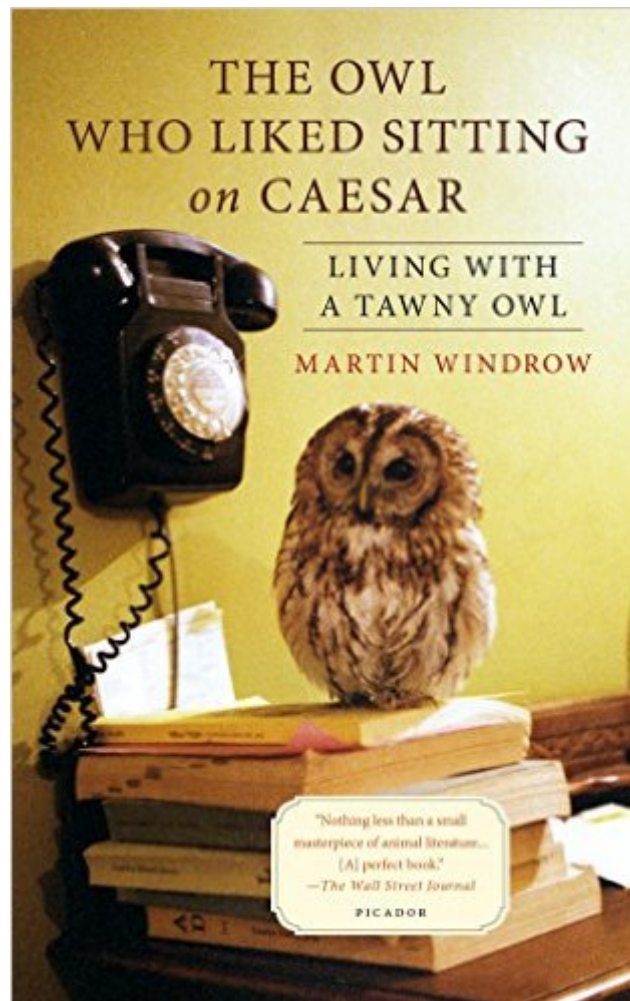


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The Owl Who Liked Sitting On Caesar: Living With A Tawny Owl



Synopsis

The story of an odd couple—a British military historian and the Tawny Owl with whom he lived for fifteen years—Martin Windrow was a war historian with little experience with pets when he adopted an owl the size of a cornucob. Adorable but with knife-sharp talons, Mumble became Windrow's closest, if at times unpredictable, companion, first in a South London flat and later in the more owl-friendly Sussex countryside. In *The Owl Who Liked Sitting on Caesar*, Windrow recalls with wry humor their finer moments as well as the reactions of incredulous neighbors, the awkwardness of buying Mumble unskinned rabbit at Harrods Food Hall, and the grievous sense of loss when Mumble nearly escapes. As Windrow writes: "Mumble was so much a part of my life in those days that the oddity of our relationship seldom occurred to me, and I only thought about it when faced with other people's astonishment. When new acquaintances learned that they were talking to a book editor who shared a seventh-floor flat in a South London tower block with a Tawny Owl, some tended to edge away, rather thoughtfully . . . I tried to answer patiently, but I found it hard to come up with a short reply to the direct question 'Yes, but . . . why?'; my best answer was simply 'Why not?'" Windrow offers a poignant and unforgettable reminiscence of his charmed years with his improbable pet, as well as an unexpected education in the paleontology, zoology, and sociology of owls.

