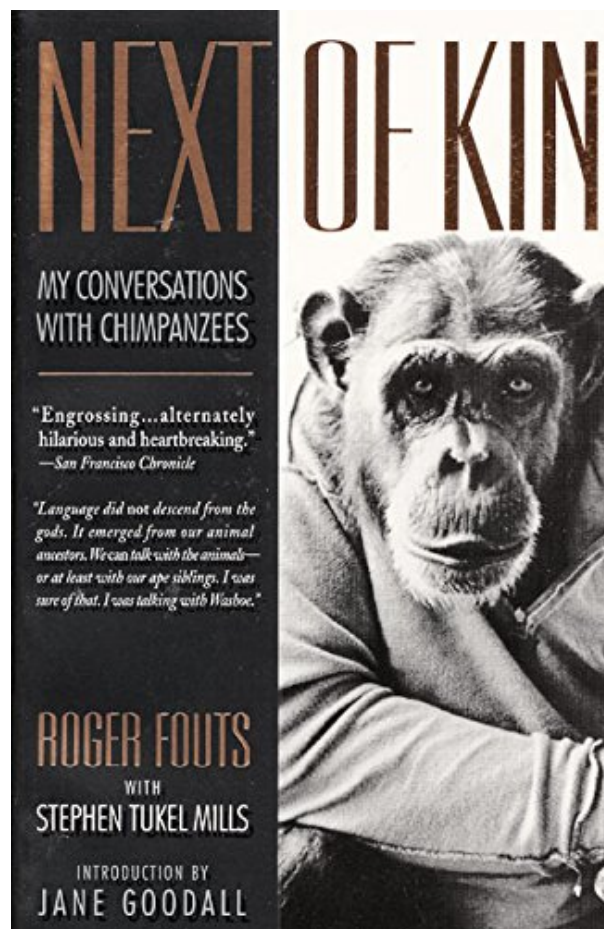
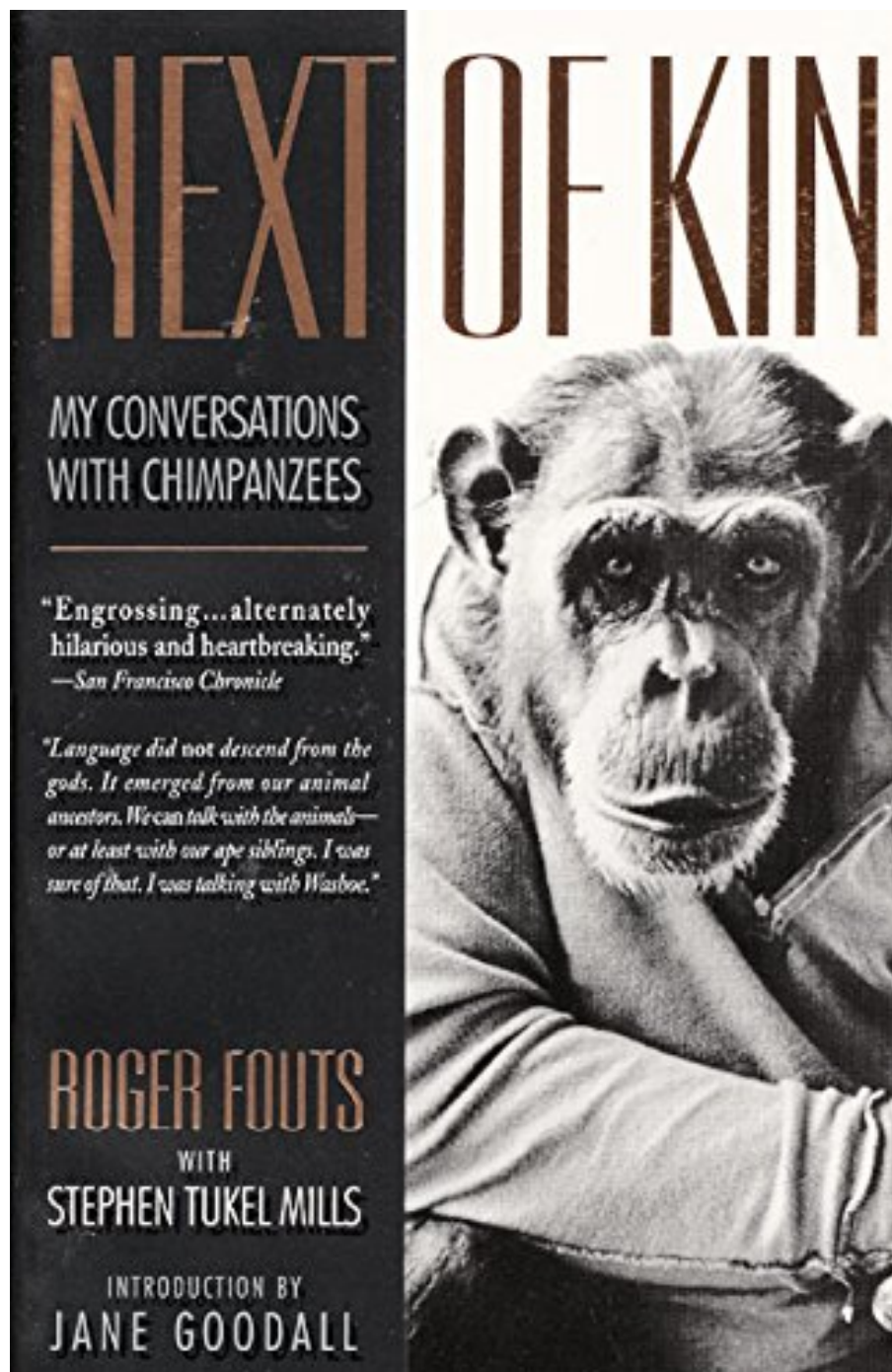


