

RECOMMENDED ANIMAL BEHAVIOR BOOKS
(Reading Levels: E=fairly easy A=average C=challenging)
Compiled by Barry Fox, Science Consultant
NY Performance Standards Consortium

1. Adamson, Joy. 2000. Born Free: A Lioness of Two Worlds. Pantheon.

The story of how Joy Adamson and her husband George raised an orphaned lioness and taught her how to survive in the wild. Immensely popular. (E)

2. Caras, Roger. 1989. A Cat is Watching: A Look at the Way Cats See Us. Simon and Schuster.

An introduction to the understanding of feline behavior with special attention to the workings of a cat's five senses. Filled with personal anecdotes, raising questions for further reading. (E)

3. Caras, Roger. 1993. A Dog is Listening: The Way Some of Our Closest Friends View Us.

Similar approach to the understanding of canine behavior as presented in A Cat is Watching with greater emphasis on physiology. Includes information on canine evolution and behaviors of specific breeds. (A)

4. Corson, Trevor. 2005. The Secret Life of Lobsters: How Fishermen and Scientists are Unraveling the Mysteries of Our Favorite Crustacean. Harper.

Everything for the lobster enthusiast—especially the social (and sex) life of lobsters. Contains many humorous passages. (E-A)

5. deWaal, Franz. 1998. Chimpanzee Politics: Power and Sex Among Apes. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Explains what chimpanzee social behavior can tell us about the way we behave. Very readable; very popular. (A)

6. Fogle, Bruce. 1990. The Dog's Mind. Macmillan.

Devoted entirely to examining the psychology of the canine mind—its anatomy, physiology, and psychology, including learning and social behaviors. Very informative. (A)

7. Fossey, Dian. 1983. Gorillas in the Mist. Houghton, Mifflin.

Dian Fossey's account of her thirteen years of field research investigating the behavior of the mountain gorilla that ended with her tragic attempts to save it from extinction. (A)

8. Goodall, Jane. 1988. In the Shadow of Man. Houghton, Mifflin.

Jane Goodall's classic pioneering account of her early years observing chimpanzee behavior. Includes many photographs. (A)

9. Goodall, Jane. 1990. Through a Window. Houghton, Mifflin.

Jane Goodall's reflections on her thirty years of researching chimpanzee behavior, her pioneering discoveries, and the need for chimpanzee conservation and sanctuaries. (A)

10. Gordon, David. 1996. The Compleat Cockroach. Ten Speed Press.

Everything you could possibly want to know about the bug's behavior. An entertaining read but can get technical. (A-C)

11. Grandin, Temple. 2000. Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior. Harcourt.

An unusual approach to the study of animal behavior written by a woman with autism who has a Ph.D. in Animal Science. Includes facts and anecdotes about the behaviors of many animals with an emphasis on farm animals. (E)

12. Judson, Olivia. 2002. Dr. Tatiana's Sex Advice to All Creation. Holt.

A wide range of creatures—from lice to lions—write letters to sex expert Dr. Tatiana seeking advice to help them with their sexual behavioral “problems.” Extremely entertaining and informative. (A)

13. Heinrich, Bernd. 1999. Mind of the Raven. HarperCollins.

A very readable and informative account of the behavior of this highly intelligent bird. Some of the behaviors discussed are: mating and parental, social, hunting, sensory, and learning. (E-A)

14. McConnell, Patricia. 2007. For the Love of a Dog: Understanding the Emotions in You and Your Best Friend. Ballantine.

The author argues that canine behavior is a reflection of the animal's emotions and that ascribing human emotions to nonhumans (anthropomorphism) is a valid way of approaching the study of animal behavior. (A)

15. Moussaieff-Mason, Jeffrey and Susan McCarthy. 1995. When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals. Delta.

More "evidence" that a variety of animals—from alligators to wolves—experience human emotions. Very popular. (A)

16. Mowat, Farley. 2001. Never Cry Wolf. Little, Brown and Co.

The author's story of how he lived with wolves in the Canadian Arctic, the myths about wolves that he dispelled, and his unorthodox research methods. Very popular. (A)

17. O'Brien, Stacey. 2009. Wesley the Owl. Free Press.

The behavior of the owl as told by a wildlife rescuer who "fell in love with a four-day-old barn owl," especially its predatory behavior. The author's conversational tone makes the book very readable. (E-A)

18. Pepperberg, Irene. 2009. Alex and Me. Harper.

A Harvard animal cognition professor's study of an African Grey parrot spanning a thirty-year relationship. Very entertaining account of the amazing learning capacity and intelligence of the celebrity parrot that was "smarter than the average U.S. president." (E)

19. Pryor, Karen. 2004. Lads Before the Wind. Sunshine Books.

A behavioral biologist relates her groundbreaking techniques training and communicating with captive dolphins and her pioneering discoveries in dolphin learning and thinking behaviors. Very readable. (E)

20. Savage-Rumbaugh, Sue and Roger Lewin. 1994. Kanzi: The Ape at the Brink of the Human Mind. John Wiley and Sons.

A fascinating account of a primatologist's study of language acquisition in the bonobo chimpanzee. Raises controversial questions about the nature of nonhuman primate "language." (A-C)

21. Sullivan, Robert. 2004. Rats: Observations on the History and Habitat of the City's Most Unwanted Inhabitants. Bloomsbury.

The results of the author's year-long investigation observing rats in a New York City alleyway. Intriguing and extremely readable; filled with surprising information about rat behavior. (A)

22. Thomas, Elizabeth Marshall. 1993. The Hidden Life of Dogs. Pocket Books (Simon and Schuster).

Using what some scientists might consider unorthodox methods, an anthropologist researches the question, "How might dogs conduct themselves if left undisturbed in normal circumstances?" An introduction to the study of canine behavior which raises questions for further reading. Very readable. (E)

23. Thomas, Elizabeth Marshall. 2000. The Social Life of Dogs. Pocket Books (Simon and Schuster).

The sequel to The Hidden Life of Dogs, in which the author observes her own household pets to investigate the answers to frequently asked questions that dog lovers have about canine social behaviors. (E)