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Animals Of A Bygone Era: An Illustrated Compendium



Synopsis

A beautifully illustrated collection of fascinating, surprising, and funny facts about extinct animals. In the past, amazing and strange animals roamed the earth, including giant sea scorpions, tiny horses, enormous sloths, and fierce "terror birds." These and many more fantastic extinct animals are illustrated in this whimsical collection by Swedish artist Maja Säfström.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

MAJA SÄFSTRÖM is a Stockholm-based illustrator and architect, and the author of The Illustrated Compendium of Amazing Animal Facts. Follow her on Instagram at @majasbok.

Dear Reader, In this book I have illustrated and presented a few of the countless amazing creatures that once roamed the earth. Some of them lived a long time ago, while others lived until very recently. I hope that you enjoy the book, learn something new, and are reminded of the beautiful, complex, and delicate history of this world.

My grandson loves this book. He was spellbound by the illustrations and in particular, he loved the comments of the animals. It captured his imagination and curiosity. It was fun to read and fun to watch my 6 1/2 yo grandson captivated by the content. Can hardly wait to read the next one.

My 11 year old and his classmates really enjoyed this book. It's beautifully designed with amazing illustrations and very informative facts.

Great gift

“Whimsical” is probably the best single word to describe *Animals of a Bygone Era: An Illustrated Compendium*, written and drawn by Maja Safstrom, which runs through a series of extinct animals from 550 million years ago (*Dickinsonia Costata*) to 12, 000 years ago (*Saddle-Backed Rodrigues Giant Tortoises*). The black-and white drawings are charmingly rough and stylized, doing a good job of clearly depicting the animals with enough if not overwhelming detail. Purists might not care for the facial anthropomorphizing Safstrom often employs, but that’s a small price to pay for what I assume will be a large visual appeal to younger readers. There’s no doubt the artwork is the strength of this book. That leaves the text, which is definitely the weak link here. To begin with a positive, Safstrom gives her creatures some humorous lines, as when a flightless bird comments that “wings are so overrated” or when another creature, one with a tiny brain, notes “I am not intelligent, but I’m not that smart either.” Most of the text though is pretty pedestrian and even a bit repetitive. And it’s also pretty slight in terms of information, with each drawing basically accompanied a one or two facts, often connected to the creature’s size. And while the parade of creatures moves in chronological order, there’s no sense of context in terms of evolution, other creatures, changes in the world, etc., and even the chronology is left to the reader to pick up on, as that fact is conveyed only by a small little number in the bottom left corner. *Animals of a Bygone Era* is a cute book filled with cute, approachable drawings and as such will engage young readers on a visual level, though I’d say it’s constructed more for the lower age levels as older kids will want to delve more in-depth into this fascinating lost world

Beginning with the earliest sea creatures and moving forwards, omitting the much publicised dinosaurs in order to give other creatures some exposure, this little book cheerfully displays various extreme, extraordinary and extinct animals. The cartoon sketches (black and white) in some cases compare modern creatures for size, like the short-faced kangaroo with red kangaroo, and all come with a place and date for the fossils or stuffed specimens as the case may be. For the dodo and

thylacine appear here as well; once the humans and large animals co-existed, like the mammoth, matters went downhill for the megafauna and smaller creatures. No lecture is given about the need to conserve vanishing wildlife but young readers should be well able to make that connection. I enjoyed the read which is suitable for any age. I downloaded an ARC from Net Galley. This is an unbiased review.

Sweet little book of illustrations of extinct animals, from one of the earliest to some that overlapped with humans, such as the dodos. She deliberately excluded dinosaurs ("Wait, what?") in favor of lesser-known critters. For the ones I know, the paleontology is accurate, but the real attraction is her charming, cartoon-like illustrations, and the whimsical (imaginary) remarks from some of her subjects. From Leptictidium, an extinct rabbit-like animal who left no descendants: "Too bad, because we were really cute." A nice gift book. The author has a few samples at her website: link at first comment, per house rules. Happy reading--Peter D. Tillman

Animals of a Bygone Era: An Illustrated Compendium by Maja Safstrom is a free NetGalley ebook that I read in late March. Adored it! This is a simple, biological, non-dinosaur-centric sketchbook with dark grey on grey (or vice versa) and black focal highlight drawings and quirky, not fully scientific, arrowed descriptions of anatomy, size, and life conditions of prehistoric and/extinct creatures. A perfect read for all ages and all levels of interests in animals.

I LOVE this book. In fact, I loved it so much and thought it was so clever that I ordered and sent to my 7-year-old grandson. He "loved, loved, loved it" as well. Highly recommend!!

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