



Octopus!: The Most Mysterious Creature in the Sea

By Katherine Harmon Courage



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“A pleasant, chatty book on a fascinating subject.” — *Kirkus Reviews*

Octopuses have been captivating humans for as long as we have been catching them. Yet for all of our ancient fascination and modern research, we still have not been able to get a firm grasp on these enigmatic creatures.

Katherine Harmon Courage dives into the mystifying underwater world of the octopus and reports on her research around the world. She reveals, for instance, that the oldest known octopus lived before the first dinosaurs; that two thirds of an octopus’s brain capacity is spread throughout its arms, meaning each literally has a mind of its own; and that it can change colors within milliseconds to camouflage itself, yet appears to be colorblind.



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Editorial Review

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Octopuses have been around for 300 million years, surfacing in ancient mythology and various cuisines and currently living the world over in an array of several hundred species that are, to our mammalian eyes, strange, even alien. Courage, an associate editor of *Scientific American*, gamely explores the bustling realm of the octopus. She endures seasickness off the coast of Spain while watching two fishermen haul up hundreds of octopuses, adding to the 50,000 tons caught and consumed each year. She follows the tentacle trail to Brooklyn, Puerto Rico, and Greece. But the most fascinating chapters in this entertaining and eye-opening inquiry are Courage's laboratory visits with scientists who are in awe of the "smartest invertebrate" on the planet. With their three hearts, regenerating arms, remarkable musculature, and superhero powers, octopuses can radically change shape, size, texture, and color. Underwater genies of disguise, they are well-armed and adept at escape. Scientists are eager to learn how these startlingly intelligent and dexterous marine creatures perform their miraculous transformations, and readers will look forward to more of Courage's jauntily elucidating dispatches. --Donna Seaman

Review

"The octopus is like an alternate experiment in intelligent life—sophisticated, alluring, and wholly alien. In her fresh, deeply reported

book, Katherine Harmon Courage makes this creature a little less mysterious, but no less marvelous."

—**CARL ZIMMER**, author of *A Planet of Viruses* and *The Tangled Bank: An Introduction to Evolution*

"What is it like to be an octopus? We need to imagine that our arms, all eight of them, can think and that our skin can see. Despite our obvious trouble understanding this invertebrate, no one doubts its intellect. A delightful book about a fascinating creature!"

—**FRANS DE WAAL**, author of *The Bonobo and the Atheist*

"According to this book, octopuses can sprout temporary horns. Horns! Seriously, you need to read this book."

—**WILL TRACY**, editor in chief, *The Onion*

"A pleasant, chatty book on a fascinating subject."

—*Kirkus*

"[A] well-written, accessible book".

—*Library Journal*

"Katherine Harmon Courage's reportage on what the mollusk is teaching us about robotics, invertebrate intelligence and camouflage is excellent"

— *Nature Journal*

"In journalist Katherine Harmon Courage's intimate, expansive portrait of these mysterious creatures, she reveals their role in everything from military research to tasty cuisine."

— *Psychology Today*

"Katherine Harmon Courage's first book *Octopus!* is crammed with funny, weird, memorable stories about human interactions with cephalopods that start out strange and only get stranger."

– **NBCNews.com**

"I love *Octopus!* What creature is more beguiling, expressive and enigmatic? Katherine Harmon Courage's breezy, accessible book introduces us to a top predator, a shape-shifter, a sea mystery that no one can resist."

--**SY MONTGOMERY**, author of *Journey of the Pink Dolphins: An Amazon Quest*

About the Author

Katherine Harmon Courage is an award-winning journalist, currently a contributing editor for *Scientific American*. This is her first book. She lives in Boulder, Colorado.

Users Review

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