

The Deorhord: An Old English Bestiary

Hana Videen

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A rare glimpse into the culture of the Middle Ages, Hana Videen's whimsical book *The Deorhord: An Old English Bestiary* dives into medieval manuscripts about animals both real and fantastical. Inflected by Christian beliefs and accounts from antiquity, these representations of animals in Old English texts vary from mundane (doves and ants) to exotic (elephants and panthers). Mythical creatures, including phoenixes and dragons, make an appearance, as well as less familiar creatures like the nicor (a water monster) and the moon-head, both of which Alexander the Great claimed to have encountered in his travels.

Glossaries of Old English words with pronunciation guides follows each creature-centered chapter, making the book not only an animal treasury but a linguistic one. In addition, historical and contextual information places these animals in the lives of the people who wrote and speculated about them—and who projected their values onto the animals.

Come for the fascinating etymologies and stay for the repeated digs at Alexander the Great. *The Deorhord* has treasures aplenty for animal lovers and curious minds.

JEANA JORGENSEN (March / April 2024)

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