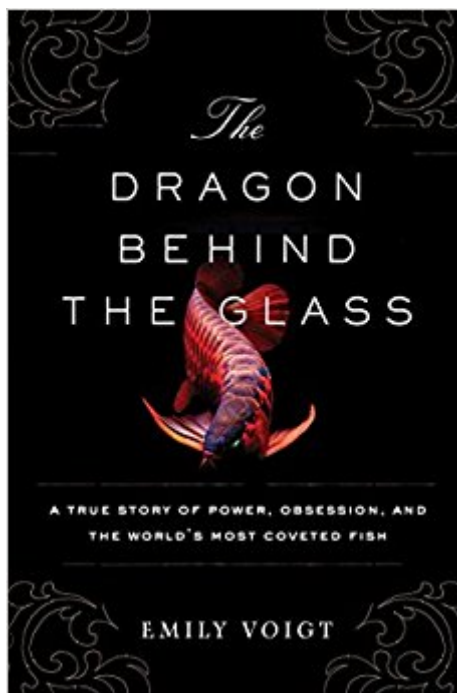




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# The Dragon Behind The Glass: A True Story Of Power, Obsession, And The World's Most Coveted Fish



## Synopsis

A FINALIST FOR THE 2017 PEN/E. O. WILSON LITERARY SCIENCE WRITING AWARD  
LONGLISTED FOR THE ANDREW CARNEGIE MEDAL FOR EXCELLENCE A LIBRARY  
JOURNAL BEST SCIENCE BOOK OF THE YEAR • [A] curiously edifying book. • "The New  
York Times Book Review • "With the taut suspense of a spy novel, Voigt paints a vivid world of  
murder, black market deals, and habitat destruction surrounding a fish that's considered, ironically,  
to be a good-luck charm. • "Discover • [An] immensely satisfying story, full of surprises and  
suspense.... Things get weird fast. • "The Wall Street Journal A riveting journey into the bizarre  
world of the Asian arowana or • dragon fish • "the world's most expensive aquarium  
fish • "reveals a surprising history with profound implications for the future of wild animals and  
human beings alike. A young man is murdered for his prized pet fish. An Asian tycoon buys a single  
specimen for \$150,000. Meanwhile, a pet detective chases smugglers through the streets of New  
York. Delving into an outlandish realm of obsession, paranoia, and criminality, *The Dragon Behind  
the Glass* tells the story of a fish like none other: a powerful predator dating to the age of the  
dinosaurs. Treasured as a status symbol believed to bring good luck, the Asian arowana is bred on  
high-security farms in Southeast Asia and sold by the hundreds of thousands each year. In the  
United States, however, it's protected by the Endangered Species Act and illegal to bring into  
the country • "though it remains the object of a thriving black market. From the South Bronx to  
Singapore, journalist Emily Voigt follows the trail of the fish, ultimately embarking on a years-long  
quest to find the arowana in the wild, venturing deep into some of the last remaining tropical  
wildernesses on earth. With a captivating blend of personal reporting, history, and science, *The  
Dragon Behind the Glass* traces our modern fascination with aquarium fish back to the era of  
exploration when intrepid naturalists stood on the cutting edge of modern science, discovering new  
and wondrous species in jungles all over the world. In an age when freshwater fish now comprise  
one of the most rapidly vanishing groups of animals on the planet, Voigt unearths a paradoxical  
truth behind the dragon fish's rise to fame • "one that calls into question how we protect the  
world's rarest species. An elegant exploration of the human conquest of nature, *The Dragon  
Behind the Glass* revels in the sheer wonder of life's diversity and lays bare our deepest  
desire • "to hold onto what is wild.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 336 pages

Publisher: Scribner; 1st edition (May 24, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1451678940

ISBN-13: 978-1451678949

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 41 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #274,791 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #31 in Books > Science & Math >

Biological Sciences > Zoology > Ichthyology #61 in Books > Travel > Specialty Travel > Travel

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## Customer Reviews

Praise for *The Dragon Behind the Glass*: "Voigt relates her continent-hopping adventures as she struggles to make sense of a modern paradox: the mass-produced endangered species . . . What follows is an immensely satisfying story, full of surprises and suspense." "The Wall Street Journal" The Asian arowana, also known as the dragon fish, ranks among the world's most expensive aquarium fish, and in this engaging tale of obsession and perseverance, journalist Voigt chronicles her effort to study and understand its appeal. . . . Voigt's passion in pursuing her subject is infectious, as is the self-deprecating humor she injects into her enthralling look at the intersection of science, commercialism, and conservationism." "Publishers Weekly \*Starred review" "Voigt's passionate narrative perfectly conveys the obsessive world in which [the arowana] swims." "Publishers Weekly Best Summer Books of 2016" "Not since Candace Millard published *The River of Doubt* has the world of the , Borneo, Myanmar and other exotic locations been so colorfully portrayed as it is now in Emily Voigt's *The Dragon Behind the Glass* . Fascinating and must-read." "Library Journal \*Starred review" "A spirited debut . . . A fresh, lively look at an obsessive desire to own a piece of the wild." "Kirkus Reviews" "With the taut suspense of a spy novel, Voigt paints a vivid world of murder, black market deals and habitat destruction surrounding a fish that's considered, ironically, to be a good-luck charm." "Discover" "Who would've thought the history of a rare fish could be so enthralling? Voigt traces the bizarre story of the world's most expensive aquarium fish, the Asian dragon fish, in a story that reads more like fiction, what with all the murder, smuggling and general intrigue." "PureWow, "The Ultimate 2016 Summer Book Guide" "Many a true-crime study could be attributed to an author's honest enthusiasm for weirdness. (I'm thinking of *The Orchid Thief*," Susan Orlean's wondrous strange book about an orchid poacher's bizarre search for the rare ghost orchid that grows in the

