



Dazzled and Deceived: Mimicry and Camouflage

Peter Forbes

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Nature has perfected the art of deception. Thousands of creatures all over the world - including butterflies, moths, fish, birds, insects and snakes - have honed and practised camouflage over hundreds of millions of years. Imitating other animals or their surroundings, nature's fakers use mimicry to protect themselves, to attract and repel, to bluff and warn, to forage and to hide. The advantages of mimicry are obvious - but how does 'blind' nature do it? And how has humanity learnt to profit from nature's ploys? "Dazzled and Deceived" tells the unique and fascinating story of mimicry and camouflage in science, art, warfare and the natural world. Discovered in the 1850s by the young English naturalists Henry Walter Bates and Alfred Russel Wallace in the Amazonian rainforest, the phenomenon of mimicry was seized upon as the first independent validation of Darwin's theory of natural selection. But mimicry and camouflage also created a huge impact outside the laboratory walls. Peter Forbes' cultural history links mimicry and camouflage to art, literature, military tactics and medical cures across the twentieth century, and charts its intricate involvement with the dispute between evolution and creationism.

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