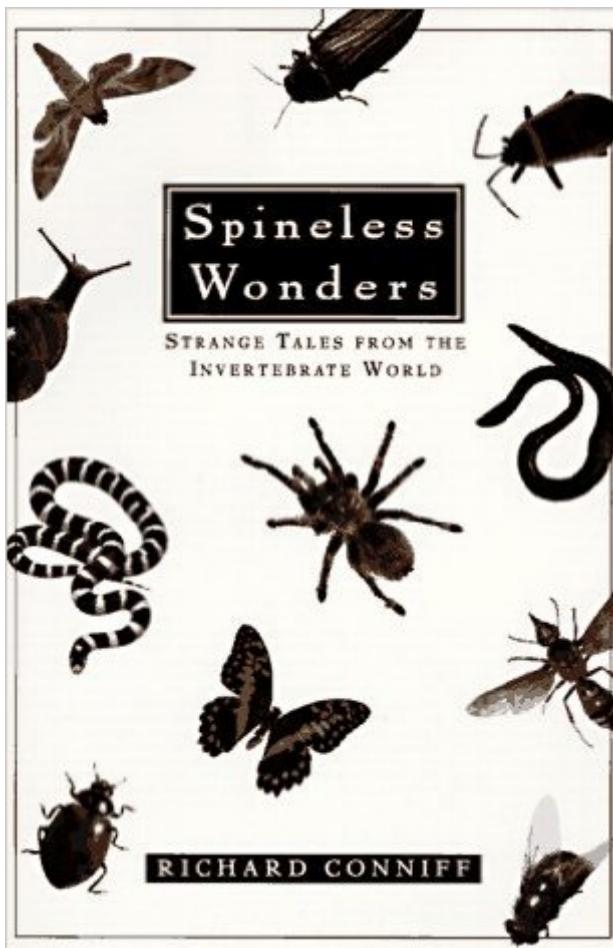


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Spineless Wonders: Strange Tales From The Invertebrate World



Synopsis

Natural history writer Richard Conniff's journalistic assignments have brought him in contact with invertebrates for more than 20 years--tarantulas of the upper , dragonflies in Arizona, squid in Florida, and flies on the rim of his beer glass. Here Conniff details his often hilarious encounters with the highly intelligent and eccentric people who study these creatures. 16 line drawings .

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An entire book about beetles, houseflies, worms, moths, and leeches? With an entire chapter on slime eels--aka hagfish--which burrow into dead fish and consume them from the inside out? You bet. As the author points out, the above-named creatures are but a few of the species that belong to the group of animals known as invertebrates, which not only lack a backbone, but also, pound for pound, far outweigh any other form of life on earth. "There are only 4,500 or so mammal species on the planet. There are, however, between ten million and thirty million invertebrate species. They represent more than 99.5 percent of all animal species. A spaceship visiting the blue planet would take them, not us, as the typical earthlings."And invertebrates are often far more interesting than us boring old mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. Take a fire ant queen, for example, who reproduces so wholeheartedly that her human equivalent would be a 120-pound woman giving birth to 500,000 babies each year. Or how about the mysterious giant squid--at sixty feet long and with eyes the size of headlights, the largest invertebrate alive--who lives five hundred fathoms beneath the ocean waves. (Nobody has ever seen one in its natural habitat.)So who's the audience? Any

adult with a taste for the more slithery residents of earth--or any parents who want to wow their own offspring with bizarre true-life tales of the scaly and slimy. (Twelve-year-olds on up, or ten-year-olds with a deep curiosity for all things gross, should have no trouble with it, either.

Forget Jack Hannah and his media sound bites which teach you absolutely nothing about other species. This book is a must read for anyone who really wants to learn more about some of the most misunderstood and hated creatures on our planet. Easy to read, entertaining and educational, Richard Conniff spins tales guaranteed to shed new light on the invertebrate world and can be read and appreciated by young and old alike. Recently I was fortunate enough to spend some time interviewing this talented author and was fascinated with his insight and true depth of feeling for the planet. It is a shame that the media suffers from tunnel vision when it comes to teaching the public about animals. Over and over we are presented with the same information about the same animals which limits our understanding of the importance of bio-diversity. Richard Conniff has worked for both the Discovery Channel and National Geographic and has travelled extensively, and with "Spineless Wonders" and his latest work "Every Creeping Thing" he has achieved what many strive for but very few accomplish. Hats off to Mr. Conniff and if those talk shows had any sense they would book you immediately and discover what I already have, that you are an incredible resource for information about the relationships between humans and other species

Richard Conniff's writing style is fun and easy to read. And although some of the facts he pours into the book may be gross, it's so interesting you are riveted. I think everyone-science lover or no-needs to read this book. I couldn't put the book down until I was done. Just to give you some extra info on what's in the book-he discusses many invertebrates such as flies, hagfish, moths and tarantulas, devoting a chapter to each invertebrate. He includes his adventures with these creatures along with it. Even the hardened scientist will find something new in this book!

There is more to the world of nature than cuddly koalas, magnificent whales, and beautifully singing birds. Most of the animal kingdom, and much of the biomass on the planet, are invertebrates! Insects, spiders, centipedes, molluscs, crustaceans, echinoderms, worms, all greatly outnumber vertebrates and are absolutely vital to continued life on earth, and all are greatly unappreciated by the average person. Richard Conniff takes us on a representative tour of several members of the invertebrate world. Though he only scratches the surface, he shows us some of the most fascinating of the "creepy crawlies," creatures that often have few admirers in the media or popular

culture. From the fascinating world of flies to the invaluable leech to the hated fire ant to beetles, fleas, and giant squid and beyond, Conniff shows us the astounding world of invertebrates. Strictly speaking, Conniff includes one vertebrate in the mix, the lowly but extremely unusual hagfish, so it is not only invertebrates. Having said that though this was an excellent book, one well worth reading. Popular science writing at its best.

Richard Conniff's subjects in his other works are often scientists and explorers of the natural world, and in this text he reviews the subjects of his subjects, much like the often-quoted description of the meat-packing company, Armour, wryly credited with using every part if the hog except the smell. Conniff's skilled, tight writing is an example of vivid, fascinating writing at its best, sending an appreciative audience into exploring the other trenchant discoveries.

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