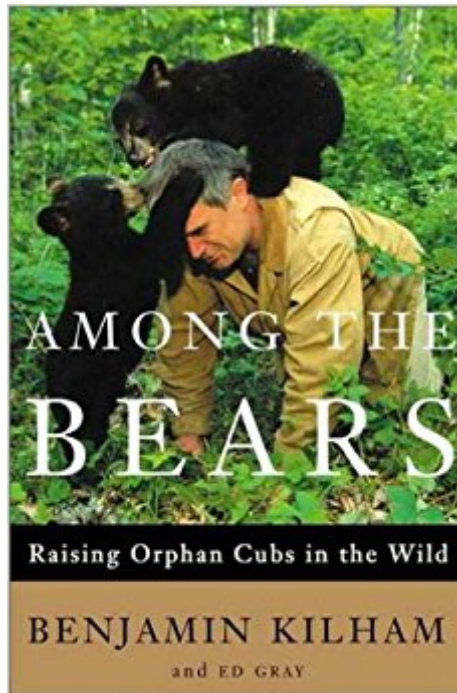




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Among The Bears: Raising Orphaned Cubs In The Wild



Synopsis

A first-person account of wild bear behavior that is both a thrilling animal story and a groundbreaking work of science. In the spring of 1993, Ben Kilham, a naturalist who lives in the woodlands of New Hampshire, began raising a pair of orphaned wild black bears. The experience changed his life. While spending thousands of hours with the cubs, Kilham discovered unknown facets of bear behavior that have radically revised our understanding of animal behavior. Now widely recognized for his contributions to wildlife science, Kilham reveals that bears are altruistic and cooperate with unrelated, even unknown individuals, while our closer relatives, the supposedly more highly evolved chimps, cooperate only within troops of recognizable members. Kilham, who turned a disability, dyslexia, to his advantage as a naturalist, offers fascinating insights into the emotional life of bears. His work—which has been featured in several National Geographic television specials—also illustrates the powerful black bear intelligence that has survived bounties and overhunting to make them North America's dominant omnivore, familiar to every reader. Beyond the natural history, he introduces individual bears who become enthralling and memorable characters. As in the bestselling books by Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey, *Among the Bears* explores the breaking down of mutual suspicion and building up of trust between species, with its hopeful implications for the shared future of humans and animals in the wild.

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Customer Reviews

When naturalist Kilham was asked to take in two orphaned black bear cubs, the conventional wisdom was that he would end up with 200-pound brutes too dependent to leave home. So Kilham decided to try his own unconventional method--he raised them in their natural habitat, surrounded by the wild bear-filled woods of New Hampshire. As their bear mother, he was given an unprecedented look into the lives of bears and what he observed turns bear stereotypes on their head. Black bears exhibit behaviors thought to be found only in humans and great apes, such as an intricate system of communication and cooperation, insight, planning, deception, and even ethics, like fair play, empathy, and altruism (qualities not found in apes). Kilham, who has now raised 26 cubs, is an intrepid bear mom, and a humble and delightful storyteller. This is an irresistible story of some of the most endearing rogues ever encountered. --Lesley Reed

Like any expectant parent, naturalist Kilham anticipated challenges in raising the newborns who joined his family in 1993. But as the "mother" to orphaned black bear twin cubs, he had no Dr. Spock to turn to for advice. A licensed wildlife rehabilitator, Kilham wanted to raise the cubs to live successfully in the wild, but had to rely largely on his own common sense to achieve this goal. So he let the cubs teach him, by closely observing and noting their behavior as they rambled together in New Hampshire's northern woods. This engrossing account, which Kilham wrote with the help of naturalist writer Gray, is both an affecting story of interspecies friendship and a surprising refutation of ursine stereotypes. To date, Kilham has raised 26 black bears; the experience has convinced him that, contrary to popular belief, these large carnivores are highly social and are as intelligent as the great apes; they can teach, learn and even deceive. Black bears, Kilham insists, can be "remorseful, empathetic, fearful, selfish, altruistic, joyful and deceitful" and have developed "mechanisms for solving disputes and demonstrating need." With the human population encroaching ever deeper into bear territory, however, human ignorance can create "problem" bears who raid backyard bird feeders or garbage cans. Having lost several of his young bears to bullets from such property owners, Kilham urges people to attempt a better understanding of an animal he finds "closely related" to humans. This important book is sure to be a milestone in the study of animal behavior. 8-page color insert not seen by PW. National author tour. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Most of us will never get to have bears in the basement, or to walk in the woods with bear cubs, or to stick our heads into a bear's den to see how things are going. So if our only bear contact has been through TV, this book will be valuable. Kilham writes well enough that he largely disappears

