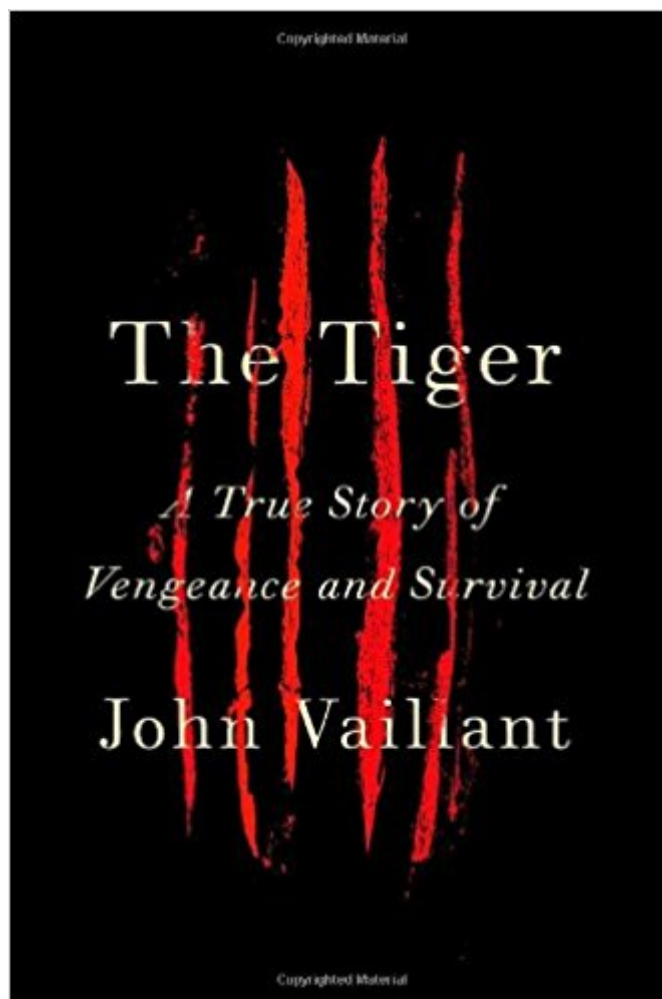


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# The Tiger: A True Story Of Vengeance And Survival



## Synopsis

It's December 1997, and a man-eating tiger is on the prowl outside a remote village in Russia's Far East. The tiger isn't just killing people, it's annihilating them, and a team of men and their dogs must hunt it on foot through the forest in the brutal cold. As the trackers sift through the gruesome remains of the victims, they discover that these attacks aren't random: the tiger is apparently engaged in a vendetta. Injured, starving, and extremely dangerous, the tiger must be found before it strikes again. As he re-creates these extraordinary events, John Vaillant gives us an unforgettable portrait of this spectacularly beautiful and mysterious region. We meet the native tribes who for centuries have worshipped and lived alongside tigers, even sharing their kills with them. We witness the arrival of Russian settlers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, soldiers and hunters who greatly diminished the tiger populations. And we come to know their descendants, who, crushed by poverty, have turned to poaching and further upset the natural balance of the region. This ancient, tenuous relationship between man and predator is at the very heart of this remarkable book. Throughout we encounter surprising theories of how humans and tigers may have evolved to coexist, how we may have developed as scavengers rather than hunters, and how early Homo sapiens may have fit seamlessly into the tiger's ecosystem. Above all, we come to understand the endangered Siberian tiger, a highly intelligent super-predator that can grow to ten feet long, weigh more than six hundred pounds, and range daily over vast territories of forest and mountain. Beautifully written and deeply informative, *The Tiger* circles around three main characters: Vladimir Markov, a poacher killed by the tiger; Yuri Trush, the lead tracker; and the tiger himself. It is an absolutely gripping tale of man and nature that leads inexorably to a final showdown in a clearing deep in the taiga.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Best Books of the Month, August 2010: Deep in the frigid Siberian wilderness, an Amur tiger hunts. Fearsome strength is at the command of a calculating mind that relentlessly stalks its newest prey: man. Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the taiga, John Vaillant provides an unforgettable true account of a lethal collision between man and beast in a remote Russian village during the late 1990's. At its core, *The Tiger* is the story of a desperate poacher who picked the wrong tiger to accost. Yet it engages the reader on political, socioeconomic, and conservation fronts in order to explain how the stage was set for a deadly showdown. It's a gutsy approach that could easily lead to chaotic storytelling, but Vaillant is careful to keep the bone-chilling storyline taut by capturing the intensity of an animal worthy of our greatest respect and deepest fears. --Dave Callanan

