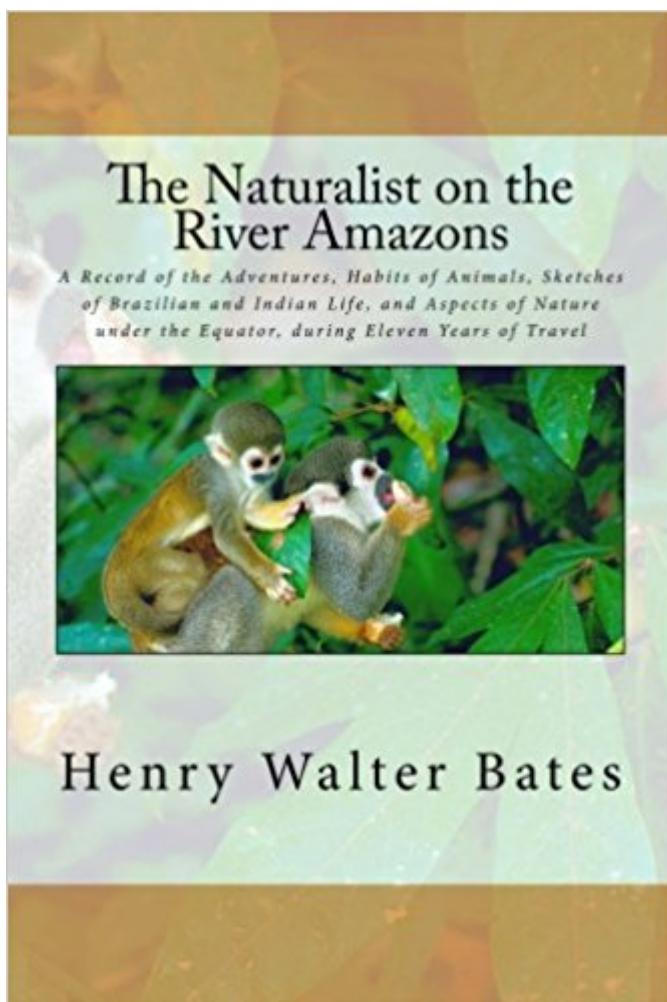


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The Naturalist On The River S: A Record Of The Adventures, Habits Of Animals, Sketches Of Brazilian And Indian Life, And Aspects Of Nature Under The Equator, During Eleven Years Of Travel





Synopsis

In company with Alfred Russell Wallace, the author, in 1848, began an exploration of the region for the collection of objects of natural history. This volume records the adventures of an eleven-years' sojourn, during which specimens of nearly fifteen thousand species were obtained; and includes the descriptions of habits of animals, sketches of Brazilian and Indian life, and various aspects of nature under the equator. "Mr. Bates was widely known as the discoverer of the principle of mimicry in the animal world...He had not the advantage of an early education, but by the unaided force of his ability, and his natural goodness of heart, made himself almost indispensable to the Geographical Society. Of his well-known book, 'The Naturalist on the River s,' Darwin said that it was 'the best work of natural history travels ever published in England.'" -The Education Outlook "An original book - a book of great value, and one which adds another to the many claims of the modern man of science to share the palm of martyrdom with the old religious martyrs. In July, 1859, 'after eleven years' residence within four degrees of the equator, the last three of which were spent in the wild country 1,400 miles from the sea coast,' Mr. Bates returned to England with shattered health, so shattered that he despaired of ever publishing his travels. As it is, we owe their publication to the friendly encouragement of Mr. Darwin, and to the high opinion he expressed of the results of Mr. Bates' journey....In tone and style Mr. Bates is perfectly good-natured, straightforward, and unpretending. The absence of all striking generalizations, and of any special assumption of poetical feeling, rather adds to the simple charm of his account. It is the view of a devoted and discriminating man, starting on his expedition with the knowledge of a well read naturalist, and the keen observation of an Englishman, but whose vision is, if unaided, unobscured by his fancy, and let us say undisturbed by any higher or more delicate flights....Mr. Bates confirms Mr. Darwin's theory of natural selection by several pointed instances: but, on the whole, his book belongs rather to the class of first-rate diaries - a fascinating collection of materials for future edification. But very fascinating it is, nor could we point to any page which is not full of lively interest. Mr. Bates belongs to the small class of men who deserve the earnest gratitude, not only of their own country, but of the civilized world." -The Spectator "This most famous work is a natural history classic." -London Literary World "Darwin unhesitatingly pronounced the best book on natural history which ever appeared in England. The work still retains its prime interest, and in rereading it one can not but be impressed by the way in which the prophetic theories, disputed and ridiculed at the time, have since been accepted. Such is the common experience of those who keep a few paces in advance of their generation. Bates was a 'born' naturalist." -Philadelphia Ledger "No man was better prepared or gave himself up more thoroughly to the task of studying an almost unknown fauna, or showed a

