

INTRODUCTION



We are humans. That means we are a kind of animal. We share the planet with millions of other species of animal.

Non-human animals share our lives and shape our history: some on purpose, some very much not. We wouldn't be where we are today – we wouldn't even exist – without other animals.

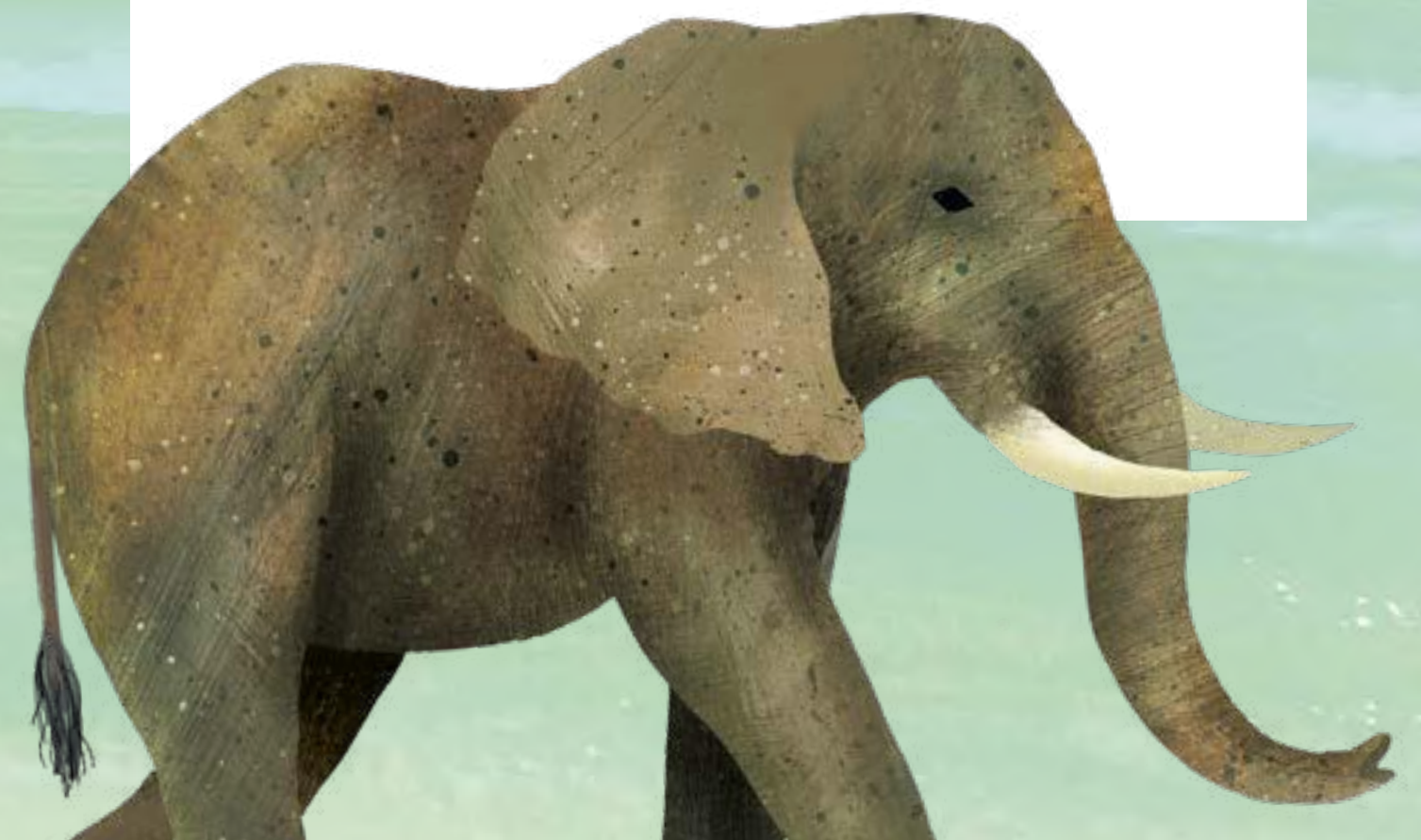
Some animals have helped us, some have caused us harm. We have helped some animals, some we have harmed so much they no longer exist.

