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Being A Beast: Adventures Across The Species Divide



Synopsis

A passionate naturalist explores what it's really like to be an animal - by living like them. How can we ever be sure that we really know the other? To test the limits of our ability to inhabit lives that are not our own, Charles Foster set out to know the ultimate other: the nonhumans, the beasts. And to do that, he tried to be like them, choosing a badger, an otter, a fox, a deer, and a swift. He lived alongside badgers for weeks, sleeping in a sett in a Welsh hillside and eating earthworms, learning to sense the landscape through his nose rather than his eyes. He caught fish in his teeth while swimming like an otter; rooted through London garbage cans as an urban fox; was hunted by bloodhounds as a red deer, nearly dying in the snow. And he followed the swifts on their migration route over the Strait of Gibraltar, discovering himself to be strangely connected to the birds. A lyrical, intimate, and completely radical look at the life of animals - human and other - *Being a Beast* mingles neuroscience and psychology, nature writing and memoir to cross the boundaries separating the species. It is an extraordinary journey full of thrills and surprises, humor and joy. And, ultimately, it is an inquiry into the human experience in our world, carried out by exploring the full range of the life around us.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you're a backpacker, you have probably noticed that there are two kinds of people you meet in the wilderness. One group might be categorized as Hikers. These are the backpackers whose main priority is not so much the appreciation of wilderness as it is accumulating miles. They travel light, sleeping under flyweight tarps, drilling holes in their teaspoon handles, and heating their tea over

homemade alcohol stoves. They can be found "through hiking" the Appalachian trail or the Pacific Coast trail. The other group are the Campers, for whom hiking is a means to get to a remote destination. They can be further divided into two extremes. At one end are those who like to bring with them all the comforts of home. They have the latest high tech tents, bags, and stoves, brightly colored parkas, and solar panels to power their cell phones and tablets. They probably eat locally sourced vegan freeze-dried food. At the other extreme are those whose priority is separating themselves as much as possible from technology and getting as close as possible to nature. They can be spotted by the gear they use, which is the same gear they bought when they started packing 30 years ago: Primus stoves, canvas packs, leather boots, and a Sierra cup. And then there are people like Charles Foster, the author of this book. Foster trained as a lawyer, but his real calling, dating from his childhood, was to be a naturalist. He is curious not just about how animals live in the wild, but what it's like to actually be a badger, or a deer, or a fox, and to that end he embarked on a series of experiments in trying to live like these and other animals, at least as much as possible as it is for a human to do so.

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