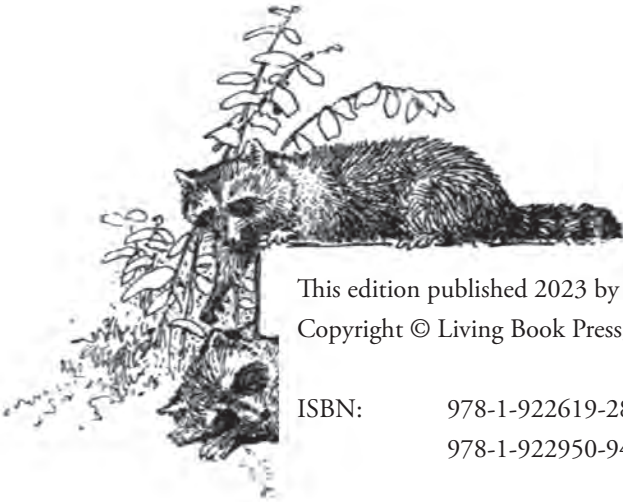


CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

A LITTLE BROTHER
TO THE BEAR

William Long

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED



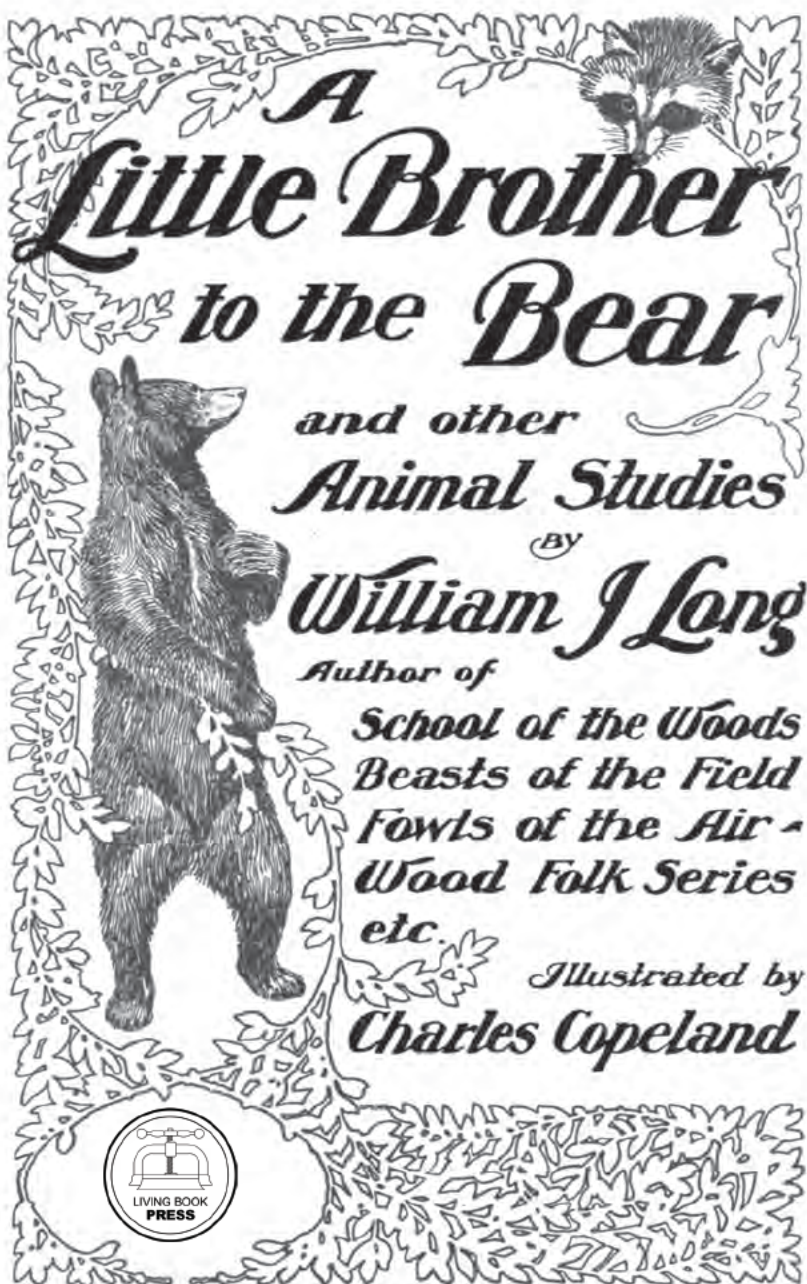
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*A
Little Brother
to the Bear*

*and other
Animal Studies*

BY
William J Long

*Author of
School of the Woods
Beasts of the Field
Fowls of the Air -
Wood Folk Series
etc.*

*Illustrated by
Charles Copeland*





“A fierce battle in
the tree-tops”

*To Lois, who
likes Bears, I
dedicate this book
of the Bear and
his little brother.*







Preface

THE object of this little book, so far as it has an object beyond that of sharing a simple pleasure of mine with others, will be found in the first chapter, entitled "The Point of View"; and the title will be explained in the chapter on "A Little Brother to the Bear" that follows.

