

Tekst 4

Dogged by prejudice

THE TRUTH ABOUT DOGS

by Stephen Budiansky

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263 pages

We have it all wrong about dogs. Or so the distinguished American science writer, Stephen Budiansky, argues. We think they are loyal, hard-working and compassionate. Dogs may save people from drowning, from freezing, from being burgled. Dogs, we tell ourselves, evolved as our partners in hunting, herding, guarding and fighting. They are man's best friend.

9, as Budiansky points out, dogs may bark at everything that moves and then sleep through a burglary. Dogs don't clean up our excrement. We clean up theirs. We feed them, walk them and suffer their extremely anti-social and sometimes violent behaviour. "If biologists weren't as blind as the rest of us, they probably wouldn't 10 to classify dogs as social parasites."

True, dogs evolved from wolves and still have some of the keenness of a wild animal. That is part of their appeal. But they are wolves who discovered long ago that you don't have to go out to hunt with the pack to 11. Behave with sufficient gentleness and charm and humans will do the hunting for you.

We humans not only assume dogs think and feel like us – "Rex, why are you looking so guilty, if you didn't hide my slipper?" – we assume they perceive like us too. In this witty, serious, enlightening book, Budiansky shatters the illusions and replaces them with some moderately firm science. We learn about the evolution of dogs, about their relatively poor sense of sight and their stunning sense of smell.

In particular, Budiansky argues that although in a number of important respects dogs are not like wolves, they still have a sociable pack mentality: a keen sense of hierarchy and their place in it. 12, most dogs are happy to accept the authority of their owner – the dominant male – so long as they are treated consistently as "underdogs". Trouble arises when communication breaks down, and dogs are treated as subjects at one moment, as masters next. 13 dogs

often arises because we humans lack the most basic understanding of dog psychology, although Budiansky admits that intensive inbreeding might also play a part in creating aggressive, mentally unstable dogs.

The apparent pleasure with which this book attacks our dogged prejudices might sound rather heartless, but it is not. Budiansky's aim is not, he argues, to 14 the extraordinary close and often deeply touching bond between humans and their dogs – to replace the romantic illusion with the cold truth of science. On the contrary, Budiansky is a dog owner and lover. He



merely believes, reasonably enough, that we are not doing dogs any favours by treating them as our close cousins. Dogs don't want to be forced into the role of would-be humans. Rather, we should appreciate dogs for the extraordinary qualities they really possess – as expressions of the diversity and wonder of life. Or, as Budiansky puts it: "Let's face it; if dogs truly were human, they would be jerks. As dogs they are 15."

Ben Rogers

The Financial Times

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Kies bij iedere open plek in de tekst het juiste antwoord uit de gegeven mogelijkheden.

1p **9 ■**

- A After all
- B Anyway
- C Consequently
- D Yet

1p **10 ■**

- A be able
- B be willing
- C hesitate
- D try

1p **11 ■**

- A change
- B dominate
- C exercise
- D survive

1p **12 ■**

- A Apart from this
- B As a result
- C Nevertheless

1p **13 ■**

- A Cruelty to
- B Interest in
- C Misbehaviour by

1p **14 ■**

- A define
- B exaggerate
- C glorify
- D illustrate
- E undermine

1p **15 ■**

- A grateful
- B obedient
- C unremarkable
- D wonderful