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Planet Without Apes



Synopsis

Planet Without Apes demands that we consider whether we can live with the consequences of wiping our closest relatives off the face of the Earth. Leading primatologist Craig Stanford warns that extinction of the great apes—chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas, and orangutans—threatens to become a reality within just a few human generations. We are on the verge of losing the last links to our evolutionary past, and to all the biological knowledge about ourselves that would die along with them. The crisis we face is tantamount to standing aside while our last extended family members vanish from the planet. Stanford sees great apes as not only intelligent but also possessed of a culture: both toolmakers and social beings capable of passing cultural knowledge down through generations. Compelled by his field research to take up the cause of conservation, he is unequivocal about where responsibility for extinction of these species lies. Our extermination campaign against the great apes has been as brutal as the genocide we have long practiced on one another. Stanford shows how complicity is shared by people far removed from apes' shrinking habitats. We learn about extinction's complex links with cell phones, European meat eaters, and ecotourism, along with the effects of Ebola virus, poverty, and political instability. Even the most environmentally concerned observers are unaware of many specific threats faced by great apes. Stanford fills us in, and then tells us how we can redirect the course of an otherwise bleak future.

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Customer Reviews

Humans' closest relatives, the great apes, have been almost exterminated, and we have no one to blame but ourselves. In his straightforwardly written call to save our next of kin, noted primatologist Stanford (Significant Others, 2002; Biological Anthropology, 2011) examines the myriad challenges nonhuman primates face today. After a prologue discussing the real possibility of the loss of the great apes, Stanford devotes a chapter to each of the threats they face. The first chapter looks at the four species—chimpanzee, bonobo, gorilla, orangutan—and discusses their differences. In the second chapter, the major role that habitat loss plays in extinction is highlighted, and the third describes a specific threat apes face, being targeted as a food source in the bush-meat trade. Chapter 4 looks at the medical realm because such diseases as ebola and HIV spread back and forth between humans and nonhuman primates, and the fifth chapter examines the ethical and conservation issues of apes in captivity. Ecotourism, a double-edged sword in Stanford's view, and the loss of unique local primate cultures round out the text.

--Nancy Bent

Craig Stanford's book makes compelling reading. In the past fifty years we have learned so much about our closest relatives the great apes. They have helped us better understand our own behavior. Now it is our turn to help them, and when you read this book, you will realize that we MUST. (Jane Goodall, PhD, DBE, Founder, the Jane Goodall Institute, and U.N. Messenger of Peace) Craig Stanford's new book appears at a turning point: will we take active steps to save our ape sibling species or accept certain disgrace in the eyes of coming generations? (Roger Fouts, Professor Emeritus, Central Washington University) Stanford persuasively argues that the continued survival of the great apes, humanity's closest living relatives, is approaching a tipping point... Stanford begins by demonstrating why gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees, and bonobos merit priority, given their similarities to humans in such areas intelligence, culture, and tool-making. A pragmatist, the author observes that limited resources are probably best employed in securing tropical forests where generations of apes can live on, rather than creating sanctuaries for orphans... This is a timely call for effective action. (Publishers Weekly 2012-08-20) Humans' closest relatives, the great apes, have been almost exterminated, and we have no one to blame but ourselves. In his straightforwardly written call to save our next-of-kin, noted primatologist Stanford examines the myriad challenges nonhuman primates face today. (Nancy Bent Booklist 2012-10-15) Whether this book leaves you feeling deflated or empowered, it will make you consider our ethical responsibility to conserve our closest living relatives. (Kimberley J. Hockings Times Higher Education 2012-11-08) Will electronic gadgetry bring down the great apes? The link may

seem surreal, but in this study of the plight of gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans and bonobos, primatologist Craig Stanford reveals how mining coltan, a mineral used in electronics, destroys primate habitats and fuels the illegal bush meat trade. In his wide-ranging call for action, Stanford--co-director of the Jane Goodall Research Center in Los Angeles, California--lays out the critical threats, arguing that humanity's closest cousins are viewed as savage 'others' and subjected to a genocidal urge last seen in the colonial era. (Nature 2012-11-15) Stanford examines the threats to apes' survival and explores approaches to reversing or at least neutralizing those pressures. He reveals a complex web of cultural, social, economic and biological issues that explain why this problem is so exceedingly difficult to solve. (Sarah Halzack Washington Post 2013-02-01) With passion and clarity, Stanford describes the nature and extent of the threats from habitat loss, hunting for meat, diseases (including those transmitted from humans), and ecotourism... It takes an experienced primatologist like Stanford to convey the true scope of the threats [apes] face and the importance of their continued existence. (J. Nabe Choice 2013-04-01) A searingly urgent little book. (Steve Donoghue Open Letters Monthly 2013-08-01)

This book "Planet without Apes" was a disappointment to me because gibbons, the amazing small apes of Asia, are totally omitted. Hence the book title is misleading. It should be "Planet without Great Apes," although my view is that gibbons and siamangs should have had their own section of the book, as they are threatened by hunting (their loud calls unfortunately lead hunters to them) and deforestation, just as are the larger apes. In fact, the rarest of all apes are two gibbon species. And there are so many gibbon species, with their unique songs and behaviors (including monogamy except in a few rare cases). The inside of the book includes four undistinguished black and white photos which makes the presentation unattractive.

Outstanding book about a very sad topic... how the world is destroying both the Great apes and their habitat, in so many ways. They are so much like people it is devastating to realize how the human race is killing them off. Stanford knows what he is writing about (he worked with Jane Goodall) and writes very well indeed. A worthwhile read, though, as I say sad.

A terrific book! Dr. Craig Stanford has dedicated his career to the study of great apes, and it shows in this fascinating look at man's closest relatives. He describes the many issues that are threatening gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees, and bonobos in a no-nonsense yet personal way. The book is a page-turner, and a cutting-edge telling of today's conservation issues.

Got this book for a class. It was interesting and depressing. Not much you can do to help apes is the theme and tells you all reasons it has come to this. It does make you more aware of materials you buy and the effect it has on the environment, including animals.

I purchased this for school and I am still in the process of using it but all in all it's a very interesting read.

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