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Customer Reviews

Martin Windrow shares his 15 years with Mumble, his pet tawny owl, with us. This memoir is loving and often witty, but it is tinged with an anger the author has carried for twenty years after Mumble's

death. I suspect that there will be controversy about this book on these pages. The idea of raising a wild creature as a pet stirs different emotions in different people. Regardless of a person's opinion, the author here does portray a long pet/owner relationship as a happy one for both concerned. Actually, a larger part of the book gives details on owls, especially the tawny owl, so there is an academic tone here. It's the latter chapters that tell us more specifically about the life shared by Windrow and Mumble. All in all, this is a memorable book which animal lovers especially will enjoy. The author is given credit for his admonitions at the book's start against "rescuing" an abandoned owlet you might think "lost". On the other hand, he shares the joy one can have in properly raising a creature such as a tawny owl and establishing a pet relationship. The book is nicely enhanced with a number of drawings and photographs. Some of the photoghs were a bit indistinct in the reviewer's copy, but may be much clearer in the published version. I enthusiastically endorse this book for all readers who love animals.

Martin Windrow held my interest in the fascinating account of his life with a tawny owl. He writes well; his dry and witty voice suits his subject perfectly. Many times, I laughed aloud at his lively descriptions of the extra effort he used to provide a meaningful life to Mumbles. Nearly as often, I laughed at Mumbles's attempts to encourage Mr. Windrow into more owl-like behavior. Boredom kicked in - and my eyes began glazing over - when he began giving general information about owls. I'm glad I didn't skip those sections, however, because just about the time I lost interest, Mr. Windrow would tie the section into an amusing anecdote from his life with Mumbles. The book was, entertaining, informative, and meaningful. I especially recommend it to anyone who thinks they want to keep a wild bird or animal as a pet. As *The Owl Who Liked Sitting on Caesar*, clearly describes, it is not a choice to be made lightly.

I am a bird lover, and have owned and rehabbed birds so I had to read this story. It didn't disappoint and was thoroughly enjoyable! I loved the story and the way that the author interspersed educational tidbits and information about owls in the story. Having owned birds, it was fun to read about how the relationship and how routines developed between Martin (the author) and the owl. An owl is not the type of pet you would expect to find in a downtown flat, and that made their adventures even more intriguing! This is a must read for anyone who has had a special relationship with a bird or other pet.

This book is both interesting and charming. It is well written by Martin Windrow, a historian who lived

with a tawny owl in his London apartment back in the 1980s. For reasons he explains, Windrow became interested in birds of prey and decided he would like to have a tawny as a pet. While this was apparently acceptable 30 years ago, Windrow makes clear that is not today. Owls belong in the wild. That said, Windrow's story of life with Mumble, a female tawny, sheds light on the habits of owls and entertains with stories about Mumble's quirks, one of which was sitting on the head of a bust of Julius Caesar that Windrow had in his apartment. Eventually, he moves with Mumble to the country, where she has a cage outdoors and is able to commune, albeit through the bars, with other owls. I was glad to know that at some point in her life Mumble had the opportunity to know that she was not entirely alone without others of her species. Windrow comes to love Mumble is grieved when she dies, in much the same way that one grieves when our more conventional feline or canine pets pass. This too made me glad because it illustrates a bond between a human and a very different species. Our world could use more of this type of attachment. Bottom line: If you like birds, nature and pet topics, you will enjoy this book.

Martin Windrow's memoir of his fifteen years sharing his life with a Tawny Owl is delightful, informative and just plain fun. I admit I was drawn to this book specifically because I have spent the past two months being completely enthralled by the around-the-clock live video feed of a pair of eagles raising their eaglet, and I think that this clearly created a resonance with much of what Windrow discussed. This narrative alternates personal vignettes of Martin's experiences with his friend Mumble and very useful informational sections about the behavior, physiology, and different categories of owls. Obviously, those who already know the "science" could skip these segments, but I found them fascinating indeed. Again, having been watching the development of the eaglet designated "B3" (the nest is situated on the campus of Berry College in Rome, Georgia), I found the parallels and contrasts with the smaller raptor absolutely enthralling. Besides the excellent narrative, this book is greatly enhanced by some absolutely charming photographs, as well as exquisite graphic illustrations by artist Christa Hook. This is a book to read and re-read, perhaps to read aloud. It is not a children's book in any sense of the word, but I would highly recommend it for any young person who has an interest in the potential of the relationships of humans and animals, especially birds.

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