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Wild Ones: A Sometimes Dismaying, Weirdly Reassuring Story About Looking at People Looking at Animals in America

By Jon Mooallem



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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. 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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