swamplands of Florida's Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve.)  
The Dragon Behind the Glass is the same kind of curiously edifying book." —Marilyn Stasio, The New York Times Book Review  
"This book starts with a bang — a murder to be exact — and the momentum just keeps going from there. The Dragon Behind the Glass is a gripping blend of investigative journalism, science, international crime, travelogue and history. You don't need to know anything about tropical fishes or fishkeeping to be totally riveted by this informative page-turner."  
Forbes, The 10 Best Conservation And Environment Books Of 2016  
"A masterpiece! Emily Voigt has raised the bar for anyone who thinks they can tell a good fish story. What an extraordinary and extraordinarily well-told tale. Voigt brings such wonderful humor, adventure, and hard science to this subject, I found myself unable to put the book down. Never has science been so much criminally good fun. I will never look upon a goldfish the same way again."  
Bryan Christy, author of The Lizard King: The True Crimes and Passions of the World's Greatest Reptile Smugglers  
"Few writers can match the intelligence, charm, wit, and sheer audacity that Emily Voigt brings to bear in this highly readable and important book. From the bleak housing projects of the South Bronx to the steamy jungles of southern Myanmar, Voigt takes us along on a journey of adventure and discovery in her quest to find an increasingly rare fish in the wild. With a page-turning plot and a cast of vivid characters, The Dragon Behind the Glass shines a powerful light on the international trade in endangered species."  
Scott Wallace, author of The Unconquered: In Search of the World's Last Uncontacted Tribes

Emily Voigt is a journalist specializing in science and culture. Her stories have appeared in the New York Times, OnEarth Magazine, Mother Jones, and Isotope: A Journal of Literary Nature and Science Writing, as well as on the programs Radiolab and This American Life. The recipient of a Pulitzer Traveling Fellowship, she holds degrees in English Literature and Journalism from Columbia University.

I never thought I could be captivated by a book about fish, but how wrong I was. Emily tells some amazing tales of history, evolution, geology and ichthyology. Introduces us to an hilarious cast of characters including explorers, breeders, researchers and traders. Intermingled with fascinating stories of the Victorian explorers who travelled the world before her, including my now own personal favorite, Ida Pfeiffer. A funny easy read, which makes you think about your place in nature... it might also make you think that you need a night out in Singapore with Kenny the Fish.



science, conservation, and the environment. I definitely recommend this book, from prologue to epilogue. A fun summer read with memorable characters where you will actually learn something too.

**Dragon Behind the Glass** by Emily Voigt This whopper of a fish yarn, is bolstered by intensive and revealing research. It's a fast-paced narrative spun by an intrepid young writer, Emily Voigt, who searches for the elusive, near mythical Asian Arowana. Voigt's quest criss-crosses 16 countries—from the Bronx in the U.S. to the wilds of Borneo and the jungle. In her travels, she encounters characters that could be right out of central casting. Colorful, often predictable, sometimes self-serving and devious, the retinue includes guides, traders, poachers and Arowana authorities, and similarly obsessed tropical fish fanciers. The line between villains and the good guys, is often blurred. Pulsing with charm and wit, *Dragon* nonetheless has its darker moments of disillusion and disappointment. Voigt sounds a timely and urgent endangered species alert that hopefully will bear consideration by anyone concerned with the plight of our planet. The book finds me so caught up in the pet fish frenzy, that I've planned a visit to the Boston Aquarium to meet the Arowana, up-close and personal—but not too close, as they are known to bite. DF - NH

A different and delightful kind of scientific travelogue I guess you could call it. The author becomes fixated with her subject and travels the world pursuing answers as to why this particular fish is so coveted. She also comes in contact with a number of very interesting characters in her pursuit of this fish.

I have kept fish since a boy in the 1970s, and have never fallen out of love with my true passions which are being an aquarist and naturalist. Reading Ms. Voigt's book, which is well-written and researched, highlights the struggle for natural history and it's practitioners to survive in a technology driven social landscape and is an outstanding contribution to the long-running story. Well done, Ms. Voigt.

I rarely read non fiction and I don't have a particular interest in fish, so when I started this book I wasn't sure if I'd finish it. I was completely taken by surprise with how much I enjoyed it though! With an interesting cast of characters and lots of travel stories, this book is making me re-think how I select books to read in the future!

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