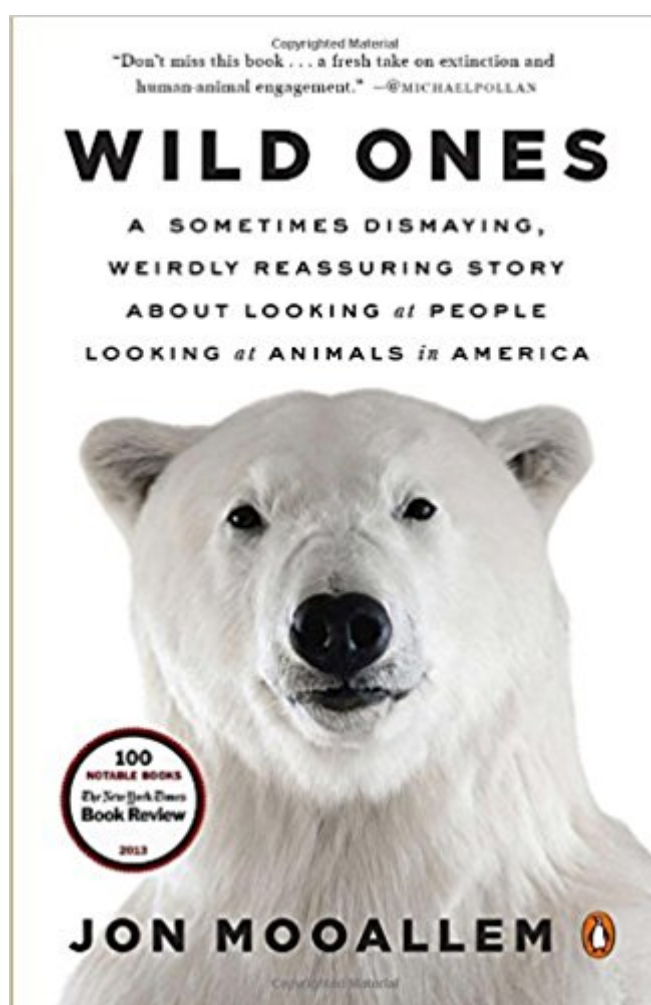


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Wild Ones: A Sometimes Dismaying, Weirdly Reassuring Story About Looking At People Looking At Animals In America



Synopsis

Journalist Jon Mooallem has watched his little daughter's world overflow with animals: butterfly pajamas, appliquéed owls—while the actual world she's inheriting slides into a great storm of extinction. Half of all species could disappear by the end of the century, and scientists now concede that most of America's endangered animals will survive only if conservationists keep rigging the world around them in their favor. So Mooallem ventures into the field, often taking his daughter with him, to move beyond childlike fascination and make those creatures feel more real. *Wild Ones* is a tour through our environmental moment and the eccentric cultural history of people and wild animals in America that inflects it—from Thomas Jefferson's celebrations of early abundance to the turn-of-the-last-century origins of the teddy bear to the whale-loving hippies of the 1970s. With propulsive curiosity and searing wit, and without the easy moralizing and nature worship of environmental journalism's older guard, *Wild Ones* merges reportage, science, and history into a humane and endearing meditation on what it means to live in, and bring a life into, a broken world.

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Customer Reviews

Mooallem grapples with the complex realities of conservation by looking at polar bears in Manitoba, butterflies near San Francisco, and the supervised migration of whooping cranes between Wisconsin and Florida. On one level, this is a bleak narrative because these animals are in human-caused peril and the pathway to saving them leads to more questions than answers. How much should we do to save an animal's true nature when our

effort to save it requires intrusive management? Mooallem argues that by focusing on the animals themselves, we are overlooking the point of the Endangered Species Act, which stressed the paramount importance of ecosystems— a far more difficult thing to save than a species. He strives for the big picture here and gently guides readers through what ultimately becomes a poignant tribute to all who try to make the world a better place. This is a wise approach to a troubling subject, and Mooallem's words do give us something to hold on to as we continue to struggle with what it means to save the planet. --Colleen Mondor --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A New York Times Notable Book of 2013 "[An] ambitious and fascinating first book— [Mooallem] seamlessly blends reportage from the front lines of wildlife conservation with a lively cultural history of animals in America, telling stories of people past and present whose concern for animals makes them act in ways that are sometimes unexpected, sometimes heroic, and occasionally absurd."— •New York Times Book Review "A thoughtful parable of Americans' complicated relations with conservationists and the wildlife they protect."— •The New Yorker "Intelligent and highly nuanced— | This book may bring tears to your eyes. If so, they will be drawn out by the tragedy of what we have done and the all-too-often pathetic efforts to turn back the clock. But read through the tears, and you will find yourself more informed, more prepared to make a difference. Mooallem has done those of us who care deeply about nature and wildlife a favor, leaving us justifiably off balance but putting us in a better position to move beyond hubris to pragmatic solutions."— •San Francisco Chronicle "An engaging nature/environment book that goes beyond simple-minded sloganeering."— •Kirkus "Wild Ones heightens one's awareness of the precipitous position of so many of our animal species, but it's also filled with curiosity and hope. The men and women that Mooallem tails are dreamers, but you wind up rooting for them to keep on dreaming."— •Smithsonian "There is, in short, ridiculously lots to love about Jon Mooallem's Wild Ones— starting with its thoughtful and troubling observation that our increasingly extravagant effort at species conservation is a corollary to, as much as a solution for, our habit of rendering wild animals extinct."— •New York Magazine "Mooallem argues conservation is and always has been about fulfilling people's need for nostalgic wildness, however contrived and fictitious it may be. Every generation strives to return the Earth to some idealized former state. Although his journey is sobering, Mooallem's conclusion is upbeat: Even small conservation victories matter."— •Discover "Mooallem manages to pinpoint something peculiar yet poignant about

being human, and as a result, reading his pieces often feels like being tricked by an approachable wink masking a sharp jab to the gut... Be prepared to be surprise-gutted."

•East Bay Express "A clear-eyed look at our coy relationship with endangered animals."

•Nature "If I could write this review entirely in smiley faces and majestic animal emojis, I would: Wild Ones is easily one of the best books I've come across this year. It's more readable than most novels, stuffed with more fascinating, offbeat trivia than the last three issues of The New Yorker combined. It's incredibly well-researched, relevant, challenging stuff."

•Portland Mercury "'If we choose to help [polar bears] survive,' Mooallem writes, 'it will require a kind of narrow, hands-on management—like getting out there and feeding them.' Among a lot of environmentalists, those are fighting words. All respect to Mooallem for having the guts to say them."

•Outside Magazine "This book is dense with both thought and fact. It is written with a vernacularly light touch, shot through with compassion and wit, not to mention open amazement, the only apt response to the story of our monumental hubris."

•The Daily Beast "Mooallem argues that by focusing on the animals themselves, we are overlooking the point of the Endangered Species Act, which stressed the paramount importance of ecosystems—a far more difficult thing to save than a species. He strives for the big picture here and gently guides readers through what ultimately becomes a poignant tribute to all who try to make the world a better place. This is a wise approach to a troubling subject, and Mooallem's words do give us something to hold on to as we continue to struggle with what it means to save the planet."

•Booklist "It is impossible to express, within the tiny game-park confines of a back cover, how amazing I find this book. I love it line by perfect, carefully crafted line, and I love it for the freshness and intelligent humanity of its ideas. As literary nonfiction, as essay, as reportage, Wild Ones is, to my mind, about as good as writing gets."

•Mary Roach, author of Stiff and Gulp "I love Jon Mooallem and I love animals, but this book is even better than the sum of its parts. Mooallem makes a persuasive case that wild animals are America's cultural heritage—our Sistine Chapel and our Great Books—and the story he tells is an archetypal American one. Even as the animals are being destroyed by unthinking, unconscious corporate forces, they are also being rescued through the tremendous energy and ingenuity of individuals, men and women who wear whooping-crane costumes, cohabitate with dolphins, and encourage condors to ejaculate on their heads. Wild Ones made me proud to be American."

•Elif Batuman, author of The Possessed "Part harrowing arctic adventure, part crazy airborne travelogue, and often funny family trek, Wild Ones shows us that while saving species might be of debatable value to some, it is maybe in our genes, and definitely in our hearts. Mooallem's analysis of our various environmental

movements has the breadth and penetrating clarity of Michael Pollan, but more importantly he makes us wonder even more about a world that is in desperate need of more wonder." — Robert Sullivan, author of *Rats and My American Revolution* "During the course of his three expeditions, Jon Mooallem collects in the specimen jars of his elegant paragraphs enough ironies, curiosities, insights, and revelations — enough life, wild and otherwise — to stock a mind-altering museum, one unlike any other, in which Martha Stewart has wandered into the polar bear exhibit, and the Hall of North American Animals turns out also to be a hall of mirrors. With Mooallem as your nature guide, you won't look at wild animals — or at *Homo americanus* — quite the same way again." — Donovan Hohn, author of *Moby-Duck*

Here's a note I just wrote to my brother to get him to buy this book: This guy, Jon Mooallem, takes a look at three animals and their habitats -- the polar bear, the Lange's metalmark butterfly and the whooping crane -- and tells the stories of the people who live near them and work to preserve them, which brings him to bigger questions, including why we humans work our asses off (or not) to preserve some animals and not others. This book is full of stories about the early days of Americans interacting with nature, stories we tell ourselves about the natural world, and one in particular that reveals just how far out of his way Thomas Jefferson once went to show a French official just how much bigger the moose are over in America. If you like looking at animals (cool), or watching people look at them (creepy, but OK), take a look at this book.

Some really deep insights into the reasons people are interested in animals - I worked in environmental education for 15 years, and Mooallem was more honest about some of the aspects of why humans choose to do habitat and species preservation, than the very people who do these things for their entire career. The examples can make you both happy and sad so his title is very well chosen, though it sounds eccentric. This is a read that will shift your moods around, make you think deeply if you choose to, and will probably stick with you a long time after you close it. You may even buy extra copies to press upon your friends, if you have friends who would benefit from reading it.

Because of the relatability of this book, I would recommend it to just about anybody. I believe that even those who might not demonstrate an interest in species conservation or environmental protection would find this novel rather absorbing. *Wild Ones* is simply more than just an omen for what our future holds, it is a delightful journey through the wilderness that encourages appreciation

for the species that our first-world lifestyles are slowly extinguishing.

“I think I could turn and live with the animals, they are so placid and self contained;I stand and look at them long and long.They do not sweat and whine about their condition;They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins;They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God;Not one is dissatisfied-not one is demented with the mania of owning things;Not one kneels to another, nor his kind that lived thousands of years ago;Not one is responsible or industrious over the whole earth.”
•Walt Whitman
Thoroughly enjoyed everything about this book. From the furry creatures to the prickly conservationists who Mr. Mooallem interviewed.

Jon Mooallem's first book was a delightful read, from start to finish and to try and summarize this book in a few short words is difficult but here goes: what began as a concerned curiosity about what kind of world will be left for his young daughter turned into an interesting journey and fact-finding mission about just how complicated it is to save and convince our culture to caring about endangered species and the animal kingdom at large.The book is broken into 3 main sections but really, it is about so much more than the plight of the polar bear, an obscure butterfly and the whooping crane. The facts, people and history that Jon incorporates into his book make for a fascinating read and is one that will leave you thinking about your own relationship to the world along with the realization that there are no easy answers.In short -- read this book. It's great and I can't recommend it enough.

This is a special book. And not just because it deals with one of the most important societal challenges of our time.This won't be the first time you've read about endangered species, or pollution, or climate change. We've probably all read bits of Rachel Carson and Garrett Hardin and Al Gore. But what makes Wild Ones special, is that it's not a run of the mill environmental science book. It doesn't mention carbon dioxide. It doesn't try to forecast sea-level rise. It wasn't authored by some impressive scientist. It's a conservation book written by a father.

Enjoying reading this book. Really makes you think of all the species/plants that are in trouble and desperately need our help or our ingenuity in coming up with a solution, if there is one!

For those seriously interested in ensuring wild species survival, I suggest the book "Wild Ones" by Jon Mooallem. Instead of breezing through a laundry list of threatened species, Mooallem

concentrates on three endangered species - the Polar Bear, Lang's Metalmark Butterflies, and the Whooping Crane - going into depth on the history, efforts and personalities of those who are working to help them survive into the next millennium. This is not a "feel good" book, but one that explores the reality of the challenges and recognizes the difficulty of even establishing objectives among species advocates. A bit of tough love but respect for those who dedicate their lives to the difficult task. Great in-depth reporting, Jon!

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