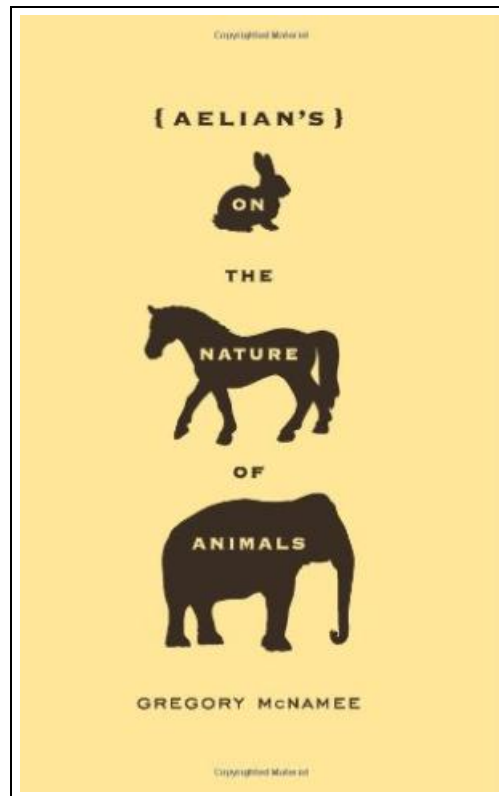


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Trinity University Press, U.S. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Aelian's on the Nature of Animals, Gregory McNamee, Not much can be said with certainty about the life of Claudius Aelianus, known to us as Aelian. He was born sometime between A.D. 165 and 170 in the hill town of Praeneste, what is now Palestrina, about twenty-five miles from Rome, Italy. He grew up speaking that town's version of Latin, a dialect that other speakers of the language seem to have found curious, but--somewhat unusually for his generation, though not for Romans of earlier times--he preferred to communicate in Greek. Trained by a sophist named Pausanias of Caesarea, Aelian was known in his time for a work called *Indictment of the Effeminate*, an attack on the recently deceased emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, who was nasty even by the standards of Imperial Rome. He was also fond of making almanac-like collections, only fragments of which survive, devoted to odd topics such as manifestations of the divine and the workings of the supernatural. His *De Natura Animalium* (*On the Nature of Animals*) has a similar patchwork quality, but it was esteemed enough in his time to survive more or less whole, and it is about all that we know of Aelian's work today. A mostly randomly ordered collection of stories that he found interesting enough to relate about animals--whether or not he believed them--Aelian's book constitutes an early encyclopedia of animal behavior, affording unparalleled insight into what ancient Romans knew about and thought about animals--and, of particular interest to modern scholars, about animal minds. If the science is sometimes sketchy, the facts often fanciful, and the history sometimes suspect, it is clear enough that Aelian had a fine time assembling the material, which can be said, in the most general terms, to support...

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