

# Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Booklist Online Exclusive: February 28, 2020

**After Dark: Poems about Nocturnal Animals.**

By David L. Harrison. Illus. by Stephanie Laberis 2020.

32p. Boyds Mills & Kane/Wordsong, \$17.99 (9781629797175). K–Gr. 3. 811

Each of these poems, written in different styles and meters, profiles a nocturnal animal. Almost every selection focuses on either hunting or being hunted, which seem like appropriate activities for those prowling around in the dark.

Subjects range from familiar critters like fireflies and skunks to scary carnivores like cougars and wolves to truly exotic beasts: the Mexican red-knee tarantula and the Arizona hairy scorpion. Even the lowly cockroach gets an ode. The poem titles offer insights into each animal's behavior, with the verse about the flathead catfish christened "Mouth of Doom" and the selection on spring peepers called "Hear This! Hear This!" (And that cockroach? "Survivor"). Full-page illustrations featuring shadowy palettes illuminate the words, which appear in a bright white font and pop against the dark backgrounds. Readers will glean a surprising amount of information about each subject, and a final section offers a few additional facts, such as dietary preferences, physical attributes, or details about life cycles. The poems make great read-alouds, and the content makes this suitable for STEAM applications.

— Kathleen McBroom

*Publishers Weekly—January 21, 2020 issue*



After Dark: Poems About Nocturnal Animals

*David L. Harrison, illus. by Stephanie Laberis.*

*Wordsong, \$17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-62979-717-5*

**MORE BY AND ABOUT THIS AUTHOR**

Harrison explores the active nighttime hours of 21 nocturnal species—amphibians, birds, fish, insects, mammals, and reptiles are all accounted for. Scientific facts and lifestyle insights, some slightly veiled, are woven into poetic language in a mix of free verse (“Mama skunk/ knows the story./ Never play/ in an empty street”) and rhyme (“Firefly females/ watch from the grass,/ checking each flash/ as suitors pass”). Warmth and foreboding emanate from the nocturnal creatures as Laberis’s shadowed nightscapes show a hum of quiet—and not so quiet—activity in an otherwise sleepy world: a mother wolf oversees rambunctious pups, cockroaches tackle a plate of noodles, and a hermit crab lays eggs on a moonlit shore. Back matter includes additional (and clarifying) facts about each subject mentioned. An immersive volume of nocturnes for young animal enthusiasts. Ages 5–9. (*Feb.*)

\*\*\*\*\*

KIRKUS REVIEW:

AFTER DARK Poems About Nocturnal Animals

Author: David L. Harrison

Illustrator: Stephanie Laberis

Review Issue Date: March 1, 2020

Online Publish Date: December 18, 2019

Publisher: Wordsong/Boyd's Mills

Pages: 32

Price (Hardcover ): \$17.99

Publication Date: February 25, 2020

ISBN (Hardcover ): 978-1-62979-717-5

Category: Poetry

Who's out at night, and what do they do? These poems answer that for you. "Shhhh, listen... / Hear that howling? / Dogs don't howl, / not like that." It's coyotes that are on the hunt, and everyone from mouse to deer better be on the lookout. Harrison's night is broadly populated. Some mark their territory or hide from large predators. A mother skunk teaches her children not to venture into the road. Fireflies flash looking for mates in the grass, a little as though the insects are texting one another. Meanwhile: "Along a path of slime / you softly flow, / scraping holes in petals / as you go"; the leopard slug eats hollyhocks and daffodils, all the while leaving a slimy trail as proof it was there in the night. The Mexican free-tail bat is on bug patrol. Twenty-one animals who live by the light of the moon get profiled in Harrison's poems, written in a variety of forms, some rhymed and most not. Each is featured in a one- or two-page spread with realistic, appropriately dark, attractive illustrations by Laberis. Though none are anthropomorphized, they still have plenty of personality. A kit fox yawns luxuriantly; a flathead catfish opens its huge mouth to suck in a hapless frog. Two pages of backmatter reveal four further facts about each profiled animal. A fine collection of poetical odes to a nicely diverse group of nighttime fauna. (Picture book/poetry. 7-12)

\*\*\*\*\*