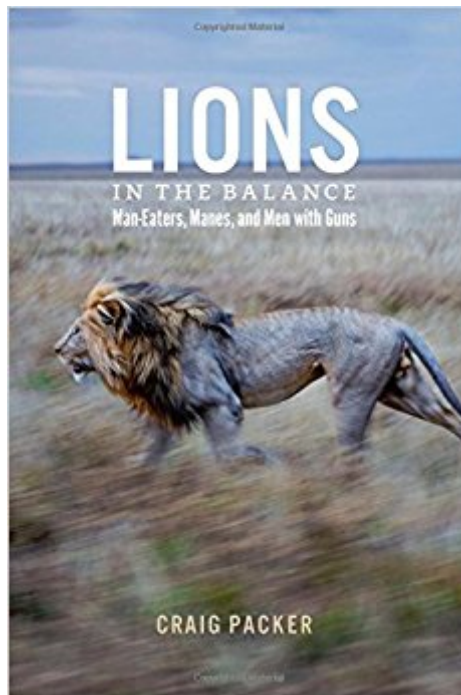




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Lions In The Balance: Man-Eaters, Manes, And Men With Guns



Synopsis

If you are a morani (warrior), you have your spear at the ready—•you could be the hero, but you will have to wait until the morning light before you can go out and prove yourself. If it is a lion, you want to be the first to spear it—•and if the lion turns on you, make sure it mauls you on your chest or stomach, on your face, shins, or throat. Any place where you can show your scars with pride, show the incontrovertible evidence of courage. A scar on your back would be a permanent reminder of cowardice, an ineradicable trace of shame. —• Monsters take many forms: from man-eating lions to the people who hunt them, from armed robbers to that midnight knock at the door of a cheap hotel room in Dar es Salaam. And celebrated biologist Craig Packer has faced them all. Head on. With *Lions in the Balance*, Packer takes us back into the complex, tooth-and-claw world of the African lion, offering revealing insights into both the lives of one of the most iconic and dangerous animals on earth and the very real risks of protecting them. A sequel to his prize-winning *Into Africa*—•which gave many readers their first experience of fieldwork in Africa, of cooperative lions on dusty savannas, and political kidnappings on the shores of Lake Tanganyika—•this new diary-based chronicle of cutting-edge research and heartbreaking corruption will both alarm and entertain. Packer—•s story offers a look into the future of the lion, one in which the politics of conservation will require survival strategies far more creative and powerful than those practiced anywhere in the world today. Packer is sure to infuriate millionaires, politicians, aid agencies, and conservationists alike as he minces no words about the problems he encounters. But with a narrative stretching from far flung parts of Africa to the corridors of power in Washington, DC, and marked by Packer—•s signature humor and incredible candor, *Lions in the Balance* is a tale of courage against impossible odds, a masterly blend of science, adventure, and storytelling, and an urgent call to action that will captivate a new generation of readers.

Book Information

Hardcover: 440 pages

Publisher: University Of Chicago Press; First Edition edition (September 15, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 022609295X

ISBN-13: 978-0226092959

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 7 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #841,456 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #70 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Cats, Lions & Tigers #222 in Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Endangered Species #296 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Zoology > Mammals

Customer Reviews

“Packer duly sets out to change the system, a lone maverick of sober-minded regulatory reform. . . . Lions in the Balance is itself a story about a loss of faith, and Packer’s anti-romanticism is such that there is no ameliorative lesson to take from his exhausting, decades-long quest to reform a practice that will not be reformed. Hunters will not self-regulate; Tanzania’s bureaucracy will not be tamed. Cattle ranchers will continue to kill lions and destroy habitats. . . . It’s bracing, reading the end of Packer’s text, to watch him wrestle with his own impotence. Exhausted, he sobs in front of his son, afraid for his own safety and that of his family. The Tanzanian government eventually forces him to abandon the Serengeti. In his quest to restructure incentives, in his willingness to take the long view, in his commitment to numbers over narrative, Packer deems himself “ultimately alone.” As it seems he is. (Kerry Howley New Yorker) “Lions in the Balance mixes episodes of spy novel intrigue with detailed descriptions of scientific studies and PowerPoint presentations.” (Erica Goode New York Times) “As he exposes corruption in Tanzania’s hunting industry and tries to get his plan adopted, diary entries show Packer and his colleagues taking on locals, hunters and megalomaniac politicians in a struggle to balance human needs, a lucrative hunting trade and true Serengeti science. His brave accounts of blackmail and death threats are alarming. . . . The book makes compelling reading as we journey through pioneering science, dodging the influential government fat cats on the way. Packer is completely candid about the ethics of those instrumental in the future of the King of the Beasts. Let’s hope someone will listen.” (Iris Barbier New Scientist) “Packer returns more than a decade after his memoir, Into Africa, with a fast-paced, unsentimental sequel about the kings of the savannah and the politics of protecting them.” (Discover) “Packer is an honest man embroiled in very murky circumstances. He is in the lonely position of one whose honesty alienates even his supporters. He came under pressure from conservationists not to publicise the figures for man-eating, on the grounds that it would reduce support for lion conservation, and from the hunting lobby not to publicise his finding that most trophy lions were immature males shot for the fee and because the

hunted by hunters were too ignorant to know that what they got was little more than an adolescent cub. His lonely position gives his story the quality of a nightmare. . . . The future for lions does not look bright. . . . Nowadays, surely not even a Minnesotan dentist, brandishing his crossbow, would slay an imbecilic lion. (Patrick Scrivenor Literary Review) "One of the top books of the year. . . . This candid volume is sure to divide opinion but it is far more than a chronicle of Packer's campaigns. There are also dozens of surprising facts about the book's heroes the lions and measured commentary on a host of complex issues: the way Tanzanian rural populations think of the wild creatures in their midst, the pros and cons of fencing in wilderness areas, and a sustained effort to recognize the contrast between romantic fantasies and harsh realities. . . . Goodness, the book will make you think. (Jon Wright Geographical) "Both timely and thrilling, this exposé/memoir details the complexity (and moral ambiguity) of trophy-hunting. . . . Zigzagging through Tanzania, Kenya, and Mozambique, Packer takes us to backroom meetings at the Tanzania Wildlife Division's Ivory Room, gala dinners given by foreign hunting organizations, and out in the field to track lions. . . . What makes this book so engaging is the writing. Lions in the Balance is far from a dry dissertation; at times, it reads like a political thriller. . . . Packer has written a fascinating book exploring some controversial and emotional subjects. . . . Readers will come away from Lions in the Balance with a better understanding of the benefits and consequences of trophy hunting, as well as who wants lions, who doesn't, and why. (Christine Baleshta Washington Independent Review of Books) "Ranges swiftly across accounts of Packer's experiences in the bush, scientific experimentation and research on location, tribal mores, and much more. (Chronicles) "A fast-paced, detailed inside look at the politics of lion conservation, the often corrupt big-game hunting fraternity, and Tanzanian government. (Library Journal) "Packer's efforts at policy and management have changed the course of his science and his life in ways that remain for readers to discover. . . . Packer's account reveals a strong personality. I am sure that many of the subjects of his stories would appreciate a chance to tell their versions of events. But readers of this book will have a front-row seat on the real, messy, and merciless business of conservation, and I doubt anyone who finishes the book will ever think of African savannas as quite so pristine again. (BioScience) "A book for those interested in the politics of lion hunting. . . . Recommended. (L. T. Spencer, Plymouth State University Choice) "Herein lies the story of Craig Packer's struggle to save lions in the wild. We learn the names and personalities of politicians and decision makers on the international stage and in Tanzania. We gain insights

about the hunting industry, especially officials in the Wildlife Division, which oversees hunting in Tanzania, about Safari Club International, about corruption in Tanzania, and about the author himself. There is a lot of science here, too, concerning the function of lion manes, how field experiments are conducted, and why lions become man-eaters. The book is engaging, candid, and thought provoking but in the end an essay in failure. Readers will differ enormously in whom to blame for this conservation debacle—•but this will, for some, make the book a page-turner!—• (Tim Caro, University of California, Davis Trends in Ecology & Evolution)—•“In this era of self-censorship, the honesty and detail of his account are rare. Packer documents murder, all manner of corruption and just plain laziness in this account of the decline of African wildlife populations, naming names. Packer and his graduate student colleagues deserve our thanks for displaying the courage to endure the dangers of field research, for risking reprisals for investigating the manipulations of government officials, and for reporting the facts contained in this memoir. So does the University of Chicago Press for publishing them.—• (Winthrop R. Staples III Biological Conservation)—•“The King of Beasts is in trouble throughout Africa as this hard-headed, clear-eyed book makes unmistakable.—• Explosive human population growth in the lion—•s habitat, conversion of wild lands into fields, corrupt government officials, unscrupulous overharvest by trophy hunters, illegal killing with gun, poison, and spear, lion bones smuggled to Asia—•the litany of woe goes on and on. Craig Packer and his coworkers studied lions in the Serengeti region and other parts of Tanzania, adding immeasurably to our knowledge of this magnificent cat.—• But they also took on the moral task of protecting lions and helping them endure. This stirring book, written with candor and wry humor, should be read by everyone interested in wildlife, as well as concerned about the impact of politics on conservation and the future of our natural treasures.—• (George B. Schaller, Panthera and Wildlife Conservation Society author of "The Serengeti Lion: A Study of Predator-Prey Relations")—•“There is only one Craig Packer; he ploughs his own furrow. Packer—•s work on lions and the Serengeti ecosystem . . . and his confrontations with officialdom will be familiar to most who have worked with (or read of) wildlife and conservation in Africa, but the Savannas Forever program was uniquely ambitious. Packer tells its story with unusual candor, laying out the facts, pulling no punches, revealing the corruption he observed in his dealings with the hunting fraternity in Tanzania—•both among the operators themselves, and at all levels of government. Specific incidences are cited; the names of those involved are given. . . . The writing is highly commendable (even enviable!), the science and personal experience episodes beautifully done. I know of no other book like—• Lions in the Balance.—• (John Reader author of "Africa:

A Biography of the Continent")

Craig Packer is professor of ecology, evolution, and behavior and director of the Lion Research Center at the University of Minnesota. He is the author of *Into Africa*, also published by the University of Chicago Press. He lives in Minneapolis, MN.

A heart-wrenching account of the steady decline of wild lions in most parts of Africa. I found this book very informational, educational, and shocking as I read of the ongoing slaughter of lions throughout the continent, whether it be by poachers, trophy hunters, "warriors" proving their manhood, or farmers in retaliation for killed livestock. Whether the reason for the killing is a result of greed, ego, corruption, self-preservation, or out of ignorance and fear, the prognosis is the same and quite grim - wild lions, sooner than you think, may no longer walk the earth. The human race needs to wake up and take action before it's too late. How sad that we are already at the point of seeing what may very well be the last lions. If the killing doesn't finish them off, then the loss of habitat they are experiencing surely will. Man has had the starring role in this tragedy...

A gripping blow-by-blow record of Professor Packer's efforts to protect the lions in Africa, this book shows the barriers of greed and corruption that face conservation efforts in Tanzania and other African countries. Packer has devoted three decades of his life and career to preserve the lion-sometimes at a risk to his very life.

In *Lions in the Balance*, author and scientist Craig Packer chronicles his attempts to protect Tanzanian lions, reform the Tanzanian trophy hunting industry, and combat corruption in Tanzanian politics. This book is very challenging. It's not a "difficult read," so to speak (Packer is a great writer), but it's depressing. Packer's attempts at protecting lions from extinction are all very practical. He understands that the idealistic conservationist attitude does not reflect reality. Packer advocates something that many lion-lovers may find deplorable: trophy hunting. Trophy hunting provides Tanzania with a sustainable income and protects villagers from lion attacks--and as long as all slain lions are over the age of six, the breeding population should remain stable. But Packer encounters incompetence and corruption within the Tanzanian government, greed among the trophy hunters, and extreme conservatism and laziness among the Tanzanian villagers. There is no hope, no happy ending to this book. One of the world's most iconic species may very well be extinct within our lifetimes.

One man's crusade against everything... including governments people and embitterment. Nobody has a probably known lions more closely than Craig packer. He deserves to be heard, and the format part travelogue part diary part musings works to make it a lively and enthralling read.

Great read

Interesting to read about all that Craig Packer has gone through to try and help lions and the people who live with them.

The beauty of this book is Dr. Packer's brutal honesty with himself and the situation he faces. He recounts his successes but just as vividly points out his failures. The book is part auto-biography, part science, part anecdote and is as unpretentious as they come. We get to know Dr. Packer and the dirty truths behind the trophy hunting industry, governments, and even conservation organizations.

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