All the sketches here are reproduced from my own note-books largely, or from my own memory, and the observations cover a period of some thirty years,—from the time when I first began to prowls about the home woods

with a child's wonder and delight to my last hard winter trip into the Canadian wilderness. Some of the chapters, like those of the Woodcock and the Coon, represent the characteristics of scores of animals and birds of the same species; others, like those of the Bear and Eider-Duck in "Animal Surgery," represent the acute intelligence of certain individual animals that nature seems to have lifted enormously above the level of their fellows; and in a single case—that of the Toad—I have, for the story's sake, gathered into one creature the habits of four or five of these humble little helpers of ours that I have watched at different times and in different places.

The queer names herein used for beasts and birds are those given by the Milicete Indians, and represent usually some sound or suggestion of the creatures themselves. Except where it is plainly stated otherwise, all the incidents and observations have passed under my own eyes and have been confirmed later by other observers. In the records, while holding closely to the facts, I have simply tried to make all these animals as interesting to the reader as they were to me when I discovered them.

WM. J. LONG.

Stamford, September, 1903.

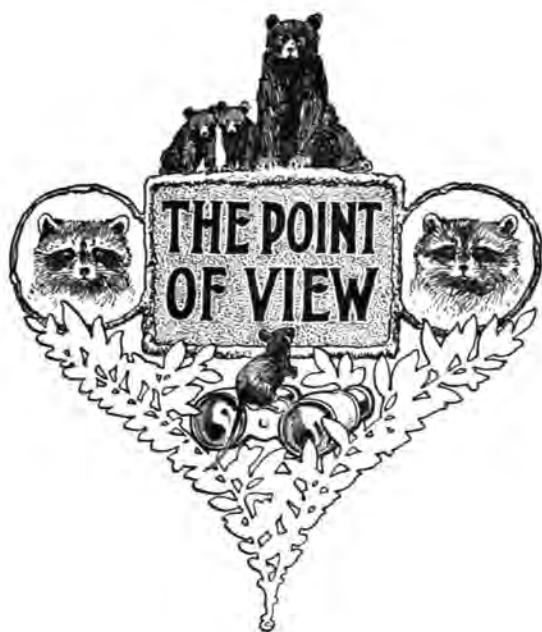




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THE POINT OF VIEW

AN old Indian, whom I know well, told me that he once caught a bear in his deadfall. That same day the bear's mate came and tried to lift away the heavily weighted log that had fallen on her back and crushed her. Failing in this he broke his way into the inclosure; and when the Indian came, drawn in on silent, inquisitive feet by a curious low sound in the air, the bear was sitting beside his dead mate, holding her head in his arms, rocking it to and fro, moaning.—

Two things must be done by the modern nature writer who would first understand the animal world and then share his discovery with others. He must collect his facts, at first hand if possible, and then he



