

Book Review

Wolf Haven: Sanctuary and the Future of Wolves in North America

Photographs by Annie Marie Musselman, essay by Brenda Peterson.

Sasquatch Books, Seattle, 2016. \$24.95

Reviewed by LLyn De Danaan

Our relationship to wilderness can change instantly. It can overtake us in a moment of crisp, clear understanding of what we must do to save our natural world. For Aldo Leopold that moment came as he beheld the, “fierce green fire dying” from the eyes of a wolf that he and a band of young Forest Service employees had shot. Something he saw in those eyes changed his life and helped mold his conservation ethics and mission in life, he writes, in *Thinking Like a Mountain*. It was something that defied domestication but instead lived “self-willed.” This story is recounted by Brenda Peterson in the linked essays that accompany the beautiful collection of Annie Marie Musselman’s photographs in the book, *Wolf Haven: Sanctuary and the Future of Wolves in North America*.

The book is an homage to Wolf Haven and its work as much as to the wolves. The 82 acre Wolf Haven sanctuary in Tenino, Washington has provided homes for 200 displaced or captive-born wolves since 1982. Wolves, classified as a keystone species and top predator, have been hunted and killed as “pests” and “nuisances” for 500 years by European and Euro-American ranchers, farmers, and developers. Yet some have survived the ravages of prejudice and development. Wolf Haven has done its part to protect them and rehabilitate their reputation.

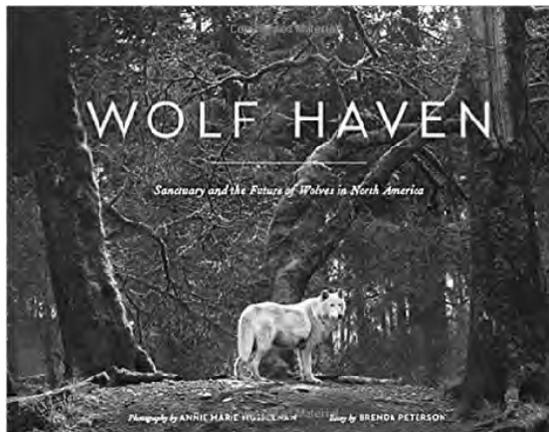
Indigenous peoples had a different thought about wolves. Northwest people, including those on the Olympic Peninsula, “celebrate Wolf as a spirit guide, family member, and mentor,” honoring its loyalty to protecting and feeding its family. It is a belief contrary to that held by many who see them as fair game.

Yet some of us raised outside the wisdom world of traditional cultures have seen deep into their eyes and do what we can to champion them. Peterson recounts successful reintroduction stories and

emphasizes the surprising ways in which wolves have helped to restore ecosystems. Still, in many places, wolf hunting is rampant. “The war against the wolf still rages,” though longitudinal research by scientists at Washington State University demonstrates that “killing wolves actually increases predation of livestock.”

El Lobo, the Mexican Grey Wolf, was nearly extinct. Wolf Haven has been involved, with others, in a loving attempt to breed and restore their populations. A significant portion of the book is devoted to that story and to the engaging photographs of Grey Wolf pups.

The photographs of wolves in their sanctuary, many of them compelling portraits of individual creatures, may occupy the casual reader for hours. However, the book is also a beautiful introduction to our complex history with a magnificent animal and all the good reasons to embrace and celebrate it.



Recommended reading:

The Wolf's Tooth: Keystone Predators, Trophic Cascades, and Biodiversity, by Cristina Eisenberg

A Sand County Almanac, by Aldo Leopold

Among Wolves, by Gordon Haber and Marybeth Holleman

Decade of the Wolf: Returning the Wild to Yellowstone, by Douglas W. Smith and Gary Ferguson

Wolfer: A Memoir, by Carter Niemeyer