



The Hidden Lives of Owls: The Science and Spirit of Nature's Most Elusive Birds

Leigh Calvez

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A naturalist probes the forest, mainly at night, to comprehend the secret lives of owls in this book that will appeal to readers of "Crow Planet" and "H is for Hawk." Join Leigh Calvez on adventures into the world of owls: owl-watching, avian science, and the deep forest often in the dead of night. These birds are a bit mysterious, and that's part of what makes them so fascinating. Calvez makes the science entertaining and accessible while exploring the questions about the human-animal connection, owl obsession, habitat, owl calls, social behavior, and mythology."

The Hidden Lives of Owls: The Science and Spirit of Nature's Most Elusive Birds Details

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Author : Leigh Calvez

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From Reader Review The Hidden Lives of Owls: The Science and Spirit of Nature's Most Elusive Birds for online ebook

Austin Dobrik says

Owls are boring as shit, this is just the story of some lady walking around the forest and feeling deeply connected to birds after they look at her.

Steven Howes says

Owls are amazing creatures. They hold a special place in many cultures around the world partly because they are not always easy to observe and the fact that they are efficient predators and can inflict instant death upon those unfortunate creatures found lower down the food chain. Their mostly nocturnal habits also adds to their mystique.

This is an excellent book for those who are not biologists or ornithologists but may have an interest in birds in general or birds of prey in particular. It does a good job of mixing science with descriptions of the feelings one gets when blessed with the opportunity to observe these birds up close.

I have been fortunate to have been able to observe most of the large owls. However most of the small owls have eluded me. However I learned a few things in this book that may help me find them in the future. Through my volunteer work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, I have had the opportunity to trap and band young and adult burrowing owls. It truly is an amazing feeling to hold one of them in your hands and have several million years of evolution staring back at you with those big yellow eyes (or blue if they are very young).

Bruce says

A very nice read. Science mixed with a naturalist's interpretations and emotions presented in clear text. Knowing many of the locations and a few of the people in the stories made this book very real and enjoyable for me. My own feelings toward owls were intensified and somewhat clarified.

Caty Clifton says

Well done, an experienced naturalist's beautiful and personal stories of these amazing birds in our world, their natural habits and superpowers. Thanks to my friend Bruce for sharing this book.

Katja says

I really enjoyed this book and finished it pretty quickly. I thought some of the more personal parts were a bit

misplaced and silly, but it didn't keep me from enjoying the book as a whole. I learned a lot, and it was not hard to read. I recommend this to anyone who wants a lighthearted and educational book on some cute owls.

Karyl says

Insights from An Owl:

Keep only what is useful. Regurgitate the rest.
Be patient. Eventually something will move.
Learn through play.
Only one out of four or five tries yields a mouse. Never give up.
Accept help when it is offered.
Adapt to stay resilient.
Travel every four to six months.
Take time to sit and observe.
Death is a necessary ingredient in life. Accept the transformation.
Never foul your own nest.
Parenthood is temporary.
The Great Gray Owl does not see what the Great Horned Owl sees. Perspective is everything.
Withhold judgment. Nature does not take sides.
Where you live is not nearly as important as where you are alive.

As with many people, I'm fascinated by owls. But it's been a casual fascination; I've never taken the time to really learn about these birds of prey. Fortunately I saw Caldez's book on a display at my local library, so I picked it up and learned quite a bit.

Some tidbits I learned from this book: that the "satellite dish" arrangement of their facial feathers funnel sound toward their ears, which are positioned asymmetrically so as to make it easier for the owl to pinpoint its prey's location, that mothers have a bald spot on their bellies called a brood patch where the owlets snuggle to keep warm before they're able to regulate their own temperatures, that most owls (though not all) begin incubating their eggs as soon as they're laid which results in a clutch of chicks of differing ages, that there is even a diurnal owl called the Northern Pygmy Owl that defies much of what is attributed to owls in general.

I enjoyed the organization of this book, with each chapter given over to a particular type of owl, with the beginning of the chapter including scientific information on that species of owl, and the rest of the chapter describing Caldez's personal experiences with that type of owl. At times Caldez gets a bit heavy-handed about saving these birds and their habitats, but it's hard not to do when you become so close to an animal and you are able to witness it in its own environment.

The illustrations by Tony Angell are absolutely beautiful and add quite a lot to this book.

Highly recommended to anyone who is interested in owls.

Tara Choate says

I was originally going to give this 4 stars because the first chapters were pretty clinical (amazing, full of info, but clinical); author goes out and find owls and describes the process. But the last couple of chapters brought a personal element that I really enjoyed which lifted it up.

I would recommend this to any bird lover, environmental enthusiast, or Pacific NW-er (you'll enjoy seeing places you know).

Miladylola says

"Czy zdaj?c sobie z tego spraw?, by?am gotowa wybra? pomi?dzy jednym a drugim gatunkiem, aby dokona? "wyboru Zofii" pomi?dzy gatunkami?"

For fuck's sake WYBORU ZOFII?!?!