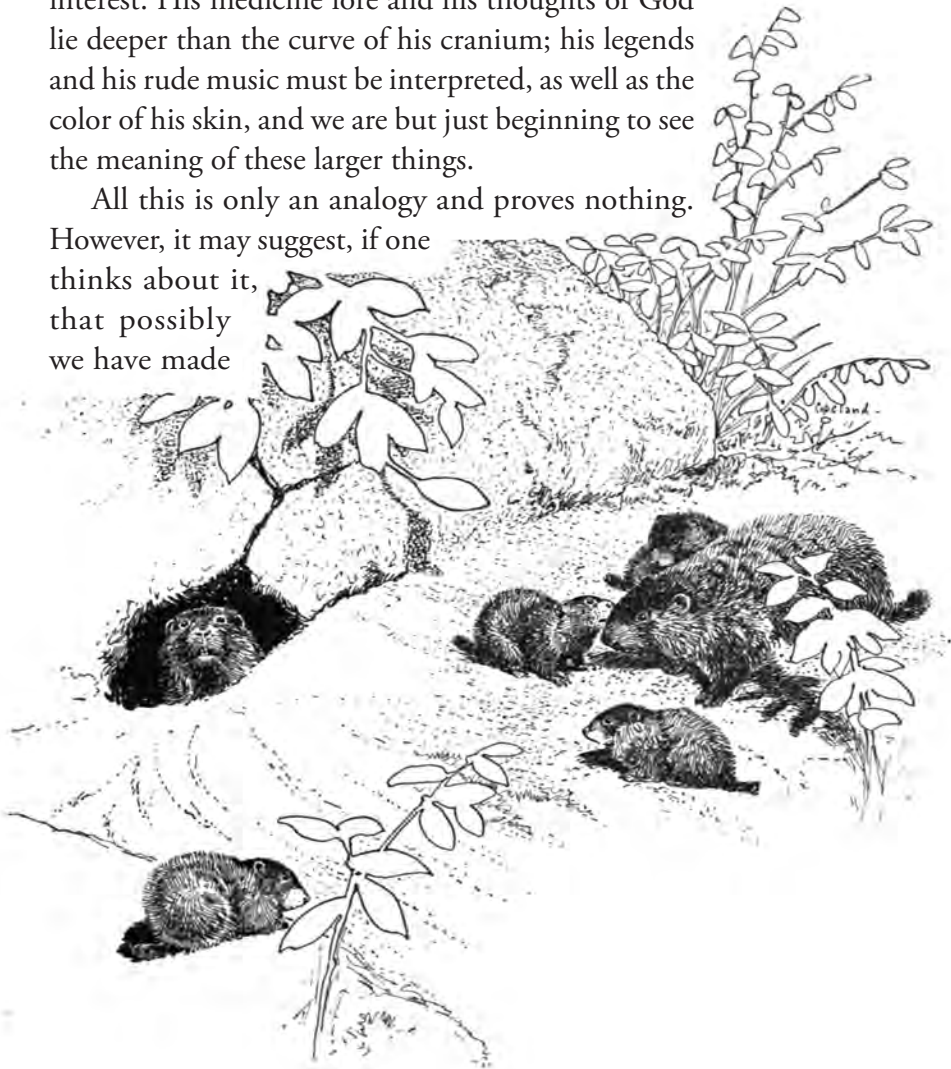
must interpret the facts as they appeal to his own head and heart in the light of all the circumstances that surround them. The child will be content with his animal story, but the man will surely ask the why and the how of every fact of animal life that particularly appeals to him. For every fact is also a revelation, and is chiefly interesting, not for itself, but for the law or the life which lies behind it and which it in some way expresses. An apple falling to the ground was a common enough fact,—so common that it had no interest until some one thought about it and found the great law that grips alike the falling apple and the falling star.

It is so in the animal world. The common facts of color, size, and habit were seen for centuries, but had little meaning or interest until some one thought about them and gave us the law of species. For most birds and animals these common facts and their meaning are now well known, and it is a wearisome and thankless task to go over them again. The origin of species and the law of gravitation are now put in the same comfortable category with the steam engine and the telegraph wire and other things that we think we understand. Meanwhile the air has unseen currents that are ready to bear our messages, and the sun wastes enough energy on our unresponsive planet daily to make all our fires unnecessary, if we but understood. Meanwhile, in the animal world, an immense array of new facts are hidden away, or are slowly coming to light as nature students follow the wild things in their native haunts and find how widely they differ one from another of the same kind, and how far they transcend the printed lists of habits that are supposed to belong to them.

We were too long content with the ugly telegraph pole and wire as the limit of perfection in communication; and we have been too well satisfied with the assumption that animals are governed by some queer, unknown thing called instinct, and that all are alike that belong to the same class. That is true only outwardly. It

