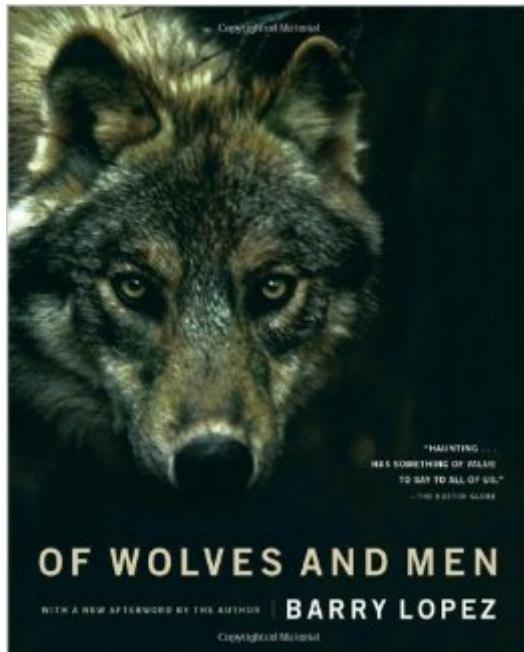


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Of Wolves And Men



Synopsis

Originally published in 1978, this classic exploration of humanity's complex relationship with and understanding of wolves returns with a new afterword by the author. Humankind's relationship with the wolf is based on a spectrum of responses running from fear to admiration and affection. Lopez's classic, careful study won praise from a wide range of reviewers and went on to improve the way books about wild animals are written. *Of Wolves and Men* reveals the uneasy interaction between wolves and civilization over the centuries, and the wolf's prominence in our thoughts about wild creatures. Drawing on an astonishing array of literature, history, science, and mythology as well as considerable personal experience with captive and free-ranging wolves, Lopez argues for the necessity of the wolf's preservation and envelops the reader in its sensory world, creating a compelling picture of the wolf both as real animal and as imagined by man. A scientist might perceive the wolf as defined by research data, while an Eskimo hunter sees a family provider much like himself. For many Native Americans the wolf is also a spiritual symbol, a respected animal that can make both the individual and the community stronger. With irresistible charm and elegance, *Of Wolves and Men* celebrates scientific fieldwork, dispels folklore that has enabled the Western mind to demonize wolves, explains myths, and honors indigenous traditions, allowing us to further understand how this incredible animal has come to live so strongly in the human heart.

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Customer Reviews

Its rare that a study like this one is both entertaining and informative, but Mr. Lopez's book is

precisely that. We are led through the ages peering at the strenuous relations of humanity and wolf-kind, from primal man's envy of this accomplished, loyal hunter, through his hateful denial of their ties, and finally to its present day nebulous dual attitude of reconciliation and euthanasia. It can best be summed up in the chapters referring to the attitudes of the ancient Greeks -especially the Arcadians, who first emulated the wolf, then hated and feared him as a sheepkiller, and then looked on him with pity and sadness and guilt. I also found the descriptions of wolves in Norse literature indicative of the strange envy/hatred/fear man seems to hold for this creature. Meanwhile the wolf lopes on through all of this, steadfast and unchanging - wanting no part in man's world, content with its own. There is much to be learned from wolves, and this book goes a long way in teaching it. In the closing chapters everything ties together in a manner that it is pretty amazing and eye-opening, even going so far as to point to the inherent relationship between a cosmic disaster and the decline of wolves. Maybe that came of sounding crackpot, but I'm not the author - read him for yourself. Its a great buy, and will stay with you for a long time to come.

A group of school children was asked to each draw a picture of a wolf. They all drew the typical savage dog-like monster, complete with huge teeth, bloody fangs, demonic eyes, the works. Then an animal handler brought a real wolf into the classroom, on a leash. They were awestruck, and took turns patting it as it was led around the room and introduced to them all. Afterwards, they were again asked to draw a picture of a wolf. This time, the picture was of wolves with big, kind eyes - and enormous, outsized feet. No fangs, no blood. That's what this book will do to the casual reader, show you the wolf you don't know, and adjust your preconceptions about the wolf you THINK you know. A marvelous achievement; must reading.

The greatest virtue of this book is that it makes you care. Some of the great wolf books presume already that you have an interest in the subject, like Mech's, as fine and as informative and as authoritative as it is, won't necessarily create a sense of awe like Lopez's. But through a judicious use of scientific and mythological materials, fused together with a marvelous literary sense, Lopez creates an epic retelling of the wolf in North America. Since reading this book for the first time, a host of sections have remained vivid to me. For instance, a schoolroom that is to be visited by a wolf and its handler. The children are asked to make a drawing of a wolf beforehand, and most create a beast with huge and menacing teeth. After the visit, they are told once again to draw a wolf, and this time draw a dog-like animal with enormous paws. No other section of the book emphasized to me how dreadfully we misconceive wolves. Lopez meanders over the course of Western civilization

harvesting tales and stories--both scientific and mythic--recounting the myriad ways we have thought about wolves. Few of our imaginings do their fine qualities justice, and most often we demonize them. As a result, the wolf as we know it is largely a creation of our fevered imaginations. Lopez tries to break through the fictions about wolves to focus more on their truer qualities and natures. The heartbreaking pages that end the book bring to mind the great tragedy it was for the North American wolf for Europeans to have discovered America. One might have to cut the book a tiny bit of slack because of the graphics. The pictures are judiciously chosen, and while graphics methods have improved dramatically in the past twenty years due to computer technology, and the book the drawings are superb, the photos good if a tiny bit blurry given their age, and the illustrations highly informative. I especially love the reproduction of the print of a three-year-old Alaskan timber wolf. I used to take the paw of my German Shepherd Birgit and place it over the print, and was astonished at how huge the wolf print was in comparison. This is a truly enjoyable and informative book, one that will enrich and alter the way one looks at nature. Certainly, I now never go to a zoo without a great deal of awe and regret when passing a wolf.

This book should be required reading for everyone. Lopez, a superior author in his own right, created THE classic book on wolf behavior and on the relationship between wolves and humans from ancient to modern times. The first few chapters deal with wolf biology and behavior, and dispel many of the myths--including the idea that nobody has ever been attacked by a healthy wolf in North America (nobody, apparently, thought to check with American Indian experience in history). It's a very, very thorough exploration of the wolf as a mammal, as an animal. Then Lopez goes into the tangled thornbush of wolf mythology and folklore, and how it affected the way humans slaughtered wolves (or revered them), and how the two fed off of each other and built up the human (mis)conception of the wolf that has only recently been shattered. There's a lot of heartbreaking information about wolf hunting, and just how devastated the wolf population has been. Reduced to a fraction of their former range, it's amazing that wolves even still exist. This book is a must-read, not only for wolf lovers, but for everyone to understand why we have so abused the natural world. For many people, the wolf IS the wild, and how we treat the wolf mirrors how we treat the wild.

One of my earliest memories is reading Jack London's "Call of the Wild". Ever since then I have been fascinated by dogs and wolves. Barry Lopez has done the wolf and the reader a great service with the extensive research. He does an amazing job of not crusading for the wolf and because of this the book is that much more persuasive. I've always felt that wolves lived their lives similarly to

the way that men probably should live their lives. Anyone who has any interest in wolves, or man's relationship with the wild should pick this book up immediately.

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