

Tenacious Beasts: Wildlife Recoveries That Change How We Think about Animals

Christopher J. Preston

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It may feel like extinction stories dominate the discourse, but environmental philosopher Christopher J. Preston elects to focus on positive trajectories in *Tenacious Beasts*, a heartening roster of rewilding projects and spontaneous wildlife recoveries.

Black bears are abundant in Montana, where Preston lives, and their population quadrupled in California in just a few decades. Roe deer and urban foxes are on the rise in the UK; bison are booming in the West; and wolves reoccupy parts of Europe and North America. Meanwhile, humpback whales and orcas are rallying in Norway.

Preston's travels take him to places where all seems to be going right for wildlife. Through research and interviews, he builds an engaging, dialogue-rich text. He disputes the pervasive assumption that "the wilderness" is the only locus for animals and that humans must live apart from them. This is a "damaging fiction," he argues; what is needed in its place is an "etiquette for coexistence."

Rewilding missions to bring back the auroch (an extinct ancient ox) through cattle crosses are no longer the stuff of science fiction. Distinguishing hopes from possibilities, the book serves as a realist's set of prophecies. It is also open about collateral damage. For instance, to save Washington's endangered spotted owls, the barred owls that harass them need to be killed; improving the situation for orcas may mean more sea otters are predated. Moreover, the big picture is not as encouraging as the selected case studies might suggest. Preston acknowledges that "For every success, there are ten cases of continuing decline. Enormous challenges lie ahead in the form of climate warming," whose feedback loops will continue to jeopardize all species.

Pragmatic and inspirational, *Tenacious Beasts* celebrates the species that "exist in the same bewildering net of life and time as we do," yet are rebounding.

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