zeal more indefatigable in prosecuting his researches, than Bates. As a collector alone, his reputation would be second to none, but there is a great deal more than sheer industry to be cited. The naturalist of the s is, par excellence, possessed of a happy literary style. His is always clear and distinct. He tells of the wonders of tropical growth so that you can understand them all." -The New York Times

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Customer Reviews

Henry Walter Bates was an English naturalist and explorer who gave the first scientific account of mimicry in animals. He was most famous for his expedition to the with Alfred Russel Wallace in 1848.

This is an enjoyable account of the travels of a nineteenth century naturalist in the . It is a book in the same vein as Darwin's "Voyage of the Beagle" and Humboldt's "Personal Narrative", and it paints a vivid picture of the wildlife and the people of the region. Bates sometimes shows the patronising prejudice of a "civilised" European towards the native peoples, but at other times he shows that he can be reasonably tolerant in his attitudes. Bates describes his years in the as "eleven of the best years of my life". But the book also shows that they were years in which he faced dangers, disease and hardship. Bates travelled out to South America in 1848 with Alfred Russel Wallace, and the dangers of such expeditions are shown by the fact that Wallace's younger brother died of yellow fever in South America and by the fact that, while he was returning to England,

Wallace's ship sank and he lost most of the specimens he had collected, with Wallace and the crew being rescued after spending ten days in an open boat. Bates is also linked to Wallace, and to Darwin, in relation to the theory of evolution by natural selection. In 1858, while in the Far East, Wallace came up with the idea of natural selection independently of Darwin (although Darwin had first developed the idea in 1838). And Bates returned to England in 1859, the year that Darwin's "On the Origin of Species" was published. When Bates read Darwin's book he was immediately convinced by it and he realised that something he had seen himself was a perfect example of natural selection. Bates had seen that some species of butterflies mimicked others in their appearance. The ones that were being mimicked avoided being eaten by being foul-smelling or noxious to predators. Although the mimics were not themselves foul or noxious, they avoided predation by evolving through natural selection to look like the foul-smelling species. Darwin praised the paper that Bates published on what later came to be known as "Batesian mimicry", and he encouraged Bates to publish "The Naturalist on the River s", which Darwin described as "the best work of Natural History Travels ever published in England." Bates's conversion to Darwinism is evident in this book, which was first published in 1863. On page 65, for example, he writes of "the slow adaptation of the Fauna to a forest-clad country throughout an immense lapse of geological time." On page 407 he says that "nature appears not to invent organs at once for the functions to which they are now adapted, but avails herself, here of one already-existing structure or instinct, there of another, according as they are handy when need for their further modification arises." And on page 413, with reference to the wings of butterflies, he writes that "on these expanded membranes Nature writes, as on a tablet, the story of the modifications of species..." I should finally mention that this edition of the book is a facsimile of the 1864 edition, and it includes some interesting illustrations, including one of an "adventure with alligator"! I recommend it. Phil Webster (England)

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