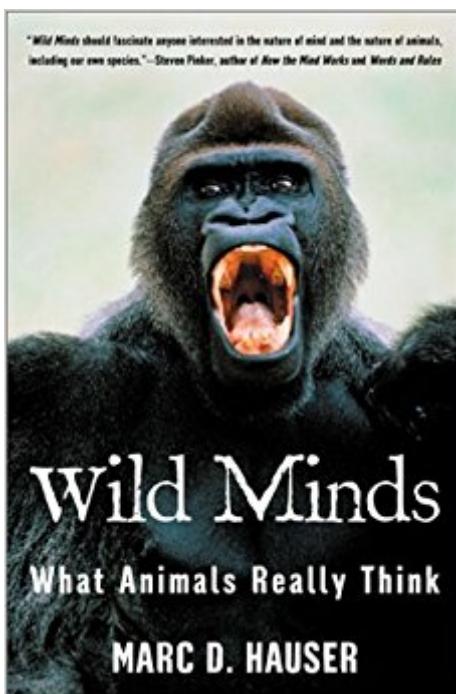


The book was found

Wild Minds: What Animals Really Think



Synopsis

Do animals think? Can they count? Do they have emotions? Do they feel anger, frustration, hurt, or sorrow? At last, here is a book that provides authoritative answers to these long-standing questions. Most popular science books tend to misrepresent animals, presenting them either as furry little humans or as creatures that cannot feel at all. Marc D. Hauser, an acclaimed scientist in the field of animal cognition, uses insights from evolutionary theory and cognitive science to examine animal thought without such biases or preconceptions. Hauser treats animals neither as machines devoid of feeling nor as extensions of humans, but as independent beings driven by their own complex impulses. In prose that is both elegant and edifying, Hauser describes his groundbreaking research in the field, leading his readers on what David Premack, author of *The Mind of an Ape*, calls "a masterful tour of the animal mind."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Vervet monkeys make one cry when a cheetah approaches; a different cry when an eagle flies overhead, and yet another cry when a human is near. It's a pity Marc Hauser makes no attempt, Edgar-Rice-Burroughs-style, to transliterate that last cry: I'd like to know the vervet word for "human". But though Hauser acknowledges the many species that exchange sounds that are very close to being "words", he argues convincingly that they do not have language. That's disappointing, of course, for those of us with that Dr Doolittle urge for closer communication with animals, but clearly how things are. And despite the subtitle "What animals really think" Hauser

concludes that we are too different ever to truly know that: not only will we never settle down with a lion or dog and exchange views about politics and sex and art; but much of their behaviour will remain enigmatic to us. We simply can't imagine or empathise our way into knowing what they are thinking. Many people, anthropomorphising wildly, like to imagine that they can. But there are always alternative explanations for animal behaviour, and no way of checking which is the correct one. Nor do animals have a "moral sense", as is argued in the final section of the book. Though animals do cooperate, and will sacrifice themselves or their interests for the benefit of others. On that question I'm not so sure that the animal form of "ethics" is really qualitatively different from the human, despite the cultural ideas we heap up around concepts of "morality". But that's an argument about human thought, and therefore outside the scope of the book. In some ways the earliest parts of the book are the most interesting.

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