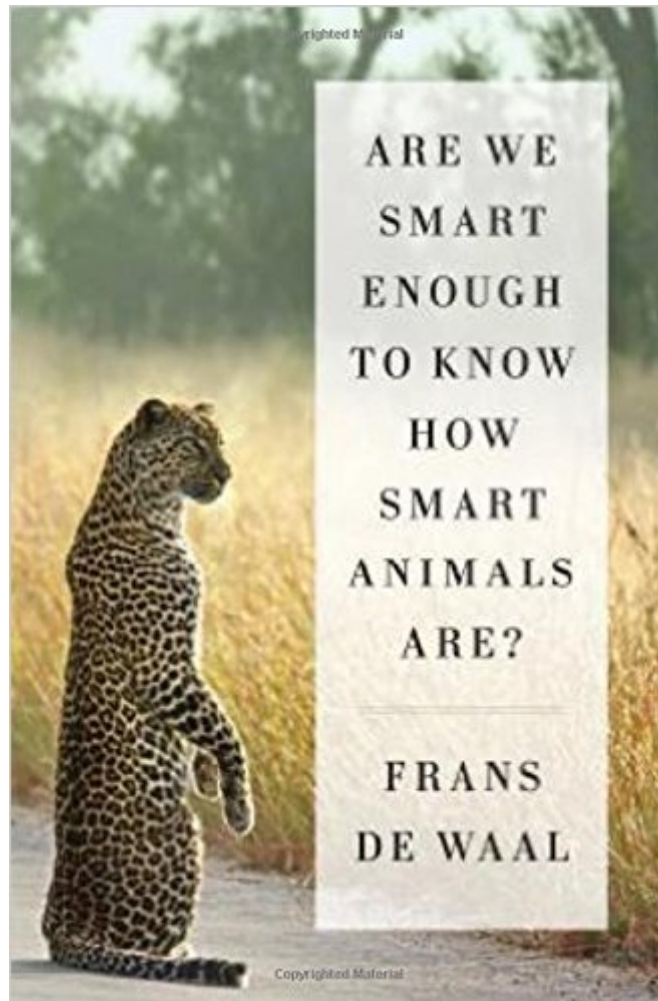# Are We Smart Enough To Know How Smart Animals Are?

Synopsis

A New York Times Bestseller From world-renowned biologist and primatologist Frans de Waal, a groundbreaking work on animal intelligence destined to become a classic.What separates your mind from an animalâ ™s? Maybe you think itâ ™s your ability to design tools, your sense of self, or your grasp of past and futureâ •all traits that have helped us define ourselves as the planetâ ™s preeminent species. But in recent decades, these claims have eroded, or even been disproven outright, by a revolution in the study of animal cognition. Take the way octopuses use coconut shells as tools; elephants that classify humans by age, gender, and language; or Ayumu, the young male chimpanzee at Kyoto University whose flash memory puts that of humans to shame. Based on research involving crows, dolphins, parrots, sheep, wasps, bats, whales, and of course chimpanzees and bonobos, Frans de Waal explores both the scope and the depth of animal intelligence. He offers a firsthand account of how science has stood traditional behaviorism on its head by revealing how smart animals really are, and how weâ ™ve underestimated their abilities for too long.People often assume a cognitive ladder, from lower to higher forms, with our own intelligence at the top. But what if it is more like a bush, with cognition taking different forms that are often incomparable to ours? Would you presume yourself dumber than a squirrel because youâ ™re less adept at recalling the locations of hundreds of buried acorns? Or would you judge your perception of your surroundings as more sophisticated than that of a echolocating bat? De Waal reviews the rise and fall of the mechanistic view of animals and opens our minds to the idea that animal minds are far more intricate and complex than we have assumed. De Waalâ ™s landmark work will convince you to rethink everything you thought you knew about animalâ •and humanâ •intelligence. 32 illllustrations

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There is (yet another) fight raging in science. This one is over how we evaluate other vertebrates. In this fascinating and eye-opening compendium, Frans de Waal says we are prejudiced towards ourselves, always comparing animalsâ ™ performance to ours, in unfairly biased experiments designed for us. It bothers people that we are not unique, and it bothers de Waal that animals donâ ™t get the credit they deserve. Ranging all over the world and all over species, the book is an endless marvel.de Waal gives the example of a chimp named Ayumu at a research center in Japan, who can routinely memorize nine numbers in any given order, having seen them for just one fifth of one second. He can then pick them out in order from random numbers presented to him all over the computer screen. No human comes close. Thatâ ™s a problem for a lot of scientists. The book is full of examples of animals, birds and fish doing highly intelligent things naturally. Our tests twist and pervert their skills to fit the test, showing them less intelligent than they are. We draw the wrong conclusions, often by asking the wrong questions. de Waal shows the way to a far more appreciative and objective way of looking at the world.My own favorite story in prejudice occurred when scientists induced pain in the feet of mice to see if they could be made to hide it. They found that mice could put on a brave face, but only when a human male tended to them. For females, they let their guard down; they freely showed their suffering. The difference was so strong that it worked even when scientists simply placed a manâ ™s t-shirt near the cage. The mice were totally focused on fear and ignored their own pain.

Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are? By Frans de Waalâ œAre We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?â • is an insightful look at animal intelligence backed up by evidence from controlled experiments. Dutch/American biologist with a Ph.D. in zoology and ethology and author of Our Inner Ape and others, Frans de Waal, takes the reader on a journey of the sophistication of nonhuman minds. This entertaining 352-page book includes the following nine chapters: 1. Magic Wells, 2. A Tale of Two Schools, 3. Cognitive Ripples, 4. Talk to Me, 5. The Measure of all Things, 6. Social Skills, 7. Time Will Tell, 8. Of Mirrors and Jars, and 9. Evolutionary Cognition.Positives:1. Engaging and well-written book that is accessible to the masses.2. A fascinating topic in the hands of a subject matter expert, nonhuman cognition.3. Entertaining and insightful. The book is easy to follow. Professor de Waal is fair and even handed. He is careful to

not oversell nonhuman cognition while providing a mixture of stories, experiments and observations to back his points. â œI will pick and choose from among many discoveries, species, and scientists, so as to convey the excitement of the past twenty years.â •4. Includes many sketches that complement the excellent narrative.5. Introduces and explains key new terms. â œUmwelt stresses an organismâ ™s self-centered, subjective world, which represents only a small tranche of all available worlds.â •6. Does a wonderful job of explaining the most important topic of this book, animal cognition. â œNo wonder Griffin became an early champion of animal cognitionâ ”a term considered an oxymoron until well into the 1980sâ ”because what else is cognition but information processing?

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