This, then, is a book about life and death. There are wondrous and terrible things in these pages, for animals are both those things. Real animals are not often cute and cuddly: they are much better than that.

The words in this book will, I hope, help you to understand the way we humans and all the other animals live together on the planet Earth. And after that, you can start to make things better.

We all can.

After all, we're all in this together.



1 LION

Let's start with **footprints**. They were made in Africa four million years ago: two living creatures walking together. What kind of animals were these? One adult, one young.

They were **humans** – and they were almost certainly walking hand in hand. When human parents want to keep their child safe from danger – say, crossing a busy road – they say: “Hold my hand.” But what danger could have faced these humans all those years ago?

Lions.

Lions once lived in Europe, but as the number of humans increased, there was less room for lions. Now you can only find lions in Africa and India.

Lions live in groups called prides. The boss female is in charge of hunting, and the other females do most of the work.

The first humans walked on two legs on the African plain and they walked with lions. Lions were the **top** animals. They killed and ate other animals to stay alive – including humans. The oldest part of our brain has never forgotten this.

Humans saw lions as their enemies. Early humans lived in **fear** of lions. But many years later, people began hunting lions for sport.

Things began to change about 60 years ago, when people began to worry about what we are doing to all the other kinds of animals in the world: the non-human animals. People began to change their minds about lions, and about other kinds of wild animals. Wouldn't it be better to live in **peace** with each other?

George and Joy Adamson lived in Africa and reared an orphaned lion cub to a fully-grown lioness. Her name was Elsa. Pictures of Elsa living in peace with her human friends went around the world. It wasn't as beautiful and peaceful as it seemed. One of Elsa's cubs grew up half-wild, half-tame. He **killed** a man and was later shot.

These days you don't often find lions outside the National Parks of Africa and the Gir Forest National Park in India.

There are not as many lions as there were in Elsa's day. Their numbers have dropped 30 per cent in the last 20 years. Now there are only about **20,000** African lions left in the wild. They are classified as **Vulnerable**.

There are four bronze lion statues in Trafalgar Square, London. We like to believe that lions are brave and heroic – that's why they were chosen to guard **Nelson's Column** – a monument to Admiral Horatio Nelson.



130 years ago, when people were building a railway line from Kenya to Uganda, two lions killed around 135 people over two years.

Lions often appear in books and poems. In *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, a lion appears as a god-like character.

Male lions have huge manes that look like crowns. Lions are **strong** and **fierce**: brave as a lion, we say. Many kings were named after lions, including Richard the Lionheart of England.

The coats of arms of England, Scotland, Canada, Finland, Denmark, Kenya and Montenegro all feature lions.



2 DOMESTIC CAT

The biggest change in human history took place around 12,000 years ago. Instead of looking for plants in the wild, people started to **grow** them. Instead of hunting animals, people kept them at home. Humans became **farmers**.

They harvested corn and kept it safe for when they needed it. The corn soon attracted mice and rats, and before long **wild cats** came to feed on the mice and rats.

But cats always push their luck. They came into the places where humans ate and slept. Why didn't they throw them out? Because cats have a secret weapon.

Purring.

Humans have always loved a purring cat: it soothes us, calms us, brings us peace. Cats came into our lives and made them **better**.

Many cats have no human homes to go to: there may be 32 million **feral** cats in the USA. In towns, they often live in large groups with a few female cats in charge.

Cats have been popular as pets for thousands of years – partly because they are quite self-sufficient.

For ancient Egyptians, cats were **holy** animals. They had a goddess, Bastet, who looked like a cat.



A cat skeleton was found buried with a human in a Neolithic tomb in Cyprus. It is around **9,500** years old.

If you've ever had a cat or spent much time with one, you'll know they are very good at sleeping – they sleep for around **12 to 18 hours** a day.

3 GORILLA

Whilst their existence dates back millions of years, scientists have known about gorillas for less than 200 years. They were first discovered in 1847.

