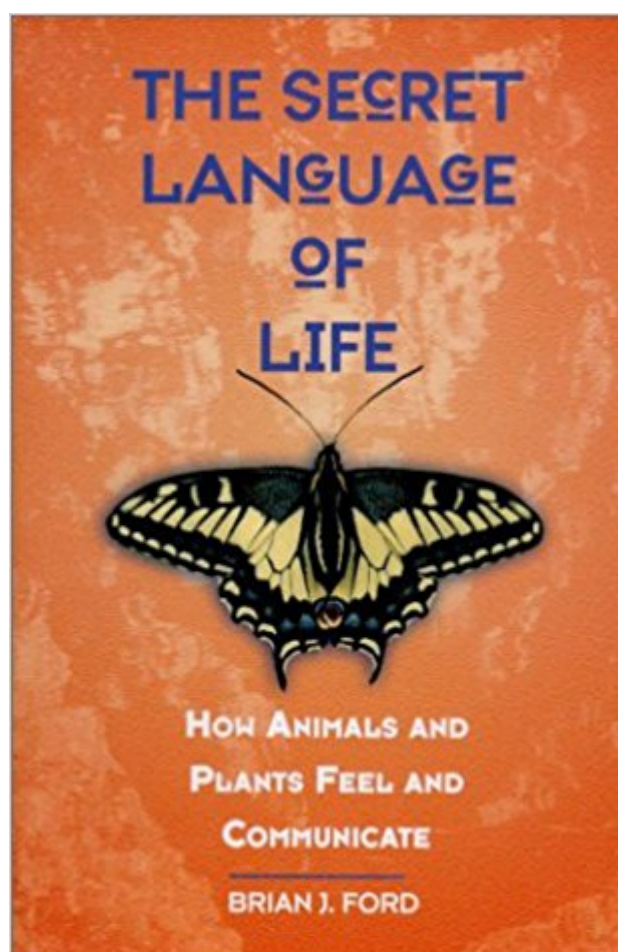


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The Secret Language Of Life: How Animals And Plants Feel And Communicate



Synopsis

Man, the crown of creation, has set himself apart from other life-forms, regarding animals and plants as dumb and insentient. Now a pioneering scientist tells us how wrong we have been. In an engrossing tour of the many species we share our planet with, Brian J. Ford reveals how all living things feel and communicate with one another in ways that, though mysterious to us, are very real. He cites a growing body of research to show that we are surrounded not by brute beasts we can use at will but by sensitive souls with emotions and responses we must respect. We are taught-wrongly-that dreams are unique to humans. Our animal relatives dream, too, and have done so since long before we as a species existed. Do animals feel pain? The weight of scientific evidence shows they do. Mammals have languages of their own to transmit inner feelings-aggression, fear-to their fellows. Birds show astounding cognitive ability, conducting elaborate courting rituals and displaying great passion and devotion to lifelong partners. Ford's fascinating and entertaining narrative shows that within each species, whether insect, fish, plant, or even microbes, life exists in glorious and surprising variety, rich in sensation and creating a marvelously complex web of interaction with its surroundings. This exciting and thought-provoking book marks a timely revolution in popular scientific thought.

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Customer Reviews

This study of the abilities of all sorts of creatures to sense and interact with the world will leave many readers impressed and at least buffeted, if not convinced, by the author's passionate

approach. Cambridge University scientist Ford (Images of Science; Microbe Power) has in effect written two books at once. The first surveys many species' social, cognitive and sensory powers. The second is a call for eco-awareness and for animal and plant and microbe rights: "All animals and plants sense their surroundings, and thus they all have feelings." A chapter on mammals' mental processes explains how mole rats search and socialize underground, how primates learn to use medicinal plants and how prairie dog colonies learn from experience. Turning to avians, Ford covers birdsong, echolocation and gulls' mating postures. Later chapters deal with reactive abilities among flora and protozoa. A fertilized ovum, like any single-celled organism, Ford suggests, has "its own sense"; as to whether the cell is self-aware, "we know too little... to decide." Ford's practical suggestions for reducing cruelty (e.g., vets should use soft tables) are useful. Most lay readers will admire his fascinating survey of creaturely powers and may be sympathetic to his call to "value the global network of all plants and animals, and react to their presence with respect." But though it trails a dazzling set of facts, Ford's call for "a new vitalism" seems less scientific (or philosophical) than quasi-religious and it's unevenly argued, though deeply felt. (Oct.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"How poorly we appreciate the finely tuned senses of the other organisms who share the planet." With these words, Ford, the author of many books of popular science, sets out to demonstrate that a belief in the sensory behavior and lives of "lower" (read: not human) forms of life is necessary to a full understanding of those lives. Eschewing the mechanistic approach that he sees in the emphasis on molecular biology in today's science, the author feels that only the holistic view of organismal biology will help us to understand the interactions that produce life on a global scale. By examining the senses and behavior of life-forms ranging from Volvox (an alga) to bower birds and such interconnections as how the welfare of farm animals can directly influence the outbreak of new diseases among humans, the author lends credence to his contention that we are surrounded by animals and plants reacting to and making sense of the world. Ford argues his thesis well in a book that is recommended for large natural-history collections. Nancy Bent Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Beautiful book, amazing facts. Everyone should read this especially if you think animals are just stupid 'animals.' This book will give you a tour of life on Earth that is so amazing that you will never forget it. It should be mandatory. It's my hope that this will help generate compassion for all life.

An insightful and entertaining book that touches on a subject rarely spoken of, but often thought about: do other life forms think, feel and communicate as we do? In fact they do. All lifeforms can communicate with one another, the only problem is we can't always understand the other lifeforms language, and if we all took the time to learn one another's language, all life would live in harmony.

How do animals and plants feel and communicate their feelings? This presents a growing body of research which demonstrates that animals - and plants - have emotions and responses just as valid as human feelings. From birds and how they see to homing frogs and their shared communities, this packs in a range of insights on wildlife communications processes.

An insightful and entertaining book that touches on a subject rarely spoken of, but often thought about: do other life forms think, feel and communicate as we do? In fact they do. All lifeforms can communicate with one another, the only problem is we can't always understand the other lifeforms language, and if we all took the time to learn one another's language, all life would live in harmony.

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