

When Mountain Lions Are Neighbors: People and Wildlife Working It Out in California

Beth Pratt-Bergstrom

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When Mountain Lions Are Neighbors focuses on a serious problem by presenting meaningful solutions.

At a time when books about conservation often and understandably focus on challenges and failures, Beth Pratt-Bergstrom's *When Mountain Lions Are Neighbors*, co-published by Heyday and National Wildlife Federation, beautifully captures a series of successes, all in California. By focusing on individual case studies, and often individual animals, the book turns these examples into effective narrative stories.

P-22, a young male mountain lion who made his home in Los Angeles's Griffith Park, became a social-media phenomenon. The public took an interest in protecting him, and researchers have tracked him since his arrival in the city, learning much about how mountain lions survive in urban areas. In the same way that this individual lion has educated Angelinos about his species, Pratt-Bergstrom uses P-22 to discuss how the animals survive in one of America's largest cities.

Other chapters tell similar stories about wild animals living in some of California's most populated areas, and how their proximity has made people appreciate the native fauna. Pratt-Bergstrom relates how harbor porpoises recently returned to San Francisco Bay, after an absence of more than six decades. Once plentiful in the Bay, porpoises left in the 1940s after the military mined the area and the waters became a regular dumping ground for sewage and industrial waste. Their surprise return in the twenty-first century demonstrates that environmental cleanup and habitat restoration can still work.

Pratt-Bergstrom also describes how Yosemite National Park has improved its approach to its bear population. Where once animals were regularly killed for encroaching on human areas, a problem caused by the availability of food there, today visitor education and "bear proofing" efforts have taught the animals to be wild again. Other examples of successful coexistence include the family of foxes that made its home on Facebook's Silicon Valley campus, and the return of wolves to the state for the first time in ninety years.

Along with these stories, Pratt-Bergstrom includes more than a dozen short stories of individual conservationists who've made a difference for a particular species, and includes an excellent resources section with ways to get involved. *When Mountain Lions Are Neighbors* focuses on a serious problem by presenting meaningful solutions, and is as enjoyable to read as it is informative.

JEFF FLEISCHER (Fall 2016)

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