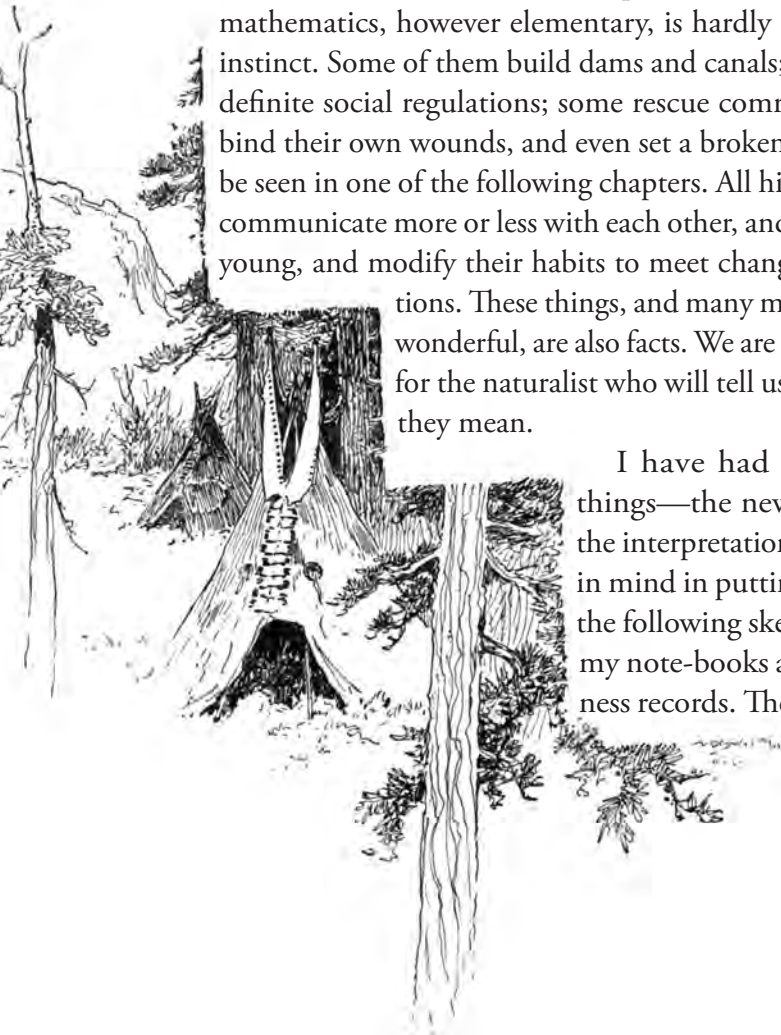
is enough to give the animal a specific name, but no more; and an animal's name or species is not the chief thing about him. You are not through with Indians when you have determined their race. That is sufficient for ethnology; to write in a book: possibly also the Calvinistic theologian was one time satisfied therewith; but the Indian's life still remains, more important than his race, and only after two centuries of neglect, or persecution, or injustice, are we awaking to the fact that his life is one of extraordinary human interest. His medicine lore and his thoughts of God lie deeper than the curve of his cranium; his legends and his rude music must be interpreted, as well as the color of his skin, and we are but just beginning to see the meaning of these larger things.

All this is only an analogy and proves nothing. However, it may suggest, if one thinks about it, that possibly we have made



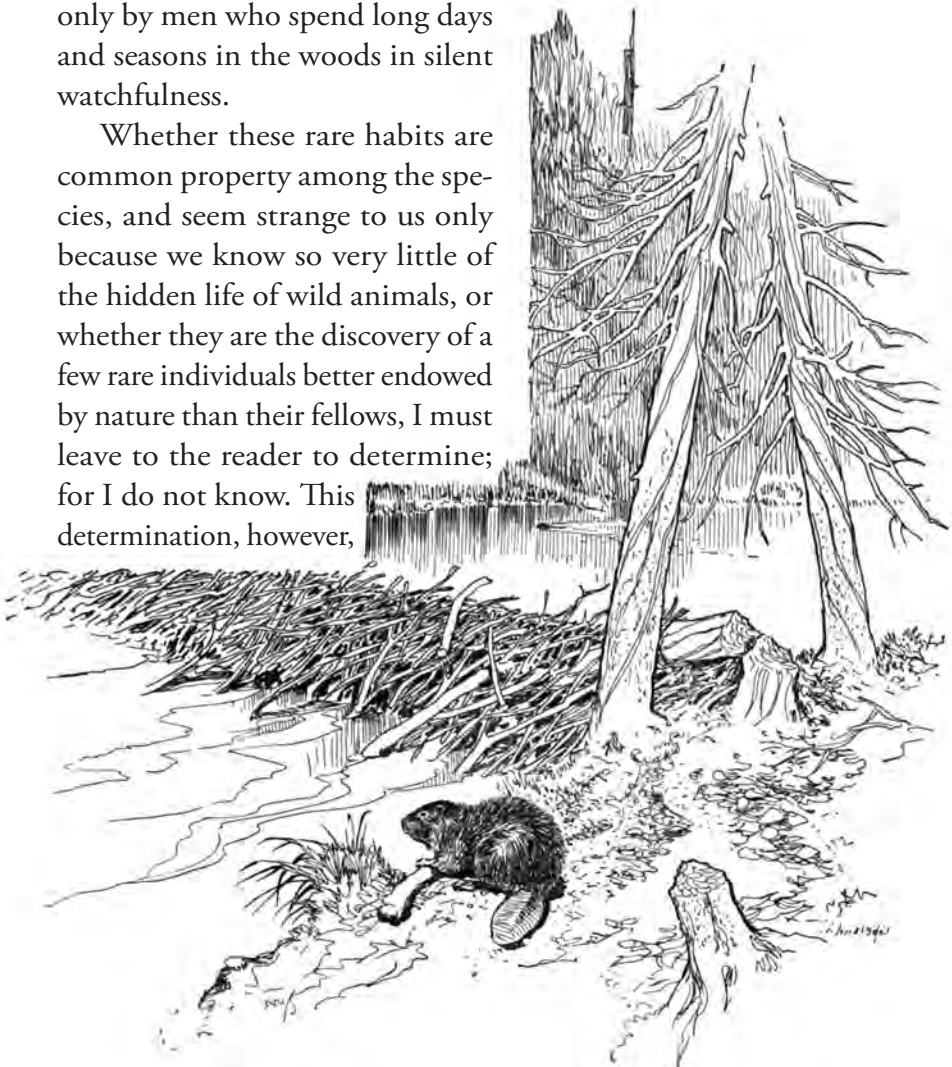
a slightly similar mistake about the animals; that we are not quite through with them when we have cried instinct and named their species, nor altogether justified in killing them industriously off the face of the earth—as we once did with the poor Beothuk Indians for the skins that they wore. Beneath their fur and feathers is their life; and a few observers are learning that their life also, with its faint suggestion of our own primeval childhood, is one of intense human interest. Some of them plan and calculate; and mathematics, however elementary, is hardly a matter of instinct. Some of them build dams and canals; some have definite social regulations; some rescue comrades; some bind their own wounds, and even set a broken leg, as will be seen in one of the following chapters. All higher orders communicate more or less with each other, and train their young, and modify their habits to meet changing conditions. These things, and many more quite as wonderful, are also facts. We are still waiting for the naturalist who will tell us truly what they mean.

