

Amazing Wildlife of South Africa and the Western United States: Wildlife I Have Enjoyed Getting to Know and Photograph

Jeff Williams

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Jeff Williams's captivating Amazing Animals of South Africa and the Western United States will be enjoyed by readers of all ages who love learning about wildlife.

Beyond stunning photographs of more than forty different types of animals taken in the wild, in wildlife preserves, and in zoos, Jeff Williams's *Amazing Wildlife of South Africa and the Western United States* is filled with little-known facts about animals, running the gamut from informative to funny to astounding.

Williams began his career as a landscape photographer in the American Southwest, but a workshop on wildlife photography got him hooked. Although focused on his many photographs of animals taken in various habitats, activities, and moods, the book's brief, conversational, and informative text makes it obvious that Williams has spent time getting to know the characteristics and abilities of each animal, the type of habitat and food they require, and what it is that makes each animal a unique and irreplaceable part of the world's ecosystem.

Williams's photographs demonstrate the care taken to capture the spirit of each animal: in the beauty of golden light reflecting off soft fur or feathers, in intimate glimpses of mothers with their young, and through the playful antics of animals large and small. Especially notable are the images of less familiar animals, often surprising in their beauty. A lovely example is the caracal cat, of which numerous images and embalmed remains have been found in Egypt; they attest to the religious significance caracals held for early Egyptians. Elegant and ethereal-looking, caracals have the ability to jump nine or ten feet straight up into the air to catch birds midflight, the book notes.

The text also highlights the degree to which many of the featured animals are threatened or endangered, with some close to extinction. Tigers, for example, have lost over 90 percent of their original territory, it informs the audience; the result is that, worldwide, only about four thousand of them remain in the wild. Another striking example is that of bighorn sheep: Williams notes that from a population of over two million a couple hundred years ago, only a few thousand remain today. The book cites efforts to bring some of these animals back from the brink of extinction through carefully controlled breeding practices.

This is an excellent resource for young students preparing reports on wildlife; its inclusion of strange, funny, and sometimes startling facts should prove useful. Who wouldn't want to know that a giraffe's neck weighs up to five hundred pounds or that cheetahs can go from zero to seventy miles per hour in about three seconds?

The text is conversational and often humorous in tone; it conveys a good amount of information without distracting from the photographs. Errors in word usage and sentence structure are distracting, especially given the brief nature and general concision of the text.

With its captivating photographs of elegant tigers, graceful leopards, powerful lions, playful wild horses, massive apes, and birds in flight, Jeff Williams's *Amazing Animals of South Africa and the Western United States* will be enjoyed by

readers of all ages who love learning about wildlife.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July 20, 2018)

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