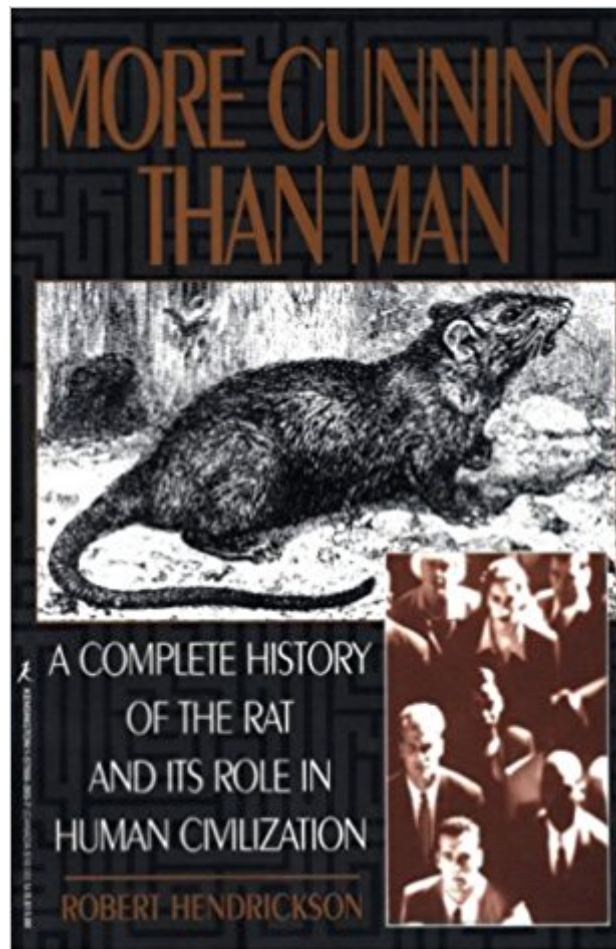




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More Cunning Than Man: A Social History Of Rats And Man



Synopsis

This eye-opening, well-researched examination of mankind's oldest competitor is filled with weirdly fascinating information about the history of the rat and the way it consistently outsmarts man.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I had read an earlier edition of this book and thought the book needed updated. When I bought the recent edition and read it, I was disappointed. The facts are there, but as previously noted, there are no citations. I grow weary of the same old 19th century drawings of rats that appear in this and most other books dealing with rats. I guess real photos just don't look menacing enough. Rats get lots of bad press. These old illustrations just add to it. The book is history, however and these are presented as such. If a book is about rats, all I ask for are illustrations that look like rats. The book is a good read. Packed with information, humor and insight, it has a lot to say. The title is very appropriate. With an animal that is as cunning, diverse and adaptable as the Rat, genetic engineering needs to approach with a bit of caution.

What an interesting non-fiction read. Our family owns pet rats so we know what funny and intelligent creatures they are. So, we're naturally interested in rats. Read this book and learn how rats shaped history in ways you cannot even imagine.

Interesting and informative. Well researched.

This is a fascinating book which details how rats impact our lives and have changed human history. Their impact is enormous, as they destroy enough food that hunger otherwise could be eliminated. The book notes that it is our ways that entice the rats. The author provides lots of interesting facts about rats. The following are notes from the book that may be of use to student of History, especially social history:

Rats do not appear to have any genetic changes from exposure to radiation. Rats have very sensitive taste sensitivity. They may detect as little as two parts per million of poison. Rats will not eat refined flour. Rat teeth can cut through concrete and steel. Rats can fall 60 feet and land on their feet. Rats will feed helpless rats and help guide blind rats. During flooding, rats stay in narrow passages in their burrows where they survive as long as their oxygen lasts. Rats often do not eat unfamiliar food which makes them difficult to poison. Knowledge of poisoned bait appears to be handed down from generation to generation. Rats cause many fires of "undetermined origin" from their gnawing electric wire insulation. Rats will bite and eat people. Tens of thousands are injured or killed annually. Some authorities believe that if crops destroyed by rats could be cut in half, world hunger would end. It is not true that lemmings kill themselves by running into the sea. When the lemmings population gets too large in an area, thousands will migrate in a straight line. They will swim across water always swimming to reach the other side. Those that drown do not intentionally drown. Along the way, pregnant females remain behind in new areas. Rats outnumber people in Washington, D.C. five to one. Rats steal. They use dollar bills for nest bedding. They steal jewelry. Few suspect their belongings were stolen by rats. Millions of people over four centuries died from typhus, bubonic plague, and other diseases carried by rats. Over a million soldiers suffered from trench fever brought by rats into their trenches during World War I. There were plagues in ancient Egypt. The plague killed 300,000 of the Persian army of Xerxes which prevented him from invading Greece. The Black Death in 1386 killed about a third in Europe including half of Italy, 90% of London, and all but five people in Smolensk. Some people blamed a Jewish conspiracy for causing the Black Death. In Mayence, 12,000 Jews were burned to death. 510 Jewish communities were "exterminated". The Black Death, by killing so many workers, gave workers greater abilities to make more demands such that the manorial system was realigned. During World War II, the Japanese dropped packets of plague filled fleas into China. This led to some plague outbreaks. Some believe the U.S. used rats as weapons against North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, and Cambodia. The U.S. (circa 1986) had 25 researchers conducting plague research while the Soviet Union had 25,000. A female rat may have 16 litters a year. The Norway rat has an average life span of six months. Lacking any other food, a rat will eat another rat. Rats can live up to two weeks without food. Rats can swim up to all a

