



A Charm of Goldfinches and Other Collective Nouns

Matt Sewell

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A charm of goldfinches, an ascension of larks, a school of dolphins, a cloud of bats, a murder of crows. All these and more are portrayed in this enchanting new book by much loved artist Matt Sewell, playing on the theme of collective nouns for animals.

Illustrated with Matt's inimitable watercolours, and imbued with a love of his subjects that will resonate with people everywhere and of all ages, this book is a great gift for nature and art lovers.

Accompanying each illustration is a playful, quirky description of each groups' personality that readers cannot help but smile at. Sewell's unique witty take on the subject, and delicately vivid illustrations make for a lovely addition to his collection of pocketable books.

A Charm of Goldfinches and Other Collective Nouns Details

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Author : Matt Sewell

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From Reader Review A Charm of Goldfinches and Other Collective Nouns for online ebook

Christee says

I don't often read non-fiction but this book is a delight! Detailing the collective nouns of creatures on land, in the air and in the sea, along with water color illustrations, it's endlessly fun to look at. So much fun that I actually read every word and long to pass it along to all my friends! I think you'll be as entranced as I am!!

Courtney says

What a charming (pun intended) little book! I was wandering the aisles of Barnes and Noble, a gift card burning a hole in my pocket, when I spotted this book and my inner linguistic nerd got excited. Overwhelmed by book choices, I didn't buy anything that day, but I couldn't get this mini little coffee table book out of my head. So I went back and bought it! The author/illustrator provides pretty illustrations and quirky little blurbs with each collective noun, some informative, some silly, some waxing poetic, and some of him just geeking out (especially about birds). I read all the entries for reading challenge purposes but it's a perfect little coffee table book to dip into occasionally.

Sarah Sammis says

Cute and short. Very UK centric for obvious reasons. Would like to see him tackle different regions of the world.

Preeti says

I didn't realize until I got this book from NetGalley that I'd read and reviewed another one of Matt Sewell's books, *Owls: Our Most Enchanting Bird*. This follows a similar format to that one, and to a bunch of other Sewell books. This one in particular takes a look at the fun and amusing names there are for groups of different kinds of animals, for example, a murder of crows or a parliament of owls, and it also has some descriptions and thoughts about the names and animals.

I felt pretty much the same about this book as that one: it's a whimsical book with cute illustrations. While it does have some scientific information about the animals it portrays, I wouldn't take most of it to the bank. It's not meant to be an informational book, really.

I do like the way Sewell illustrates the eyes of some of the animals. Eyes and facial expressions are one of the hardest things to illustrate (as well as human hands!), in my opinion, and I think he does a good job. For example, look at these images of cute, innocent (yeah right!) starlings versus the vultures that are definitely up to something.

Here are a few of my other favorites:

Overall, it's a cute book but not something I'd buy myself.

Note: I received this book from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Heather *Awkward Queen and Unicorn Twin* says

This gets three stars instead of four only because I was extremely bored by the Air section, which was mostly birds, of course. Otherwise this was cute and interesting.

Paul says

Humans have always had a natural desire to collect and group things together. It works well for domesticated animals, where people are used to talking about a herd of cows, or a flock of sheep. But how do you collate wild animals and birds? Should they all be flocks and herds? Thankfully human imagination has gone to work on this and come up with a whole host of rich and interesting names for all species of animals.

Matt Sewell has collected together all the collective nouns for all manner of animals who inhabit land, sea and air. As well as the titled, A Charm of Goldfinches and the well-known Murder of Crows he introduces to us the less common quarrel of sparrows, a quiver of cobras, a harem of seals and deceit of lapwings. Alongside each collective noun is a delightful watercolour of the animals and a little explanation of the origins of the noun.

I really liked this enchanting little book with its colourful bold artwork and Sewell's charming prose but if there was one minor flaw was it too brief.

Paquita Maria Sanchez says

As I joyfully make my way through this beautiful, fun lil' book, I've decided to jot down some mnemonic devices to help me retain these collective nouns. Will they help you? Probably no. In the event that they do, you should know that we are friendship soulmates and I will love you forever across all the oceans of time, probably.

A Sleuth of Bears

Sleuth→Bluth→I Blue Myself→Bluebeard = bears.

A Band of Coyotes

Band→The Band→The Basement Tapes→Bob Dylan→Ballad of Hollis Brown→A cold coyote calls = coyotes.

A Mob of Emus

Mob→Sopranos→Tony loves ducks→bird flu = emus.

An Array of Hedgehogs

Array→X-Ray→Radiation→Dr. Strangelove→Russia→Hedgehog in the Fog = hedgehogs.

A Memory of Elephants

Memory→Eternal Sunshine→Lacuna→Tuna→Chunk Light Tuna in Water→Water for Elephants = elephants.

A Skulk of Foxes

Skulk→Hulk Hogan→Hulkomaniacs→Maniac Marvin→Fox Mulder = foxes

A Down of Hares

Down→Down feathers→Hairs = hares.

A Leap of Leopards

Leap→Leopold & Loeb→Moral lepers = leopards.

