



Astonishing Animals: Extraordinary Creatures and the Fantastic Worlds They Inhabit

By *Tim Flannery*

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Sumptuous birds of paradise, amazing soft shell turtles, frogs that look like tomatoes, and terrifying fish (including the deep-water angler fish from Finding Nemo) are just some of the extraordinary creatures that can be found in Tim Flannery and Peter Schouten's new book *Astonishing Animals*.

Superbly illustrated in lifelike full color paintings, *Astonishing Animals* details ninety of the world's most amazing animals from around the world. In this book you will find the Hairy Seadevil, the spectacular Sulawesi Naked Bat, and in the depths of the limestone caves in Slovenia, the Olm, a pink, four-legged, sightless salamander that lives for a hundred years. In fascinating vignettes, Flannery offers the true evolutionary tale of how each of these bizarre creatures came to look the way they do. Alongside each historical account is a stunning hand painted color reproduction (life-size in the original painting) by Schouten.

Filled with purple-faced apes, jagged toothed dolphins, antlered lizards, *Astonishing Animals* is a remarkable collection of the world's most incredible creatures and the stories behind their remarkable survival into a modern age.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Flannery, a scientist, museum director and author (*The Eternal Frontier*), and Schouten, a Whitney award-winning wildlife painter, team up again (after 2001's *A Gap in Nature*) to offer this spectacular look at 97 creatures who "represent, in one way or another, the outer limits of life's progress." (Actually, 96: one of these animals, they tease, is imaginary.) Some, like the deep sea-dwelling hairy sea devil ("every bit as repulsive as its name suggests"), are products of their extreme environments; others, such as the blue bird of paradise, exhibit exceptional efforts at sexual attraction (the male bird dances while hanging upside-down from a branch, pulsing his feathers hypnotically and emitting "an intense, rhythmic buzzing"). Evolutionary pressures have made some very different creatures look remarkably alike, such as the long-beaked echidna (a mammal), the kiwi (a bird) and the mormyrid (a fish), which all feed on a similar diet of worms. There are beauties, such as the two-gram bee hummingbird; oddities, such as the white uakari, whose scarlet, very humanoid face earned it the nickname "the Englishman"; and grotesqueries, such as the Asian giant softshell turtle, which feeds on human corpses thrown into the Ganges River. All are rendered in masterful, full-color illustrations, some of which spill across two pages. Flannery's text is lively and informative, veering easily between droll descriptions and poignant warnings about disappearing habitats. As beautiful as it is fascinating, this book will be relished by animal lovers of all stripes.

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Review

"Reverently, [Flannery] tells the story of each animal--the great auk, the passenger pigeon, the red gazelle, the dodo--and, with Schouten's vividly expressive paintings, the effect is enduring."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mildred Bostwick:

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