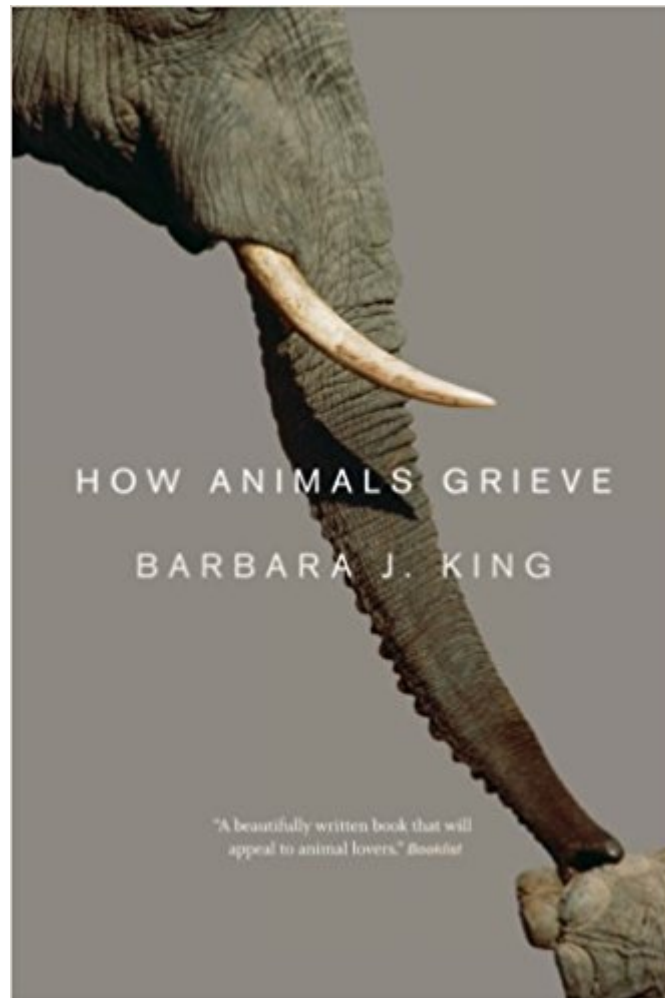




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How Animals Grieve



Synopsis

From the time of our earliest childhood encounters with animals, we casually ascribe familiar emotions to them. But scientists have long cautioned against such anthropomorphizing, arguing that it limits our ability to truly comprehend the lives of other creatures. Recently, however, things have begun to shift in the other direction, and anthropologist Barbara J. King is at the forefront of that movement, arguing strenuously that we can—and should—attend to animal emotions. With *How Animals Grieve*, she draws our attention to the specific case of grief, and relates story after story from fieldsites, farms, homes, and more of animals mourning lost companions, mates, or friends. King tells of elephants surrounding their matriarch as she weakens and dies, and, in the following days, attending to her corpse as if holding a vigil. A housecat loses her sister, from whom she's never before been parted, and spends weeks pacing the apartment, wailing plaintively. A baboon loses her daughter to a predator and sinks into grief. In each case, King uses her anthropological training to interpret and try to explain what we see to help us understand this animal grief properly, as something neither the same as nor wholly different from the human experience of loss. The resulting book is both daring and down-to-earth, strikingly ambitious even as it's careful to acknowledge the limits of our understanding. Through the moving stories she chronicles and analyzes so beautifully, King brings us closer to the animals with whom we share a planet, and helps us see our own experiences, attachments, and emotions as part of a larger web of life, death, love, and loss.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Do we just imagine that animals have feelings like our own, that their loyalty springs from something other than the need to be fed? Anthropologist King investigates research and scores of stories of animals grieving the loss of animal companions, speculating that where there is grief, there must be love. She explores a variety of settings, from farms to homes to fields, to detail how creatures as diverse as ants and elephants mourn their dead. Cautious of the human tendency to interpret animal behavior from the human perspective, King offers strong evidence of attachment that leads to grief when a companion dies. Among her stories: a house cat loses her sister and lifelong companion and wails inconsolably; horses gather in a circle to mourn at the burial site of a recently deceased companion; elephants surround their matriarch, keeping vigil as she dies. King recounts stories of cats, dogs, rabbits, goats, and other animals grieving to the point of depression and weight loss. She also points to additional resources, including video clips of animal behavior, in a beautifully written book that will appeal to animal lovers. --Vanessa Bush --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"A beautifully written book that will appeal to animal lovers." (Booklist) "Barbara J. King has pulled together anecdotal and scientific data on grief and love in animals in her excellent book *How Animals Grieve*. With her engaging story telling she opens up our eyes to the possible inner lives of some surprising species. We expect big-brained chimpanzees and elephants to express their feelings, but her tales of rabbits, goats, birds, turtles and others force us to look again at the emotional content of animal lives." (Cynthia Moss, author of *Elephant Memories: Thirteen Years in the Life of an Ele*) "Poignant, thoughtful, and sometimes heartbreaking. King once again elevates the discussion of animal emotion. She tackles a tricky subject with a scientist's care and an animal lover's grace." (Jennifer Holland, author of *Unlikely Friendships*) "I must admit that I was skeptical that an entire book could be written on the subject of animal grief, because the scientific literature in this area is so painfully thin. But Barbara King has succeeded beautifully. She has collected an incredible database of stories about various kinds of animals, and taken together they offer more than enough substance to sustain this book. It is as if she has created a mosaic for her reader. She has collected bits and pieces--individual stories about one animal or another--which by themselves might be little but trifles. But King pastes them together with masterful skill, and the result is a compelling picture of animal grief. We get the feeling that there are still a lot of blank spaces on the canvas, as our scientific understanding is far from complete, but it is only a matter of time before these spaces will begin to fill in. *How Animals Grieve* is a fascinating book which will

