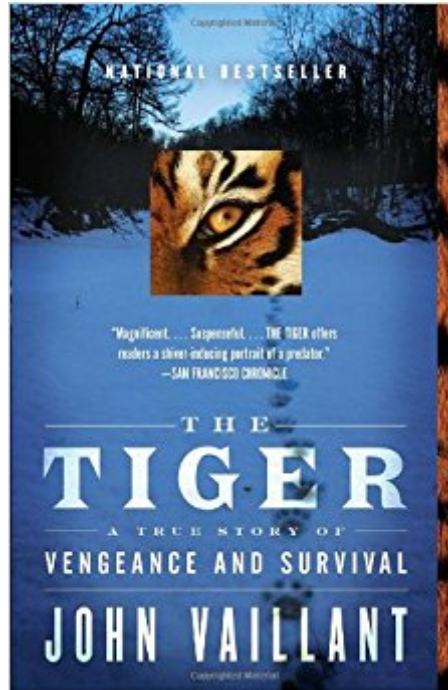


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The Tiger: A True Story Of Vengeance And Survival (Vintage Departures)



Synopsis

A gripping story of man pitted against nature's most fearsome and efficient predator. Outside a remote village in Russia's Far East a man-eating tiger is on the prowl. The tiger isn't just killing people, it's murdering them, almost as if it has a vendetta. A team of trackers is dispatched to hunt down the tiger before it strikes again. They know the creature is cunning, injured, and starving, making it even more dangerous. As John Vaillant re-creates these extraordinary events, he gives us an unforgettable and masterful work of narrative nonfiction that combines a riveting portrait of a stark and mysterious region of the world and its people, with the natural history of nature's most deadly predator.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars See all reviews (403 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

This is far more than just an animal-eats-man thriller like Alaska Bear Tales. It does have a rather small story of a man eating tiger terrorizing a community, but it balloons out, covering all the eddies of history, natural history, economics, and culture that moved the characters to this moment where their worlds collide. The story could easily be covered in 160 words on page two of a newspaper as some AP wire from Russia. Or in a narrative book it would take maybe 20 pages or so pages. But here the author brings nearly every back story to light in an amazing parade and alignment of stars that borders on fate. The Soviets annexing Northern Manchuria, Defending it from China, bringing Russians to the far East, the crumbling of Soviet systems, the crippling impoverishment of the

community, the open markets to the South, the Chinese appetite for tiger products... Everything lines up to bring this confrontation in a way too clear cut for fiction. I will not say that this book is a slow read, because I had problems putting it down, but at times it was frustrating that the core story of the tiger never seemed to move closer. It reads like a local history text, a biographic series of many of the main characters and a natural history account of tigers all blended together. I don't think I have ever come away from a book feeling like I knew the context of events better. The image created of post Perestroika Russia alone is worth the price of the book. However, I can see some people being turned off by all the detours and side streets the book takes. This is not a straight narrative.

This is a very well-researched account of the hunt for a tiger that was terrorizing a remote Russian community in the Far East in 1997. In the wake of perestroika and the fall of the Communist regime, the economy of the former Soviet Union cratered, and plenty of people in the far-flung territories out past Siberia were reduced to a subsistence level of living, taking to the forests to poach game and forage for natural resources coveted by the nearby Chinese. Some turned to hunting the local Amur tigers, all parts of which would fetch a high price across the border. Consequently it was inevitable that conflicts between man and tiger would arise. The problem with this account is that there is not a whole lot that can be known for certain about the tiger's attacks and about the actions and intentions of the victims prior to their deaths. As there were no witnesses, it remains uncertain what all parties involved, the tiger and its forest-haunting human prey, were up to over the course of the few days of the predator's brief reign of terror. As a result, the author is reduced to a great deal of conjecture and speculation. Worse, because of this absence of solid evidence, he's forced into endless digressions to pad out the story. There's plenty of material about other tiger-human interactions and folklore and research across the centuries, and efforts at conservation, and the lifestyles of Russian poachers and even of rogue Germans in hiding in Namibia in WWII. And every figure involved in the hunt for the killer tiger, no matter how inconsequential or tangential to the core of the story, gets a capsule biography. Also troubling is the author's propensity to ascribe feelings and motivations to this particular tiger.

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