

**Kenneth F. Kitchell, *Animals in the Ancient World from A to Z*.** London/New York: Routledge, 2014. Pp. xxv, 257. ISBN: 978041539243-3.

Preceding the Contents page in Kitchell's admirable reference work, the sixth volume to appear in the Routledge series "The Ancient World from A to Z," he cites three passages from ancient authors who wrote extensively about non-human animals, from widely differing perspectives. Aristotle's famous observation (*PA* 645a16-18) that no animal is so lowly that one cannot find something marvelous in it, is followed by Pliny the Elder's statement (*HN Praefatio* 17) that some works should be storehouses of information and not mere books. Finally, Kitchell cites Aelian's claim (*NA Praefatio*) that while others have worked with more diligence and application on the subject than he, he has endeavored to make large amounts of animal lore available to the reader in plain language. Kitchell's citations here are well chosen, since, viewed together, they give a clear idea of the overall approach that he adopts toward the material of his volume, which includes the sober insights of ancient zoological science alongside the quirky and often delightfully misinformed assertions of ancient antiquarian lore concerning our non-human neighbors, be they real, imaginary, or ultimately unidentifiable.

Research by classical scholars into topics relating to man's encounter with the non-human animal world in the civilizations of Greece and Rome has progressed at a prodigious pace in recent decades,<sup>1</sup> but despite the many excellences of this body of scholarship, some at least of this work suffers from a handicap which is almost inevitable, given the nature of modern man's encounter with non-human species, limited, as it so often is, to an evening walk with the family dog or at best to an occasional perusal of the denizens of the local zoo.<sup>2</sup> This distancing from the non-human animal world helps to account for problems of differentiation and nomenclature encountered in some works of classical scholarship that investigate the animal world in antiquity. Moreover, although we are often reminded that the Greeks and Romans lived in closer proximity to other species than does modern man, ancient authors were often no more precise in their references to their animal brethren than are modern scholars.<sup>3</sup> Kitchell's profound grasp of the details of modern zoological taxonomy and his meticulous attention to differentiations in nomenclature allow him to draw fine distinctions between animals frequently confused in ancient and modern discussions of the non-human animal world, and classical scholars owe him a debt of gratitude for

---

<sup>1</sup> A valuable guide to this body of scholarship, current to mid-2006, is found in Thorsten Fögen, "Animals in Greco-Roman Antiquity and Beyond: A Select Bibliography," at [http://telemachos.hberlin.de/esterni/tierbibliographie\\_Foegen.pdf](http://telemachos.hberlin.de/esterni/tierbibliographie_Foegen.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Animal rights philosopher Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Avon, 1990) 95, points out the more sinister side of our limited encounter with non-human animals, "For most human beings, especially those in modern urban and suburban communities, the most direct form of contact with non-human animals is at mealtime: we eat them."

<sup>3</sup> Kitchell more than once alludes to this failing common to ancient and modern discussions of non-human species, observing, 118, "It should be noted that both ancient authors and Classical scholars have been fairly loose with terms," and, 139, "It is generally impossible to be sure which animal is meant when any ancient author uses the word 'oryx' and the waters are muddied when Classical scholars over the years have used a variety of terms to label the species...."

rescuing them in future from their common misidentifications of such creatures as apes and monkeys, mules and donkeys, antelopes and gazelles, and leopards and panthers.

Although Kitchell acknowledges in his Preface (xi) that completeness in such a work as his is impossible, and that his emphasis will be on mammals, the reader will find ample coverage of most insects and reptiles commonly encountered in Greek and Roman zoological treatises and encyclopedias, although birds are omitted from Kitchell's volume, as are appearances of animals in religious and mythological contexts in classical literature.<sup>4</sup> Since his work is intended for a wider audience than classical scholars alone, Kitchell cites sources from the Loeb editions when possible, and he is careful to transliterate all words that appear in Greek letters for the benefit of Greekless readers. He provides as well (xix-xxi) a list of standard works of reference, of collections of ancient texts, and of classic treatments of individual species to which he has occasion to refer in the course of his alphabetic entries. These entries are immediately preceded by an extensive list of "Abbreviations of Ancient Works" (xxiii-xxv), given in their standard Latin designations, from which Kitchell draws material for the entries. Although he repeatedly cites the animal-related treatises of Plutarch, in particular his *De sollertia animalium*, in the course of his alphabetic entries, Plutarch is somewhat surprisingly omitted from this list of abbreviations, and one misses as well any reference, in the list of abbreviations or in the entries themselves, to Philo of Alexandria's treatise *De animalibus*, which discusses hundreds of mammals, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects, molluscs and crustaceans.<sup>5</sup>

In his alphabetical entries (1-205), Kitchell skillfully avoids the tedium that could easily beset a long work in glossary form by varying the arrangement and subject matter of the individual entries, combining in them the chattiness of Pliny and Aelian with the attention to scientific detail that distinguishes Aristotle's biological works. His entries generally attempt to clear up any misconceptions on the identity of the animal under study, whether the problem exists in ancient or modern sources, and contain information on the ancient and modern geographical distribution of the animal, along with details, anecdotal and scientific, on the appearance and habits of an animal. Especially helpful is the list of Greek and Latin names and variants under which a given animal was known to classical authors that opens each entry.

Since Kitchell's work is intended primarily as a zoological guide, one does not find a great deal of material on issues relating to more abstract philosophical dimensions of the ancient human-animal encounter, although Kitchell does include entries on animals in ancient law, on pet keeping, and even on bestiality, that touch upon the moral dimensions of human-animal interaction, as do a number of the more extended entries in his work, including those on the dog, the dolphin and the elephant. Lack of attention to such issues cannot of course be reckoned a shortcoming in a volume devoted to facts rather than to philosophical speculation. Kitchell has chosen rather to direct his speculative prowess to the problem of identifying the numerous animals mentioned in

---

<sup>4</sup> Kitchell notes (xii) that such omissions are justified on the grounds that some varieties of animals have been the subject of earlier studies.

<sup>5</sup> Philo's treatise *De animalibus*, originally written in Greek, survives only in an Armenian version. An English translation of the work, with exhaustive commentary, is provided in Abraham Terian, *Philonis Alexandrini de Animalibus: The Armenian Text with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981).

ancient sources that still puzzle classical scholars and whose very existence remains in doubt, including the cebus, the glanos, the clura, the leucrocota, the manticore, the hippagros and the axis, among countless others.

The extensive Bibliography (206-235) that follows Kitchell's alphabetical entries reflects the nature of the volume, including predominantly studies of individual species mentioned in classical authors and works that seek to make the sorts of differentiations that figure heavily in his work, although readers with an interest in representations of animals in ancient art will find much of interest. Given the nature of Kitchell's work, few readers are likely to study his glossary from cover to cover, but no one with an interest in the animal world of the Greeks and Romans can come away from even a casual reading of any entry in Kitchell's work without being enlightened and impressed.

STEPHEN T. NEWMYER  
DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY