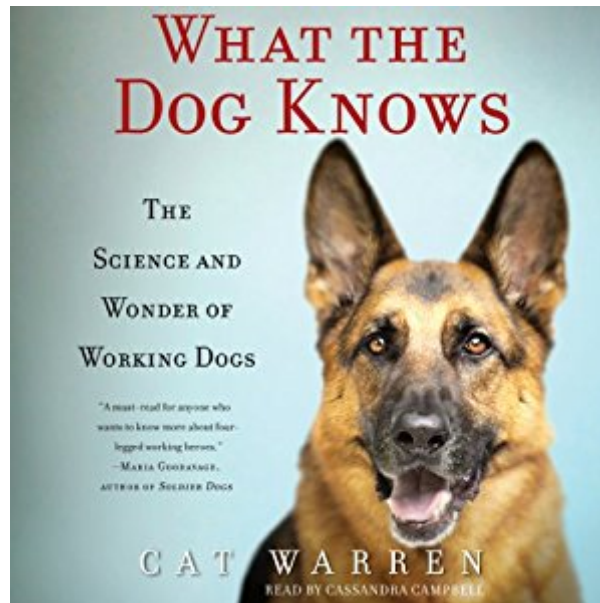


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What The Dog Knows: The Science And Wonder Of Working Dogs



Synopsis

Cat Warren is a university professor and former journalist with an admittedly odd hobby: She and her German shepherd have spent the last seven years searching for the dead. Solo is a cadaver dog. What started as a way to harness Solo's unruly energy and enthusiasm soon became a calling that introduced Warren to the hidden and fascinating universe of working dogs, their handlers, and their trainers. Solo has a fine nose and knows how to use it, but he's only one of many thousands of working dogs all over the United States and beyond. In *Scent*, Warren uses her ongoing work with Solo as a way to explore a captivating field that includes cadaver dogs, drug and bomb-detecting K9s, tracking and apprehension dogs - even dogs who can locate unmarked graves of Civil War soldiers and help find drowning victims more than two hundred feet below the surface of a lake. Working dogs' abilities may seem magical or mysterious, but Warren shows the multifaceted science, the rigorous training, and the skilled handling that underlie the amazing abilities of dogs who work with their noses. Warren interviews cognitive psychologists, historians, medical examiners, epidemiologists, and forensic anthropologists, as well as the breeders, trainers, and handlers who work with and rely on these remarkable and adaptable animals daily. Along the way, she discovers story after story that proves the impressive capabilities - as well as the very real limits - of working dogs and their human partners. Clear-eyed and unsentimental, Warren explains why our partnership with dogs is woven into the fabric of society and why we keep finding new uses for their wonderful noses.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When a nervous, self-focused singleton German shepherd puppy enters journalist Cat Warren's life, the usual doggy activities are not enough to challenge or focus her new dog's prodigious energy. That's when Warren discovers that nosing out the missing dead perfect for her dog's talents and temperament—and also congenial to her sharp eye and lively intelligence. Dogs. Death. Murder. Mystery. Decomposition. Trust. Error. Life. Loss. Love. Discovery. They're all here—which is why WTDK can be read, among other things, as an extended meditation on human mortality and self-consciousness—two topics I'm drawn to. Warren has enlarged my sense of the possible ways to die: There are so so many ways to go (Be murdered and left to rot along a highway; get murdered and buried under a dead animal to throw off searchers, or simply to succumb to being lost.) And once one has departed, there are many ways, some slow, some fast, to fade from the earth—“beer-bloated and submerged, or reduced to a years-old oily smudge broadcasting a sweet, acidic scent through the godforsaken woods. As Warren explains, “we cease to exist, but we also stubbornly stick around. But cadaver dogs like Solo and handlers like Warren are important and incredibly interesting just because of who they are—“solvers of mysteries, assuagers of grief, providers of endings to tragic stories of accidents or murder, and bringers of justice. Of course, Solo, Warren's canine partner, isn't thinking about any of the above. He's fully engaged in the here and now, focused finding and following death's sweet scent—“not its implications. He's an expert in what Wallace Stevens called the “æthe. Stuff. Running through it, around it, sensing it, sniffing it out, muscling through it. And as Solo's partner, Warren must tune into this powerful canine mindfulness, too—or as she puts it—“she must trust her dog: “If the drugs or the gunpowder or the bone is actually there and a handler tries to move on? The dog learns how to commit, to plant himself stubbornly and ignore the handler's prevarications or even a slight jerk on the lead to come off the scent, a pull that a less-evolved working dog might respond to. It's not mystifying. It's not eerie. It is a beautiful sight, a dog trusting his nose, ignoring his handler's efforts to get him to unstuck himself from the flypaper scent that he's stuck to. The dog who ignores the handler's gaze, which is irrelevant to the task at hand. This is what real faith should look like---hard and unwavering. This is what the co-evolution of a working dog and handler should look like. The dog's commitment to the truth in the face of your moving away. That's real teamwork—the dog pointing his nose or paw or entire body at the scent, telling his handler. You bloody idiot! It's here! Do you think you see