from the story, and you can imagine doing what he is doing, learning what he is learning, walking in his shoes. And in so walking, we learn how little we previously knew about bears, become fascinated with their lives and society, and want to know more. Much of the power of the book comes from stories. Stories of how a mother bear introduced her cubs to the author, of how she protected the author from a big male bear that saw him as a rival, of how bears form friendships and share food with their friends, how bear cubs love to play, how mother bears go about teaching the kids, how bears can love a man, and show that love. As a story teller, Kilham is terrific. For spending every daylight hour outdoors in New England, summer and winter, he never seems to get hot or cold, never seems to get wet when it rains, never gets tired, never spots a black fly or mosquito. The story is not about him. It is about the bears. They couldn't have asked for a better translator or advocate. I don't think this book delivers as much insight into ourselves as "Illumination in the Flatwoods: A Season with the Wild Turkey", which is slightly better written, but the two authors approached their subject matter in the same way, with similar results: they devoted all of their time to raising young wild animals and re-introducing them to the wild, and along the way were admitted to a secret society. I bet you'll give it 5 stars too, and go on to buy his other book - "Out on a Limb: What Black Bears Have Taught Me about Intelligence and Intuition" - which should be read after this. And if you haven't read "Illumination in the Flatwoods", better hurry up and do that, too.

We lived along the Canadian border - very remote country - where there were more bears than people. This book is a down-to-earth, easy to read, approachable and informative narrative. Of course, I wish there were even more photos of the bears, especially the one shown in the National Geographic special of Kilham taking a nap on his couch with a small bear beside him - perfection! We also are dyslexic, and relate very much to his story. Sometimes, dyslexics see the world differently, in their own special, creative way. Good for Kilham! I'm sorry to see so much bear habitat encroached upon by housing developments - a sad situation for bears, one of our most precious and remarkable native Americans. I also suggest Kilham's newest book: "Out on a Limb: What Black Bears Have Taught Me about Intelligence and Intuition."

This is an amazing story of young bears and their Development

Good reading.

Ben Kilham is a lay person that found himself raising orphan bears -- he speaks to you from his

experience, not his PhD. This is the most enlightening and informative book on black bears that I've found. I have learned so much and have much more respect and am awe of this magnificent creature (and I hunt!). I don't think I ever thought bears were stupid (Yogi bear and Disney didn't help), but I never knew how incredibly intelligent they were (are).

I just finished reading *Among the Bears* and I think Benjamin did a great job at describing the bears body language, and his explanation of what their sounds and gestures meant are superb,,I have seen a lot of bears in the last 40 years and have seen several of these gestures..This book starts out a little slow but soon picks up and then I could not stop reading, This book does tell it like it really is in the bears world good and bad

Highly recommended for those interested in saving bear cubs who have lost their mothers, teaching them to live in the wild, and then releasing them into their natural habitat in New Hampshire. The book came to my attention at our monthly potluck and program when the speaker, who works for Vermont Fish and Wildlife, did a talk on "The Bears of Vermont". He told us about the book, and I have since learned of many others who have bought and read it.

This book Should Be Mandatory for everyone of age 12 or greater living in the 46 states of America that are homes to any of the three species of bears in our country. It is the most educational book on the workings of the minds of Ursus yet written. In order for us humans to live comfortably in an environment which was mastered by bears before we came along, we MUST learn to see ourselves and the environment thru the eyes, or, more importantly, the minds of the bears. Mr. Kilham has certainly done his homework, not only diligently but, also, most dedicatedly and put it and his lives experience forth in a masterful volume. I, personally, envy Mr. Kilham his experience with the bears and the writing of this book. I also envy his success in finding a challenging and rewarding vocation and life style. As the header above indicates, I found "Among the Bears" to be the Most Fascinating Read I have experienced in a long time.

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