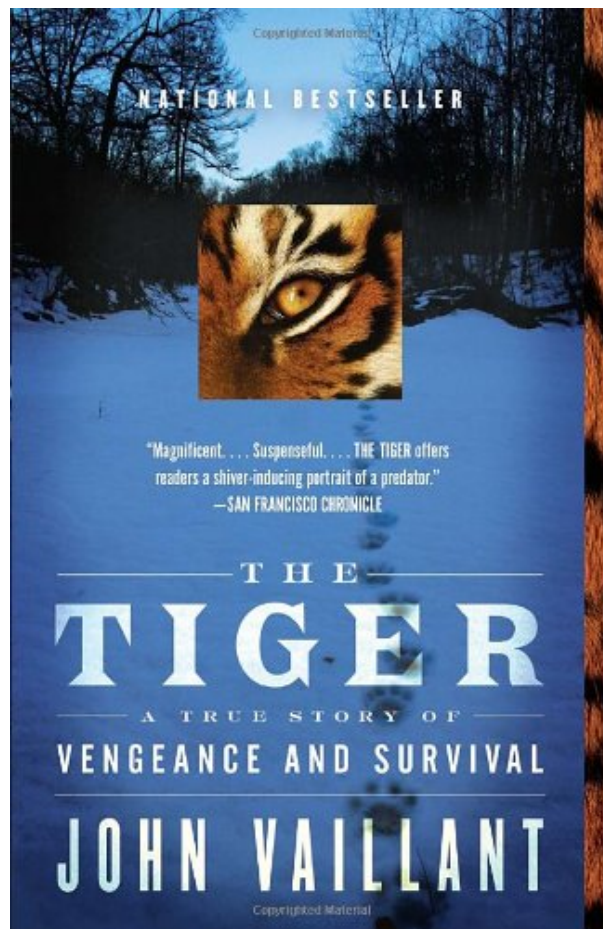
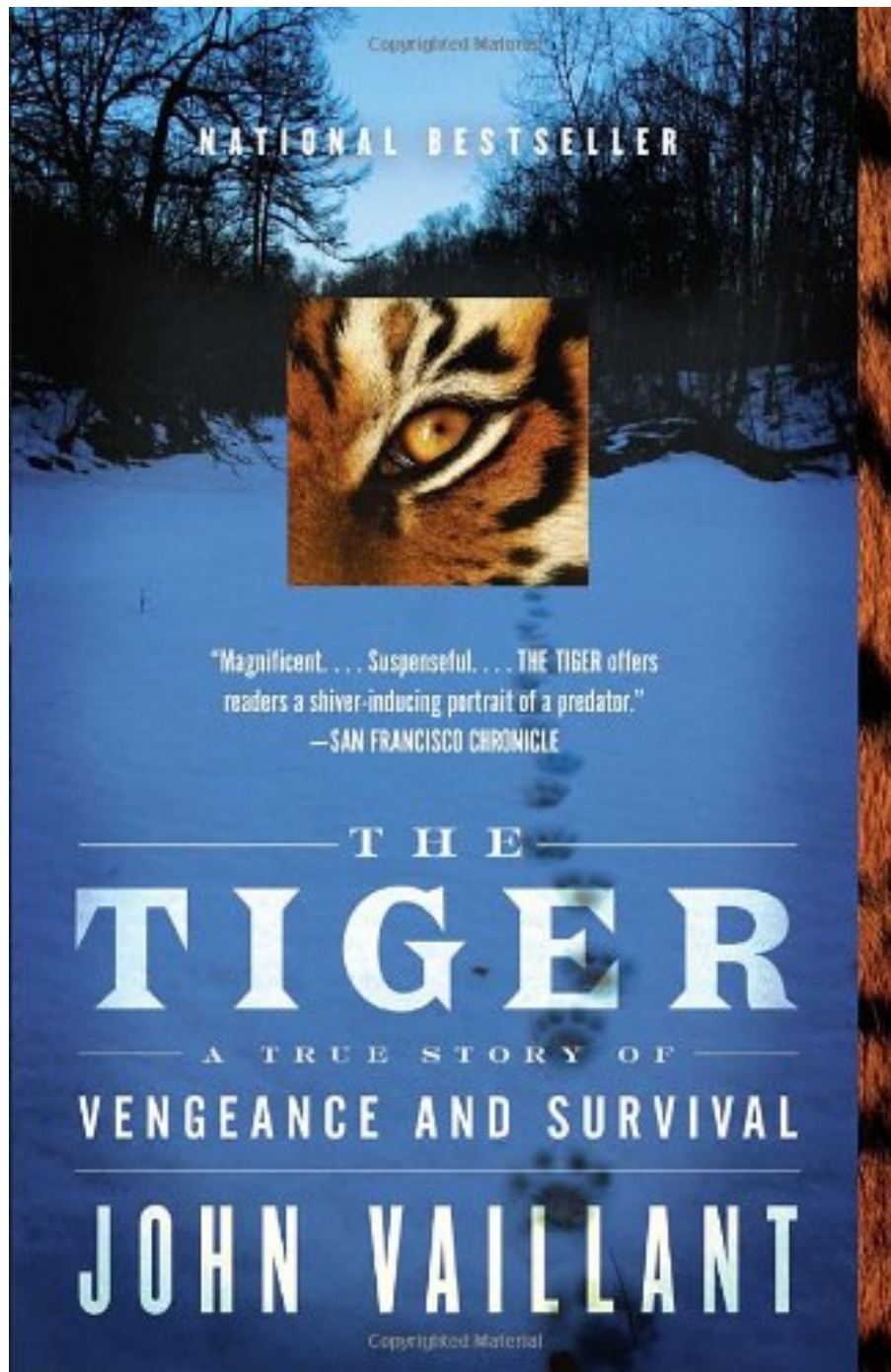


THE TIGER: A TRUE STORY OF VENGEANCE AND SURVIVAL (VINTAGE DEPARTURES) BY JOHN VAILLANT



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A gripping story of man pitted against nature's most fearsome and efficient predator.

