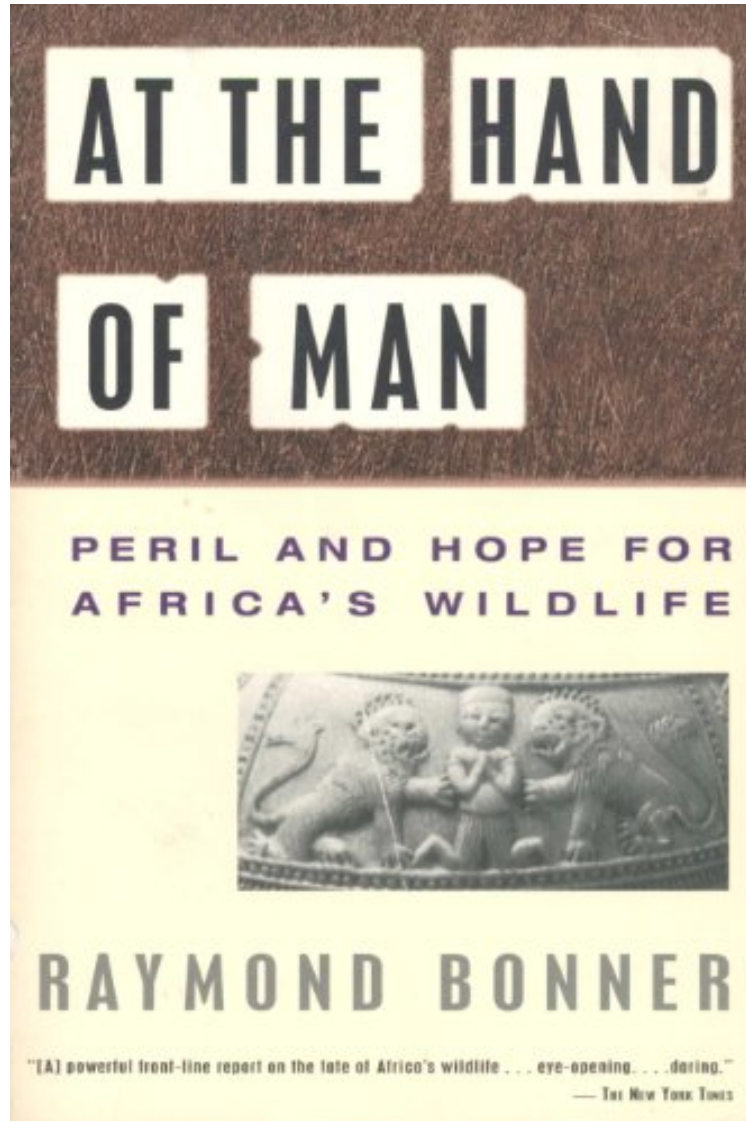


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At the Hand of Man: Peril and Hope for Africa's Wildlife

Raymond Bonner

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Raymond Bonner : At the Hand of Man: Peril and Hope for Africa's Wildlife before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised At the Hand of Man: Peril and Hope for Africa's Wildlife:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. ExcellentBy Leon KachelhofferMandatory reading for anyone interested in true conservation. This book brings to light the root causes. Highlights the relations and plight of rural communities and THEIR wildlife. If only decision and policy makers would heed to the call of wildlife, their patrons (rural commities), true practicing conservationists and relegate emotion to Hollywood only then can pragmatic and practical steps be made/implemented to make a difference out in wilderness. This Book is GOLDEN!4 of 4 people

found the following review helpful. Facing realities of complex African wildlife conservation