I have had these two things—the new facts and the interpretation thereof—in mind in putting together the following sketches from my note-books and wilderness records. The facts have



been carefully selected from many years' observations, with a view of emphasizing some of the unusual or unknown things of the animal world. Indeed, in all my work, or rather play, out of doors I have tried to discover the unusual things,—the things that mark an animal's individuality,—leaving the work of general habits and specific classification to other naturalists who know more and can do it better. Therefore have I passed over a hundred animals or birds to watch one, and have recorded only the rare observations, such as are seldom seen, and then only by men who spend long days and seasons in the woods in silent watchfulness.

Whether these rare habits are common property among the species, and seem strange to us only because we know so very little of the hidden life of wild animals, or whether they are the discovery of a few rare individuals better endowed by nature than their fellows, I must leave to the reader to determine; for I do not know. This determination, however,



must come, not by theory or prejudice or a priori reasoning, but simply by watching the animals more closely when they are unconscious of man's presence and so express themselves naturally. As a possible index in the matter I might suggest that I have rarely made an observation, however incredible it seemed to me at the time, without sooner or later finding some Indian or trapper or naturalist who had seen a similar thing among the wild creatures. The woodcock genius, whose story is recorded here, is a case in point. So is the porcupine that rolled down a long hill for the fun of the thing apparently—an observation that has been twice confirmed, once by a New Brunswick poacher and again by a Harvard instructor. So also are the wildcat that stole my net, and the heron that chummed little fish by a bait,

and the fox that played possum when caught in a coop, and the kingfishers that stocked a pool with minnows for their little ones to catch, and the toad that learned to sit on a cow's hoof

and wait for the flies at milking time. All these and a score more of incredible things, seen by different observers in different places, would seem to indicate that intelligence is more widely spread among the Wood Folk than we had supposed; and that, when we have opened our eyes wider and cast aside our prejudices, we shall learn that Nature



is generous, even to the little folk, with her gifts and graces.

As for the interpretation of the facts, upon which I have occasionally ventured,—that is wholly my own and is of small consequence beside the other. Its value is a purely personal one, and I record it rather to set the reader thinking for himself than to answer his questions. In the heart of every man will be found the measure of his world, whether it be small or great. He will judge heat, not by mathematical computation of the sun's energy, but by the twitch of his burned finger, as every other child does; and comprehend the law of reaction, not from Ganot's treatise, but by pulling on his own boot-straps. So, with all the new facts of animal life before him, he will still live in a blind world and understand nothing until he have the courage to look in his own heart and read.

