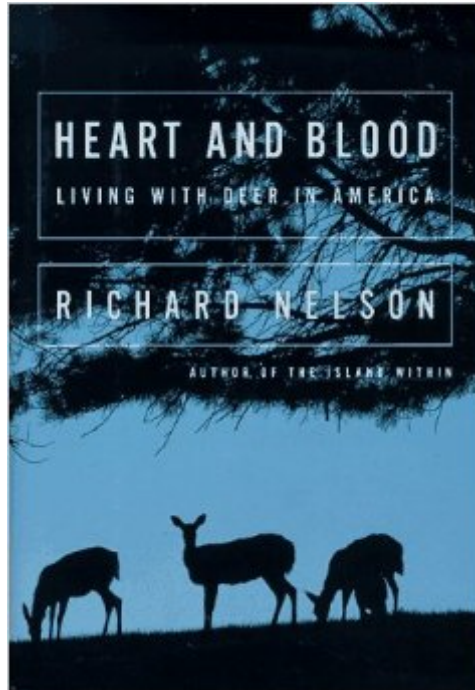


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# Heart And Blood: Living With Deer In America



## Synopsis

"When it comes to deer, wildness is the greatest truth. And tameness is a tender, innocent lie." So writes Richard Nelson, award-winning author of *The Island Within*, in this far-ranging and deeply personal look at our complex relationship with this most beautiful, but amazingly elusive, creature. *Heart and Blood: Living with Deer in America* begins with the author tracking a deer on a remote island off the Alaskan coast. From there he takes us on a kaleidoscopic journey, visiting such disparate territories of the deer as a hunting ranch in Texas; a state park in California; a Wisconsin forest on opening day of the hunting season; Fire Island, New York; and the suburbs of Denver--where the deer have become so numerous that they pose hazards to landscape, motorist, and pedestrian alike. Nelson examines the physiology of the deer, explaining how its unique digestive system and grazing habits have enabled it to thrive in the varied environments of the United States, whether wild, suburban, or urban. He investigates the different methods of controlling the deer's skyrocketing numbers, from the more "humane" methods of relocation and sterilization, to hunting--in all its forms. Nelson also explores the role of the deer in traditional Native American life, takes us with him on a hunt, and awes us as he witnesses the birth of a fawn--an event rarely seen by humans. By the end of this journey we understand the deep reverence in which the author holds this magnificent animal. For to know the deer is to glimpse the hidden heart of wildness itself. In *Heart and Blood*, Richard Nelson has produced a book of outstanding insight and intelligence that brings us closer to our natural world and, in the process, closer to our own true nature.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As a National Park Service Ranger and animal lover I've personally and professionally struggled with the issues surrounding deer management -- Bullets or starvation, which is more humane? Deer abundance or ecosystem biodiversity? Etc. etc. I've also read a great deal of literature spanning the entire HEART and BLOOD spectrum. This is the most accurate, fair, and comprehensive treatment on deer management I've ever seen. Richard Nelson is the epitome of the professional anthropologist. He walks with as much confidence in the scientific and statistical world of biology/wildlife mgmt. as he does in the socio-political world of mass media, voters, and taxpayers. The veteran scientist will regard the imagery in a few of his more vivid passages as "filler". These readers should be reminded that if the management of deer wasn't an emotional issue there would be far fewer researchers employed in such capacity. Hopefully they also realize that when Nelson describes tracking a food stressed doe in winter with "...at last I found her at the end of her tracks like a pencil resting in mid sentence," he didn't choose those words to impress an English teacher but to describe to the layperson exactly what it is like to pursue a starving animal. On the other extreme the animal rights activist may try to skip over all of Nelson's nuances regarding deer behavior, physiology, and biochemistry. However, Nelson goes to great lengths to interject such information at a gentle rate and in very accessible terms. With sincere unbiased reporting he describes opposing positions on classic bipolar debates. Then with his own arguments Nelson blurs the dividing line so thoroughly that animal rights activist will find themselves whispering "I can see how a hunter could be an animal lover too." and wildlife managers will end up muttering "I suppose individual animal welfare is worth the millions being spent on finding viable management alternatives to the bullet." To say that this book has something for everybody would not only be cliché, it would be inaccurate. This book has everything for everybody. If you don't believe me, get a degree in Wildlife Management. Spend hundreds of hours tracking deer, thousands of hours pouring over scores of boring scientific research papers, EISs, lawsuits, and "blood-thirsty" calls-to-arms by animal rights organizations. Or save yourself a few thousand dollars tuition and buy and enjoy reading this book. Allow Nelson who has already done the "BLOOD" work to take you directly to the "HEART" of the dilemma in a mere 400 pages.

This book is the most thorough, most comprehensive, most graceful study of deer I have ever encountered. It deals with everything from the natural history of deer to the animal rights movement to different approaches to hunting and management. There's even a section that deals with the ways in which the film "Bambi" inextricably has altered Americans' views about deer. Nelson is

honest about his own biases and convictions; he tells us that he is a hunter and that he believes in a strict ethical code with regard to his own hunting, a belief he learned while working as a cultural anthropologist with the Koyukon Indians in northern Alaska. Despite his strong beliefs, he is remarkably even-handed when dealing with the many controversial issues surrounding wildlife management in America today. I understand much better now why animal rights activists and wilderness preservationists do not always make comfortable allies. I trust this author; he has integrity. I loved "The Island Within" for capturing the mist-ridden world of an island off the coast of the Pacific Northwest, and I loved this book every bit as much. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in deer, hunting, and the animal rights and environmental movements. It is balanced, fair, and majestic.

Nelson explores deer history, management, and views in a thorough and unbiased review. He takes a personal perspective on values of hunting which will make the hunter and nonhunter alike ponder the marvels of the hunt.

This is a very informative book. Sometimes a little too many statistics for my taste. Richard Nelson speaks from a vast experience with the subject. I am glad I bought it, and will probably keep it for reference.

Seriously, and I've met few non-fiction books that I can say that about. I'm not a hunter but I found this book quite engaging. Hunting is only one focus of the book. There is great appeal for readers interested in wilderness and conservation issues in the U.S. Remarkably detailed, intelligent, and colorful examination of deer across the U.S.; Alaska, Texas, Wisconsin, California, New York, etc. Very well-written; not a word is wasted and the whole is beautifully composed.

I bought this book because it was highly recommended in another book, *THE BEAST IN THE GARDEN* (about cougars). It is elegantly written, thus, the Beautiful part....and it is well researched and shows empathy and understanding for the various and often opposing views of "living with deer in America." Adds to the national discussion about hunting, diet, managing wildlife, respecting the mystery of the wild lives among, around (and within 'd say) us.

I have not read a book about hunting and hunters that so thoroughly and interestingly covers the ethic, anthropology and natural history/ecology of hunting. I would consider it required reading for all

out-doors people right along with Aldo Leupold's Sand County Almanac. The information and ideas presented are well documented in the bibliography. Nelson weaves the knowledge and wisdom he has gleaned into the natural history of man in North America in a way that clearly shows the interdependent web of existence. He does not moralize on the subject. He does explain the ethics of good stewardship and how and why they have come about. He encourages hunters to maintain and improve on their understanding of the world and their part in the order of things.

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