

Acknowledgments

This book had its origins during work for an earlier volume in the Heritage Matters series, *Changing Perceptions of Nature*. From discussions about ideas of wilderness, and how our approach to landscapes, geology, plants and animals have changed over time, our thoughts began to focus on those animals that people had engaged with, been scared by, utilised, or adored, for centuries. Of all these iconic animals – including wolves, whales and elephants – one animal in particular stood out: the bear. We knew that there was a rich seam of information to mine here – not only on the biology of bears, but more importantly on the human-bear relationship and how this has been expressed in folklore, in first nations' societies, in childhood stories and toys. We wanted also to discuss how our perception of bears is influenced by the manner in which they are revealed to the public in the wild, in museums and galleries, and to give a message about just how threatened some species are, and why, and the efforts being made to conserve them. We also wanted to reflect on what our long association with bears says about *us*; to borrow from Shakespeare, we wanted to hold, as *'twere, the mirror up to [bears], to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.'* The reflected image is contradictory, complex and at times frankly disturbing.

To achieve these wide-ranging aims we have been fortunate to bring together a distinguished field of authors, all of whom have addressed bear species from different standpoints. To all of them we are extremely grateful for their time, expertise and patience, but especially so to the two doyens of bear studies: Barrie Gilbert and Lynn Rogers who have kindly provided the Foreword and Afterword for this book. Special thanks are due to Caroline Palmer at Boydell, who has been extremely patient with the Editors, keeping us on track, delighted and sane by her ability to barely contain herself with ursine puns and jokes. We are indebted to Caroline and her team, especially Emily Champion and Elizabeth McDonald, for all their support during the long gestation (and occasional hibernation) of this book. This volume marks a departure in cover design for the Heritage Matters Series and we are especially grateful to Nick Bingham at Boydell for his assistance and patience as we considered various alternative designs – needless to say, the Editors are delighted with the result. Ian would like to thank Kate, Maille, Freya and Ceara; and special thanks to Elspeth Lees, who once again has accommodated his bear obsession when he really should have been doing other things.

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