Christopher McDougall Reviews *The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival*

Christopher McDougall is the author of national bestseller *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes and the Greatest Race the World has Never Seen*. He is a former war correspondent for the Associated Press and a three-time National Magazine Award finalist. He's written for magazines ranging from *Esquire* and *The New York Times Magazine* to *Outside* and *Men's Health*. He does his own running among the Amish farms around his home in rural Pennsylvania. Read his review of *The Tiger*: A few years ago, I interviewed a Delaware state trooper named Butch LeFebvre who had been assigned to investigate rumors that a mountain lion was roaming the outskirts of Wilmington. It was silly, of course--big cats had been wiped out on the East Coast more than a century ago. But just to be safe, LeFebvre strapped on night-vision goggles, loaded a rifle with a tranquilizer dart, and set off into the woods behind the Du Pont Country Club. By 3 A.M, he had spotted nothing, so he headed back to his truck. The next evening, he returned to the same spot for another look--and found paw tracks following his footprints all the way back to where he had parked. LeFebvre was an experienced hunter, but he learned something that night: one killer out there was doing a great job of watching and thinking and learning, and it wasn't him. To this day, the Wilmington lion has never attacked or even emerged from the suburban shadows. Not so lucky, however, is the Siberian village in John Vaillant's chilling *The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival*. In 1997, deep in the remote Russian backcountry, a gigantic Amur tiger begins acting like the only thing more savage

than a wild animal--us. It doesn't just attack villagers; it hunts them, picking its targets like a hitman with a contract, at one point even dragging a mattress out of a shack so it can lie comfortably in wait until the woodsman returns home. A few days later, the woodsman's horrified friends discover remains "so small and so few they could have fit in a shirt pocket." Vaillant is as masterful with science as he is with suspense. We feel what it's like to be in a tiny settlement cut off from the rest of the world, at the mercy of a beast so swift that it can be seen until its mouth bites down on your face. Tigers, Vaillant explains, are nature's last word in mammalian weapons design. Big as three NFL linebackers bundled into one, armed with claws longer than fingers and jaws rated on a strength-scale used for dinosaurs, tigers are built like missiles and can out-swim, out-climb, out-fox and out-run just about anything that breathes. That's the bad news; the worse news is, they're also armed with memory and invisibility. "I have seen all the other animals," one poacher says, "but I have never seen a tiger--not once." What enthralled me as much as the deadly cat-and-man game at the center of *The Tiger* are the side-stories that inform it. Vaillant introduces us to characters like Jakob von Uexkull, a Victorian-era baron-turned-physiologist who specialized in *umwelt*: the lost art of immersing yourself in another creature's psyche. You crouch to the height of the animal you're seeking, learning to see the world through its eyes, inhale scents through its nostrils, feel cool earth and crushed leaves beneath its padded paws. There are hunters in Siberia, Vaillant tells us, who can sniff the woods and identify animals by smell. These maestros believe killing a tiger without cause is as vile as murder, and such a violation of natural order that calamity is destined to follow. They feel such kinship with the big cats that they'll even share their meals by leaving hunks of meat in the woods, convinced the tigers will re-pay them in kind with a deer haunch when times are lean. They see themselves as blood brothers of the Amurs--but as Vaillant shows us, no one fights more fiercely than relatives. (Photo © Luis Escobar)

Starred Review. The grisly rampage of a man-eating Amur, or Siberian, tiger and the effort to trap it frame this suspenseful and majestically narrated introduction to a world that few people, even Russians, are familiar with. Northeast of China lies Russia's Primorye province, "the meeting place of four distinct bioregions"--taiga, Mongolian steppes, boreal forests, and Korean tropics--and where the last Amur tigers live in an uneasy truce with an equally diminished human population scarred by decades of brutal Soviet politics and postperestroika poverty. Over millennia of shared history, the indigenous inhabitants had worked out a tenuous peace with the Amur, a