A Pride of Lions

Pride→Pride Parade→Friends of Dorothy→Cowardly Lion = lions.

A Plague of Rats

Fucking duh.

A Gaze of Raccoons

Gaze→With your eyes→Black eyes→Raccoon eyes (see a doctor) = raccoons.

A Trip of Rabbits

Trip→Alice in Wonderland→White Rabbit = rabbits.

A Shrewdness of Apes

Shrewdness→Rudeness→Rudie Can't Fail→Overpowered by Funk→Ticker Tape = apes.

An Obstinacy of Buffalo

Obstinacy→Nancy Sinatra→These Boots→Jack boots→Soldiers→Buffalo Soldier = buffalo.

A Caravan of Camels

Caravan→Minivan→Vans®→Ska kids→Ska Sucks→Sucks that I smoke Camels like a sucker = camels.

A Quiver of Cobras

Quiver→Sliver→Ira Levin→Rosemary's Baby→Baby Cobra = cobras.

A Bed of Scorpions

Bed→Bedsheets→Ya didn't have the decency to change thaaa sheets→Wind of Change = scorpions.

? To be continued...?

Julia says

This was a fun, informative and quick read as well as one that surprised me. The reason for the surprise was that although I knew it was about collective nouns I didn't know that the author would be putting more thought into teaching and sharing with his reader than in just giving out the word.

Keeping with his British humor the book is a hodgepodge of comedic thoughts, some dark bits best read before allowing a younger child to get a hold of it, personal observations, animal trivia and awareness of some conservation issues. Each animal has one to two paragraphs while the material included is different enough to keep the reading new throughout.

And finally there are the beautiful and detailed-illustrations that complete this book. I could probably be just as happy if *thugs* had been an art-type book.

I would highly recommend this book to animal-lovers and those who may be interested in collective nouns as this will be a treasured resource for years to come.

Stuart Champion says

A beautiful read for naturalists and linguists alike.

Breakaway Reviewers says

A gem of a book to help at quiz nights!

I have always enjoyed finding out what a group of a specific animal is called and thanks to Matt Sewell, I am now able to appear hugely knowledgeable when discussing bears by saying "Oh yes, in fact a group of bears is really a sleuth of bears" or "look at that caravan of camels" or my best while staring at a river in Africa "Ah, there is a crash of hippos"

Matt Sewell has divided the book into three parts; land, air and water. Who can resist looking into the skies and saying "There's a convocation of eagles" or watching vultures feasting on a dead animal "We're so lucky to see a wake of vultures"

And in the water section some equally brilliant descriptive nouns: "A shiver of sharks" (too right! It would send your body into shivers!) or "a smack of jellyfish" (and we've all experienced how sore that can be!)

This is a truly beautiful book that will appeal to young and old and if remembering all the descriptive nouns is a bit too taxing on the brain, then just paging through and studying his brilliant sketches will bring hours of fun.

Treebeard

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.

Clare O'Beara says

Having read the recent book on Owls by the author, I was interested to see this one about collective nouns for groups of animals. Each page illustrates the group with spare, colourful, cheeky art.

You probably know many of them, but just as probably don't know the rest. Rats, crocodiles and elephants fill the pages as well as the more usual birds in their parliaments, exaltations, murders etc. Good for young readers or adults.

I downloaded a copy from Net Galley. This is an unbiased review.

Janet says

The best book! Irreverently descriptive and delightful, with beautiful watercolor illustrations. Completely enjoyable, would make a great gift for an animal and language lover. But, as the author/illustrator says in his description of a Shiver of Sharks, "Don't be misled by my bad habit of making everything look cute..."

Jason says

This is a lovely book, full of amazing watercolours of land/air/water animals, I recommend the paper version over the electronic version as you'll see the full affect of the paintings which are spread over two pages.

With each collection of animals mentioned you get some info on how the collective name was first created, you get info on the animals themselves, an idea of how many species and a nice big helping of Matt Sewell's humour. Here is a sample of him describing Buntings:

"There are many different kinds of buntings around the world and they are all as cute as a baby turtle's birthday party."

I was quite surprised how many of these I already knew, but there were still plenty of new ones to learn, so this is a great source of info for those who take part in pub quizzes. A wonderful book that I highly recommend.

Alia'a Siren says

I don't think I've read a book as charming as this. Sewell's write ups of each collective noun were witty and filled with cute "did you know?" bits, its so memorable. My favourite is "A Harem of Seals".

Trish says

I found out about this book thanks to a friend here and since I'm a linguist and love everything quirky about languages (palindromes, puns, etc), I also enjoy all the collective nouns of the animal kingdom. One of my personal favourites has always been "a murder of crows" though thanks to this book I now know that people have been very inventive with the names of other animal groupings as well. So of course I needed to have this book.

It is divided into the chapters "land", "air", and "water".

What I didn't expect but enjoyed very much was all the historical info about how the nouns came to be as well as some cultural context. Like in the example below:

The illustrations, too, of course. I got a taste of Matt Sewell's art in his other book I read yesterday and I really like his style. In this case it brought home the quirkiness of the labels we give animal groups and was the perfect combination.
