

Sample Annotated Bibliography

(My four books are all about the connection between animal behavior and people.)

1. Lorenz, Konrad Z., King Solomon's Ring. New York: Harper & Row. 1952.

This book is a series of essays by Konrad Lorenz, an Austrian scientist who did most of his work in the early 20th century. Lorenz studies animals and tries to understand their behavior scientifically. Each chapter is a study of a different animal. Lorenz has chapters on fish, moles, geese, apes, and wolves. The chapters have quotes and illustrations; clearly Lorenz was targeting the general public instead of scientists. I found this book easy to read. Chapters were short and stood on their own.

Lorenz is most famous for his experiments in raising geese and ducks. He figured out that these birds imprint on the first creature they see as soon as they hatch. Because of this, Lorenz wound up as the mother figure to several groups of birds. He spent many months of his life being followed by lines of goslings, teaching them to swim, eat, and even fly. He tells in great detail how he figured out some basics of animal behavior.

Much of this book is unintentionally funny. In one chapter, Lorenz raises some birds which accept him as one of their own. In order to respect him, the birds begin bringing Konrad food, bugs and worms which they attempt to place in his mouth, ears, or nose. As a conscientious scientist, Lorenz accepts these gifts. He doesn't feel that it's right to lose the trust of his flock.

In the last few essays, Lorenz looks at aggression in animals. He examines animals, such as wolves, which have the means to kill each other, but don't. Then he tries to figure out why. Animals with weapons avoid each other through displacement – that is, they attack the ground instead of each other. If not that, they have a social system of submission, such as the clear ranking of wolves in a pack, which determines which wolf submits to which. Lorenz makes the point that all animals with the means to kill each other develop *controls*, ways to prevent this, which is evolutionarily disastrous.

Finally, Lorenz tries to draw some conclusions about people as a species. He argues that our technology has come so quickly that we never developed any *controls* as other animals have. We don't have a ritualized system of submission or particularly effective ways to channel our energies into safe aggression.

Lorenz is very cautious about making solid claims about people, but he does explain principles of animal behavior very well. I liked reading him.