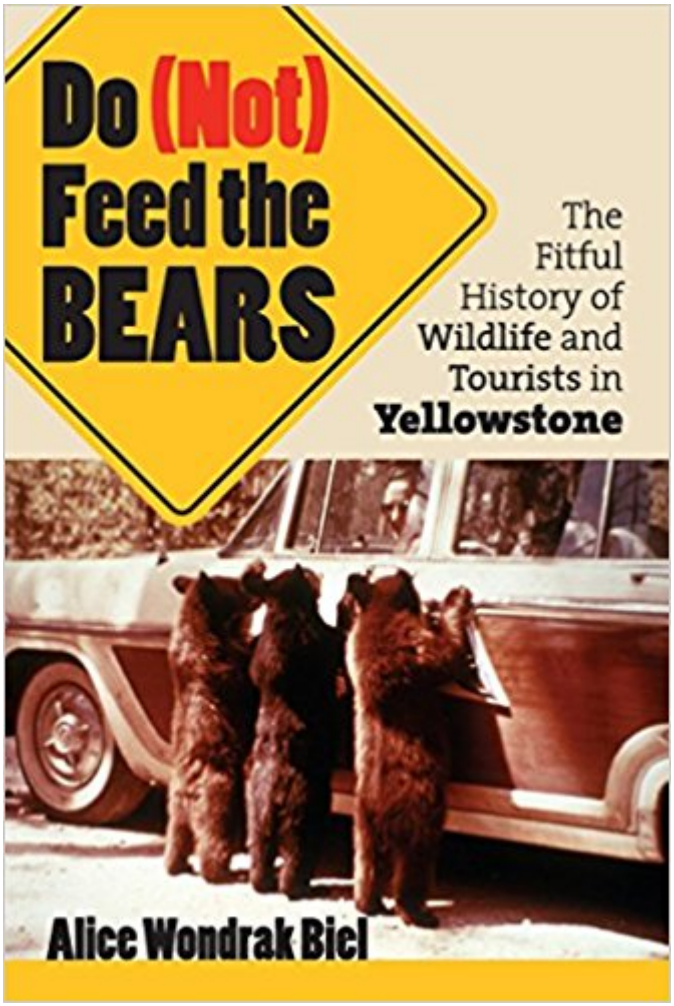
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Do (Not) Feed The Bears: The Fitful History Of Wildlife And Tourists In Yellowstone



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Synopsis

It was a familiar sight at Yellowstone National Park: traffic backed up for miles as visitors fed bears from their cars. It may have been against the rules, but park officials were willing to turn a blind eye if it kept the public happy. But bear feeding eventually became too widespread and dangerous to everyoneÃ¢â ¬â •including the bearsÃ¢â ¬â •for the National Park Service (NPS) to allow it any longer. As one of the park's most beloved and enduring symbols, the Yellowstone bears have long been a flashpoint for controversy. Alice Wondrak Biel traces the evolution of their complex relationship with humansÃ¢â ¬â •from the creation of the first staged wildlife viewing areas to the presentÃ¢â ¬â •and situates that relationship within the broader context of American cultural history. Early on, park bears were largely thought of as performers or surrogate pets and were routinely fed handouts from cars, as well as hotel garbage dumped at park-sanctioned "lunch counters for bears." But as these activities led to ever-greater numbers of tourist injuries, and of bears killed as a result, and as ideas about conservation and the NPS mission changed, the agency refashioned the bear's image from cute circus performer to dangerous wild animal and, eventually, to keystone inhabitant of a fragile ecosystem. Drawing on the history of recorded interactions with bears and providing telling photographs depicting the evolving bear-human relationship, Biel traces the reaction of park visitors to the NPS's effortsÃ¢â ¬â •from warnings by Yogi Bear (which few tourists took seriously) to the increasing promotion of key ecological issues and concerns. Ultimately, as the rules were enforced and tourist behavior dramatically shifted, the bears returned to a more natural state of existence.Biel's entertaining and informative account tracks this gradual "renaturalization" while also providing a cautionary tale about the need for careful negotiation at the complex nexus of tourists, bears, and all things wild.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. While vigilant Smokey and food-crazed Yogi have been the most enduring images of the grizzly for most baby boomers, writer-historian Biel shows how they symbolize the long history of bears in Yellowstone National Park in a superb, complex narrative. "[T]he bear has served as a flash point for controversies related to the park's evolving wildlife policies and ideologies," she writes. Beginning with Yellowstone's early years at the end of the 19th century, Biel shows how the tension between the "maximization of tourist visits" and the "preservation of primitive conditions" became the defining issue for Yellowstone bear life. "Bear shows" in the 1910s, where tourists watched bears being fed, started a dangerous tradition of visitors' hand-feeding that lasted until the 1950s. Biel's work is rooted in solid research and provides a concise look at all major government policies toward the park through the 1990s. But Biel's look at the conflict between commerce and ecology throughout Yellowstone's history is also aided by her humorous insights, such as how a 1961 park pamphlet using Yogi Bear to discourage bear feeding was like "Bart Simpson warning kids to respect their elders." 14 photos. (Mar. 4) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The story of Yellowstone Park and its wildlife, particularly bears, is intrinsically intertwined with tourists. Since the park's inception, people have traveled there to view Old Faithful and see a bear. When national parks were new, feeding grizzly and black bears was part of the charm. But once roadside feedings were de rigueur for tourists, the exchanges turned out to be detrimental to both wildlife and humans. The animals became dependent on a foreign, unhealthy food source, and people were getting mauled. Over the course of her clarifying history, Biel writes with conviction about the influence of various park superintendents, bear-management strategies, and changing ecopolitical influences, particularly the economic impact of the tourist trade. Years of training the public to regard bears as neither cute nor cuddly but as wild animals magnificent in their own right and deserving respect appear to have improved the welfare of wildlife in the park. Yet each generation must be educated anew, and Biel's book is a valuable contribution to that effort. Pamela CrosslanCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an

out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Everybody who loves Yellowstone (and any other park for that matter) really would enjoy this book. It’s an easy read with lots of stories and informative history. I’d always known that we shouldn’t feed the bears-- this book helped me understand why.

Great book with interesting stories!

good read.

Great book

I bought this book about a year ago. I feel this book is easy to read, well written and told the story of the history of the black and grizzly bears of Yellowstone National Park. I highly commend the author for not glossing over some of the ugly past issues of bear policy. I laughed and cried at the ineptness of park managers when learning to deal with bears and the public. I did not know a lot about the past bear management in Yellowstone and found it heartbreaking to learn how the bears have been mismanaged in the park, from feeding platforms to letting visitors hand feed bears by the roadside. I was shocked to learn the numbers of bears that have been destroyed because of these issues!! I am glad that the park has gone full circle and now cherishes the natural bear and are working to do all they can to preserve bears and relocate them rather than destroy them. When you see a bear, please don’t feed it.

Yeap, I bought the book because of the adorable cover, and I am not at all sorry. The book is brief, readable and informative. It covers bear policy at Yellowstone, but not simplistically. Rather, it uses bear management policy to talk about our own ideas about nature, wilderness, and how those ideas have changed over the past 100 years. It is largely jargon free--or at least always explains it--and I found the book a delight.

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