NEXT OF KIN: MY CONVERSATIONS WITH CHIMPANZEES BY ROGER FOUTS, STEPHEN TUKEL MILLS



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NEXT

OF KIN

MY CONVERSATIONS
WITH CHIMPANZEES

"Engrossing... alternately
hilarious and heartbreaking."
—*San Francisco Chronicle*

*"Language did not descend from the
gods. It emerged from our animal
ancestors. We can talk with the animals—
or at least with our ape siblings. I was
sure of that. I was talking with Washoe."*

ROGER FOUTS
WITH
STEPHEN TUKEL MILLS

INTRODUCTION BY
JANE GOODALL



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Amazon.com Review

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NEXT OF KIN: MY CONVERSATIONS WITH CHIMPANZEES BY ROGER FOUTS, STEPHEN TUKEL MILLS PDF

For 30 years Roger Fouts has pioneered communication with chimpanzees through sign language--beginning with a mischievous baby chimp named Washoe. This remarkable book describes Fout's odyssey from novice researcher to celebrity scientist to impassioned crusader for the rights of animals. Living and conversing with these sensitive creatures has given him a profound appreciation of what they can teach us about ourselves. It has also made Fouts an outspoken opponent of biomedical experimentation on chimpanzees. A voyage of scientific discovery and interspecies communication, this is a stirring tale of friendship, courage, and compassion that will change forever the way we view our biological--and spritual--next of kin.

- Sales Rank: #304451 in Books
- Published on: 1998-09-01
- Released on: 1998-09-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x 1.04" w x 5.25" l, .79 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 448 pages

Amazon.com Review

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34 of 34 people found the following review helpful.

Animals are people, too!

By Amazon Customer

"Next of Kin: My Conversations with Chimpanzees" is one of the most amazing, heartbreaking, and inspirational books I've ever read. The book is written by Roger Fouts, a primatologist who devoted his life to studying the language patterns of chimpanzees. While in graduate school, Roger was introduced to Washoe, a precocious young chimp who became fluent in American Sign Language. Eventually "Project Washoe" expanded to include many chimpanzees, all who learned to communicate with humans using ASL and demonstrated unique personalities, complex emotions, and astounding intelligence.

I've always been a big animal lover, but reading this book taught me so many things that I never knew before. Anyone who questions an animal's ability to think or feel will get a sharp reality check after reading this book. Chimpanzees are people, too, just as much as human beings are. Unfortunately, the majority of humans in this world don't agree with that logic, and thousands of animals, including chimpanzees, are routinely kidnapped from their natural habitats and bred in captivity for the sole purpose of participating in biomedical research. In many cases, medical laboratories house animals in appalling conditions and literally torture them to death. "Next of Kin" details the horrors that go on behind closed doors at biomedical laboratories, and chronicles the steps Fouts and other animal activists have taken to protect chimpanzees from being treated inhumanely.

I absolutely loved this book. Reading it made me feel close to Washoe and her chimpanzee friends, even though I never met any of them before. (Sadly, Washoe passed away last fall at the age of 42, but I hope to visit members of her family at the Chimpanzee and Human Communication Institute in Washington someday.) Parts of this book are incredibly depressing and difficult to read, but hopefully learning about the terrible ways animals are treated will inspire people to take action. I admire everything that Fouts, his family, and his colleagues have done to protect chimpanzees, who are our next of kin on the great evolutionary scale. I hope other readers get as much out of this book as I did.

42 of 44 people found the following review helpful.

Some people are not human, but still deserve respect.

