

BOOK REVIEWS

WEIRD & WILD ANIMAL FACTS

Published: Apr 2015. 40 p. Holt, hardcover, \$17.99. ISBN 9780805079456. 590.2

Sarah Hunter, BOOKLIST

Is there anything more satisfying than astounding friends with an obscure animal fact? Given the popularity of weird-animal-fact books for kids, it seems unlikely. This eye-catching volume is a great place to start for those new to the animal-fact game, helped along in no small part by the thoughtful layout and appealing illustrations. Loy sticks to fairly familiar animals, such as jellyfish, warthogs, sloths, and vultures, a roster of creatures more likely to be recognized by the youngest set. Each two-page spread is festooned with full-color well-reproduced photos of an animal and a handful of fascinating facts sure to pique kids' interests. For instance, "A penny is heavier than a hummingbird"; "Tarantulas have retractable claws"; and "An adult giraffe's kick is so powerful it can decapitate a lion." Close-ups of animals eating, swimming, bathing, and making funny faces only add to the jaunty appeal. This is a perfect fit for animallovers, and the very browsable format will also suit emerging readers. A list of resources for animal facts—all websites—is included in the back matter.

Roxanne Burg, Orange County Public Library, CA

Gr 2-4—This engaging book provides facts about 14 well-known species, including hippos, kangaroos, vultures, tarantulas, jellyfish, and hummingbirds. Each animal is given a colorful spread with photographs and several factoids. There's a lot of fascinating information here. A hummingbird's heart can beat up to 1,260 times per minute, and they weigh less than a penny. Sand tiger sharks are about three feet long at birth and will generally have about 3,000 teeth, losing and replacing about 1,000 per year. Sloths are related to anteaters and sleep up to 18 hours a day. This book is a fast, enjoyable read, with most of the eye-catching photographs supplied by the author. Those seeking more in-depth information will need to look elsewhere. However, this is a useful supplement to more encyclopedic works and a solid choice for readers looking for a brief taste of the animal kingdom.

Publishers Weekly Children's Frontlist Fiction Best Sellers List, #24 (3/6)

Readers with an interest in the more gruesome side of the animal kingdom will find plenty of fodder to gross out their friends, enemies, and family members as Loy shares trivia about 14 animals, including octopuses, jellyfish, naked mole rats, and tarantulas. Photo collages, a mix of Loy's images and photographs from other sources, provide multiple views of each creature, set against digital backdrops. Not all of the tidbits are grisly, but the ones that are hit their marks: "An adult giraffe's kick is so powerful it can decapitate a lion" (not pictured, thankfully), while vultures' bald pates mean "there are no feathers to clean after sticking their heads inside the carcass of a dead animal." Ages 4-8. (Apr.)