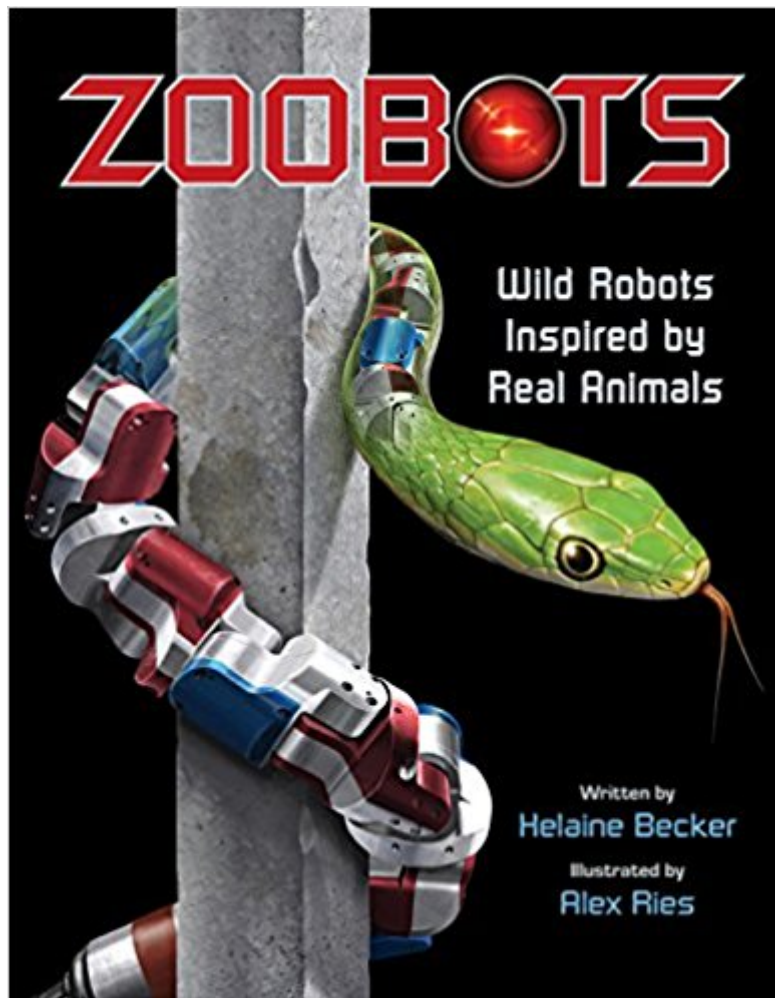




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Zoobots: Wild Robots Inspired By Real Animals



Synopsis

Innovations in the world of robotics are multiplying, with many cutting-edge breakthroughs, and this exciting and timely new book for young readers explores one particularly intriguing area: the world of robo-animals, or zoobots. In an attempt to design robots that can solve problems or perform tasks that humans can't, or just can't do easily, roboticists have been looking at the unique skills some animals have. Using something called mechatronics --- mechanical and electrical engineering combined with computer science --- they are finding ways to closely mirror those skills in robot form. Some fascinating examples from the book of what zoobots can do include: finding survivors of a fire using sensitive, computerized "whiskers"; scaling skyscraper walls using super stickiness; or delivering drugs deep within the human body using microscopic whiptails for locomotion. Twelve zoobots are described, each on its own two-page spread. Award-winning children's author Helaine Becker's text is comprehensive, yet clear and lively, and is made more manageable by being broken up into shorter segments. The futuristic design of the book includes vivid, detailed color illustrations by Alex Ries, of both the zoobot prototypes as well as the animals from which their skills were derived. This imaginative and interesting nonfiction book will definitely capture the imaginations of technology buffs. It also has enormous potential for classroom use in exploring everything from basic technology and robots, to engineering concepts, to inventions. A glossary and an index make it work well as a wonderful reference tool.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 1180L (What's this?)

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[Books > Education & Reference > Science Studies > Zoology](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Gr 3-6 Twelve futuristic robots are introduced on spreads. Each one is given a name, team, realm, super skill, specifications, and applications. Also included are the animal that inspired the bot and its special ops. The status for all is either working prototype or prototype in development, making this a soon-to-be dated title. But the idea behind the book is a fascinating one. For example, the Ghostbot evolved from observations of the black ghost knifefish. The bot mimics the real fish's fluttering fin to achieve incredible flexibility. Its planned purpose is to be an all-powerful surveillance tool that can hover over rough terrain underwater. On each spread, white text is set on a black background. Illustrations are large, colorful, and appealing, and the glossary and index are extensive. While brevity rules here, the cover and content will find an audience among young robotics enthusiasts. For interested browsers. Anne Chapman Callaghan, Racine Public Library, WI

Zoobots? What exciting first generation inventions this book introduces! Scientists are making science fiction come alive in research and university labs around the world, from the nanobot that can move around in human blood vessels to the 200-pound Ole Pill Bug designed to withstand temperatures up to 1850° F and aid in fighting forest fires. These animal-inspired robots will only spawn newer, even stranger robots in the future. For now, though, all but 4 of the 12 robots featured have working prototypes; the others are in development. Using scientific headings, a black background, and a larger-than-life Photoshop illustration of each zoobot (along with a smaller illustration of the animal on which it is based), this ought to engage the imagination of future scientists and who knows what they might create? This one won't stay on library shelves for long. Grades 3-6. --J. B. Petty

Good.

