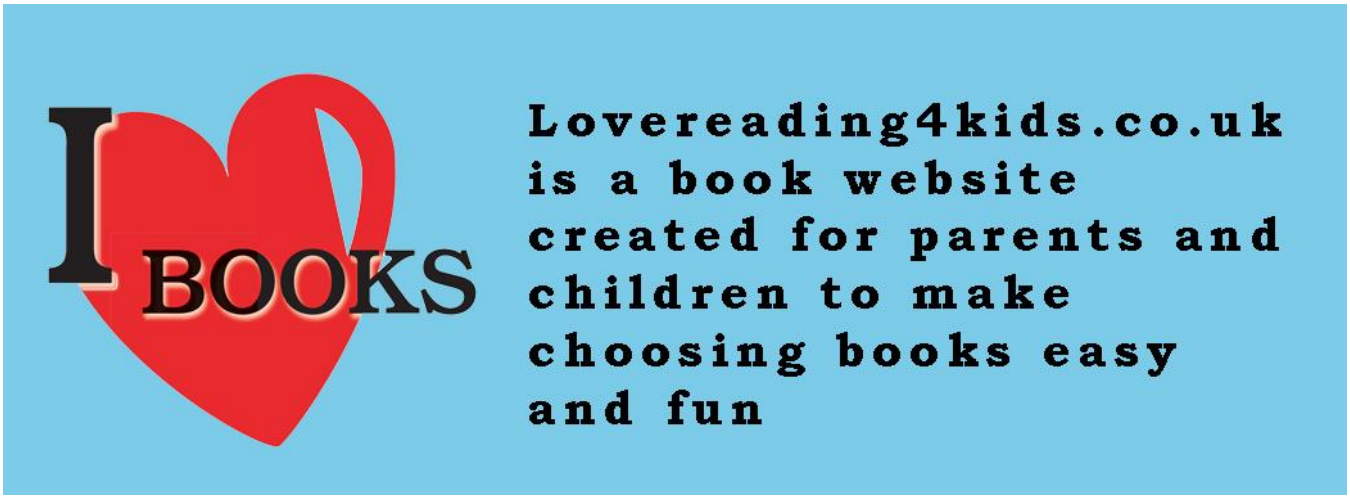


Opening extract from

Lesser Spotted Animals

Written & Illustrated by

Martin Brown

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LESSER SPOTTED ANIMALS



CONTENTS


INTRODUCTION 8–9


NUMBAT 10–11


CUBAN SOLENODON 12–13


LESSER FAIRY ARMADILLO 14–15


ZORILLA 16–17


SILVERY GIBBON 18–19


DAGGER-TOOTHED FLOWER BAT 20–21


LONG-TAILED DUNNART 22–23


RUSSIAN DESMAN 24–25


SPEKE'S PECTINATOR 26–27


ONAGER 28–29


BANDED LINSANG 30–31


YELLOW-FOOTED ROCK-WALLABY 32–33


GAUR 34–35


SAND CAT 36–37


SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALE DOLPHIN 38–39


THREE MONKEYS 40–41


HIROLA 42–43


CRABEATER SEAL 44–45



ILI PIKA 46–47


ZEBRA DUIKER 48–49


BLACK-FOOTED FERRET 50–51


GLOSSARY 52–53



INTRODUCTION

FED UP WITH THE SAME OLD ANIMALS? HAD ENOUGH of hippos? Bored with bears? Tired of tigers? Do you want animals that are fresh, new and exciting? Try *Lesser Spotted Animals*, a book about the wonderfully wow wildlife we never get to see. There are hundreds and hundreds of different animals in the world – big and small, common and rare – but most books show you just a handful of those hundreds. And it's the same handful over and over again. It's time for a book that's different – without the same ho-hum, run-of-the-mill creatures we're served day-in-day-out. No pandas, elephants or zebras here – this is a book about the world's ***other*** animals.



