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0521814103 - Hunter and Hunted: Relationships between Carnivores and People

Hans Kruuk

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Hunter and Hunted

Relationships between carnivores and people

Humans have mixed emotions concerning carnivores. We admire them as beautiful hunters, cosset them as pets and working animals, hunt them, and use their pelts and other products in clothing, medicines and cosmetics. However, they are also responsible for killing us and our livestock, carry disease and compete with us for space and food. While some advocate the conservation of predators such as wolves and tigers, others see them as vermin and want them gone. In this book, Hans Kruuk, a lifelong naturalist with a passion for predators, tells the fascinating story of carnivores and our intricate relationships with them. Illustrated with specially commissioned drawings, it deals with the wild beauty of carnivores and their conservation, but also with pets, sport, furs and medicine, maneaters and sheep killers, explaining in simple terms what the role of carnivores is in nature, their impacts on human lives, our art and literature, and how and why we instinctively respond to them.

HANS KRUK is Honorary Professor of Zoology at the University of Aberdeen and formerly Senior Principal Scientific Officer, now an Emeritus Fellow, of the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology in Banchory, Scotland. A passionate naturalist, he completed his PhD under Nobel prize winner Niko Tinbergen, co-founded and co-directed the Serengeti Research Institute in East Africa, and has studied the behaviours of animals as diverse as flatfish, hyaenas, gulls and badgers all over the world. He has written four previous books and over 120 scientific papers, and has won the Scientific Medal of the Zoological Society of London and the Medal of the Mammal Society.

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HANS KRUUK

*Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
and University of Aberdeen*

Drawings by

DIANA E. BROWN



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To Jane

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Preface

Watching animals in the wild has occupied much of my life so far, and carnivores were usually central to this. I had the excitement of living amongst foxes, hyaenas, lions, badgers and many others, and almost daily I can watch otters catch their fish just a short distance from my house. I want to keep it that way. More and more I am aware of how privileged I am, in being able to spend time with these wonderful animals in their natural haunts. More and more, also, I am aware of the desperate need to preserve a place for them in our world.

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Carnivores are often unpopular, because of the damage they may do to livestock, because of a threat to our person, or because they compete with us over game. We also live in this world with an instinctive, anti-carnivore behaviour to protect ourselves. But at the same time we have an extraordinary relationship with the animals as pets, and we exploit them in several ways. Many of us recognize the wonderful beauty of wild carnivores, and their important role in natural ecosystems.

In this book I attempt to analyse these enigmatic and contradictory relationships, and I try to explain our fascination for the dangerous beauties. Hopefully, this will help to improve the chances of their long-term survival, which is what I especially care about. But the analysis of our relationships with attractive predators and competitors may also help us to understand ourselves. It enables us to see mankind as another species, as another mammal, with its own characteristic anti-predator behaviour that has evolved in response to particular ecological threats and requirements. Uniquely, our inherited anti-predator system is augmented and modified by culture, which, in this context, acts within our species as a highly important process of communication of individual experiences with these animals.

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My interests in carnivores and anti-predator behaviour owe much to the late Niko Tinbergen at Oxford, who as a wonderful naturalist and teacher of ethology opened my eyes and those of many others. Later, this process was developed further in Africa, guided by my late friends John Owen, Hugh Lamprey and Myles Turner, and I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to my many students and colleagues who were involved in the various projects. I am grateful to Steve Albon and staff at the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology (now the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology) in Banchory, Scotland, who in many ways enabled the writing of this book, and to Diana Brown for her inspiring drawings. Loeske and Jane Kruuk, Matt Gompper, Joshua Ginsberg and an unknown referee ironed out many of the mistakes and deficiencies in my writings, for which I thank them deeply. Especially, I acknowledge the helpful interest, tolerance and love from my family, Jane, Loeske and Johnny. Alec Birkbeck, Sim Broekhuizen, Ray Hewson, Andreas Krantz and Ilan Rootsi provided references and ideas.

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Spotted hyaena, meerkat, lion, black-backed jackal, raccoon, stoat, brown bears