

***How to Talk to Your Cat***

Clare Bessant (1992). BNP Publications: Chicks Grove. 119pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, 4 Quarry Cottages, Chicks Grove, Tisbury, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP3 6LZ, UK (ISBN 1 85685 015 3) Price £8.50 UK, £10.50 overseas.

This is a good little book, written for cat owners who are curious about the behaviour of their pets.

It certainly seems that 1992 was the year of the cat. Bookshop shelves are littered, if you will excuse the term, with books on astrology, meditation, psychic powers and cooking for cats. There seems to be an insatiable demand or at least publishers feel that there is.

The title worried me a little as it is the same as that of Patricia Moyes' book published in 1978 that covered the same territory. It is also misleading because the content is in fact more serious than the title suggests, but that is often the compromise a writer has to make with the publisher.

Ms Bessant first covers the sensory capacity of the domestic cat, reminding her readers that it can be difficult to comprehend abilities that are not within the terms of experience of humans. This section is followed by one on the pet cat's behaviour. At the end of each chapter she has written a brief point by point recapitulation of the important facts that have just been mentioned, a friendly form of reinforcement. She finishes her book with an A-Z of interesting information - aggression to zoonoses, passing through xenophobia on the way.

*How to Talk to Your Cat* is not as flippant as the title suggests. It contains sensible, accurate information, at a reasonable price, for intelligent cat people.

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***Wildcats***

Mike Tomkies (1991). Whittet Books Limited: London. 108pp. Hardback. Obtainable from the publishers, 18 Anley Road, London W14 0BY, UK (ISBN 0 905483 86 3) Price £6.95.

Mike Tomkies is one of those rare authors who can combine a scientific appreciation of his animal subjects with a sense of admiration and affection, and this makes for most enjoyable reading. His latest book on the subject of Wild Cats is essential for anyone interested in the biology, history and nature of our elusive and sadly declining Scottish Wild Cat. It is also an excellent introduction to the behaviour of the Wild Cat for all owners of pet cats who may be keen to unravel a little more about the 'wild cat' in their living room.

The author explains how the Wild Cat can be distinguished from the feral or pet domestic cat and how the latter, through cross-breeding, is affecting the genetic integrity of the few populations of Wild Cat still to be found. Tomkies is at pains to give an

accurate description of this top-of-the-food chain predator and dispel the myths of wanton ferocity that have led to its persecution by man in defence of game and stock. The author also catalogues the sad decline of a creature that used to range throughout mainland UK and presents up-to-date information about its present distribution and efforts to protect it. The first hand descriptions of breeding and raising Wild Cats are superb and the author's observations of their hunting are enthralling, yet interspersed with easy to read 'harder' data. The author also addresses the sightings of various mystery black cats and large stock-killing beasts around the country in the 1980s, uncovering the truth behind many of the sensationalist press stories and vindicating the Scottish Wild Cat.

Overall, the text is easy to read and carries the distinct and occasionally earthy attitude of a man whose experiences raising Scottish Wild Cats and living the solitary life makes for quite a unique approach. Compared with the emphasis in the text on portraying the Scottish Wild Cat as a beautiful and highly specialized predator, I found many of the illustrations annoyingly anthropomorphic. Otherwise my only major criticism of the text is that it is by necessity rather short in order to fit in with the excellent series on British Natural History from the publisher. Perhaps readers who enjoy this notable excursion could read Mr Tomkies' other books, particularly *Wild Cat Haven*, for more in-depth accounts of his unique life among the Scottish Wild Cats.

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***Handbook for the Animal Licence Holder, 2nd edition***

Edited by J Bunyan (1991). Institute of Biology: London. 62pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, 20 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2DZ, UK (ISBN 0 900 490 27 6) Price £10.60.

Directive 86/609/EEC of 24 November 1986 triggered the proliferation across Europe of national legislation designed to bring the scientific use of animals within a common overall framework. The UK was first to complete this process.

Possibly the principal change introduced by the *Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986* was the concept of cost benefit analysis in which the potential for animal suffering is weighed against the potential for biomedical and scientific advance. This formalized concern for animal well-being is reflected in new attitudes towards training those responsible for the scientific use of animals. This short book is directed at such persons and succeeds a somewhat slimmer volume by H V Wyatt, published by the Institute of Biology in 1980.

The handbook is divided in to two parts. The first outlines the principal provisions of the *Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986*, but being addressed by four authors, well known in UK, tends to approach its provisions from different directions. This leads to irritating repetitions of certain topics whereas others such as the responsibilities of licence holders, the role of the inspectorate, the possible contribution of ethical