



# **Niko's Nature: The Life of Niko Tinbergen and his Science of Animal Behaviour**

*Hans Kruuk*

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A charismatic naturalist, bird-watcher, teacher, artist, photographer, film-maker, and winner of the Nobel Prize, Niko Tinbergen was a prominent and influential scientist. Jointly with Konrad Lorenz, he laid the foundation for a new science, the biological study of animal behaviour. 'Ethology', and his talent for devising behaviour-testing experiments, provided an outlet for Niko's enthusiasm for gulls and sticklebacks, snow-buntings and foxes, wasps and falcons, and even children.

This first full-length biography of Niko Tinbergen, lavishly illustrated with many of Niko's own drawings, describes his background in Holland, a naturalists' paradise, and the beginnings of his investigations into the behaviour of birds, fish, and insects. Hans Kruuk also explores is Niko's relationship with his colleague and co-Nobelist Konrad Lorenz. These were two men full of contrasts: Niko a charming, self-effacing field man and experimenter; Konrad a flamboyant and egocentric German, always full of new ideas. Niko's Nature goes on to follow Niko's progress in Oxford after the Second World War, where he became the world authority on the behaviour of animals in the wild: his inspiring book *The Study of Instinct* remains an all-time classic.

As a scientist Niko will always be known for the four fundamentally different ways in which he asked the question 'why does an animal do this?' These questions, about physiology, development, evolution, and function, became known as 'Tinbergen's four whys'. But Niko's successes came at a price - severe and devastating depressions that were to plague him throughout his career.

In this fascinating and engaging story, Niko's long-time friend and student Hans Kruuk argues that his impact as a scientist and naturalist was in large part due to his skills as a communicator, photographer, and film-maker. *Niko's Nature* is an intimate and insightful portrait of an extraordinary figure.

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