

## 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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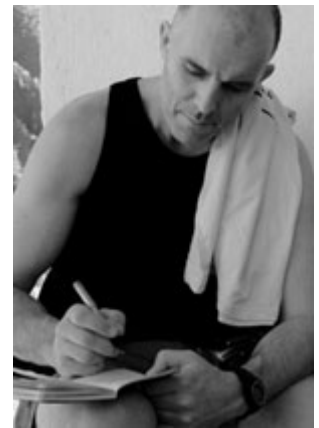
## **Editorial Review**

Amazon.com Review

**Amazon 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'd 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'd 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'd 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't 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)

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From Publishers Weekly

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.

From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

The Amur tiger, weighing 500 pounds with four-inch claws and now numbering only around 400 in the Russian Far East, is certainly a formidable creature, and Vaillant gives the animal the respect it deserves in this unusual true-crime tale. Critics agreed that *The Tiger* is nature writing and reporting at its best, mesmerizing and insightful into both the threatened natural and human worlds. "Think of Vaillant as a younger version of John McPhee," wrote the *Seattle Times*, "but on steroids." The only complaint came from the *Oregonian*, which accused Vaillant of unnecessary padding. But all reviewers appreciated Vaillant's moral and highly recommended the book: "When you murder a tiger, you not only kill a strong and beautiful

beast, you extinguish a passionate soul" (*Washington Post*).

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Eleonora Plunkett:**

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#### **Pearl Minjares:**

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