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Book Of The Spider



Synopsis

THE FASCINATING TRUTH BEHIND WEB WEAVERS Despite Little Miss Muffet's well-documented confrontation, most spiders are quite harmless--except to smaller bugs. In THE BOOK OF THE SPIDER, spider specialist Paul Hillyard explores the engaging world of arachnids--especially the funny and often absurd ways in which humans respond to more than 35,000 known species of spiders. Covering the complete spider spectrum, from folklore and myths to ancient scientific studies to techno-spiders building webs in outer space, the author reveals a captivating social history of the most misunderstood of God's creatures. THE BOOK OF THE SPIDER answers a number of questions, both obvious and obscure, all fascinating: How can humans forecast weather by observing a spider's actions? Why is black-widow venom more dangerous than a rattlesnake bite? Why are spiderwebs often used to dress wounds and coagulate blood? What's the best cooking method for spider a la carte?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Nothing pleases me more than to come upon an impressive orb-web with a large spider sitting head-down in the middle," Paul Hillyard writes in the preface to this charming collection of spider legends and observations. And while many of us may not share his desire to get really close to arachnids, even a certified spider-hater can find something interesting in The Book of the Spider--if only confirmation that they are worthy objects of horror. Gruesome reports of 30-foot webs and gangrenous spider-bites are countered by legends of luck-bringing and facts about ecological

usefulness. Hillyard not only describes the major types of spiders and their incredible habits, he reports on spiders in art, mythology and religion. There's even (shudder) a recipe for barbecued blue-legged tarantula, served al fresco! If you love spiders, you must have this entertaining, informative book to add to your store of arachnid facts--you'll be the life of the party. If you run in fear from our eight-legged friends, cure your phobia by reading all the way to the last chapter, entitled "From Arachnophobia to the Love of Spiders." Then you, too, will come to appreciate the old English nursery rhyme: If you wish to live and thrive/Let the spider run alive. --Therese Littleton

Like a cunningly designed web, Hillyard's survey and appreciation of the world's most despised, yet most beloved, creepy-crawlies will ensnare readers from arachnophobes to arachnophiles. Hillyard, who maintains the national collection of spiders at London's Natural History Museum, knows a good spider story when he hears one, and tells many here. In an engaging yet scientifically rigorous manner, he covers arachnophobia; spiders in myth and literature; venomous, aeronautic and other types of spiders; webs and spider silk; the conservation of spiders and the history of spiderology. He serves up tales of folk remedies that call for eating live spiders; of the Australian funnel-web spider, which "strikes repeatedly and furiously at anything that moves

Very good!!

Paul Hillyard is a well-known arachnologist from the London Natural History Museum. In "The Book of the Spider" he has given us all an appetizer, which will serve to wet our appetites for more on this fascinating subject (often viewed with horror by arachnophobes). I could say that he has left a lot out (many worthy arachnologists were not included in his mini biographies), but for the size of the book he covers a lot! I also think that his style will get young people interested, as well as fascinate older people who have little acquaintance with the subject. Not just a dry compilation of facts (which it might easily have been, if made longer), but a great piece of advocacy for the less loved of the natural world. This book includes tidbits on the tarantella craze, Anansi the spider trickster, Spider Woman, spider venoms, webs, spider behavior, and of course short biographies on arachnologists, including the French biologist, Eugene Simon, who wrote his first book on spiders at the age of 16! As a professional arachnologist who has spent much of my life studying these amazing arachnids I find this work a delightful introduction to the subject and recommend it highly.

Hillyard is a friendly, engaging writer and his book is fine bait for any arachnophile. But he purports

to be passionate about spiders, and this book doesn't show it. It's entirely too light on its subject ... for example, there isn't a single technical drawing or close-up photograph in the whole book. Color plates for those fantastically varied species? None either. And the next-to-last chapter on significant spider classifiers, those English country parsons, is really a snooze. The most significant problem is the lack of a chapter on spider myths, an odd omission for a subject as murky and maligned as spiders. He could have broken some new ground, as well ... For instance, the hobo spider, a wholly new venomous species, is spreading through the Pacific Northwest ... how did it get here? Who found it? When do people bump into it, and how does it behave? What is its future?

Only 3% of the human population enjoys spiders! If you are one of those rare folks or a lay scientist this little gem of a book will charm and educate you with hundreds of fascinating facts. The prodigious talents and feats of many different types of spiders are described accurately and precisely. Written in a conversational style the varied topics of facts, history, myth, are explored with an often whimsical and affectionate eye. Astound your friends with little known spider facts, recite lengthy, descriptive spider poems to your loved one. Includes an extensive bibliography for further research. It's a keeper for me, I look forward to impressing my grandchildren, having already amazed my 14-y/o for years with my spider facts and stories...

I was never arachnophobic, but I had a fairly serious fear of spiders for a long time. Although I'm not quite an arachnophile yet, "The Book of the Spider" was a fascinating read that helped me to overcome much of my fear of spiders. After reading in this book that some spiders play dead when frightened, I observed a little spider outside my house doing just that when I got too close to him. It was almost...cute! :3 Highly recommended to people who are looking to learn and become braver, while being entertained at the same time!

This is not what you would call an information book, although there is plenty of excellent information in it, from a guy who really knows his spiders. It's more of a casual stroll through the sometimes unpleasant but never boring world of spiders, plucking the juiciest tidbits of information as it goes. If you need a systematic overview, this isn't the book for you. But as a good read that takes you through the highs (web-building) and the lows (how they eat) of the spider world, it's unbeatable. One more thing: the design of the book (inside) is a delight. Unfortunately this edition does not have the original cover, which was excellent.

About the only point of contention is that the author feels as many people love spiders as hate them! (Does he really believe that?) Outside of that small complaint, this is among the best creepy crawly books out there! Starting out with the mythological birth of spiders in Lucretius's "Metamorphosis", you'll learn all about the truly weird creatures we have labelled "Arachnids". From the Tarantula dance to Darwin's comment on some very strange specimens, to gossamer skies, and various poisons, you can't miss with this one! Includes some nifty drawings, too! So if you have any interest in the huge Spider species, check this book out!

If you love spiders, if you know a good deal about them, if you're new to the arachnid section of the invertebrate world, or even if you're afraid of spiders, this book is for you. Everything you could want to know about spiders is in here- from basic anatomy to behaviour to the history of Arachnology. Hillyard covers every spider myth from around the world- including variations on each one! I have to say, the references are one of the best features. I found several books and spider-oriented people I didn't know were out there and can now broaden my spider knowledge even further.

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