



The Historical Animal

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The conventional history of animals could be more accurately described as the history of human ideas about animals. Only in the last few decades have scholars from a wide variety of disciplines attempted to document the lives of historical animals in ways that recognize their agency as sentient beings with complex intelligence. This collection advances the field further, inviting us to examine our recorded history through an animal-centric lens to discover how animals have altered the course of our collective past. The seventeen scholars gathered here present case studies from the Pacific Ocean, Africa, Europe, and the Americas, involving species ranging from gorillas and horses to salamanders and orcas. Together they seek out new methodologies, questions, and stories that challenge accepted historical assumptions and structures. Drawing upon environmental, social, and political history, the contributors employ research from such wide-ranging fields as philosophy and veterinary medicine, embracing a radical interdisciplinarity that is crucial to understanding our nonhuman past. Grounded in the knowledge that there has never been a purely human time in world history, this collection asks and answers an incredibly urgent question for historians and others interested in the nonhuman past: in an age of mass extinctions, mass animal captivity, and climate change, when we know much of what animals have done in the past, which of our activities will we want to change in the future?

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