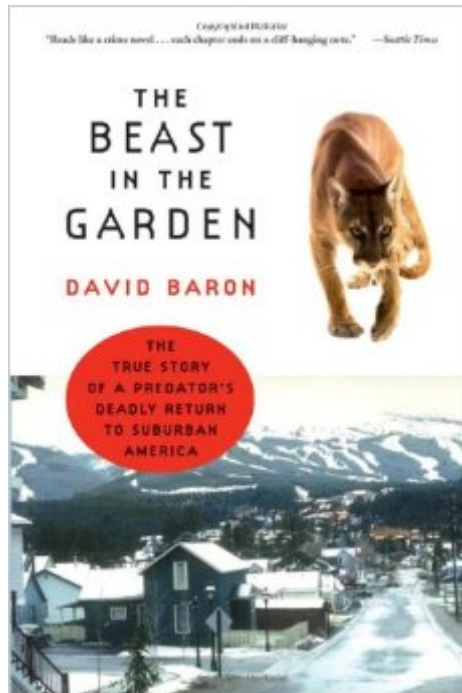


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The Beast In The Garden: The True Story Of A Predator's Deadly Return To Suburban America



Synopsis

"Reads like a crime novel . . . each chapter ends on a cliff-hanging note." •Seattle Times When residents of Boulder, Colorado, suddenly began to see mountain lions in their backyards, it became clear that the cats had returned after decades of bounty hunting had driven them far from human settlement. In a riveting environmental tale that has received huge national attention, journalist David Baron traces the history of the mountain lion and chronicles one town's tragic effort to coexist with its new neighbors. As thought-provoking as it is harrowing, *The Beast in the Garden* is a tale of nature corrupted, the clash between civilization and wildness, and the artificiality of the modern American landscape. It is, ultimately, a book about the future of our nation, where suburban sprawl and wildlife-protection laws are pushing people and wild animals into uncomfortable, sometimes deadly proximity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

David Baron has written a superb book on what is likely to be a growing problem in the United States for some time to come. While the main story is about an increasing number of close encounters with mountain lions that culminates in a fatal attack on a teenager in the greater Boulder, Colorado area, the implications behind how it all began are far more wide-ranging. Ultimately, this book is about how Americans are reordering their relationship with nature and don't even realize it. Baron tells the story well. Even though you know where the book is headed, you are still gripped by the narrative; you still hope the fatal ending Baron has already told you about in the

beginning of the book might still be averted. The author also weaves several historical and biological asides into the story that smartly explain it. The significance of mountain lion attacks on dogs, for example, is made far more ominous because Baron has told the reader of the mountain lion's previous relationship with wolves. The author has his prejudices, but it's hard not to agree with him after reading the book. He strongly believes that nature's relationship with man must be managed. He convinces the reader that whatever we call the environmental policies that helped animals like the mountain lion return to Boulder (and elsewhere in the U.S.) in the 1980s, it is not a return to an original state of nature as it existed before white settlers so much as it is a whole new world. And that new world has its own rules that are different from those in the past. Not understanding that will force us to learn some painful lessons.

This is an outstanding book about the relationship between humans and mountain lions. The story centers on a jogger tragically killed (and partially eaten) by a mountain lion that had become habituated to humans. In the process of telling the story (a factual event), the author describes the history and evolution of mountain lions, their historical relationships with humans, lion behavior, the problems encountered when humans and mountain lions move into each others' habitats, and how the two can coexist. The author does a great job of tying everything together in a work that is both very informative and highly readable. I highly recommend this book! It is one of the best books I have read in a long time.

I am an author who has written about man-eating lions for Men's Journal and have researched the subject extensively. NO ONE has written as well and authentically as David Baron. This is an extraordinary book that manages to thread the needle, avoiding sensationalism, but also not shying away from critiquing the more environmentally pc among us. It is an extraordinary piece of writing, a literary work of non-fiction that deserves a wide readership far beyond those interested in predators and adventure journalism. Read the book. Buy the book. Give the book. One of the very best pieces of non-fiction you could hope to acquire.

The "problem" illustrated by this 278-page non-fiction book is the increasing contact between humans and mountain lions (cougar, puma, whatever...) in the Western United States. Baron focuses on the encroachment of the big cats into urban Boulder, CO in the 1990s with a consequent tragic result for both cougars and people. The lion/human interactions escalate from the occasional urban sighting - at first denied by wildlife authorities - to cougars killing deer within city boundaries to

killing pets to killing farm animals to stalking and threatening humans to, finally, an incident in which a lion kills a high school student athlete as he runs in broad daylight on a hillside above his school. This tale, with lots of footnoted references, also tracks the efforts of a Boulder parks department employee who, from his experience with people being killed by wildlife in Yellowstone NP, recognizes the growing potential for a deadly cougar/human encounter. But he can't convince state game officials to take the problem seriously, partly because game department officials believe Boulder brought the problem on themselves by allowing deer, the cougar's favorite food, to proliferate far beyond normal population density by the city's anti-hunting bias. Apart from the dead high school student, there are cautionary tales about a college-age woman who is treed (yes!) by cougars while running in a suburban area and an adult male attacked and injured on a popular day hike. But other than recoding and mapping the locations of cougar/human encounters - which Washington state just passed a law requiring - what can be done to avoid cougars becoming habituated to (i.e., not fearful of) people with the eventual conclusion on their part that humans are valid prey? Nobody knows. Baron's book is well written, entertaining and educational. My only complaints are about the author's occasional rambles into non-relevant aspects of some of the characters' lives and the lack of photographs. There's one photo of a cougar track in the snow (good to memorize if you live in or visit cat country!) and one of a cougar shot by Boulder police. But in a book which goes into depth about several characters I'd like to see pictures of them as well as some of the locations where incidents occurred. Recommended for anyone interested in North American wildlife or anyone living in "cougar country", which currently is most any place in the Western United States.

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