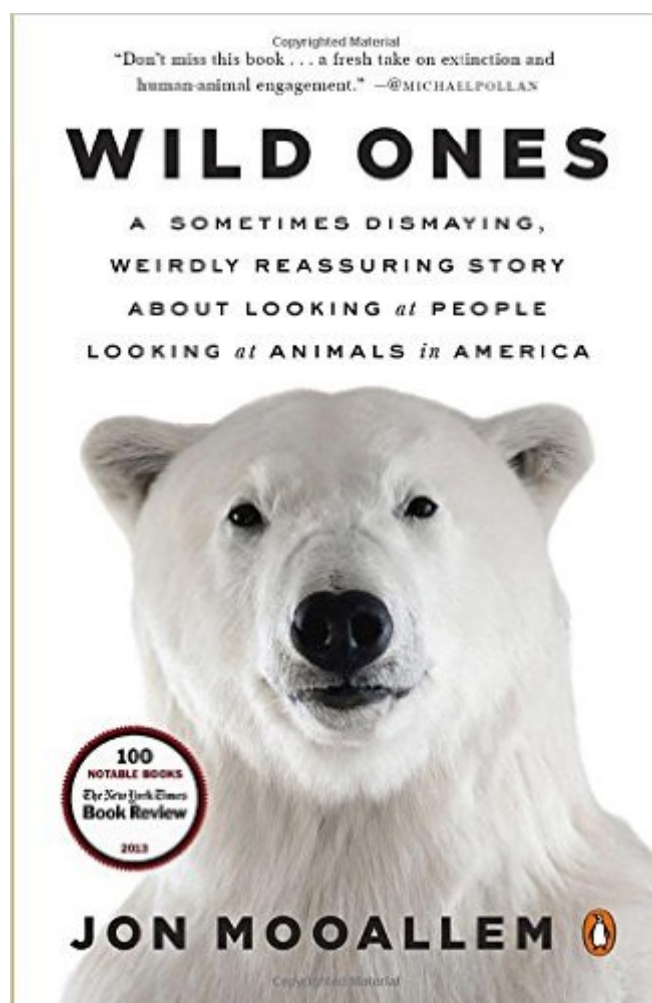


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Wild Ones: A Sometimes Dismaying, Weirdly Reassuring Story About Looking At People Looking At Animals In America



Synopsis

"Ambitious and fascinating... [Mooallem] seamlessly blends reportage from the front lines of wildlife conservation with a lively cultural history of animals in America." --New York Times Book Review

Journalist Jon Mooallem has watched his little daughter's world overflow with animals: butterfly pajamas, appliquéd 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. In America, *Wild Ones* discovers, wildlife has always inhabited the terrain of our imagination as much as the actual land. The journey is framed by the stories of three modern-day endangered species: the polar bear, victimized by climate change and ogled by tourists outside a remote northern town; the little-known Lange's metalmark butterfly, foundering on a shred of industrialized land near San Francisco; and the whooping crane as it's led on a months-long migration by costumed men in ultralight airplanes. The wilderness that *Wild Ones* navigates is a scrappy, disorderly place where amateur conservationists do grueling, sometimes preposterous-looking work; where a marketer maneuvers to control the polar bear's image while Martha Stewart turns up to film those beasts for her show on the Hallmark Channel. Our most comforting ideas about nature unravel. In their place, Mooallem forges a new and affirming vision of the human animal and the wild ones as kindred creatures on an imperfect planet. 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.--And don't miss the album based on the book: *WILD ONES* by Black Prairie.Â Digital release on May 14; physical release on June 11--Â

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Customer Reviews

As suggested by the subtitle, this book looks at the people who devote themselves to the conservation of endangered species in the United States and Canada. Mooallem has spent huge amounts of time with these conservationists, interviewing them, following them, even helping out as a volunteer. We get to learn a lot about some endangered species, what it takes to keep them from going extinct, and how dedicated the people are who work to save them. The book is exceptionally well-written. Mooallem tells many compelling stories, introduces us to a string of memorable characters, past and present, and meditates eloquently on the philosophy of conservation and our relationship with nature. He was motivated to explore this topic when he observed that Isla, his young daughter, is surrounded by pictures, books, and toys depicting wild animals, some of whom will undoubtedly go extinct during her lifetime. This proves to be a rich vein for philosophical meditation as he ponders what kind of world we are leaving for our children and how will they feel about our negligence. Mooallem explores the history of conservation from the time when all wild animals were killed for sport and economic reasons through the passage of the Endangered Species Act in the 1970s and on to the present. The idea that a species could go extinct was never considered by the early European settlers of the New World. The abundance of wildlife and the vast domain of wilderness conspired with the notion that God would never allow a species to disappear. The extinction of the passenger pigeon and the near extinction of the bison became a sort of wake-up call to human empathy for wild things.

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