

# Endemic:

*Exploring the Wildlife Unique to Britain*

BY JAMES HARDING-MORRIS

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James Harding-Morris, who describes himself as a passionate nature enthusiast, realised a few years ago that there is no definitive list of British endemics, so he decided to create one. Discovering that there are around 700 British endemics he chose 20 to research further and has put his findings into this highly entertaining and informative book.

I bought *Endemic* initially for its chapter on the Lundy cabbage but once asked to write a review, read it in its entirety – and I’m glad I did! It is an extremely well written and easy to read book.

The book presents Harding-Morris’s travels across Britain as he searches for his chosen endemic animals, plants, and fungi, sharing both his field experiences and insights from local experts whose knowledge he draws on in his quest, rather than serving as a formal reference guide.

Unlike many natural history books, *Endemic* doesn’t contain any photographs and relies solely on the power of language to fuel one’s imagination. The descriptions are detailed and imaginative, with occasional quips to make one smile: ‘If you’re cool like me, they’re shaped a bit like the Pokémon Starmie.’ I found that the absence of images did force a slower reading pace, re-reading some of the descriptions to ensure I understood them, and in some cases taking time to look at online images.

This is not a book to take out on a walk to help you identify species, but it certainly piqued my curiosity, and I found myself wondering how many of his 20 I could manage to find if I went out looking. Maybe I could seek out the No Parking Whitebeam, only found in six square kilometres of North Devon, or should I pop up to Orkney to try and find the Orkney vole which is around 10 times bigger than the Pygmy shrews on Lundy? Maybe I could detour to Arran on the way home to view the Catacol Whitebeam, allegedly one of the rarest trees on the planet...

Of course, my favourite chapter was *Devon’s Galapagos: Lundy Cabbage and its Beetles*, containing many familiar names and places, and I learnt that Lundy has the only endemic that hosts other endemics!

Overall, *Endemic* is a compelling and inspiring read and offers a deeply rewarding journey around some of Britain’s rarest species.

