

Who's Yawning Now?

Nicki Geigert

Readers Magnet (Aug 18, 2020)

Hardcover \$17.99 (42pp)

978-1-951775-83-4

Who's Yawning Now? is a valuable, educational picture book that encourages curiosity through its curation of interesting birds and mammals.

Wildlife photographer Nicki Geigert's *Who's Yawning Now?* is a splendid animal facts picture book for young conservationists.

Threaded by the clever concept of yawning—which, in the animal world, can be used as a warning, among other reasons—this introduction to biodiversity features animals across continents, from llamas and wolves to dholes and tenrecs. Each page includes one yawning animal photograph; intriguing facts about where the animal lives, and what it eats; and information about whether it is endangered. An energetic, clear style invites fun read-alouds as well as casual perusal.

The multilevel text includes green bars that designate a simpler story line for toddlers to follow, while its main body is aimed at six- to ten-year-olds, making it an adaptable addition to home libraries. The interior design, however, is utilitarian. Its map diagrams are small, its paragraphs are dense, and its red font highlights sometimes focus on animal names, but at other times pull out phrases or vocabulary words (like “Endangered Red List of Threatened Species” and “stable species”), setting up an expectation for a glossary that’s absent. A lack of definition for what the criteria are when it comes to classifying animals as vulnerable or not also leaves open-ended questions. The book’s original photographs stand out for their close-ups, which bind to the yawning theme.

The first person voice that’s used for each animal yields playful expressions, such as “I am the dad and have just awakened” and “Please do not call us baboons” that appeal to children’s fondness for personification. Animals’ comments about people’s “carelessness” and their strong, repeated concern about the harm that people inflict inspire passion, though, with few practical, additional resources about what can be done, the implied call to action is weakened. The text is most effective at conveying memorable facts in measured, age-appropriate amounts, bringing habitats to life.

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KAREN RIGBY (January 9, 2023)

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