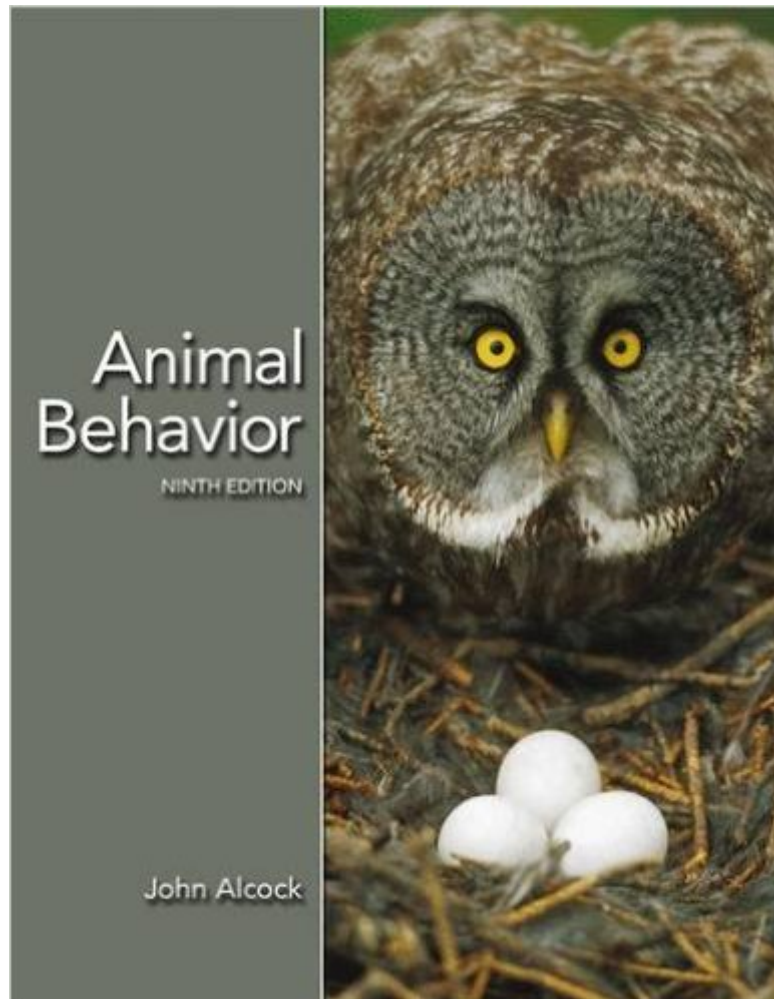


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# Animal Behavior: An Evolutionary Approach, Ninth Edition



## Synopsis

This new edition of *Animal Behavior* has once again been thoroughly rewritten with coverage of much recent work in animal behavior, while retaining the many successful features of previous editions. The writing style is clear and engaging; the book is well illustrated with many new photographs; and the discussion questions are embedded in the text to encourage the development of problem-solving skills of students. This now-classic text continues to offer a balanced treatment of the underlying mechanisms and evolutionary bases of behavior with a focus on the importance of evolutionary theory for the unification of the different behavioral disciplines.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Every time I teach *Animal Behaviour* I swear that I am going to change texts "the next time" -and every time UNTIL NOW my students have said that they REALLY liked Alcock, well, the latest edition changes all that. As other reviewers have noted (and for reasons that escape me) Alcock has allowed his publisher to "dumb down" the text into a bland "pretty face" that turned students off in droves. As I moved through each chapter I kept thinking "How could someone as smart & interesting as Alcock make so many cool subjects so BORING?" Previous editions convince me that it ain't him, so it must be the publisher. Margins are huge, more and more gratuitous "illustrations" clutter up the text & break one's stream of thought, and by mid-term I essentially threw up my hands, apologized to the class & went to using the original primary sources with the book as a marginal reference for those that got lost. If you have a huge lecture course full of unimaginative

students who want to take one & one only Behaviour course so that they can say that they have "done Behaviour" then this text is probably perfect for you, otherwise I would suggest haunting used book shops for past editions or going straight to the literature. the whole thing reminds me of "New Coke" -a marketing scheme that ignored its market. Alcock is an excellent scholar and in the past his book has been a great source of original material which I have encouraged my students to have on their shelves as a reference source, but this is a shame.

I'm really unhappy with my choice of this book for my college-level animal behavior course. Each chapter lacks any overarching structure or organization, and is instead just one example after another, strung together without continuity. Case studies are ONLY useful if they complement fundamental information about the theory underlying the concept. In this textbook, the underlying concepts are presented as afterthoughts or parenthetical sidenotes (when they are presented at all). Many of the figures are informative, but a good percentage of them are also just pretty pictures that don't convey anything about the topic at hand. Given that many students opt not to open their textbooks at all, I look to the course text as a resource the students can turn to if they don't understand something we discuss in class. I don't think this text would help clarify any of the concepts I teach, so it's not particularly useful. I will definitely be looking for a better text in the future.

I used this book as a student and enjoyed it then. Years later, as a professor, I decided to switch from Krebs and Davies' text to this one for the greater number of examples. However, the lack of theoretical underpinning makes this book more of a fun read than an educational one. My students often thought "wow, that's cool" without understanding the significance. I also found the avoidance of mathematical models troubling. This is a trend I have seen in the most recent Ricklefs' Ecology text as well (which I no longer use). Beautiful photos, easy to read, lots of examples, but much too watered down. I would give this book to my parents to read to understand animal behavior, but I won't use it for a college text again.

Alcock's 'Animal behavior: an evolutionary approach' editions 1 through 6 have come to dominate the field. Edition 7 (without the 'evolutionary approach' on the cover) is a step backwards. The page size is larger with much white space and the pictures have been artistically coloured. Some pictures are there for entertainment and are biologically wrong (flip) p372 the asymmetric pseudoscorpion with a leg and a pedipalp segment missing. There is significantly less content (at least 20% less on

the sample of pages I measured). The language is simpler, sometimes at a cost in precision. Some explanations have become 'textbook glib' where attention could/should have been drawn to the fragility of evidence (e.g. it's about time someone pointed out the influence of a single point on Baker & Bellis' human mate guarding results (p476 Fig 15 this edition)) other examples p344 - the suicidal male redback spider - fails to consider mating strategies in other closely related *Latrodectus* sp. and the observation the fatal flip breaks the embolus, sealing the female's reproductive tract. etc., etc. The redesign, pretty pictures and reduction in content seems to come at the expense of a marked price hike. In content the book is now closer to Krebs & Davies 'An introduction to behavioural ecology' which needs to be considered as an alternative for textbook adoption. In favour of the new style is that a sample of students preferred this book on appearance.

I took an ethology class a few years ago and used this text. As others have said, it is very readable and contains invaluable information for biologists as it explains how and why different animal behaviors evolve. This knowledge allows one to understand the mating strategies, certain anatomical features, ecology, etc about every animal on our planet (including ourselves). My one quip regarding the book is that it seems like it's been dumbed down as the font, pictures, and margins are quite large. I feel like Alcock probably could have put more into the book, and it would have been more complete had he done so. However, for an introductory class this book does a fantastic job and offers so much that I did not receive from any other during my undergraduate study. Overall this is a highly informative and genuinely fun textbook to read.

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