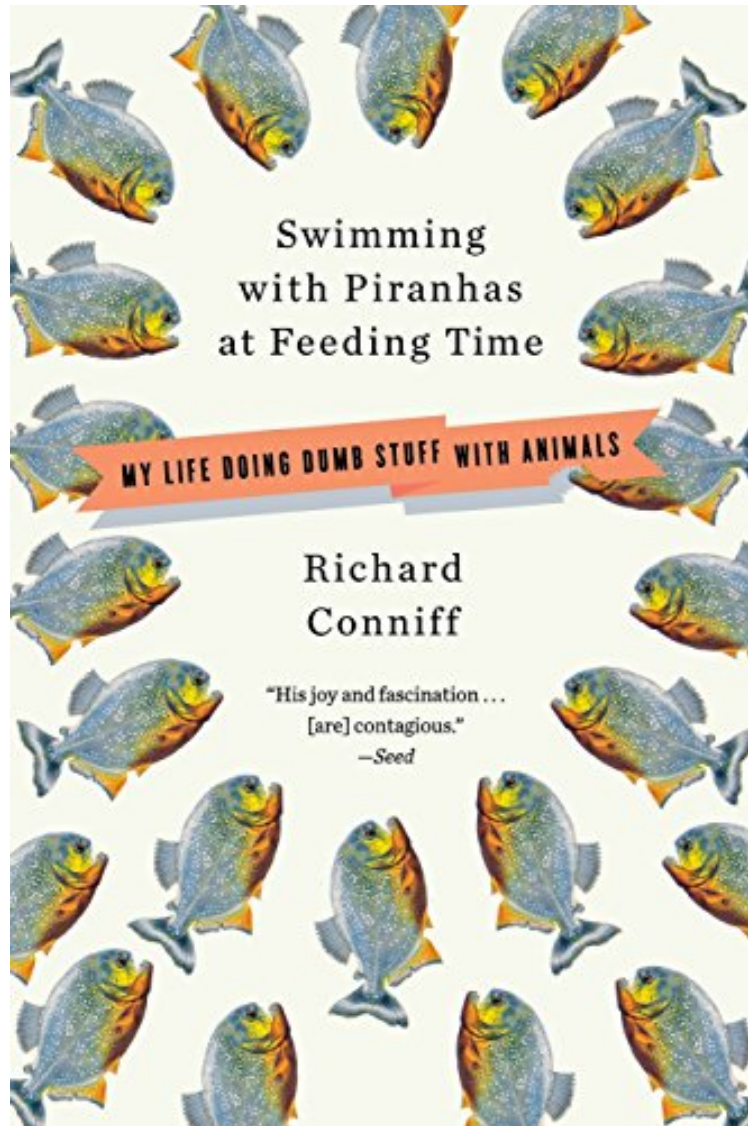


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# Swimming with Piranhas at Feeding Time: My Life Doing Dumb Stuff with Animals

*Richard Conniff*

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**Richard Conniff : Swimming with Piranhas at Feeding Time: My Life Doing Dumb Stuff with Animals** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Swimming with Piranhas at Feeding Time: My Life Doing Dumb Stuff with Animals:

