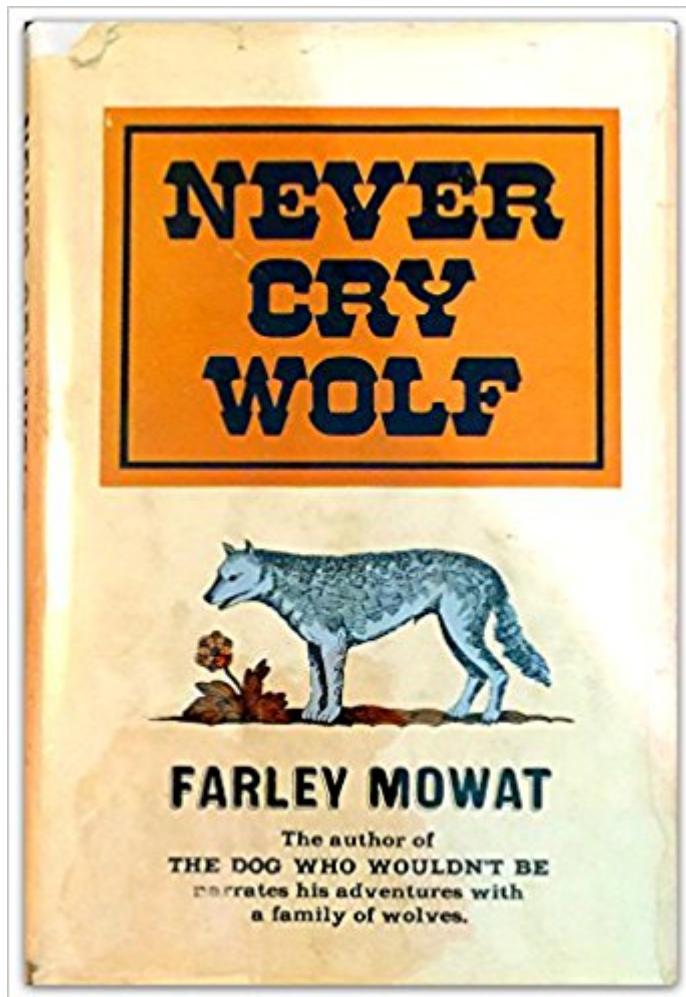


The book was found

Never Cry Wolf



Synopsis

In Never Cry Wolf, by Farley Mowat, the author begins by recounting how he expressed an interest in living biology at age five when he first discovered two catfish in a stagnant pond near his grandmother's home in Ontario. When he completed his schooling, he was engaged by the Department of Mines and Resources to investigate the problems of the decreasing deer population, presumed to have been as a result of an out of control wolf population. Never Cry Wolf is a scientific account of what Mowat discovers as a result of his study of wolves. Mowat's journey into the world of wolves changes everything he believes and has been told about them and their behavior. Before he leaves for his study, he is told that wolves are decimating the caribou population, killing them indiscriminately for sport. He is also under the impression that they will attack and kill a considerable number of men each year, but they will not touch Eskimo women who are pregnant. Told that wolves number as many as thirty thousand in the region of his studies, Farley expects the population to be thick in the area of his observations, but none of these things are true. The reality he soon learns is that the trappers are killing far more wolves each year to feed their husky teams than the wolves kill - up to three hundred a year each. The wolves, on the other hand, subsist on a diet of mainly mice. They hunt caribou as well, but only take the weak, the injured, or the sick, leaving the caribou stronger for their intervention. They do not kill men, and, in fact, they presented little threat to Farley despite his presence near their den, close to their young and around their food. He even camps near a wolf den to better study them with their pups. Even this close contact doesn't promote aggression from the wolves. He spends summer and fall following the wolf family around, all without threat to him. The final confirmation of this occurs when he crawls into their den at the end of the season...

