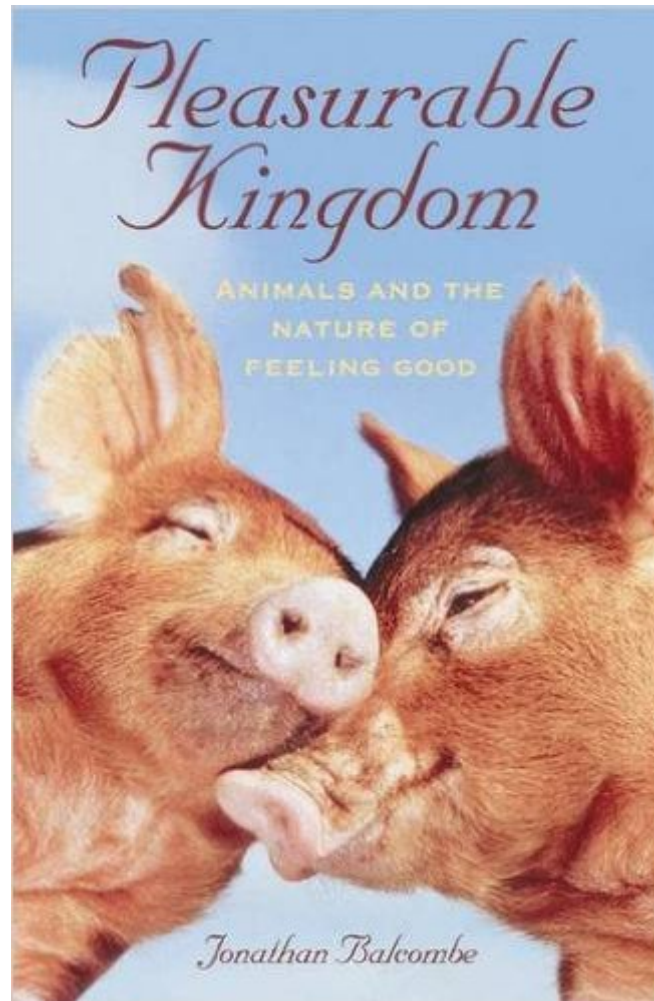


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Pleasurable Kingdom: Animals And The Nature Of Feeling Good (MacSci)



Synopsis

The recognition of animal pain and stress, once controversial, is now acknowledged by legislation in many countries, but there is no formal recognition of animals' ability to feel pleasure. *Pleasurable Kingdom* is the first book for lay-readers to present new evidence that animals--like humans--enjoy themselves. It debunks the popular perception that life for most is a continuous, grim struggle for survival and the avoidance of pain. Instead it suggests that creatures from birds to baboons feel good thanks to play, sex, touch, food, anticipation, comfort, aesthetics, and more. Combining rigorous evidence, elegant argument and amusing anecdotes, leading animal behavior researcher Jonathan Balcombe proposes that the possibility of positive feelings in creatures other than humans has important ethical ramifications for both science and society.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Though clearly written with a view to influencing public opinion, this is a profoundly interesting book. Although not long, it is packed with information to support the contention that animals - and not just mammals - are as capable of feeling pain, pleasure and joy as are humans. After spending a great deal of time with animals, I am in little doubt that Jonathan Balcombe's fundamental premise is quite correct. The scientific literature confirms that mammals experience fear, anxiety and pain. Not just a set of reflexes that look like or are interpreted as fear or anxiety, but the real thing. Several governments have been sufficiently impressed by this evidence to enact laws to protect the welfare

of many species. It should surprise nobody that a biological system would have to be set up to generate the opposite: animals seem to be able to experience not just pleasure, but joy and happiness. Many of us have thought that feelings are unique to mammals, but it seems that even fish display behaviors indicating that they are sentient. Always difficult to prove if we cannot ask direct questions, but even the most objective research is providing robust, objective evidence that this is true. Jonathan Balcombe argues - I believe convincingly - that animals are individuals with an impressive range of feelings and emotions. As I am composing this review, I have just written an article on my blog concerning the findings published this week that dolphins call each other by "name." This is further evidence supporting the facts presented in this book. If the material presented here is correct, then it has some stunning ethical implications. I found this book to be a good complement to Peter Singer's *The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter* and Michael Pollan's *the Omnivore's Dilemma*. Highly recommended.

It was a pleasure to discover 'Pleasurable Kingdom'. In fact, I read Balcombe's book in one go - I could not put it down - and have been totally inspired by it. It has changed the way I am observing and relating with the animals who share my home. There were several aspects of "Pleasurable Kingdom" that I was particularly taken with: the author's astute critique of wildlife documentaries which concentrate on the violent deaths of animals (the 'struggle for survival' narrative in such films is relentless), and neglect all the other positive moments - and times for leisure - in a creature's life; Balcombe's respectful inclusion of insect, chicken and fish pleasure; and his compelling analysis of the implications for the future of our knowing non-human animals feel and appreciate pleasure as much as human animals do (albeit in different ways). The author's use of personal anecdotes is also very effective. I will be setting 'Pleasurable Kingdom' as a text for my course in human-animal studies. It will be challenging for students - in the very best kind of way. Dr Annie Potts, University of Canterbury

This small volume is a book of huge significance. We humans are not alone in loving and valuing our vivid, eventful, cherished lives. Here is the book that proves it. This book convincingly challenges the notion that humans are fundamentally different than the rest of animate creation--and in so doing, for the first time I know of, probes the true nature of the experience of existence on this planet outside of our single species. Jonathan Balcombe is a maverick thinker and an excellent writer. Read this joyous account and rejoice. You will feel far more at home on this sweet green Earth. May his book change the way we treat the others with whom we share the

planet.

By showing that animals enjoy life, Balcombe demonstrates that humans do wrong in depriving them of opportunities to seek pleasures by caging them in factory farms for meat, in laboratories for harmful experiments, and in zoos or circuses for our amusement. It doesn't take much thought to imagine the displeasure a person would feel in similar situations. We animals are all alike in our pursuit of happiness, and we should live our lives in a way that recognizes and respects this truth. Make the world a more pleasurable place for all of us by going vegan.

The evidence is mounting and irrefutable: Animals are entitled to respect and kindness as living, feeling beings. They are NOT little machines or economic units that live, suffer and die for human "pleasure." Anyone who claims to be honest must read this and make appropriate changes in their behavior. I was shocked, years ago, into giving up meat and animal products when I became aware of the reality of what happens to animals raised as "food." Those who own and run factory farms are on the moral level of death camp commandants. There are no more rationalizations possible in the light of research and logic. Compassion requires change.

As a neurologist, it comes as no surprise to read that all animals feel pleasure and pain, as they are neurologically equipped for both. Eloquently written -and often humorous- this book forces us to rethink our use of animals in many areas, including medical experiments, that cause immense suffering and that deprives them of even the most basic pleasures in life.

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