

Birds, Beasts and Bedlam: Turning My Farm into an Ark for Lost Species

Derek Gow

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Have you ever tried to breed storks, frogs, or beavers? Derek Gow has.

An aspiring zoologist and a frustrated farmer, Gow turned his obsession with animals into a rewilding project on his three-hundred-acre British farm. A man of action, he uses his text to poke fun at sluggish conventional conservationists, and to talk about how he discovered ways to restore wildlife through trial and error.

Gow's efforts to breed and foster endangered species lead to some hilarity. He discusses fighting a wild boar piglet for use of his own sofa, extracting his mangled hands from the jaws of an enraged wildcat, and enduring the terror of merging onto the highway while a bison bull attempted to tear apart his cattle trailer.

Filled with historical notes, sketches, and amusing anecdotes, the book also recounts the fate of various vanishing species, as well as the introduction of new species over the centuries. It shares hopeful success tales, as well as failed efforts to control nature, like a short-lived attempt to introduce a new breed of cow, and hunting parties that began with the intention of controlling the rodent population, but that ended in drunken debauchery and poor results. The result is a keen, interesting, and funny conservationist's text.

WENDY HINMAN (July / August 2022)

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