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The Secret World Of Red Wolves: The Fight To Save North America's Other Wolf



Synopsis

Red wolves are shy, elusive, and misunderstood predators. Until the 1800s, they were common in the longleaf pine savannas and deciduous forests of the southeastern United States. However, habitat degradation, persecution, and interbreeding with the coyote nearly annihilated them. Today, reintroduced red wolves are found only in peninsular northeastern North Carolina within less than 1 percent of their former range. In *The Secret World of Red Wolves*, nature writer T. DeLene Beeland shadows the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's pioneering recovery program over the course of a year to craft an intimate portrait of the red wolf, its history, and its restoration. Her engaging exploration of this top-level predator traces the intense effort of conservation personnel to save a species that has slipped to the verge of extinction. Beeland weaves together the voices of scientists, conservationists, and local landowners while posing larger questions about human coexistence with red wolves, our understanding of what defines this animal as a distinct species, and how climate change may swamp its current habitat.

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Customer Reviews

As the gray wolf war rages on in the west, another problem has been unfolding along the east coast without all the headlines. During the month of November 2013, 6 red wolves were illegally killed within a month in NC. Thus, it's the perfect time to go and grab a copy of *The Secret World of Red Wolves: The Fight to Save North America's Other Wolf* by T. Delene Beeland. Appreciation stimulates conservation, and this book will certainly make you appreciate these fascinating canines. Beeland divides the book up into three main parts: 1) The Red Wolf Today; 2) The Red Wolf Yesterday; and 3) The Red Wolf Tomorrow. Within these sections, Beeland uses the wealth of information that she has accumulated through experience and research to tell this grand story of *Canis rufus*. Lots of important science is weaved throughout the story. Part I covers several seasons. Through hiking in the field and interviewing the biologists, Beeland is able to relay the current status of these wolves. Readers will be surprised to learn that red wolves were, in fact, the very first wolves introduced in the United States, that they actually benefit the ecosystem by eating nonnative nutria, and that they are actually more scared of you than you are of them. Part II deals with taxonomic history of the red wolf, their early decline because of settlers' fear of "big bad" wolves, and the history of how they came to be reintroduced in NC. Part III discusses what types of things still need to happen for this recovery effort to be successful. This is a book every North Carolinian interested in science should read because this great effort is taking place in our backyard. It is a book anyone interested in the need for apex predators should read. Beeland's vast knowledge and enthusiasm make this a book that is hard to put down.

I'm not familiar with science writing awards, but I do think *The Secret World of Red Wolves* deserves one. Ms. Beeland's prose makes for easy reading, even though some of the topics covered in the book can be quite complex. Her research is thorough and presented in a way a layman can understand and find interesting. There is an excellent introductory chapter followed by chapters about her hands-on experience shadowing Fish and Wildlife biologists as they work to protect the last population of wild red wolves. The most interesting part of the book for me began with Chapter 8 when Ms. Beeland covered the controversy over theories of the red wolf origin as a species. The rest of the book is about the history of the red wolf from colonial times to its near extinction to its partial recovery with the help of the red wolf program. Man caused the near extinction of this species, and only man has the power to bring it back. Unfortunately, due to inbreeding with coyotes and human poaching, man will probably always have to take an active role in protecting this species. This book is a must read for anyone interested in North American ecology and endangered species. It should have a wide appeal for scientists and laymen alike.

AT LAST!!! I've been hoping someone would write a comprehensive book on the Red Wolf history, and near extinction, and captive breeding, and successful release to the wild for decades, and at last here it is! And an excellent job done the subject! No wolf collection is complete without it! The Red Wolf project is so historically important because of HOW MUCH was learned in the process--these guys were winging it and inventing how to release a captive bred predator back to the wild with no guide from previous experiences, and how they succeeded is all in this book! The Gray Wolf reintroductions, among others(and likely any predator reintroductions in the future) have all benefitted enormously from what was learned regarding the Red Wolves. The Red Wolf project will NEVER be a "failure" simply because of all that was learned from it--and STILL is being learned! The foolish people that think Red Wolf preservation is wasted effort because they believe Red Wolves are simply coyote/gray wolf hybrids are narrow minded indeed! Hybridization may well have "created" many divergent species, along with "regular" evolution, and red wolves are an excellent opportunity to study that phenomenon! Even if the "new" coywolves(coyotes with some wolf genetics) spreading back throughout the Eastern United States presently, are the more functional, widespread larger canine predator for the ecosystems here, I think it is still well worth preserving this older bloodline of Red Wolves, even if it can only be preserved in a few, limited and heavily human monitored situations. Scientists are hoping to clone the extinct marsupial Tasmanian "wolves"(thylacines)--even though there may be no place left in the wild to reintroduce them just now, but wouldn't that be worthwhile just the same? Even if thylacines could only be kept with close human management? And in a similar fashion, I think the remnant Red Wolves should always be preserved, whatever it takes. North Carolina, as a state, SHOULD BE so proud to have the ONLY surviving Red Wolves in the world! And this book documents it all.....

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