In the early days of the **movies**, a filmmaker wanted to make the fiercest monster ever seen on the screen. He came up with King Kong: a terrifying, giant gorilla that stormed through New York and climbed the Empire State Building.

Less than 50 years later, in one of the most influential pieces of **television** ever made, the great broadcaster David Attenborough was filmed playing with gentle wild gorillas in Africa.

Once gorillas were creatures to fear. Now they are creatures that need our protection. Once all of nature was terrifying and dangerous: now it is something we must look after and love.

Gorillas have changed the way we think about the planet we live on, and about the other animals we **share** it with.

The scientist Dian Fossey spent 19 years living with gorillas. She studied them closely and taught us about the way they live. She found out the meaning of the sounds gorillas make. She showed us that gorillas had gentle manners and a strong sense of family.



Humans are closely related to gorillas: we are both different kinds of ape.

Gorillas make and use tools: one gorilla was observed making a bridge from a tree stump.

Gorillas burp when they're happy.

A fully-grown male gorilla has pale fur across his shoulders and is called a **silverback**. Gorillas can get quite large – a big male gorilla can reach up to 199 kilograms!

A captive gorilla called Koko learned human **sign language**. Koko even made jokes. One day she tied her handler's shoelaces together and signed "Chase me!"



4 MOCKINGBIRD

Mockingbirds changed the way we think about ourselves and about every other animal that ever lived.

That's because when Charles Darwin visited the Galápagos Islands (near South America) in 1835, he looked at the mockingbirds and saw something peculiar.

The mockingbirds that lived on one of the islands were different to those on the island next door. Darwin asked: **Why?**

When Darwin got home, a bird expert told Darwin that the two mockingbirds were completely different – and different to every other kind of mockingbird.

Darwin carried on thinking . . . and thinking. And after over 20 years of thinking he wrote the book that changed the way we all think – **On the Origin of Species**. It showed the way all animals are related and that all animals adapt across time.

For example, if an antelope's food is the leaves of trees, the higher they can reach, the more leaves they can eat. So the antelope with the longest neck, will get the most food and most likely **live longer** and have more young ones. And from those young ones, the one with the longest neck – longer even than its parents – will have an even better chance of survival.

So, after thousands of years and thousands of parents with thousands of young ones each with a longer neck, you have . . . **a giraffe.**

And many people were shocked and horrified. If giraffes are related to antelopes, could **humans** be related to **monkeys?**

And of course, the answer was . . . **yes!**

Charles Darwin visited the Galápagos Islands during a five-year expedition in a boat called HMS *Beagle*.



Mockingbirds like to eat fruit, seeds and insects, such as beetles, bees and butterflies.

Remember the name **Charles Darwin** – he'll crop up again later!

There are around 16 species of mockingbird. The **Northern mockingbird** can be found in the USA, Canada and Mexico.



5 AMERICAN BISON

200 years ago, there were around 50–60 million buffaloes in North America. 100 years later there were only 300 in the whole of the USA.

The USA would not be the country it is today without the **near extinction** of the buffalo.

Before European people came to America, Native Americans – especially the Plains Indians – needed buffaloes to live. Buffalo meat was their food and buffalo skin was their clothing and shelter.

Europeans began killing buffaloes – sometimes at the rate of 5,000 a day – which meant the Native Americans were left with little to eat. This was the Europeans tactic to stop the Native Americans fighting back.

In 2016 President Barack Obama made buffaloes the **national** mammal of the USA.

Buffaloes are big – their hump is as high off the ground as a tall man. They used to travel in huge herds across the plains, following the growth of new grass.



Buffaloes were moved into other wild places in North America. There are now around 13,000 wild buffaloes in the world.

William Cody worked for the Kansas Pacific Railroad, finding meat for the workers. In two years, he killed 4,282 buffaloes. They called him **Buffalo Bill**. He later travelled around America and Europe with a show about the Wild West.

In 1902, there were only 25 left in **Yellowstone National Park**, so the managers at Yellowstone bought 21 buffalo from private owners and reintroduced them to the park. Now there are around 4,600.

