animal Westerners use as both pet and meat, the rabbit reflects some of our most unsettling cultural contradictions. Part literary companion, with analyses of rabbits in art and literature from poet William Cowper to Beatrix Potter, and part clear-eyed review of facts on rabbit "industry" and rabbit biology, this volume imparts insight into the genesis of pet keeping, the fur industry and the permutations of rabbits in folklore. With colorful anecdotes (including one about introducing Jack, a rabbit grieving for his mate, to new friends), this absorbing book opens the door on the realm of all things lagomorph. The prevalence of rabbits in folklore (as fools, mischief makers and sexualized witches) reveals just how much baggage this small creature has carried, up through the age of the Playboy Bunny. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The rabbit has been domesticated for roughly 1,500 years, but until fairly recently they were not kept as house pets; the traditional pet rabbit was caged in a hutch outdoors. The rise of "house rabbits" that live uncaged indoors and the dearth of books written about rabbit behavior led Davis and DeMello to create a book that explores the roots and nuances of rabbit behavior to increase our understanding and appreciation of the species. Whether exploring our schizophrenic approach to rabbits (Are they pets, pests, or a profitable farm animal?), portraying the complex lives of wild rabbits and the corresponding behaviors of their tame brethren, discussing the roles rabbits have played in folklore and religion, or describing the commercial uses for rabbits, the authors reveal a fascinating depth of information. Enlivened by a broad range of quotations from such sources as poets, scientists, and animal-rights activists; illustrated with period and modern photographs; and heavily footnoted, this is currently the best book to offer readers who want to know more about their pet rabbits. Nancy BentCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

This fascinating work exposes the often complex relationship between man and rabbits. I was particularly enthralled with the cultural history the authors presented. The author takes us through the mythical stories our ancestors believed about lagomorphs through to modern medical and cosmetic testing. This is not a watered down history. The authors do not try to sugar coat what we

do with rabbits or animals in general. If you are an animal lover you will appreciate this book.

Stories Rabbits Tell is exactly what the title promises: a natural and cultural history of a misunderstood creature. When I ordered this book I was not expecting it to be as comprehensive as it is, and I was quite pleased. This book traces the history of the rabbit as a pet, food source, literary symbol, and sadly, as a misunderstood and all-too-often abused and neglected animal. The rabbit is the only animal in Western culture that is accepted both as a food source and a family pet, this juxtaposition speaks to the misunderstood nature of this animal. I recommend this book to anyone who is interested in animals, rabbits, literature, sociology, and anthropology. Truly a wonderful book.

I have always been impressed by this book from the first time I ever read it. It was apparently impressive enough to someone else that I found I had my first copy stolen, and I am now on my second copy. What impresses me most about this book is not that the authors themselves live with companion rabbits, nor is it their myriad qualifications for its writing. It is not their controversial coverage of the commercial meat and pet industries, and neither is it of the research and experimental industries. It is not even the clinical lessons from anthropologic and cross-cultural research. I am most impressed by the fact that this book was ever written at all. I am most impressed that this book, once written, ever saw publication. Rabbits are an almost globally reviled animal; their only redeeming attributes being their hoppy legs and wiggly noses, round faces and wide eyes, suitable only for the subject of anthropomorphosizing these characteristics for children's books. Yet it is that same round face with wide eyes that goads us on to greater and greater acts of pesticidal warfare. To many, they are simply unworthy of any sort of cultural or historical study. This book, its authors, and its publishers, disagree. The book is an interesting social study of these opposing aspects of the rabbit. Part delight, and part despair, part childhood friend and part adult foe, rabbits and their roles in human history are an interesting study in human cultural contradiction, which is the pervasive theme of the book. Many have become so bogged down in their joy or anger over specific chapters of the book that the overall theme of the book has become lost in personal interests. I respectfully disagree with some that the agenda of the authors in the chapters regarding animal testing, breeding and the commercial meat industry is to advocate animal rights. I do believe that the authors are interested in animal welfare, however. There is a difference. This debate among the reviews is neither here nor there in relation to the subject of the book. Whatever you believe the authors intended with those chapters is irrelevant. The book's overall aim is to guide the reader through our cultural views of the rabbit, in all their glorious confliction. This is what makes this book

worth reading. The authors never deny they have a bias; they live with companion rabbits and are bound to have certain feelings on specific subjects. They make that clear. They also present the facts gathered on each topic in relation to the underlying theme of the book, which is the more important aspect of this exercise. In this they have succeeded. They draw no conclusion, leaving it open to the reader to decide how they feel about rabbits now that they have an understanding of them and their history within our culture. They obviously hope that their readers come away from the experience changed, yet they leave that change open to the reader's discretion as to if they come out in favor of rabbits, against them, or, like most of us, a mixture of both. The authors are realistic in their expectations that the majority of their readers will have had some interest in rabbits in the first place to have made the decision to pick up the book. Those who have no interest in rabbits (and they are the majority of the populace) will most likely choose not to read about them at all. However, it is these readers, should they decide to delve into the world of the rabbit, that will be the least emotionally invested in any particular chapter to appreciate the overall arc of the book; that we as humans are capable of, in equal parts, loving and hating another creature so much that we iconize and demonize them in one breath.

Comprehensive view of rabbits from all angles. Hard to read the chapter on the farming of rabbits, but the info needed to be put out there for all to see.

Interesting, I learned a lot. Some information was difficult to read (sad) overall a good book.

Best rabbit book I've read yet. Lots of history and great contemporary stories about bunnies too. Highly recommend this book!

Kid loves it

"Stories Rabbits Tell" continues where R. M. Lockley stopped in "The Private Life of the Rabbit." The authors describe the behaviors of both wild and domestic rabbits and provided interesting history about the rabbit/human relationship. This book is exactly what it claims to be. It is a book for pet rabbit lovers by pet rabbit lovers. Those who make profit off of rabbits might be offended by this book. Both of the authors are deeply involved with the House Rabbit Society, a rabbit rescue and education organization. If you love rabbits as pets and want to learn about wild and domestic behavior, this book is for you. If you want to learn about the rabbit in literature, poetry, religion, and

as a cultural icon, this is a good book. If you're hoping to read the glorified version of the rabbit production industry, look elsewhere.

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