

Real Mosquitoes Don't Eat Meat: This and Other Inquiries into the Oddities of Nature

By Brad Wetzler

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I was examining a list of more than 20 books available for reviewing when I discovered this odd title. I am not especially interested in mosquitoes, and I know very little about them. But a colleague's encouragement and my own curiosity led me to choose this book from the list.

When I received the book, I started reading at once and continued for the rest of the evening.

What kept me so interested were all the quirky questions, such as: Do animals have orgasms? Why are other primates so much stronger than us? What causes you to see stars after a hard blow to the head? Is it safe to drink out of plastic bottles? When dogs sniff at each other, what are they smelling? Is it ever too cold to snow?

The book comprises 168 questions and answers, divided into four chapters. Chapter 1, *The Great Beyond*, contains questions about meteorology, astronomy and the Moon. The next chapter answers questions about the body. If you are more interested in our planet, Chapter 3 contains many questions and answers on this topic. The last chapter covers the Carbon

Factor: *Life and Nothing but Life*.

All the questions and answers are taken from the American magazine *Outside*, and are written by the author of the magazine's 'Wild Life' column – a space where readers' questions about natural science and outdoor lore are answered. Some of the answers, although only few, are not so relevant for European readers, because they are directly related to America – for example, 'What percentage of the US is paved?'

All the answers are given by American scientists, expert outdoorsmen and professors. They are all experts in their narrow fields, and their answers are easily understandable by everyone. You don't need to have a degree in biology or astronomy to enjoy reading this book.

Another big advantage with this book is that you don't need to start on page one and read the topics in order: jumping back and forth brings the reader to quite different themes and crazy oddities on our earth. And many nice illustrations make reading even more fascinating.

I have already used some of the funny stories and explanations in my

classroom, asking my students if they know 'When a spider builds a web from tree to tree, how does it string the initial thread across a wide distance?' We had an interesting lesson about spiders, food chains and ecosystems as a result.

I can highly recommend *Real Mosquitoes Don't Eat Meat* to any teacher who thinks it is often hard to answer difficult questions from pupils. But it is not just teachers who will benefit; this book is worth reading for everyone.

Details

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