mile and can tread water for up to three days. Dogs are the best animals at killing rats (not counting humans). Rats usually outsmart dogs yet dogs are rats' best competitor. Rats will attack back against a dog and will gang up on a dog to get away. Dogs can be trained to kill rats. Rats ruin 25% of sugar crop in most West Indies islands, the northern part of South Africa, several islands in the Pacific, and even a higher percent in Hawaii. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr and others called for a war against rats. President Lyndon Johnson proposed a two year effort costing \$40 billion. Congress defeated the proposal. Johnson commented the government does more to protect cattle than protecting children. Stricter inspection of ships prevents rats entering. Still, rats can jump over mooring line guards with a 36 inch diameter, can walk 60 feet on cable at least a quarter inch thick, and can swim to shore. The U.S. Agriculture Department used a new poison, 400,000 traps, poisoned grain in several carloads, and a million pounds of poisoned sausages to kill 8.5 million rats. Red squill is an effective rat killer that has been known about since the 16th century. The plant grows in the Mediterranean. A good way to prevent rat infestation is to change one's environment by being so clean the rats have no food. Mice eat less than do rats. A mouse eats about 4 grams of food per day. Yet, with their urine and droppings, they contaminate almost as much food as do rats. Medical research using rats has happened in most medical researches. 15 minutes of strong sunlight can kill a rat.

The most inclusive book on this rodent I've ever read. It includes the origin and natural history of the rat, rat behaviour, man's attempts to eradicate them, rats' links to disease, rat folklore, rats in art and literature, rats in the lab, rats as pets, rat attacks, even recipes for cooked rats (:-P). Don't think I'll be trying any of those. The book has many facts about rats I've seen nowhere else, including this : scientists were able to impregnate a female *Mus musculus* with the semen of a Norway Rat. Attempts to cross *Rattus norvegicus* with *Rattus rattus* have failed. That means that the common house mouse is basically a tiny rat...or that the Norway rat is a huge mouse, however you want to look at it. Of course, all this information in a book of less than 300 pages means the book reads like some rivers out west...a mile wide and only 6 inches deep. Furthermore, Mr. Hendrickson uses neither endnotes or footnotes, so if the reader wants to verify the info by consulting the original sources, s/he is SOL. This is most irritating when one is reading the horrific attacks of rats 'swarming' human victims and eating them alive. Behaviour that unusual in an animal that prefers to avoid people begs for better verification, rats being one of the animals that inspires Urban Legends. (At least one story RH repeats was identified as such by Jan Harold Brunvand; the one where two people check into a hotel room, one leaves, when she returns, the second person has

vanished, and no one remembers her ...) The author does include an index and a bibliography. And while I do understand that most people would read this book for the horrific elements, I wish the role of the rat as pet had been covered better. Any rat person will tell you that a rat is friendlier than a cat, smarter than a dog, more trainable than a guinea pig or hamster, and cleaner than any of these other animal companions. For that matter, wild Norway rats have been tamed and trained by any number of convicts and POWs and other, lonely people forsaken by their human brethren. I gave this book 4 stars out of 5 because I reserve 5 stars for one-in-a-million masterpieces. I took off 1/2 a star for the lack of documentation... use endnotes or footnotes, PLEASE! WARNING: THIS BOOK SHOULD NOT BE PURCHASED BY A PROSPECTIVE RAT OWNER, WITH THE IDEA THAT IF A RECALCITRANT PARENT/SPOUSE/SO READS IT, THEY'LL BECOME ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT GETTING A RAT! :-)

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