By M. BranhamRay Bonner is straight on with this book. Even though it was written in 1992 - the same issues, conflicts and concerns are as current today as they were then. The debate over how to manage wildlife and protect it, is the same arguments that Bonner has brought to light in this book, I still hear today. Having been born and raised in East Africa, lived extensively around wildlife all of my life, Ray Bonner has brought out the complexities of managing wildlife in a land with a large number of hungry, poor people and an expanding population. Often our family were called to help control wildlife such as hippos raiding crops nightly, elephant destroying small farms (often the whole food supply for the year!), man-eating lion, stock killing leopard. I witnessed the deaths of local African people by elephant or buffalo, and understand Bonner's findings why locals teach their children that "elephants are bad - they kill me". Bonner is great at bringing this "other side" to the table. He is looking at it from the African's point of view. His finding is correct that the International organizations, AWF and WWF, sit in their offices far removed from the daily issues of the African, control the purse strings and impose their visions of how the Africans will manage their resources and wildlife. Most of the decisions makers have never lived in the shoes of Africans, around wildlife. He shows that such organizations, arrive and rather than ask what do you think you need help with, the locals are told, this is what you will do. The points he makes that these organizations think "wildlife first" and people "second" is so valid - though in 2006, there is at least some thinking with newer and younger organizations that, "wildlife 7 of 12 people found the following review helpful. On target for support of culling and trophy hunting...By Customer...off target scientifically and economically. Raymond Bonner, a well respected investigative journalist lived in Kenya for a few years in the early 1990's and he uncovered something. He says that much of the tourism revenue derived from safaris and visits to the big game parks such as Masai Mara, Tsavo, Amboseli, Serengeti, Kruger, and Etosha was not benefiting the locals in the immediate areas. Further he came to see the dichotomy between how most Westerners view wildlife and how Africans do. Our view is colored by the romantic writings of Dinesen and Markham, and the adventurous hunting life enjoyed by Hemingway. Africans on the other hand see wildlife either as food or something to run away from. He's spot on with the reaction of a typical Kenyan toto who has been taught very early in life that "elephants are bad" because "they kill me." One star to Mr Bonner for his accurate assessment of the inadequacies of tourism development plans and programs for the environmental education of children in Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The book gets another star for its exposure of the cultural biases and narrow self-interest that oftentimes politicizes organizations such as the WWF - the world's largest conservation agency - the World Wide Fund for Nature (formerly the World Wildlife Fund). However Mr Bonner runs out of stars and a persuasive argument when he proposes that it is AT THE HAND OF MAN (read Western white man and his do-good conservation ethics) that there is the greatest threat for the future of Africa's wildlife. Mr Bonner is strongly opposed to the ban on ivory and he supports culling of elephant herds. Although he is eloquent in saying that he "can't understand" how someone would wish to hunt elephants or other big game, it is obvious from his arguments that he doesn't understand the close connection between culling and trophy hunting. I intend to deal with the book on its scientific and economic arguments alone, and stay away from polarizing political ideology that sees everything as either cultural or science warfare. (I'm actually quite surprised that this book has not featured more in the debates as it is well written and Bonner certainly isn't shy in offering his opinion). Recent scientific work on the complexity of elephant social life and family structure, particularly the dominant role played by the matriarch, tends to undermine the scientific value of culling. Studies have shown that in times when overpopulation causes degradation of the environment (the main reason for culling) the matriarch utilizes a natural population-regulating system. She simply leads a group of female elephants away from the males in the herd to their eventual demise. Also man-made contraceptives that last for up to a year are now proving somewhat successful. On the economic front, whereas it's true that tourism revenues have not made much contribution due to corruption, mismanagement, or use for things other than community development, this is a double-edged sword argument. There is sufficient evidence to show that the revenues earned from the sale of culled elephant ivory (prior to the international ban) was not going to locals either. Further, when the ban was temporarily lifted in 1997, there was a concomitant increase in poaching. As for the income earned where trophy hunting is allowed as part of a culling process as in South Africa; let's just say "show me the money"! is probably the best analysis. Most of the money does not go to fees paid in Africa but in fact never even leaves the US. The majority is paid to the big US game hunting outfits that equip and organize the African hunting trips. This book is a genuine attempt by a Westerner, who having lived in Africa, comes to some understanding of the gap between what we think about the continent and what it's really like and seeks to put his insights into words. It's also more than that. It is the work of a bright investigative journalist using his skills to expose some of the complexities of wildlife management and the biases that attend it. Unfortunately the book didn't stop there, it's still more. It's political. Bonner himself makes it so. "It was natural for me to take up this cause. I am a liberal, and a former public interest lawyer; I was a vegetarian for a period in the seventies and still eat very little meat, and I have been opposed to commercial whaling and cutting down forests." Oops there it is! Let the wars begin! and Bonner will deservedly get hit by both sides. Liberals will strike first slamming Bonner for saying that vegetarianism is a qualifying criteria for Liberalism! Conservatives will also go on the attack, when after reading the book, they realize that his real sympathies lie with them, and he makes a hash out of arguments they could defend. Everybody, fire away!

Defying conventional wisdom even as it makes an impassioned plea for moral common sense, this book by an award-winning journalist sheds a new light on the history and politics of the African conservation movement. The book will anger and inspire anyone who cares about African wildlife and the people whose future is intertwined with the fate of these animals.

From Publishers Weekly In 1989, member nations of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) declared the elephant endangered and banned all trade in ivory, a business which represented some \$50 million annually to the Third World. The actions were the culmination of a campaign led by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the African Wildlife Federation (AWF)--white, Western organizations. Bonner (*Waltzing with a Dictator*) presents a riveting account of events leading to the ban and its effect on native peoples. While poaching was out of control in Kenya and Tanzania, Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa had well-managed herds that were increasing. Bonner charges that WWF, AWF and animal rights groups pressured governments and scientists and manipulated Africans. Arguing that wildlife projects must consider people first, he discusses "sustainable utilization"--killing animals for commercial purposes--which is supported by WWF, and the culling programs of the 1960s and 1970s. Examining tourism as a source of income, Bonner finds that it is of little benefit to people who live near the parks since the money goes into the national treasuries; and some parks are so heavily visited that the sheer numbers of tourists is damaging the environment. One solution, Bonner suggests, is to promote hunting over tourism; it is more profitable, and it gives local people a stake in conservation. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Bonner, a staff writer for *The New Yorker*, uses the save-the-elephant crusade and subsequent ban on world-wide ivory sales as a case study in African wildlife management. The ban, he argues, as well as other African conservation efforts, are merely the latest manifestations of the long-held view that Westerners have the right to impose regulations on Africans, without their consent and without providing money to enforce these rules. He persuasively suggests that the ban on ivory has hurt as much as it has helped, even suggesting that it was unnecessary to save the elephant. Bonner reports on several successful African initiatives that have saved wildlife habitat while simultaneously allowing the people of the region to flourish. Written in a compelling journalistic style, Bonner's book belongs on most libraries' shelves. It is certain to challenge and provoke. For another book on a similar topic, see Jonathan Adams and Thomas Shane's *The Myth of Wild Africa: Conservation Without Illusion*, LJ 10/15/92.- Randy Dykhuis, OCLC, Dublin, Ohio Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus s In a book that's bound to be controversial, New Yorker staff writer Bonner (*Weakness and Deceit*, 1984) charges Western animal-rights activists with practicing "eco-colonialism," which he deems as detrimental to the people of Africa as old-style colonialism. Bonner--who recently spent some time in Africa and is an avowed advocate of environmental stewardship--notes that, in a continent where the population has increased from 100 million to 450 million in under a century, it's unrealistic to expect impoverished Africans to give up more land to wildlife so that the continent can remain the fantasy wild kingdom that Westerners yearn for. Africans and animals, he contends, will have to evolve some tenable modus vivendi if wildlife is not to disappear and Africans not to starve. But Western organizations--including all the big-name environmental groups--focus exclusively on animals, reflecting decisions that more often have to do with fund-raising than with reality. To illustrate how these groups manipulate the public and politicians, Bonner traces the history of the 1989 decision to enact the current international ban on the sale of ivory--by his account, a sordid tale of money-driven environmentalists, Western emotionalism, and political posturing and opportunism. Bonner says that elephants aren't likely to disappear and that, in areas like Zimbabwe and Namibia, thanks to projects like Campfire, they are actually thriving. Moreover, these projects not only involve the local people but also distribute the revenues gained from tourism and from selective culling. But too many environmentalists, Bonner says, ignore the plight of Africans, push a Western-based agenda, and neglect to educate their members on the devastating impact of unbridled wildlife on the ecosystem. "It's too easy to impose bans," he forcefully concludes. Tough, timely talk: an important book on an increasingly hot topic. -- Copyright copy;1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.