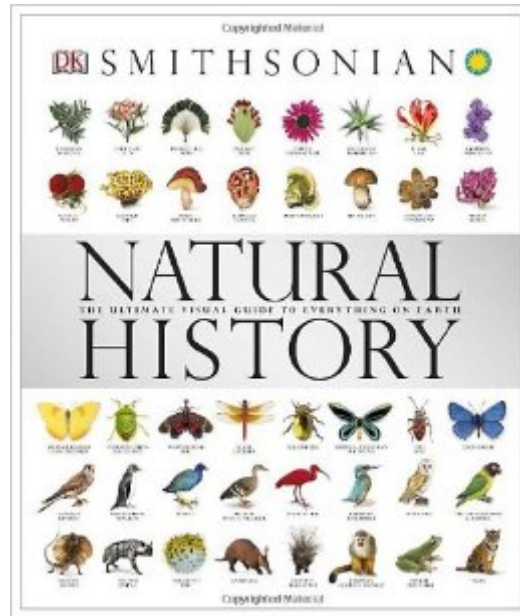


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Natural History (Smithsonian)



Synopsis

A landmark in reference publishing and overseen and authenticated by the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, *Natural History* presents an unrivaled visual survey of Earth's natural history. Giving a clear overview of the classification of our natural world-over 6,000 species-*Natural History* looks at every kingdom of life, from bacteria, minerals, and rocks to fossils to plants and animals. Featuring a remarkable array of specially commissioned photographs, *Natural History* looks at thousands of specimens and species displayed in visual galleries that take the reader on an incredible journey from the most fundamental building blocks of the world's landscapes, through the simplest of life forms, to plants, fungi, and animals.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am a man of nature. So it's no surprise that it only took two minutes after it's discovery to officially want to add this to my compendium collection. After a week, I manage to find and buy this book at Barnes n' Noble (cost me \$50 - you'll get a much better deal on here!) First off, I'm going to tell you know (though you probably already know), this book is FREAKIN' BIG!!!! Might as well be a college textbook! You'll need to find some (worthy) space in your bookshelf for it. Secondly, the sheer number of species (and specimens, mind you) inside these covers is astounding. Compare a book from the same series (DK's *Animal* for example), which had about 2,000 species in it. This tome has 5,000 (something you need to see in order to grasp the sheer quantity)! And not just animals... where else could you find a book with rocks, minerals, fossils, shells, microbes, fungi, plants,

protists, and animals all in one! It's taxonomically organized (with the system for rocks and minerals as well) starting with Bacteria & Archaea first, then Protists (yes, it uses the kingdom Protista - something I don't usually favor), then the plants take over for a good portion of the book (any lover of flowers is going to flip out), fungi proceed, then finally come the animals (which takes up half of the book - and I don't even mind). One thing I really enjoy is the fact that this is one of the only plant books I've seen where everything isn't organized for gardeners. And there are some very cool rocks and minerals in here. Third, the format is reminiscent of a Sears/Walmart catalog - the species group is listed, and then specimens abound to every last corner of the page. The photos (and illustrations for some) are wonderful and very clear. A few "not favorable" things I might add - not all animal groups get coverage, most entries that cover trees do not show the entire plant but simply a branch or leaf, the fish diversity is somewhat limited, and I've already mentioned the kingdom Protista and the dominating Animalia. But you shouldn't pay attention to these things, because if you're looking for a book with a complete diversity of the world we live in - I would recommend this.

'Natural History' is, as it claims a visual guide, perhaps not the ultimate, but close and not everything - almost. Its chapter on fish seems a little lean, but most will not notice. It is a big heavy, over 7 pounds, coffee table book. It does have some stunning pictures and lots of colored illustrations. Most of what it includes are sections on each page with coloured charts, pictures, and illustrations of many elements of the natural world; rocks, ferns, a variety of snails, birds of prey - it is filled with almost any living thing you could think of. The maps are well done and it will do much to clear up any confusion one has on classifications. You could even accomplish much identification yourself of rocks and birds using its clear pictures. There are sections on; the living earth, minerals, rocks and fossils, microscopic life, plants, fungi and animals including invertebrates, chordates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. There is a glossary and an index. It is an excellent reference and learning tool and of course has the expertise of the Smithsonian Institute behind it. This is a book young children could learn from, but adults would not feel "talked" down to. It would make a great addition to your home, school or as a Christmas present that should get much use.

The DK science books have set a standard that is hard to beat - and this is one of their best. Great photography and graphic design and just enough info to get you started on any subject. I can't recommend this book with enough superlatives. An absolute joy!

Smithsonian Natural History entertains but does not cover any specific topic systematically. It

catalogs a wide variety of fields worth further investigation by any aspiring naturalist. The publisher's excellent use of white space highlights page after page of compelling photography. This book offers a selection of the rich detail and well written descriptions the publisher's guidebooks provide. Smithsonian Natural History does not cover any one field comprehensively. The book's size makes it physically unwieldy for use as a field guide, so this offering will serve best as a coffee table book. The outstanding photography will appeal to children as young as middle schoolers, but the high quality description better matches the needs of readers at the high school level and above. For those whose appetites for nature study are whetted by this gorgeous volume, the publisher offers many field guides that cover specific topics more comprehensively. To really learn this material, pick one of those field guides and go out and see the world. The publisher's well-photographed examples are important for distinguishing between two similar specimens, but they sometimes overpromise. I wish reality were as fabulous as these books imply, but this photography provides us with the fashion models of the animal world -- reality is a bit more prosaic. Like a high fashion magazine, this is a great book to page through when you have time to kill, but people are unlikely to read it for its own sake.

Bought this book as a Christmas gift for my boyfriend who loves natural science. We keep it as a coffee table book and our guests ALWAYS pick it up and flip through it whether they're interested in science or not. It's funny seeing which animals or plants each guest will flip to. Sometimes when we're sitting around bored in the evening, we'll pick an animal and find it in the glossary just to look at all the pictures of related animals. This book is MASSIVE and has hundreds and hundreds of pictures. Would definitely recommend it to anyone looking for a neat gift.

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