



Kaori Nagai, Editor: *Maritime Animals: Ships, Species, Stories*

Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, 2023, 240 pp, 12 figures

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Accepted: 27 March 2024 / Published online: 23 April 2024
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If a book shares in common certain things with ships (both are launched; both are often made with the byproducts of trees; both involve voyages of mind, body or both, etc.), then *Maritime Animals* is the Noah's Ark of books. Indeed, the book 'styles itself as an ocean-going ship, which carries all sorts of animals and their stories' (p. 3). And like the Ark, rather than focusing on the dogs and cats that were often kept onboard as companion animals, this edited volume brings together an assortment of reptilian, mammalian, and invertebrate beasts, all of whom share in common that they have endured long-distance voyages at sea. Unlike the Ark though, these stories are all real, and they highlight the courage and charisma of nonhuman animal protagonists rather than a single heroic human.

A few years ago, maritime archaeologist Peter Campbell tweeted a photo of a gull drifting through the waves astride a floating dead fish. The tweet posed the question: given that it has a passenger and is voyaging the sea, does this dead fish count as a boat? Kaori Nagai, editor of *Maritime Animals*, offers a twist on Campbell's humorously philosophical question by asking who counts as a seafarer? The best corollary to the gull-fish conundrum, and the clearest answer to Nagai's question, can be found in the volume's final chapter, by Thom van Dooren, on land snails whose enthralling adaptations have allowed them a certain agency to drift and diversify over vast oceanscapes to the Hawaiian archipelago via wood, wings, digestive tracts, and finally, canoes. The tortoises, tuataras, sheep, horses, shipworms, sponges, sled dogs, whales, and rats all also earn seafarer status as they travel in, on, or alongside oceangoing vessels, whether or not of their own volition.

Circumnavigating back to the volume's beginning, David Haworth and Lynette Russell examine Galápagos tortoises, and in doing so, foreshadow some of the agency of van Dooren's snails; however, in the case of the equally slow-moving tortoises, the reptiles have evolved to survive years without light, water, or food, but tragically, this marvel of island evolution facilitated their exploitation as 'living larder' in ships' holds. In the following chapter, Derek Lee Nelson and Adam Sundberg expose shipworms as enterprising actors in a 'maritime ecology'. A fellow eco-participant is the ships into which they burrowed for millennia; their activities in turn brought on numerous adaptive responses among nautical engineers, who have fought in vain to 'control eradicate, wall off, or escape' the various

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other animal and chemical participants in the maritime ecology (p. 50). Nancy Cushing brings us back to vertebrates with her cleverly titled chapter ‘Sheep from Cowes’, as she plots sheep’s course from the Isle of Wight to Australia, evaluating their experiences as unwitting participants in the British colonizing mission and in relation to the attitudes of their caretakers onboard *Fairfield* in 1826. By contrast to the sheep whose value was limited to meat, milk, and wool, the seafaring horses examined by Donna Landry enjoyed varied roles as companions-in-arms, trade goods, and prized possessions whose deaths at sea were often mourned ceremoniously. In a second chapter on reptilian seafarers, the travels of the tuatara are considered as a tragically metaphorical account of the European colonization in Aotearoa/New Zealand, where the Māori regard the reticent tuatara as keepers of sacred knowledge; the extraction of these ‘living fossils’ for display in European zoos and museums violates taboos as much as it mirrors the processes of knowledge extraction among the Māori and so many other Indigenous peoples worldwide. In Nagai’s own chapter, ship rats, especially the brown rat, becomes the ‘totem animal of the British colonizers’, as the uninvited rodents travel intrepidly around the globe, ‘sharing the danger of the sea’ (p. 125), and decimating local populations along the way; at the same time though, the rats’ consistent displays of cunning and their audacious attitudes make them almost more charming versions of the stereotypical colonizer. Introducing a much more welcome member of the shipboard family, Lea Edgar takes on the history of seafaring sled dogs in maritime Canada, and the unique truce that forms between working dogs and humans, which relied on Indigenous Inuit knowledges of training, breeding, and keeping. Jimmy Packham and Laurence Publicover take a detour from the animal onboard the ship to one who has traveled alongside so many vessels, the whale. Analyzing the figure of the whale in textual accounts and in a museum display, their chapter reflects on the value of metaphor and materiality, the role of interpretation and authenticity, and the distinctions between marine and maritime to determine that whales, whose sheer size shrouds them in mystery, have lured human voyeurs into the deep ocean to plumb the depths and their denizens at great cost. And in a final nod to the invertebrate, Killian Quigley ventures into those same depths alongside sea sponges to ask what new, more-than-human, knowledges we might find if we were to consider shipwrecks ontologically (note: this chapter is a condensed version of the author’s book, *Reading Underwater Wreckage*, reviewed previously in this journal) (Rich 2023).

To put it bluntly, I found this book to be utterly enthralling. In every chapter, and on nearly every page, I learned something new about the wonders of nonhuman animal lives, how they have shaped our maritime past, and how they can help us think better about the enduring questions of our treatment of the more-than-human world—and in turn how we can act more ethically. While some of the animals featured in this volume are ones I know well and love dearly (there is a sled dog on either side of me as I write this review), others I’ve frequently held some antipathy for and yet in learning more about them, felt myself being charmed by their guile and guts, their resilience and perseverance. I’m now smiling at the mental image of a parade of rats boldly boarding a ship along its rails and ropes, and presciently leaving that same ship before anyone human suspects it’s sinking. I wonder now about what the decontextualized and publicly displayed whale skeleton suggests about the archaeological practice of converting wreckage from the seafloor into museum exhibits (p. 169). And the tuatara, an animal I’d never even heard of before reading this book, has now come to signify the tensions that still reverberate in settler colonies across the globe, and how knowledge itself might be repatriated (pp. 110–111).

One of the most important questions this volume asks is how the distinction between marine and maritime is maintained. In light of Anthropocene entanglements of oceanic

colonization, extinction, and environmental degradation, challenging the marine/maritime distinction remains a persistently pressing matter for maritime and nautical archaeologists and historians. Balancing historical evidence with contemplative meditations on its significance, the writing is thoughtful, engaging, and provocative throughout. As in every menagerie, this collection of beastly papers truly holds something for everyone; but for the friends of the scaly and slimy, and of the salt-splashed quadrupeds, there is also a delightful whimsy found here even as critter agency is weighed carefully against the asymmetrical influence of the human animal on others' lives and wellbeing.

Author contributions SR wrote the book review.

Funding Open access funding provided by the Carolinas Consortium.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The author has no conflict of interest.

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Reference

Rich S (2023) Killian Quigley: reading underwater wreckage: an encrusting ocean. *J Mari Arch* 18:345–347. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11457-023-09368-1>

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