Book Information

Hardcover

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Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 5.8 x 1 inches

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (253 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #749,231 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #87 inÂ Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Dogs & Wolves #4814 inÂ Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Fauna

Customer Reviews

NEVER CRY WOLF is Farley Mowat's first-person reminiscence of his time spent studying wolves in the Canadian arctic. NEVER CRY WOLF, first published in 1963, was one of the earliest, most widely-read, and most effective conservation narratives ever penned. It's Russian edition (the title of which, literally translated back into English, is WOLVES, PLEASE DON'T CRY) was responsible for a Soviet ban on wolf hunting that spared the animals in their natural habitat and gained Mr. Mowat a notorious reputation at the U.S. State Department, which banned his subsequent entry into the United States. NEVER CRY WOLF has been attacked as being more fable than fact, and this may be true. Mowat has often said that he prefers not to let facts get in the way of the truth, and there is no question that he wanted his readers to come to love these generally benighted creatures. If one doubts the low esteem in which wolves are held one only needs to consider representative northern European fairy tales: Peter and the Wolf, Little Red Riding Hood, and others present the wolf as a four-legged homicidal maniac. Unfortunately, this agelong prejudice has nearly exterminated the wolf in most of its range, courtesy of a certain two-legged homicidal maniac. Like our primordial fear of the dark, and the very common terror of cats, lukophobia derives from the lost years of the cave. Mowat tells a good story. As a young Game Warden he is sent to remote northermost Canada to evaluate the effect of wolf depredations on the caribou herds. What he finds is that the wolves eat only sick, aged, or weak caribou, thus contributing to natural selection (while human beings are actively destroying whole herds of caribou).

I picked this book up recently for the first time since high-school, some 15-plus (!) years ago. Maybe it was Steve Irwin's death, or a viewing of the documentary Grizzly Man, that got me to thinking about it- either way, I'm glad I did. I'd forgotten what a wacky character Farley Mowat was, and how much more there is to this quick read than dry scientific reporting. Mowat's communing with the wolves (circa 1950) was partially borne of pure, scientific curiosity; in his own words, he "took the word biology- which means the study of life- at its face value," and sought to immerse himself outdoors and away from an aseptic laboratory. The other thing engendering his research was the vagary of the Canadian government, which set him to studying wolves in Ottawa with a throw of the dice (not to mention next to no itinerary, instructions, or training). Mowat dispelled major myths of wolf as bloodthirsty, marauding monsters, and showed them to be gentle, caring, and family-oriented (in fact, mostly monogamous) creatures. He never felt threatened by his lupine companions, despite keeping quarters very close to- and at one point, entering- the den. He witnessed "George, Angeline, and Uncle Albert" engage in compassionate acts like nurturing and training young pups and serving as hosts for traveling packs of non-native wolves. The chapter at

the narrative's end ("To Kill A Wolf") describing the indiscriminate and government-promoted wolf hunting practices is made sadder by the way the wolves have by then won the reader's heart. What made this nature tale really shine, however, was Mowat's plucky attitude and unconventional scientific methodology. He alternately horrified Eskimo locals and won them over with alcohol.

My problem with Farley Mowat's (non-autobiographical) books is that they play extremely loose with the facts and the persons described, and in some cases just lie. In the case of Never Cry Wolf, Mowat plagiarizes substantially. Mowat's misinformation undercuts the credibility of real scientists at a time scientists are routinely disregarded by our policy makers, reinforces the public misconception that researchers find only what they want to find, and misleads people badly about the true nature of wolves and our environmental issues. The basic plot of Never Cry Wolf is of Mowat as a young field biologist during summers in Canada who had to fight incompetent, unsympathetic bureaucratic supervisors whose only interest was in finding excuses to kill wolves. Mowat claims he discovered that the wolves ate mainly mice, not endangering the caribou, deer or other large prey species, but that the bureaucracy fought to suppress these findings. In fact, Mowat's field experience was nothing like what he describes in Never Cry Wolf, and far less extensive or valuable. Mowat has never published any scientific reports supporting his claims. The head of his scientific field project was Doug Pimlott, one of the top wolf scientists in North America, and a man with enormous integrity, sympathy for, and understanding of wolves. The actual facts of Mowat's very limited field experience have been described in several scientific journals. Folks interested in the true story should search out the reviews of Never Cry Wolf published by Pimlott in the Journal of Wildlife Management 30:236-37 (1966) and Banfield, A.W.F. in the Can. Field Naturalist 78:52-52 (1964). Even more troubling is Mowat's apparent plagiarism.

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