It is a little shorter than i thought but still great book

Robot Snakes. That's the first thing that jumped out at me when I saw the cover of this book, and I knew that not only would my 10 year-old love this book, but so would every 10

year-old in the several library sites I oversee. That is the kind of book *Zoobots* is – it’s a win-win situation. You have robot animals, complete with facts about the functions and statistics on the robotic creatures, plus profiles on the animals influencing them; you also have the nonfiction aspect, which makes it compatible with Common Core focus on nonfiction texts, with the extra STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) appeal that will hopefully inspire a reader or 3 to become a scientist and actually work with these robots. Helaine Becker’s text is chunked into a dossier-type format, complete with futuristic fonts. We get the name of the robot – some include the Shrewbot, the Octobot, the Ghostbot, and the Nanobot – and what class of animal its influence belongs to (i.e., mammalia, reptilia). There are skills, specifications, and applications: the growing number of robotics dedicated to the medical industry alone is amazing, as is the idea of using pill bug-inspired robots to help prevent raging forest fires. Special Ops describes special talents these robots can use while in the field; my favorite is the Uncle Sam snake robot, who can actually assemble itself! There is no science fiction here – all of the 12 robot animals profiled are in some sort of prototype stage, whether being developed or in existence. A section on the future wonders what further robots future minds will create, which I hope spurs some readers to start sketching and joining robotics teams. There is a glossary of terms and a full index. I loved this book, and think it belongs in libraries and science classes throughout elementary and middle schools. The illustrations, by concept artist and illustrator Alex Ries, give life to the robotics, spotlighting their flexibility and their features. The book is only 36 pages, but the number of lesson plans and ideas that can come out of this? Boundless.

We used this in our kids’ science class about robots. It tied in perfectly to our key concepts of: “scientists take ideas from nature to create robots to do things humans can’t or don’t want to do.” It was too long (and awkward) to read aloud to our class of 4 - 7 year olds. We actually just showed the pictures and did brief verbal summaries of each page. (On my blog I share my short text version of the book.) here’s a sample of my short text: “Scientists wanted to develop a robot that could fight forest fires. It needed armor to protect itself from heat, and it needed to have lots of flexible legs so it could move across rough ground. They used a roley-poley bug as the inspiration for the exoskeleton armor and its legs, and it carries a tank of water or fire extinguishing chemicals to spray at a fire.”

As usual I received this book free in exchange for a review. This time it was from NetGalley. Despite

that kindness I give my candid thoughts below and attempt to write a balanced and well-rounded review. Let me know how I do! In a nutshell this book centers around 12 animal-inspired robots. Each entry is formatted like a dossier giving the robot's name, team (land, air, water), realm (animal family to which it belongs), a few of its vital statistics, its potential uses and a bit about the animal that inspired it. To the positive, I can see how this book might bridge that gap between animal-lover and future engineer. Lots of kids love animals and if you can somehow use that inspired interest to get them into more math and science classes then that's a real win. So conceptually this one has a great head start. Also, the text is detailed, engaging and seems at about the right level for a 10-12-year-old child. It uses words that they might find challenging but they're often defined in-line and there's a glossary if all else fails. Finally, even as an adult I find these machines potentially fascinating so the topic has a broad range of undeniable appeal. It is also a great touch that for each 'Zoobot' they include a 'status' indicating just how far along production is. On the negative side, I wish that they had included more actual photographs of their subjects. All the animals are real enough and many of the Zoobots are "working prototypes" but all the graphics are illustrations rather than photos. While they are great illustrations it gives the book a unnecessarily cartoonish feel. Also, each Zoobot has a header that's some seemingly appropriate verb. For example the pill bug Zoobot's header is "Spray!" with others of "Stick!", "Ripple!", "Whip!", and most off-putting of all "SNOOORRRFF!" I found these especially childish and rather a waste of space. In summary, this book is solid but image is everything when it comes to kids. It's filled with interesting content but the presentation seems a bit childish in places and I'm concerned that it won't hit the target age group quite the right way. Or maybe I just have really picky kids.

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