Everyone's heard of the koala – so cute and grey and fluffy – a nature superstar.



And if it ever became extinct we would cry and weep and wail. But what about the *pica*? Hmm? It's cute and grey and fluffy too. Would we cry and weep and wail if it vanished forever? How could we? No-one's ever heard of it. Why? Because all the books are full of koalas – and lions and tigers and all the other usual, regular celebrity creatures we always see.

Those big-shots have hogged the stage too long. It's time to shine the limelight on some of the alternative animals out there. From the black-footed ferret to the yellow-footed rock-wallaby and everything in between. This book celebrates some of the thousands of mammals that never get seen and never get talked about even though they are every bit as amazing or weird or beautiful as their over-exposed cousins.



NO HIPPOS

Bison are banned – we've got the gargantuan gaur instead. And who needs a grouchy gorilla when you can have the seldom seen solenodon with all its noxious slobber. No meek little house mouse in this book either, just a merciless marsupial mouse that eats meek little house mouses.



NIL BISON

Discover all the brilliant beasts you never knew you needed to know about – it's goodbye to the gnu and cheerio to the cheetah – say hi to the hirola and nice to meet you to the numbat.

The world of *Lesser Spotted Animals* starts here!





NUMBAT

Toothy termite-eater of the Australian west

THE NUMBAT'S OTHER NAME IS THE BANDED ANTEATER, WHICH is a little curious in that it *is* banded etc but it doesn't really eat ants. Its diet consists almost entirely of termites – and lots of them – maybe as many as 20,000 a day! The numbat uses its sharp claws to open the termite tunnels before licking up the tiny insects inside with a long sticky tongue. However, because termites have soft little bodies, it doesn't need to chew them, even though it has fifty teeth, which is more than any other marsupial.



ANT



TERMITE



The great pity about this unique creature is that there are so few of them. There are probably only about a thousand or so left in the wild and the numbers are dropping. There are more giant pandas than there are numbats but it's the big black and white guys that get all the attention and cameras and queues at the zoos. So spare a thought for the just as vulnerable numbat – the banded not-anteater.



GIANT PANDA

SIZE: a bit bigger than a guinea pig

WHAT THEY EAT: termites

WHERE THEY LIVE: small areas of dry woodland in South West Australia (and also now in two reserves on the other side of the country where they have recently been reintroduced)

STATUS: endangered

AND: it's a marsupial but it doesn't have a pouch. Baby numbats just have to cling on – for four months!



CUBAN SOLENODON

Shaggy Caribbean insectivore with a toxic bite

THE CUBAN SOLENODON IS AN EXTREMELY RARE CREATURE. AFTER BEING discovered by Europeans in 1861, very few were ever captured and studied. In the eighty-four years between 1890 and 1974 none were caught at all. Everyone thought they were extinct. But then a few were spotted in the more remote parts of Cuba and in 2002 one was caught, examined and released back into the jungle. It was found to be a clumsy, sluggish animal – with a foul temper! Not surprising, I suppose. If you'd been snatched from your home then poked and prodded and stared at for a few days, you might be a bit narky too!

But the solenodon's scarcity is not the only reason it's rare. It's also one of the very few mammals with a poisonous bite. It has venomous saliva, which runs into its bitten prey through grooves in two of the solendon's lower front teeth. **Deadly dribble.**



GROOVY TOXIC TOOTH

They live in family groups in burrows or hollow logs. They are nocturnal and, although sluggish, can climb quite well. So perhaps, between 1890 and 1974 they *were* there but just underground, in the dark, or up a tree.

SIZE: about as big as a small cat

WHAT THEY EAT: insects, spiders, worms, lizards, roots and fruit

WHERE THEY LIVE: tropical forest and woodland of eastern Cuba

STATUS: endangered. Dogs and cats threaten the few that are left

AND: the solenodon is not immune to its own poison and could die after a fight with another solenodon



