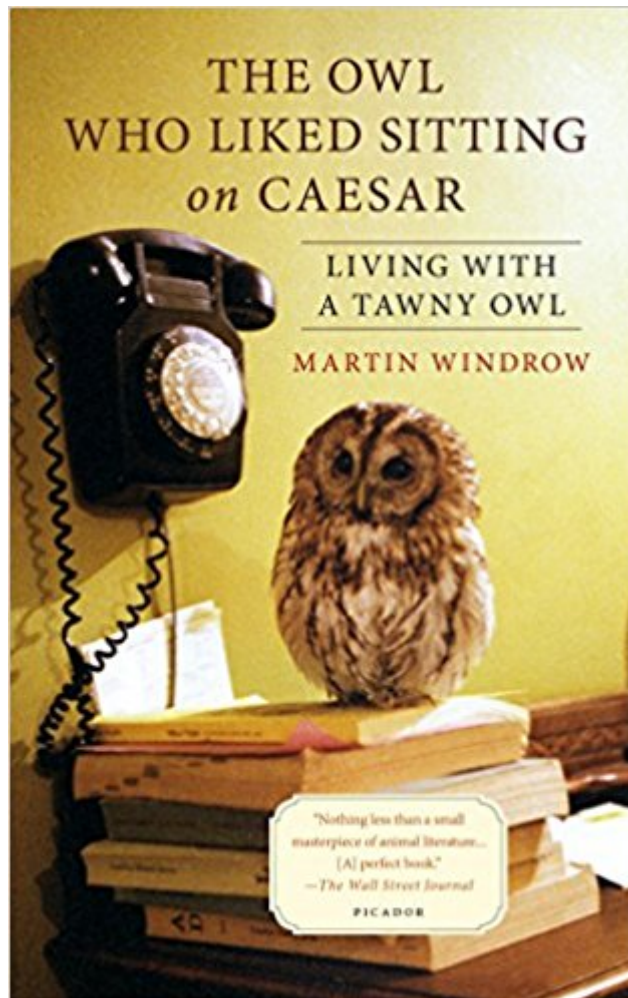




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# The Owl Who Liked Sitting On Caesar: Living With A Tawny Owl



## 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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The sweetly smiling older gent on this book's jacket is seen inside in photos, too, but they depict a much-younger man, often with a little, stern owl perched on his shoulder. The tawny owl,

Mumble, met her end too soon, and thus it took Windrow (*The Last Valley*, 2005) many years to put aside his sadness and pull together his notebooks and photos depicting their 15-year owl-man relationship, living together in England. Windrow has an endearing, entertaining voice, not without a sense of humor. He not only describes his relationship with the little owl (Ã¢â¬Ålove at first sightÃ¢â¬Å) but also gives owl history, the speciesÃ¢â¬Å contemporary existence, precautions, and more. WindrowÃ¢â¬Ås journal entries from the time are scattered throughout, and they reveal his careful attention to MumbleÃ¢â¬Ås learning to Ã¢â¬ÅspeakÃ¢â¬Å and fly and adapt to her unusual life. Containing many photos as well as Christa CookÃ¢â¬Ås beautifully detailed sketches, this is a gentle, touching love story that will appeal to all pet owners, not just those fond of tawny owls, which Windrow describes as Ã¢â¬Åsomething like cats that can fly.Ã¢â¬Å --Eloise Kinney --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Ã¢â¬ÅAnyone who thinks the bond between man and dog or cat is the supreme human-house pet attachment will have to reconsider after reading Martin Windrow's touching account of the bird who changed his life, a possessive and characterful tawny owl named Mumble who was his domestic companion for 15 action-packed years . . . [The Owl Who Liked Sitting on Caesar is] a memoir of his friendship with this singular creature, interwoven with a natural history of her species and a close, not to say obsessive, description of her traits . . . [It] is all the more affecting because of its gruff understatement.Ã¢â¬Å Ã¢â¬ÅLiesl Schillinger, *The New York Times Book*

ReviewÃ¢â¬ÅUnlikely books are often very endearing--this is one such book. An utterly charming work, perhaps best read at night when there are owls about.Ã¢â¬Å Ã¢â¬ÅAlexander McCall Smith, author of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency seriesÃ¢â¬Å Ã¢â¬ÅWith a keen eye for the telling detail, Windrow has written an informative, tender and, yes, wise memoir on the blessed ties that bind people and their pets--one that should find a permanent perch on your shelf.Ã¢â¬Å

Ã¢â¬ÅJay Strafford, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*Ã¢â¬Å Ã¢â¬ÅFunny, touching and divertingly novel . . . [Windrow] has produced an homage to both a creature and its species that is almost Leonardo-like in its precision and spirit of curiosity. The result is nothing less than a small masterpiece of animal literature . . . [A] perfect book.Ã¢â¬Å Ã¢â¬ÅBen Downing, *The Wall Street*

*Journal*Ã¢â¬Å Ã¢â¬ÅCharming . . . Mr. Windrow's owl fascination knows no bounds. Ã¢â¬Å