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admit, I downloaded this book as a compulsive response to the sub-\$3.00 price inducement offered at the time. While not a huge risk -- I had encountered Mr. Conniff's prose once or twice earlier in the pages of Outside Magazine and NatGeo -- I still wondered about the relatively fire-sale pricing. Bad eBook formatting? Poor editing? Turns out, the book is fine; I merely lucked into great pricing for a solid book. Nature enthusiasts will surely enjoy the breadth and variety, if not the depth, of Mr. Conniff's exploits and descriptions thereof. Which is not to suggest that the vignettes do not contain thought-provoking moments, because they do. This is because Mr. Conniff sticks largely to describing, very clearly and succinctly, what he saw and experienced during a very brief frozen moment in the life-cycle of a given creature and those who study it. In doing so, Mr. Conniff invites the reader to ponder those big-ticket philosophical and conservation issues -- the relevance of anthropomorphism in primate study, or the role of hunters in attaching economic value to a stressed species, for instance. Want more depth? Mr. Conniff provides plenty of names and organizations in each chapter, as well as a perfectly succinct list of citations by chapter at the end of the book. Kindle users will be happy to know that the table of contents is linked and that it is as easy as ever to highlight a name or book title provided by Mr. Conniff and, with a few button presses, instantly learn more via the Web. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Every page is an adventure! By SingleEyePhotos I wasn't quite sure what this book would be like, and I put off reading it for a while (waiting until 'I felt like it'), but once I started, I couldn't stop! Even though it's a real page-turner, it's written in such a way that it's perfect as a 'palate cleanser' between other books. Each chapter is less than 10 pages long, is entirely self-contained and relates to a single subject. The author's style is very easygoing, amusing, and somewhat self-deprecatory. These are not stories about \*animals\*, but \*stories\* about animals and the people who study them. Every chapter is full of fascinating trivia and anecdotes. The scientists are all real 'characters', and their love/admiration for the animal they study shines through clearly. I bookmarked several chapters to share with different friends, depending on their interests. A definite 'must read' for just about anyone, of any age. No blood, no gore, no sad endings - just the tales of some quirky people who have dedicated their lives to studying other creatures, great and small, likeable and not, endangered or plentiful, wild or captive. As another reviewer said - buy this book! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Humorous and fun writing, although more misses than hits in terms of topics covered. By ian710 Conniff is a good writer, very eloquent and it shows in the language - effective in conveying the mood, and humorous. However there were more misses than hits for me in this collection of essays about various animal groups from microbes to mammals. Also, I often found the insights into his day to day work experience, his notes from the field if you will, more interesting than the main articles themselves.

Hilariously informative. . . . This book will remind you why you always wanted to be a naturalist. Outside In this thrilling foray into the animal kingdom, Richard Conniff takes readers on an adventure-packed journey as he courts the most dangerous animals and lives to tell the tale. He lets African wild dogs sniff his neck to test the idea that they are vicious man-eaters, sticks his hand in a fire ant mound and does multiple takes for a pretty camerawoman on a television shoot, and flings chicken carcasses into piranha-infested waters to clock how quickly they disappear before diving in himself. This collection offers a rare chance to go along on these death-defying treks and see life through the eyes of a bona-fide field naturalist.

From Publishers Weekly Travel writer and field naturalist Conniff (Rats) shares such outrageous vignettes from his career as feasting on warthog sausage with an occasional side of beetle larvae, having insects copulate on his forehead and communing with packs of African wild dogs. His acute descriptions and self-deprecatory humor keep such sections riveting, but the chapters profiling other experts' research and involvement with various species read a bit laboriously. Particularly tedious is his investigation into Madagascar's lemurs with Patricia Wright, a housewife-turned-primatologist, who names the lemurs and spends nights in the forests observing them. Conniff's perspective is nowhere to be found in this chapter, only a historical and contemporary account of Wright's experiences and her effort to preserve the lemur colonies. Readers will likely crave more chapters spotlighting Conniff's personal experiences of the animals and his keen wit and insights. (May) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Nature writer Conniff has traveled all over the world to climb mountains, follow African wild dogs, watch hummingbirds in an Arizona backyard, and, yesswim with piranhas. While following the African wild dogs, which have a reputation as predators unafraid to attack humans, Conniff gets out of his Land Rover and sits near three dogs. Two yearlings approach, but an adult walks right up to the author and sniffs him. A visit to an entomologist reveals the self-named Justin O. Schmidt Pain Index, a guide to just how painful insect stings really are (as sampled by Mr. Schmidt, who's been stung by at least 150 different species). New Orleans gets battered not only by hurricanes but by a much more insidious enemy, termites, and Conniff learns that there are two different kinds of housesthoes that have termites and those that will have termites. And, finally, that swimming with the piranhas part: with red swim trunks in a public aquarium tank and amid chummed beef liver in the , Conniff survived this watery visit. Delightfully addictive, read this one for natural-history fun. --Nancy Bent A quick and intensely pleasurable read. - Seed Conniff writes with vibrancy and verve. His prose crackles with the leaves on an African savannah and

shimmers with the sun on a Louisiana bayou. - Sacramento Book