Pisz o sowach, a nie o swoich kruchych emocjach dotyczc?cych ptaków. Taaa pewnie te? bym dosta?a amoku, jakby mi dali potrzyma? sow?, bo s? taaaakie pi?kne, ale no do cholery, to mia?a by? ksi??ka o ptakach. A by?a o rozmocjonowanej i patetycznej kobiecie, która widz?c ptaszory nad sterta ?miecic czu?a z nimi powinowactwo dusz. W rzuci mam twoj? dusz?, chce czyta? o kluciu asynchronicznym i szlarach.

Carlo Ruggiero says

Was hoping for more information about the owls themselves; this book is more about the author's search for, and experience with, various species of them in the wild mostly in Washington State.

There are some interesting stories, but it was not quite what I expected.

Anastasia says

A highly personal introduction to owls by a naturalist who travels to places in North America where she comes face to face with these amazing birds. Touches on both positive and negative roles human beings are playing in owl species survival.

I found out more informative than captivating but still head and shoulders above a dry textbook-style read.

S. M. says

I pine for the days when books like this were written by people who were actual professionals on the subject.

Apparently now all you need to get a best-selling science/nature book published is to be a half-enthusiastic amateur who's happy to yammer on and on about mundane philosophical thoughts that most of us had when we were 12, or prater randomly about your uninteresting life and family.

Edith says

1 1/2 stars. Do yourself a favor: If you are thinking of reading a personal journal of encounters with owls, read Tony Angell's "The House of Owls," not this book. If you want to read of a genuine and serious encounter with a bird of prey, read "H is for Hawks," not this book. The only things to recommend "Hidden Lives" are indeed the wonderful illustrations by Tony Angell. (Actually as an object, this book is a handsomely produced one, on nice paper and well designed.)

Why didn't I like this book? First, this book is not really about owls, it's about Ms. Calvez, and her reactions to owls and other people. This wouldn't necessarily be an issue if she were a better writer, but Ms. Calvez is a poor stylist and a clumsy writer. Second, the information about owls is scattered all over the place, which might not be annoying to some readers, but it was to me. Third, this book could have used some maps.

Fourth, and most serious, she seems to suffer from a complete lack of imagination about what it might be to be an owl. She seems not to have figured out that owls, like any other living being, are driven by biological imperatives. Owls do not "adopt" their plumage, any more than humans "adopt" their skin colors. "One of my favorite qualities of wild species is just that--they are wild," she says. "They are free to move about the earth in their own time for their own purpose, a luxury that we as humans rarely experience. They come and they go as they please, showing up sometimes where we least expect them." This is the thinking of a child. Owls are no more free to do what they wish (if we could imagine what might be the equivalent of wishing in an owl) than any other creature who must find food, shelter, a mate, and raise young. If I wished to spend time with someone who thought this way, I would find myself a real child, and go owling with him or her. It would be a much more genuine and illuminating experience than spending time with this author and this book.

Maureen says

This is a good and well written resource if you're interested in owls. The author followed a group of wildlife biologists as they studied, counted and banded the owls in the pacific northwest. Calvez says that you sense a sense of wisdom and trust as you look into each other, human and owl. In the end the owl's message is one of transformation.

Monika says

Ksi??ka jest podzielona na podrozdzia??y o poszczególnych gatunkach sów wyst??puj??cych w Ameryce Pó?nocnej, sk??d pochodzi autorka.

Wola??abym chyba mie? t? ksi??k? podzielon? w inny sposób - np. wg kryterium wygl??du i cech charakterystycznych dla ró?nych gatunków, sposobu l?gu, ró?nic w zak?adaniu gniazd itd.

Autorka nie jest profesjonalnym ornitologiem, wi?c opowiada j?zykiem nie specjalistycznym. Jednocze?nie wprowadza kilka poj??, które przydaj? si? przy rozmawianiu o ptakach, a sowach w szczególno?ci (jak np.

szlara, lotki).

W niektórych miejscach mam poczucie niekonsekwencji - raz ksi??ka bardzo powierzchownie traktuje pewne tematy, a raz jest niebywale drobiazgowa (jak np. przy dokonywaniu pomiarów opisuje szczegó?owo od którego pióra do której kostki dokonuje si? pomiaru, albo podaje ?aci?skie nazwy ro?linno?ci).

Ponadto, wed?ug mnie niepotrzebne by?y tu osobiste wtr?ty typu, rozmowa z sowami, opis emocji w trakcie czekania na obserwacj?, ?zy wzruszenia itd.

Poza tymi powy?szymi wadami, ksi??ka mi si? bardzo podoba?a. Je?li chcecie wiedzie? co to jest szlara, jak sowy s? przystosowane do ?ycia w ciemno?ci, co sprawia, ?e maj? doskona?y s?uch i jak to si? dzieje, ?e potrafi? lata? bezszelestnie - to polecam t? ksi??k?.

Izabella (Pages Full of Stars) says

I really enjoyed it! In the past few years various owl figurines took over my bookshelves, so I was glad to be able to learn something about those interesting birds.

I think that the format of the book worked very well for me. The fact that the author weaved her experiences with owls around the straight scientific facts, made it much more accessible and enjoyable. I'm also glad that at the very end, there's multiple references to the websites where we can learn more and even watch owls under 24/7 cam.

I did wish that the author covered more species that can be found outside of North America, but I understand why she narrowed it down to those she was able to witness herself, and I definitely recommend this book if you'd like to read more about owls.
