

Polar Bears in the Wild: A Visual Essay of an Endangered Species

Joe McDonald

Amherst Media (May 15, 2018)

Softcover \$24.95 (128pp)

978-1-68203-336-4

Outstanding color photography distinguishes this “visual essay” by award-winning photographer Joe McDonald.

The polar bear, certainly one of the planet’s most recognized animals, is also one of the most endangered. “Today,” writes McDonald, “this magnificent predator, the largest non-marine carnivore on Earth, is in danger of extinction.” This sublime book melds an informative text with intimate photographs of the polar bear, presenting a story of precarious survival. Each of the book’s highly visual chapters discusses aspects of the bear’s life on land, on the ice, as hunter, as parent, and at play.

Brief yet enlightening, the text acts as a bridge from one photograph to another. Accompanying each photograph is an explanatory caption that perfectly describes the picture’s action. The photos—some by McDonald, others from outside contributors—are all of superb quality. Each captures an uncensored moment in the life of a polar bear in its natural habitat. McDonald writes that this work represents “one of the most diverse collections of Polar Bear photographs ever published.”

While some of the hunting photos are unflinchingly brutal, there are many more shots that are charmingly engaging. There are photos of bears in differing light, photos of adults in various colors (McDonald points out that polar bears are not only white but can appear yellow and sometimes even brown), and photos of mothers and cubs. In addition, there are photos of other arctic animals, including birds, foxes, and seals.

This book offers a rare, up-close-and-personal view of the polar bear that leads to a true appreciation of the animal’s harsh lifestyle. As McDonald eloquently states, “One could, perhaps, liken the Polar Bear to the proverbial canary in the coal mine, a harbinger of threats all of us may face in the not too distant future.” *Polar Bears in the Wild* is a visual feast to be savored.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (July/August 2018)

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