

Book Review

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ANIMAL BEHAVIOR. Editor: Marc Bekoff. Foreword: Jane Goodall. Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, USA. 2004.

Volume 1 (A-C) – ISBN 0-313-32746-7

Volume 2 (D-P) – ISBN 0-313-32747-5

Volume 3 (R-Z) – ISBN 0-313-33294-0

As with almost all new encyclopedias, I experience (and probably many with me) an intense anticipation prior to turning the front cover for the very first time. This was especially true for me, being a zoologist/ethologist, when holding the brand new copy of *The Encyclopedia of Animal Behavior*, one of the first complete resources on animal behavior to discuss topics as diverse as parental care by insects to long-distance communication in whales.

My expectations were automatically set high as I opened the front cover because of the obvious and inherent strategic problems when undertaking an enterprise such as this, especially for a vast and extensive topic such as “animal behavior.” The editor, Marc Bekoff, states in the preface of the book that the encyclopedia “is the most complete and comprehensive collection of original essays on the topic of animal behavior.” If, in addition, the incitement is also to make the information easily accessible and appealing to a wide range of people with various backgrounds and interests, then this is definitely a challenge. After six months of having the encyclopedia accompany me at work as well as on the living room sofa over many late evenings, I have to admit that the editor’s statement is not too far from the truth. The challenge is clearly something which the numerous authors, guided by Bekoff, have taken on and handled successfully and brilliantly without any obvious or overt problems.

The encyclopedia is compiled into three volumes with a total of 1,274 pages. The initial volume starts with a foreword from Jane Goodall, a highly qualified researcher and legend in ethology, who concludes that this encyclopedia is “the encyclopedia long sought for.” This is followed by a six-page-long introduction to the topic, written by Bekoff, in which he very neatly manages to address and summarize the different disciplines encircling the topic. The wide range of topics covered in these three volumes is indeed impressive, not accomplished elsewhere or earlier. To realize this, a similarly impressive (large) number of

authors—290 authors—have contributed to this encyclopedia set.

The encyclopedic approach is based on a number of different entries, starting with an alphabetical list of all behavior entries followed by a list of those entries in relation to eight different advances to the topic, called “Guide to Related Topics.” These are “Specific Types of Animals,” “Behavior of Animals,” “Careers in Animal Behavior,” “Education in Animal Behavior,” “Humans and Animals,” “Literature, Arts, and Religion and Animal Behavior,” “People in Animal Behavior Research,” and “Research, Explanation and Methods of Study.” Thereafter, the true encyclopedia starts. The topics are presented in the form of essays, each ranging in size from 300 to 7,000 words. Volume I covers entries starting with the letters A-C, which is continued in Volume 2 with D-P, followed by R-Z in the third and final volume. At the end of most of these essays, the encyclopedia’s true value is revealed with a small list of cross-reference entries, which makes it easy to jump to different approaches related to the specific behavior sought. By using these cross-references, it is easy to retrieve information around a specific behavior relatively swiftly. At the last part of the encyclopedia, at the end of Volume 3, three very useful lists can be found. These provide information on “Organizations and Related Web Sites,” listed alphabetically and in categories, followed by “Suggested Resources in the Study of Animal Behavior” and “About the Editor and Contributors.” The last list reveals that approximately 75% of all contributing authors originate from North America and Canada, 20% from Europe, and 5% from the rest of the world. All three volumes start with the complete initial “Alphabetical List of Entries,” which covers the entire encyclopedia, but only the third and final volume presents a complete index covering all three volumes.

So what is the final impression of this encyclopedia as a whole and its usability as a true encyclopedia? Well, there is one statement that I find appropriate to utter for this seminal work in its field, also stated by Jane Goodall: “This is the encyclopedia long sought for.” It is indeed an impressive work, which covers the topic efficiently, and together with the editor’s successful encyclopedic approach, it also impressively brings order to this vast and extensive topic while at the same

time making the information accessible using a large number of different entries. This should definitely appeal to a wide range of people with various backgrounds and interests, from experts in the field to the general public who have an interest in zoology and ethology. *The Encyclopedia of Animal Behavior* also won the “Best Reference Source” award from the *Library Journal*.

I think the best way to summarize my review is to admit that my copy of this encyclopedia, now commonly found lying on the coffee table in my living room, has definitely started a fairly successful “reclaim the evenings” campaign against my TV set. In other words, I can easily recommend this encyclopedia to everyone interested in the topic. The prevailing question remains, however: How many evenings will it actually take to browse through 1,274 pages?

Christer Blomqvist, Ph.D.
Department of Physics, Chemistry, and Biology
University of Linköping
SE-581 83 Linköping
Sweden