

ANIMALS

Deer. By John Fletcher. 2014. Reaktion Books. (ISBN 9781780230887). 208 pp. Paperback. \$19.95.

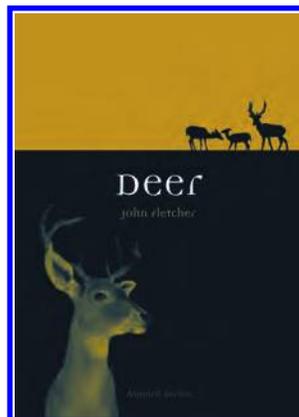
Dolphin. By Alan Rauch. 2014. Reaktion Books. (ISBN 9781780230894). 207 pp. Paperback. \$19.95

Rabbit. By Victoria Dickenson. 2014. Reaktion Books. (ISBN 9781780231815). 216 pp. Paperback. \$19.95.

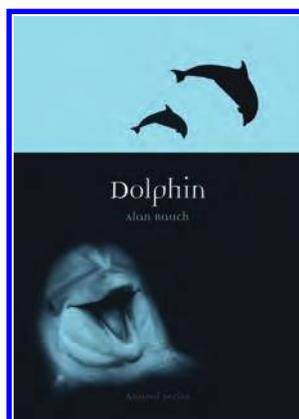
Deer, *Rabbit*, and *Dolphin* are three books in a series marketed as a “new kind of animal history” in that they all begin with an in-depth look at the natural history, zoology, and taxonomy of each animal. Each book also cleverly folds in the cultural implications of the animal’s relationship with humans through the arts, religion, history, animal husbandry, hunting, and popular culture. Thorough yet engaging, each book is written by a different author, all experts in their fields. The series includes over 60 titles, with more to come. As an educator, I see the books in this series as filling a niche for students seeking very specific information about the natural or cultural history of an individual animal. Outside of that audience, the books may only speak to individuals who have a passion for specific organisms. This series is unique in how it connects each organism through science and the arts.

Deer

“This book is designed to appeal to the scientifically literate as well as to those with a background in the arts” (p. 7). John Fletcher, veterinarian and deer farmer, clearly explains the complex taxonomy of deer in chapter 1. He goes on to cover the rich cultural relationship between deer and humans dating



back to the popular deer farms of Europe in the 1500s, as well as the role of deer in the arts over time. Fletcher leaves no stone unturned. He is especially gifted at asking relevant questions, which leave the reader pondering his theories. For example, his detailed study of the mythological and practical implications of antler regeneration suggests that if we could understand the physiology of antler regeneration, we might someday apply that knowledge to making limb regeneration possible in other animals.



Dolphin

Even though this is a series, each book approaches the natural and cultural

history of its animal slightly differently. Much emphasis in *Dolphin* is placed on the evolutionary history and social behavior of these cetacean mammals, widely known as among the more complex social organisms on earth. The dolphin’s roles in mythology and popular culture are also explored in depth. In modern times, the opening of dolphin parks and the presentations of dolphins in films, TV programs, and literature have all contributed to our current familiarity with them. Our knowledge of these creatures continues to be updated as curiosity about their intelligence, social structures, and methods of communication leads many researchers to study them in depth.



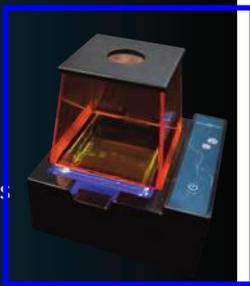
Rabbit

Chapter 2 of *Rabbit* exemplifies the first portion of the book: “The Natural and Unnatural History of The European Rabbit” explains how the ravages of rabbits as an introduced species in Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand have affected other native populations, as well as the human response to their explosive growth in a new environment. Later chapters cover the rabbit’s cultural implications throughout history – including their roles as cuddly creatures for darling children or responsibility shapers for older

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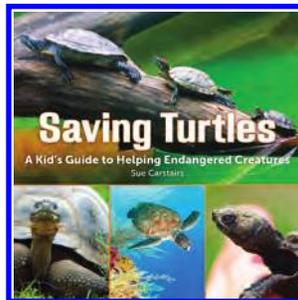
*Patent Pending



children through home “rabbitry” programs. Rabbits are incredibly heterogeneous in that they are farmed for meat and fur, bred for laboratory experiments, and shown and raised as pets. In folklore they are symbols of luck, evil, fecundity, a sign of the Chinese Zodiac, and even messengers between other worlds and known human existence.



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Saving Turtles: A Kid's Guide to Helping Endangered Creatures. By Sue Carstairs. 2014. Firefly Books. (ISBN 1770852905). 64 pp. Paperback. \$9.95.

When I first received this book, I thought, “Oh no, another ‘save the endangered *enter cute animal here*’ book.” However, I soon realized that this book is not that at all. It has wonderful details about turtles. Did you ever wonder where all the turtles go in the winter? “...in the cold winter months, they can burrow into the mud at the bottom of a lake and hibernate, getting their oxygen in a different way” (p. 10). There is also a great diagram of turtle anatomy with brief descriptions of several major structures. The level of detail is perfectly appropriate for most students but may be a little “light” for advanced high

school students. For example, I wanted details about how the frogs breathe in the winter.

Saving Turtles is meant to interest students in becoming active conservationists. There are some pretty graphic pictures of turtles that have been injured by humans, but none of them are terrible, and there are many great pictures of turtles being turtles. As the author says, “If no one knows about the dire situation that turtles are in, nothing will change” (p. 52). The book gives lots of information about current conservation efforts, including treating injured turtles, “headstarting,” and raising awareness. “Headstarting” turtle eggs is a way “to ensure that these eggs are not lost,” by harvesting, incubating, and hatching the eggs and then releasing the babies (p. 34).

This book would be a valuable addition to any biology or environmental science teacher's collection. Or better yet, to any school's library collection. It would be a great resource for a student report or project. And there are additional resources listed in the back of the book, after a very nice glossary and index.



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