interest and inform animal lovers and scientists alike." (Jessica Pierce, author of *The Last Walk*) "In this deeply moving and beautifully composed treatise that is sure to anger some, but inspire many, Barbara King methodically presents her powerful evidence that many animals possess thoughts, feelings and emotions, including the profound sense of loss following the death of a family member or close companion. Consider, for example, the female dolphin who carries her dead calf for several days, loath to part with her beloved child. What else is she doing but grieving? It might be a controversial, minority viewpoint that some animals mourn the death of others, but King's profound and well-documented work has left me firmly in her camp." (David Kirby, author of *Death at Sea World*) "Humans and other animals experience love and fear, and form deep emotional bonds with cherished companions. We mourn when a close friend dies, and so do other animals, as Barbara King's poignant book illustrates in compelling detail. *How Animals Grieve* helps us to connect and to better understand the complex social lives of other animals and of ourselves." (Gene Baur, president and cofounder of Farm Sanctuary) "Let me begin by saying I recommend this book to anyone who doubts that animals grieve. The evidence presented is overwhelming." (EcoLit) "How *Animals Grieve* is not the definitive work on animal grief, but rather a stepping-stone to further investigation, observation and understanding. King hopes others will continue to look with fresh eyes, expand our knowledge and better understand all animals." (Shelf Awareness) "Admirably, carefully, and cautiously reviews and synthesizes a topic that is of great interest to numerous people, including those who are fortunate enough to live with nonhuman companions, those who are lucky enough to study them, and those who are interested in other animals for a wide variety of reasons." (Marc Bekoff *Psychology Today*) "King's thoughtful, warm-hearted prose will raise awareness and amaze readers." (*Publishers Weekly*) "King makes a compelling case for the rich and deep emotional lives of other animals." (PETA)

The book is a good read, but there are sections which are in-congruent. The lack of consistent evaluation reduces the credibility of the treatise. The editor could have provided better guidance to the author so that the evaluation of grief was more balanced and better presented. For example, the author challenges the reader to doubt the presence of emotion because not all animals in the same study cohort expressed emotion. Then, deep within text is the thought that maybe we should not expect all animals of the same species to express emotion in the same manner. That thought could have benefited from a broader, scientific comparison. Indeed, not all humans express grief, nor do we all express grief in the same manner. That difference does not mean our species is devoid of emotion, and it should not mean that the study cohorts, the animals, are devoid of emotion. The

book would benefit from a structured statistical comparison of animal to human. Our species cultures and the emotions expressed are so varied, yet we choose to not presume any human group is completely devoid of emotion. Do we all cry at the same tragedy or laugh at the same joke? No, of course not. Yet we fail to allow animal species that same consideration. Why do we still doubt that we are so very different than animals? Could it be we should study what prohibits us giving animals that respect?

I enjoyed this book - felt it was a fascinating topic - and found myself wishing there were more. I suspect there are many of us out there that can share our own stories about the display of grief or caring from one animal to another. The author was trying very carefully to maintain a sense of "science" about it --

A colleague loaned me this at a time when I grieve the loss of my beloved dog Maddie. The evidence for animal grief gave me comfort. King's style is readable. The book is an excellent model of academic inquiry that acknowledges limitations as well as the human aspect of research. If I had the opportunity to teach Comp 101/102 to a class of future animal anthropologists and/or vets, this would be my text book of choice. I've since purchased several copies: one for my own shelf, and a few for gifts to fellow animal lovers.

The assertion is: Animals grieve because they seem to love. Not very scientific but how can anyone really know for sure what any animal feels or its thought processes. I think some animals do have the capacity for some kind of definition of love. Not much else to this book. It failed to keep my interest with anything compelling or of real substance.

This book I recommend for all to read. If people think that animals don't GRIEVE then they have been sleeping! The research that was done putting this information together is far more than what I had believed. They cry and mourn and go into depression just like we do and more. I really think animals are a lot more than what people care to understand. But more so the love and care that they give their babies is almost and at times just as equal as any mother who has given birth.

A very good and enlightening read for those who would like to learn more about animals. I am an Animal Behaviourist and am currently studying Animal Psychology. How Animals Grieve has some very informative reference material.kitty

I LOVE the book and I've only read the first few chapters! I am actually editing my "animal" book and now I have to tweak a chapter on love. GREAT BOOK!

This book was much more detailed than I thought it was going to be (that's a good thing). The author goes about the question of whether animals grieve or not in a scientific manner, not through an emotional, non-fact backed opinionated way. Some of the observations that the author made were also surprising (such as which animals you would have thought would grieve more than others). If you are interested in animals or psychology this is the book for you!

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