By Duane Williams

This is one of the best books I have ever read. I could hardly put it down. It is the autobiographical story of a graduate student who wanted to be a clinical psychologist working with children, but who didn't have either the grades or the money to get into a first-tier Ph.D. program. His advisor suggested that he apply to the University of Nevada, where he was admitted to the department of experimental psychology, a far cry from clinical. For money, they offered him a half-time assistantship, working for Allen and Beatrix Gardner, researchers who were trying to teach a chimpanzee to talk. His interview with Allen Gardner did not go well and he was sure he wasn't going to get the job, but after the interview ended he was asked if he would like to see the chimp.

"As we approached the fenced-in nursery school, I saw two adults playing with a child in the shade of a tree. At least I thought it was a child. When the child saw us coming she leapt up and began hooting. Then she began sprinting in our direction--on all fours. We were only a few yards from the four-foot-high fence now. Washoe continued to speed toward us and, without breaking stride, vaulted over the fence and sprang from the top rail. What happened next amazes me to this day. Washoe did not jump onto Allen Gardner as I had expected. She leapt into my arms."

He got the job. He didn't know anything about chimpanzees, especially about changing diapers on an infant chimp, and he didn't know anything about American Sign Language, but he learned fast. For the next several years he was part of a project to teach ASL to Washoe and to demonstrate that a nonhuman animal could learn a natural, human language. They didn't treat Washoe the way animals are usually treated by researchers. They raised her in a human family situation and treated her as a human child. They spoke no English in her presence--only ASL. They wanted to see if she would learn it the way a child learns language. She did, and in the process challenged the almost unanimous conceptions of scientists, linguists and philosophers about the uniqueness of language in humans.

The Washoe project came to an end about the same time as Fouts was finishing his dissertation. The Gardners had arranged to send Washoe to the Institute for Primate Studies in Oklahoma. They asked Fouts to go along to take care of her. So for the second time he had Washoe to thank for getting him a job. But the situation in Oklahoma was not a happy one. For the first time in his life Fouts was introduced to the cruel conditions to which animals are routinely subjected in animal research and he found himself in the situation of protector of Washoe who he had always treated as a human child. Unfortunately, he was a young, inexperienced Ph.D. up against a powerful professor with a wide reputation. For the next 10 years or so he would have to use all his wits to survive and to protect the chimps under his care. He wasn't always able to succeed.

While in Oklahoma, Fouts came in contact with an autistic child and his work with Washoe led him to a remarkable discovery. He realized that the child might not be able to coordinate his auditory experience with his visual experience and that might be why he couldn't communicate with others. So Fouts tried teaching sign language to the autistic child and in a couple of months the child was communicating with others for the first time in his life. His behavior also changed. He stopped screaming and rocking and started making eye contact with people. More remarkably, a few weeks after he started learning ASL, he started to speak in English. This led Fouts to begin theorizing about the origins of language, which is discussed at some length in this book.

The situation in Oklahoma got worse and worse for the chimpanzees and Fouts began seeking an escape. Eventually he found a sanctuary in Central Washington University and built a home for Washoe and other chimps there--the Chimpanzee and Human Communication Institute, where the chimps live free from human domination. Graduate students who work with them can do so only if the chimps agree. (Remember, I am talking about talking chimpanzees here!) Fouts says that sometimes a graduate student will complain that he can't get the chimps to cooperate in a study and Fouts just says "Too bad. Think up a study that's more fun."

As you might have guessed, Fouts became an animal rights activist. To him, his wife and his children, who grew up with Washoe, Washoe has always been considered a person. He says "Of all the people who visit

Washoe's family, deaf children are the first to recognize the chimpanzee as our next of kin. To see a deaf child, who struggles daily to be understood by fellow humans, talking animatedly in sign with a chimpanzee is to recognize the absurdity of the age-old distinction between 'thinking human' and 'dumb animal'. When deaf children look at Washoe, they don't see an animal. They see a person. It is my fondest hope that, one day, every scientist will see as clearly."

Teaching a chimp to use a natural language, bringing an autistic child out of his isolation, and fighting for animal rights are not Fouts only remarkable achievements. He also demonstrated that an animal who used ASL would also teach it to her child. Washoe taught Loulis to speak.

I remember first hearing about Washoe back in the early 70s, I think, but reading a popular science magazine article about her is nothing like reading this first hand account. As the introduction by Jane Goodall says, this book "has all the elements of a truly great novel--adventure, heartbreak, the struggle against evil, courage, and, of course, love."

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Fascinating!

By Jean Greek

I love this book! Roger Fouts brings the chimpanzee's in his life in to clear focus for us! This is a superb mix of entertainment and education. Dr. Fouts enlightens us about the plight of chimpanzees without leaving us to despair of their fates. Once you read this book you will understand why it is so imperative that we finally start treating these incredible individuals like the kindred creatures that they are. Roger Fouts has led a fascinating life and we are lucky to have this opportunity to share in it! Thanks Roger! Jean Swingle Greek, co author of Sacred Cows and Golden Geese and Specious Science

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