Ã¢â¬ÅCarmela Ciuraru, *The New York Times*Ã¢â¬Å Ã¢â¬ÅThe Owl Who Liked Sitting on Caesar is pure joy. Martin Windrow shows us the essence of a wild animal in a story as informative as a scientific paper on the species *Strix aluco*, but much more fun to read. Owls are among the world's most interesting creatures, and to see one up close and in detail as we do here is a valuable

experience that will appeal to readers of every kind. — Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, author of *A Million Years with You: A Memoir of Life Observed*

I have read countless nonfiction books about animals, from Colette to Farley Mowat, and this affecting account of the author's fifteen-year stint as caretaker and companion to Mumble the Tawny Owl is a noteworthy addition to the genre. Windrow is a dry and witty writer, who obviously feels and thinks deeply about his subject, but is cautious not to stray into melodrama or anthropomorphism. His memoir, part scientific treatise and part diary, is in turns informative, touching, and hilarious. I was howling with laughter through much of the book, somewhat to the consternation of friends with whom I was spending the week in a tiny beach house. And Windrow's career as editor of a military publication stands him in good stead as he strives to adequately and clearly describe the impressive biological mechanisms that make the Tawny Owl a fearsome killing machine of small prey. This book will be enjoyable even for those who are not bird lovers; Windrow describes Mumble as being in many ways like a flying cat, and her personality shows no shortage of fascinating and comical behaviors that will sound familiar to cat and dog lovers. SPOILER ALERT: And Mr. Windrow, if you ever chance to read this review, my sincere condolences on the premature loss of Mumble. Will Rogers once said "If dogs don't go to heaven, then I want to go where they go." I think we can safely substitute "Tawny Owls" in that sentence.

I bought this for my 94-year-old mother who is a voracious reader...mainly of complicated spy novels. She happens to love owls (she has a "Hall of Owls" -- stitchery kit owls she did over the years), so I got this book on a lark to broaden her reading horizons a bit. She just told me "this is the best book I've ever read." Now THAT is high praise.

This is a book that grows on you. It's very English, and so has some Britishisms in words and other things that may puzzle some American readers, and if you don't like the British style of--what to call it, perhaps "understatement"--this may not be the book for you. There are already oodles of reviews, so I won't recap all that in this one, just say why I like it. Windrow was 29 or so when he got the bird in 1978, and lived with the owl for 15 years. He was and still is a military historian. He wrote the book more than 20 years after Mumble (the owl's name, long before the Walt Disney movie character of that name) died, partly at the urging of friends. The book is partly a meditation on and a description of a younger self and dealing with an unusual and high-maintenance pet. Note: Americans cannot legally have such a pet, and Tawny Owls are not an American species,

anyway. Windrow provides a lot of information about owls in general and the Tawny in particular, partly in describing what he learned about owls over time with Mumble. Housing, feeding and caring for Mumble took considerable care, and his London flat, and later his house in the country, had to be sort of reconfigured for her (Mumble's) presence, though in the country she had an outside aviary Windrow built. In a way this is a wonderful story of the English eccentric, and some of the happenings are hilarious, though most just pleasant. Man and owl developed great affection for each other. One has the sense that this unusual pet helped the man get through some tough times. The Caesar in the title was a bust of a Roman, presumably some of Windrow's collection of military and historical materials. Owl relaxing on the bust of an austere Roman is an irresistible image. The end is immeasurably sad. Windrow comes home, and after searching finds Mumble dead, apparently from a heart attack prompted by some human intruder (she was fiercely territorial). The last few pages carry a powerful undercurrent of wistful longing and memory. If you like the book you'll likely keep it to reread and reread again. It's that kind of book.

I was hopeful upon ordering this book that I would like it. So many before thought Windrow rambled too much on the biology/physiology/psychology of owldom and didn't have much story. I beg to differ. All the commentary on owls greatly added to the story and my understanding of Mr. Windrow's relationship with Mumble. The story is remarkable, and the artwork and photos were lovely. I recommend it to all nature lovers.

The Owl Who Sat on Caesar is the first-person narrative of the author's (Martin Windrow) account of raising domestically-bred tawny owl and living with her for over 15 years in a suburban highrise in London, England. Through Windrow, Mable, the owl, takes on near-human characteristics. Bird's and her human's relationship sure reads like an intense love affair and I doubt that he could have invented their affection for each other had it not been genuine. This book is, almost at once, a laugh-out-loud work of comedy and often gut wrenching at the same time. It is extremely well-written, very educational and an absolute joy to read. Readers will end up knowing much, much more about owls than they did going in and most, if not all, will enjoy every second of it. I could not lay the book aside for any length of time without yearning to get back to it ASAP. Both thumbs and big toes up to Martin Windrow for this wonderful, literary treat!

One must really be interested in owls to enjoy this book. I wanted more of the interaction between the author and the owl, and less seemingly unending scientific information about owls which was

interesting at first but after a while, tedious.

This is a lively and engaging story of life with a wild owl. Though entranced by owls myself, I don't think I could put up with having one in my city apartment, complete with all the mess. However, Mr. Windrow managed to do so and gives us a wonderful story. There is quite a bit of detail about the anatomy of the owl which I found quite interesting. The unfortunate way in which their association comes to an end is a shocking and sad moment, and I was very sorry that it ended like that. But I'm happy for the time I spent with Mumble and her guardian.

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