formidable hunter that can grow to over 500 pounds and up to nine feet long, but the arrival of European settlers, followed by decades of Soviet disregard for the wilds, disrupted that balance and led to the overhunting of tigers for trophies and for their alleged medicinal qualities. Vaillant (*The Golden Spruce*) has written a mighty elegy that leads readers into the lair of the tiger and into the heart of the Kremlin to explain how the Amur went from being worshipped to being poached. Photos. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"The Tiger" by John Vaillant is many things, but foremost it is a nonfiction thriller in which the central characters are a very large Tiger and the disparate characters in far eastern Russia with whom the Tiger interacts. As events unfold and the suspense builds the reader is increasingly unable to stop reading. How will this end? Who will survive? Along the way we learn much about the remote and forested Primorsky Krai region which holds Vladivostok at its tip. In my high school history class in the early 1960's I had learned about Vladivostok as Russia's most important Pacific port and as the termination of the Trans-Siberian railway. This piece of Russia borders Manchurian China and North Korea and is close to Japan. The Tiger taught me much more about this region, and the people who came here for lots of different reasons under a relatively prosperous Soviet experience but then were abandoned to a more primitive survival under Perestroika. We also learn a lot about the Amur Tiger subspecies which is concentrated partly in the mountains of the Primorsky Krai. The Amur Tiger population is barely holding its own as forces of conservation and poaching compete. Tiger products have high commercial value in China, which is right across a long and porous border. We learn as well about the long and sometimes spiritual relationship between man and tiger. Few who pick this book up will be disappointed. It holds special appeal to nature lovers as well as those intrigued by geography and history. The Tiger thriller story line is blended seamlessly with the wildlife, history and geography background. A very large number of difficult-to-pronounce Russian names may seem challenging, but in fact less than a hand full of these names need to be remembered through the story.

Fascinating book. This true story is about a man-eating Tiger..however, all the aspects of it (geography, Russian/Siberian history/species adaptations, life on the Taiga, the role of predator and prey, native knowledge, weather, "umwelt") are so thought-provoking and challenging that long after you finish the book you will be pondering everything the author has tied together in this story. The author uses words in such a way that you can see the Taiga, feel the bitter cold, and get a sense of

what it's like when this Tiger is stalking you..and waiting for you... because the Tiger sees you before you see the Tiger..Bravo..John Vaillant!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I loved this book. I read an excerpt of it in a magazine and I was hooked. I bought it and read it in a few days. It's a great window into an animal and a part of the world that I didn't know anything about but found fascinating. It's years later and I still think about the environment and characters in this book, and the atmosphere the author created in this story. The book is for anyone looking for a great read - a great story well told.

In brief, *The Tiger* tells the story of Inspection Tiger, a group of men assigned by the Russian government to investigate and arrest poachers. They find themselves investigating a peculiar instance of a tiger stalking, harassing, and eventually killing a man and his dogs. Its a very interesting narrative. However, this story line accounts for roughly about 15% of the book. The rest of the book is filled with the background and history of how the far eastern Primorsky Krai (Primorye) region became inhabited following Perestroika. I found myself nearly as interested in this aspect of the book, as I did the actually tiger investigation, which is a testament to the author. That being said, although the theme of "tigers" mostly persists throughout the book, you'll find yourself reading many more pages about the history of Russian life in the remote taiga than you will about tigers. Still a worthy read, however. I came for the tigers, and stayed for the history lesson.

A harrowing, frightening tale of a man-eating tiger in the wilds of Primorye, an area of eastern Russia near the border with China and N. Korea. The story centers on a large male tiger (and tigers in the area and in general), its victims and the assorted secondary characters, as well as the hunters-protectors of the animal. However, it is much more, as history, culture, politics and ecology are all blended in to make it a fascinating read. Some may claim that all the digressions are padding and subtract from the focus, but I don't agree. Likewise it is possible to argue that the author attributes too many human elements to a fierce beast, and that may be true, but given the history and culture of the region and the central place the Amur tiger has held in relation to humans for so many years, it not hard to ascribe some anthropomorphic traits to these beasts. If you care about tigers and their future, are enthralled by little known geographic spots and want a darn good read, this is your book.

Kind of a strange book. More about the area in general location, history etc. than the tiger. Didn't

finish it so maybe it gets better.

One of the best books I've read in years. You learn about tigers in north east Asia (who knew?) AND about the Russians that live there. Fascinating.

An interesting story that reminds me of how fables are created. This is purportedly true life and once again, highlights the flexibility of most wildlife when sharing this world with humans. I was pleased the Russians take a more casual and causal view of living with wildlife. The Tiger Team was tasked with investigating and did. This book further illuminates the intelligence in species other than humans (and I hold my doubts on humans daily).

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