

Ancient Egyptian Animals

An Illustrated Research Report for a Film Production

Submitted as a Portfolio for Review

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INTRODUCTION

Sitting at the crossroads of the Old World, the land, water, and air of Egypt have hosted a sumptuous variety of native, migratory, and imported species of animal life—the greatest variety in any ecosystem outside the tropical rain forests. To the south, the world's longest river, the Nile, brings animals down from Sub-Saharan jungles and savannas. To the west, the world's largest desert, the Sahara, surprisingly teems with wildlife; to the east lies the likewise living, Arabian Desert. To the north, the world's largest landmass, Eurasia, brings forth yet other species. The Mediterranean Sea, the world's largest inland body of water, as well as the Red Sea provide passage for aquatic animals from as far away as the Atlantic and Indian oceans. Moreover, the natural and artificial diversity of fauna was even greater in millennia past, when the Egyptians were the most prosperous people on Earth and our species had not yet extirpated all too many others.

Wild and domestic animals fulfilled a great many needs in the worldly lives and hoped-for afterlives of the ancient Egyptians. Animals fulfilled physical needs, serving as foods, medicines, pets, sport, and

beasts of burden. Animals fulfilled aesthetic needs, inspiring designs for hieroglyphs, objets d'art, and such household goods as furniture or toys. And animals fulfilled spiritual needs, embodying the virtues worshipped as gods.

Various animals acted as agents of Divine Providence in the miraculous Exodus of the Hebrews from their bondage in Egypt. Frogs, "sciniphs," flies, and locusts plagued their captors. The blood of Paschal lambs marked their doorposts. In the wilderness, scale insects evidently provided manna; and migratory quails, meat. And in the Promised Land, milk flowed from goats; and honey, from bees.

This work before you presents over 200 of these animals native to, migrating through, or imported into Egypt during the time of the pharaohs. Included are such invertebrates as the dreaded scorpions and the sacred scarab; such fishes as the playful Nile fish and the electric catfish; such amphibians and reptiles as the fearsome Egyptian cobra and the infamous Nile crocodile; such birds as the sacred ibis, the beautiful waterfowl, the awesome vultures, and the royal falcon; and such mammals as the sacred baboon, the beloved dogs and cats, the grave-robbing jackals, the majestic lion, the formidable hippopotamus, the

graceful gazelle, and the host of helpful livestock.

For each animal, you will be presented with an intriguing and entertaining "character study," consisting of a simple, yet accurate "color model" as well as text of biology (particularly behavior), Egyptology, and Bibliology (Biblical references).

For your convenience and creativity, the animals are numbered, lettered, and indexed: An index to the natural relationships in each group of animals appears as a table of contents for that section; and in the "Indexes" section, there are Habitat Indexes to the settings around ancient Egypt in which the animals lived as well as an Alphabetical Index to the animals' common names.

In assembling this "bestiary," I have researched various reliable resources, for truths "stranger than fiction." For biology, I have relied especially upon *Grzimek's Animal Life Encyclopedia* and *The New International Wildlife Encyclopedia* as well as *Walker's Mammals of the World*, *The Birds of North Africa*, *Domestic Plants and Animals: The Egyptian Origins*, and the Los Angeles Zoo; for Egyptology, *Amazing Facts About Ancient Egypt*, *Ancient Egypt* (A Time-Life Book), *Dictionary of Egyptian Civilization*, and *Eyewitness Books: Ancient Egypt*; and for Bibliology, *Living Animals of the Bible* as well as *The Good Book*.

Ironically—but just as planned—the paintings and other artifacts in the tombs of the ancient Egyptians bring their natural and supernatural

worlds back to life, thousands of years after their passing. With these antiquities as a background—and at the risk of having made a showcase of graven images—I offer for your enjoyment and edification these **Ancient Egyptian Animals!**