

Bee by Claire Preston.
Reaktion Books Ltd, 2006.

Bee is another in the series of animal biographies published by Reaktion Books of which at least thirteen others have already been produced.

Bee is written by Claire Preston, a Fellow and Lecturer in English at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and because of her 'day job' the quality of Bee as a work of literature, never mind of natural history, is very high.

Bee is divided into 12 amusingly titled chapters, each one illustrating an aspect of the bee, such as its history and behaviour and its domestication for the purpose of honey production; but there are also chapters on the bee as a metaphor for types of human society, as a favourite image in art, as a paradigm of industry and determination, and as an object of terror in Hollywood B movies (pun unintentional).

Claire Preston takes the reader on a fascinating, amusing and highly informative journey after which s/he will never look at a bee flying past, or buzzing around a flower, in quite the same way.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh