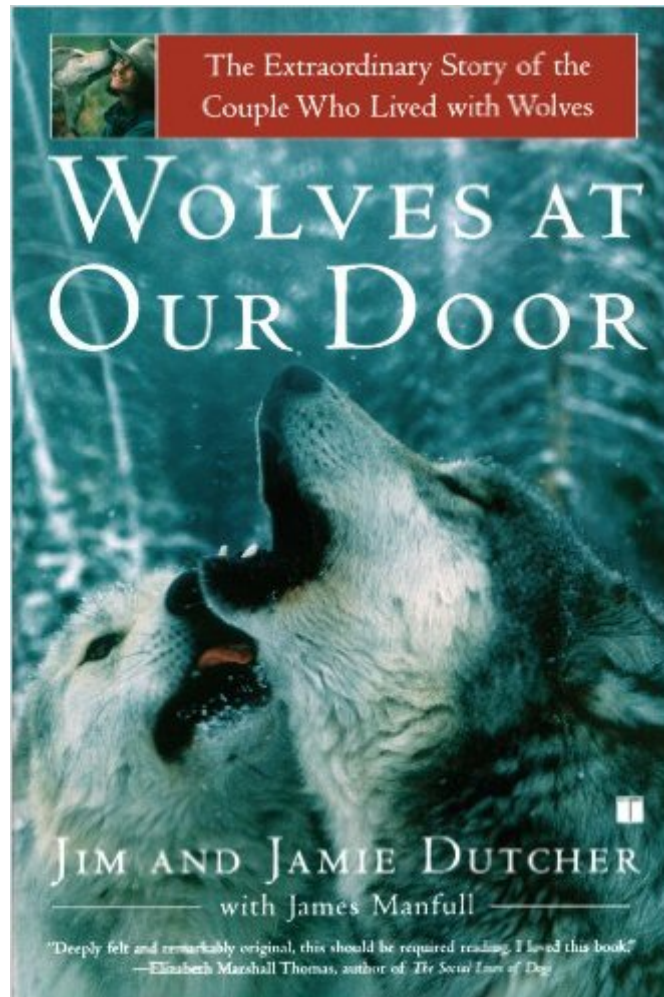


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Wolves At Our Door: The Extraordinary Story Of The Couple Who Lived With Wolves



Synopsis

For centuries, wolves have haunted the human imagination. It has been accepted as conventional wisdom that they are savage predators, creatures of nightmare. Determined to overcome such misconceptions, Jim and Jamie Dutcher spent six years in a tented camp on the edge of Idaho's wilderness, living with and filming a pack of wolves. Now, in this lyrical memoir, the Dutchers share their experience of life among these intelligent and elusive animals. By socializing with the pack from the time they were pups, the Dutchers were able to gain the wolves' trust and observe their behavior in a way that few people ever have. What they witnessed was remarkable: a complex nature oriented toward family life and strong social bonds. *Wolves at Our Door* is much more than a behind-the-scenes look at the making of the Dutchers' Emmy Award-winning Discovery Channel documentary. It is the story of two people brought together by their devotion to wildlife and held together by their belief in each other. It is about their struggle to keep the project alive amid marauding mountain lions, forest fires, subzero temperatures -- and the never-ending storm of controversy that surrounds the wolf.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Wildlife documentarian Jim Dutcher and his wife Jamie Dutcher describe their six-year project designed to capture the natural interactions of a typical pack of wolves. While they couldn't fully replicate a natural wolf setting, they come as close as can be imagined by fencing off several square miles of varied terrain in the Sawtooth Mountains, and living within a small wired-off

enclosure within the larger area. The wolves they raise from puppies so that they can interact with them safely, and observe them without interrupting their natural behavior. Over the course of six years, Dutcher describes the wolf behavior he observes in great detail, and he also highlights the more interesting technical aspects and logistical obstacles in filming a wildlife documentary. We get a more general, and less honest, view of his relationship with his wife Jamie, and his relationship with others involved in the project, others with whom he becomes increasingly contentious. There is almost no insight into the financial end of a project like this. First, the bad. Dutcher falls into the common trap of inserting himself into the story when unnecessary; or, to be more precise, inserting his opinions into the story. On the one hand, the author should be able to express his ideas; he's the author, after all. But on the other hand, he's disparaging a group of colleagues who share responsibility for the wolves, and he's not making enough of an effort to give their side of things fair play, in my opinion. He does articulate their position on wolf welfare in general terms at times, but only to give him a vague idea to refute in detail. Also, every time he mentions his wife, I can practically hear her breathing as she reads over his shoulder.

One other reviewer mentioned that some of Jim Dutcher's remarks in the book were extremely biased, and I would like to take this opportunity to agree with that remark and set some of the record straight. First of all, there is a rift between WERC and Jim Dutcher. Each side has its own version of what has happened and what is happening, and, obviously, if you listen only to Jim, you're going to have a very one-sided piece of information. If you have never been to WERC, then don't criticize its care of the wolves. I had the opportunity to work at WERC as a summer intern after my sophomore year of college. The relationships between the handlers and the wolves was unbelievable. These people care so much about the wolves there, and from what the current handlers have told me, so did the past caretakers. I can assure that there was no "abandonment" of the wolves by the caretakers. If they were being fed over the fence (and I have no idea whether or not this is true), then at least they were being fed. And the only thing I can think of that would result in a short period of severely limited socialization would be a policy change of the board of directors, which, I can assure you, would be backed with plenty of justification and probably very much disliked by the caretakers (believe me, they WANT to be with the wolves). Jim, on the other hand, did abandon the wolves. I disagree with the whole notion of purchasing wolf pups, for whatever project, as this encourages the captive breeding of wolves for pets or hybridization or other purposes. He knew this project wasn't going to last forever, and surely he had to know the complexity of the relationships he was forming with the wolves, and yet he continued with the project anyway.

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