where this is going? Well you can't. Well, Cat Warren is much too smart for any trite and saccharine "My Dog Saved Me" or "My Dog Taught Me To Really Embrace Life" bulls**. Instead we see the hard work, the misunderstandings, the errors in attention or translation that inform the dog-human partnership or as Cat Warren would call it, the work. She even includes stories of notoriously fraudulent handlers just to remind us of the human predilection for lying "to ourselves and others. For training a dog and one's own head to find the occult dead is hard. Very difficult work. Important work. Scary work. Dangerous work. And I'm so grateful that Cat Warren and Solo and people and dogs like her have taken on the job. It's an honor to get to know them and to read Warren's very fine and brilliant book.

A captivating read about the science behind working dogs that use scent to locate people. The author, a university English professor, finds a new hobby in being a cadaver dog handler when she gets a new German Shepard puppy who is "driven by his nose". She delves into the challenges and rewards of successfully training and running a "body dog". Such an interesting first-hand perspective of Dr. Warren's experiences in navigating her new hobby, it's physically demanding, and masculine world, during her academic career. Dr. Warren has a lovely storytelling style mixing the science, culture, and her experiences in being a working dog handler. Very inspiring, fantastic read. HIGHLY recommend!

So, it didn't hurt, that this book was written by a German Shepherd Dog lover, as I will admit I am, too. Cat Warren is an excellent writer, incorporating scientific data with her own experiences in acquiring a crazy, high drive working German Shepherd pup and trying to figure out what to do next. And with the help of some very knowledgeable, and experienced people, Warren found the path for her and her dog, Solo. I learned so much about dedication, training and building a bond with a working K9. In 1998, I found an 8 week old, German Shepherd puppy and my journey with a very smart and energetic dog began. We did not go the same route, as Max was "just" my companion dog, after many wounds and much learning (mostly on my part). This book brought back those days, vividly, but also showed me to be much more respectful when I see search and rescue dogs in training. Crazy dogs they are, but Warren illustrates the service they do and the amazing dedication both dog and handler must have. Thank you, Cat Warren

I read a lot of dog books. Sometimes I actually run out of decent behavior books to read, so then

switch to something related to dogs but not in my specific field of interest. So I read this one hoping only that it was well written enough to hold my interest. Well it was and more, it was actually a "can't put it down" kind of read, and I was also surprised and impressed by her writing style as well. She goes deep into subjects when needed, then captures you quickly for the next sub-topic. It was like peeking into a secret world, not just that of the wonderful dogs and the sense that we can't really understand well. But also into the world of those who choose to train and research that world. All richly punctuated with tons of other references, segues, descriptions. A great read. It is not often that I actually say at the end of a book, "I will read anything this author has written." And I did say that at the end of this one. Unfortunately, can't find any other books on that Cat Warren has written. Hope that changes as I will be waiting anxiously for her next book on whatever subject.

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