Outside a remote village in Russia's Far East a man-eating tiger is on the prowl. The tiger isn't just killing people, it's murdering them, almost as if it has a vendetta. A team of trackers is dispatched to hunt down the tiger before it strikes again. They know the creature is cunning, injured, and starving, making it even more dangerous. As John Vaillant re-creates these extraordinary events, he gives us an unforgettable and masterful work of narrative nonfiction that combines a riveting portrait of a stark and mysterious region of the world and its people, with the natural history of nature's most deadly predator.

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242 of 249 people found the following review helpful.

Gripping and informative

By Alan Mazer

Someone asked me recently what sort of non-fiction I like to read, and I had to think about it. I have a few niche areas that I enjoy, but generally all I ask of a book is that it keep me engaged and give me something to think about. This approach means that I read a lot of books in areas where I have no expertise and little real interest, merely because someone did a great job of presenting the material and I got hooked. "*The Tiger*" is one of these books.

Primarily it's the story of a tiger, hungry, injured, and irritated, which starts killing off the members of a Russian community, and of the men tasked with tracking the tiger and killing it. But there's a lot more here, too: interesting background on tigers and other animals, and how they hunt; the culture of the Russian Far East, including issues surrounding the Chinese-Russian border; the effects of perestroika on poorer Russians. And it's all woven together in a manner that made me want to keep reading.

I was particularly intrigued by how recent the events in the story are, being from the late 1990s. The people depicted are clearly on the fringes of Russian society, living literally hand to mouth just to stay alive. That someone could have a TV and other modern conveniences, and still rely for their survival on hunting small game and gathering pine cones, was not something that had occurred to me. Also interesting were the observations on how, through many years, tigers and people have lived together peacefully in the Far East, yet in a balance so fragile that either may be forced to hunt the other just to survive. And of course there are some fascinating statistics on tigers, both their declining numbers, and their physical abilities.

While this book is footnoted and has an extensive bibliography, I would suggest it for anyone who simply likes a good adventure story. It's a great read!

117 of 122 people found the following review helpful.

A Lyrical, Insightful, and rather Exhaustive Analysis

By Bryan Newman

This is far more than just an animal-eats-man thriller like *Alaska Bear Tales*. It does have a rather small story of a man eating tiger terrorizing a community, but it balloons out, covering all the eddies of history, natural history, economics, and culture that moved the characters to this moment where their worlds collide.

The story could easily be covered in 160 words on page two of a newspaper as some AP wire from Russia.

Or in a narrative book it would take maybe 20 pages or so pages. But here the author brings nearly every back story to light in an amazing parade and alignment of stars that borders on fate. The Soviets annexing Northern Manchuria, Defending it from China, bringing Russians to the far East, the crumbling of Soviet systems, the crippling impoverishment of the community, the open markets to the South, the Chinese appetite for tiger products... Everything lines up to bring this confrontation in a way too clear cut for fiction.

I will not say that this book is a slow read, because I had problems putting it down, but at times it was frustrating that the core story of the tiger never seemed to move closer. It reads like a local history text, a biographic series of many of the main characters and a natural history account of tigers all blended together. I don't think I have ever come away from a book feeling like I knew the context of events better. The image created of post Perestroika Russia alone is worth the price of the book.

However, I can see some people being turned off by all the detours and side streets the book takes. This is not a straight narrative. By the time I knew the end was near, I felt almost like the hunters tracking the tiger, just willing the confrontation to come. And the climax was worth it. The author uses cinematic timing and fated suspense right up to the last moment.

I highly recommend it. Not as a riveting storyline, but much more - a riveting, all encompassing history. Occasionally the author went a little over the top with his description of tigers, but I can never look at a tiger in a zoo the same way again.

63 of 65 people found the following review helpful.

This Tiger really burns bright

By Gary Greenberg

The remarkable thing about John Vaillant's *The Tiger* is not that it's a total page-turner, or that he manages to stuff the *Tiger* with so much fascinating natural and political history that you come away with three or four points added to your IQ, or that his lush descriptions are sensuous without being cloying and muscular without being macho, or that his characters are indelible and engaging and worthy of *The Dirty Dozen* or *Where Eagles Dare*, or even that the tiger and its hunters will relentlessly stalk your consciousness when you aren't reading the book (quite a trick in attention-challenged times). It's that you will, without even knowing it, and even if you don't want to, find yourself suddenly occupying the tiger's world, and seeing it through his eyes, feeling its wounds and its anguish and its hatred, and, above all, rooting for it against your fellow humans. Let this book hunt you down and pounce on you. You won't regret it.

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