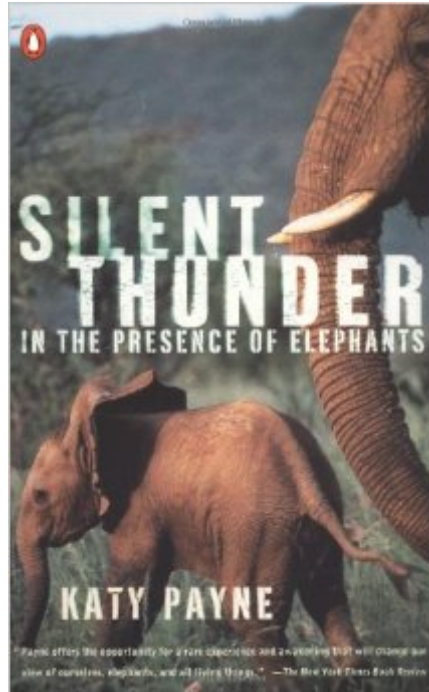


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# Silent Thunder: In The Presence Of Elephants



## Synopsis

This remarkable memoir of scientific discovery begins at the Washington Park Zoo in Portland, Oregon, where Katy Payne's revolutionary work in the field of elephant communication began. It was there that she first discovered the idea that elephants use infrasonic sounds -- sounds below the range of human hearing -- to communicate. This led Payne and her colleagues to conduct field research in Kenya, Namibia, and Zimbabwe that brought about fascinating new insights into elephants' social lives. When five of the elephant families they were studying became victims of culling, Payne changed her approach to her research as she fought valiantly to protect African elephants. *Silent Thunder* is a natural history rich in observation of the animal world and how humans participate in it. It is also a passionate story of Payne's own spiritual quest as she turns a keen eye on her own role in this world. On every page Payne's courage and empathy shine through, giving this unique combination of scientific journal and personal memoir an unforgettable emotional power.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I read Ms. Payne's book in two days. It gripped me with its tales of Africa, and scientific discoveries, and magnificent, intelligent, sentient beasts. She describes clearly the people and animals of Africa, and treats all with equal respect. The description of the night she spent staring down a lion a few feet away was worth the price of the book alone. This is a wonderful book that taught me a lot about African wildlife and people--and the courage and soulfulness of a biologist who spent time among

them.

This is a stunning and important book. When I finished I was overjoyed -- that Katy Payne had found language for the reality of elephant culture and the spiritual depth and integrity of the native peoples in Africa -- and I was ravaged by the truths she exposes of the ways that the colonial mind and presence have undermined the natural world and the lives of the indigenous peoples; ultimately animal and native peoples are marginalized and pitted against each other for survival. This book carries a profound understanding of the complex nature of elephants and dares to present the terrible vision of their circumstances from which we cannot and must not turn away. Because Katy Payne is such an honest and lyrical writer, because she is exacting as a scientist and a compassionate person, we can, if we allow ourselves, truly be transformed by taking in the implications of her observations and understanding. It is no exaggeration to say this is a great book which will forever change the ways we see the world. Deena Metzger, co-editor *Intimate Nature: The Bond Between Women and Animals*, Fawcett Columbine, The Ballentine Group.

A fascinating story about the discovery of infrasonic communication between elephants, her experiences with elephants, and the implications of culling on these magnificent creatures. Payne maintains a foundation of integrity in her book which opens your heart to these beautiful animals. It is full of facts, anecdotes, stories and passion. I highly recommend buying this book as it is an incredible story and it is for the elephants!

Anything about elephants is worth reading. To really understand elephants and the complexities of the impact of human society on them, I recommend Douglas Chadwick's *The Fate of the Elephant* first. To read about a female scientist's experience of elephants, I recommend Joyce Poole's "Coming of Age with Elephants." Even the story of Modoc the elephant is more engaging. There's something remarkably un-magical about the writing here. I don't understand it. Ms. Payne's public presentation of her experiences with elephants is so interesting, incredibly engrossing. An academic/lecture setting offers the benefit of her pre-recorded elephant calls played at different speeds. She shows several photos of the elephants, her research setting, and her friends. She explains technical diagrams of sound speed and pitch and their distribution across geographical settings. (The absence of photos or other illustrations is quite noticeable in this book.) Experiencing Ms. Payne "live" infuses the book with more import, but I can't in good faith claim that the book stands that way on its own.

Katy Payne is a wonderful writer with a tremendous talent for integrating life with her research. This book is about elephants, about Katy, about the men and women and societies that she meets in a wonderful pilgrimage. You experience her joys, her sorrows, her love for elephants, her research breakthroughs and the distress of the wildlife situation, especially within Zimbabwe. Katy also has a beautiful talent for gracefully understanding how other societies function and for developing a culturally sensitive learning posture. This is a great book. For those reviewers who want "more pictures," there are thousands in this book that Katy brings to your mind when you READ it. I learned a tremendous amount about elephant behavior/communication, wildlife biology and the lifestyle of a wildlife biologist in this book. Wonderful, wonderful work! Thank you Katy!

I read this book before departing for Thailand to study elephants. It is a disturbing book, but I recommend it. We need to treat these noble beasts better and it's not easy considering their size and how much they must consume in a day. It all got me started on a quest to learn more about Elephants. We found several elephant rescue camps in Thailand that use tourist money to acquire urban elephants and ones that are used in Berma for logging...very bad for their backs. We signed up for three days where we would have our own elephant and would have to care for it. I found myself bonding with my Minoy, a large female that was assigned to me. It's hard to believe, but she bonded with me as well. When I left there was a very large tear in her eye. Elephants are amazing animals. This book was helpful to me in understanding how elephants communicate. I could feel them "talkin" to each other through my legs, but could not hear the subsonic messages.

Did you know that elephants communicate with sounds that are below the range of human hearing? Similar to whales, they can speak over long distance with each other using infrasound. I can't help but wonder if their infrasonic vocalizations are what contribute to the palpable energetic vibrations I felt, sitting amongst the clusters of elephants in Northern Kenya. Katy Payne is one of the elephant researchers in Amboseli Park, Kenya, that helped to discover the infrasonic rumbles of elephant communication (along with Joyce Poole and Cynthia Moss) during the late 1980's and early 1990's. She is also an eloquent writer with a passion for the elephants she studied for many years. In *Silent Thunder: In the Presence of Elephants*, she shares some fascinating stories of what it's like to be in the bush with wild elephants...and one gripping story of an encounter with a lion. Her personal accounts hint of her strong intuitive gifts, where she touches on her precognitive dreams. She stops short of using direct language on some of these topics, which left me longing to hear more of what

the real Katy Payne is all about. But I applaud her for bringing up spiritual topics at all. It's unusual for a scientific researcher to make personal revelations. I found it refreshing that she did.

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