



A Wolf Called Romeo

Nick Jans

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A Wolf Called Romeo is the remarkable story of a black wolf, thought to be the lone survivor of a mountain pack, who befriended an Alaskan village. The villagers were so taken by their lupine friend they named him Romeo. Romeo played with local dogs, and lived alongside his human neighbours with astonishing affability.

In September 2009, Romeo was killed by poachers, who had him stuffed to commemorate their achievement; much to the devastation of the Alaskan community.

This is the story of Romeo's seven-year magical friendship with the villagers, told through the eyes of Nick Jans - an Alaskan author and photographer, who experienced Romeo's story and took thousands of photos of him. As well as Romeo's tale, the book touches on the wider subject of human interaction with the wild, and our ability to destroy the things we are most in awe of through our ignorance and fear.

A Wolf Called Romeo Details

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From Reader Review A Wolf Called Romeo for online ebook

Kathy Crenshaw says

I can't say enough good about this book. I can barely write about it without blubbering. It's a magical, transformative tale based on a rare occurrence of a wild wolf living in and among the people and dogs in Juneau, AK and how he befriended and was befriended by those same people. If you enjoy wildlife this is the book to buy. LOVED IT!!!

Chris Craddock says

Who's Afraid of Alaska Woolf?

Nick Jans was a hunter and a wilderness guide who hunted alongside Native Alaskan tribes, but he lost his bloodlust and traded his knife and rifle in for a pen and a camera. Living in Juneau, with a glacier practically thawing in his backyard he and his dogs encountered the wolf that would come to be known as Romeo. He was a lone wolf, not a member of a wolf pack. Still, he seemed to be not only surviving on his own, but healthy and thriving. Only one piece was missing from his puzzle: This Romeo lacked a Juliet. He was a lone wolf, but also a lonely wolf. He sought companionship in the strangest places: the dogs of some lucky Juneau residents, and by proxy, their owners.

Besides Jans, his wife and their dogs, two other groups formed the strongest bond with Romeo: Hyde, a photographer, and his dog; and Britain, a dog and her owner. Many other Juneauites and tourists were also able to get close to Romeo. There is always a chance for catastrophe when wild animals encounter humans, but for quite some time disaster was averted.

Though Nick Jans is biased to the extreme towards Romeo, he offers plenty of evidence to support his version of events. At one point a beagle named Tank chases after Romeo and disappears, but though the dog's bereaved owner is certain Romeo is to blame, Jans offers alternate scenarios, or at the very least, mitigating circumstances. Other close calls with Pugs and Pomeranians were shrugged off. Meanwhile Romeo is described as all but walking on water--strike that. He is shown literally walking on water. The lake is still frozen over but water from melting glaciers is flowing over it at a depth of a few feet allowing Romeo to "walk on water." This is described as a miracle along with the miracle of Romeo surviving as long as he does, and returning to the place season after season where he is so revered.

Though Nick Jans is definitely a partisan in favor of Romeo in particular, and wolves and wildlife in general, he states a compelling case, and I tend to agree with his verdicts. The bottom line is that A Wolf Called Romeo is an enjoyable and inspiring book that will have you howling at the moon.

Bobby says

A Wolf Called Romeo tells the one-of-a-kind story of a lone black wolf - a wild wolf - who became a fixture in Juneau, AK over the course of several years. During the time that Romeo spent near the Mendenhall glacier many of the people there, and their dogs, witnessed a wild wolf who was non-threatening to humans

and seemed to relish the opportunity to play with the local dogs, something he did daily as townsfolk came to witness this "friendly" wolf. Jans tells the story in an almost conversational manner coupled with insight into wolves, what it means to be "wild," humans, and how the two relate. The story is a powerful one that Jans relates so well that I found myself compelled to get back to it and to finish it as soon as possible. This is the kind of story that will stay with you well after you've read it. Haunting, compelling, very well done, and highly recommended!

Carl Safina says

A surprisingly good book; surprising because it's titled *A Wolf Called Romeo* and it's written in an initially offputtingly breezy style. But it's loaded with facts about wolves that quite accurately sum up a lot of the science that I recently learned while writing my own book which has a long consideration of wolves (*Beyond Words; What Animals Think and Feel*). For 6 years in the early 2000s, a wild wolf cavorted with humans and their dogs just outside Juneau, Alaska. As you'd expect--or maybe the opposite of what you'd expect--the wolf acted better than the people.

Spenser says

I thought this book was a nice story of a remarkable animal, who lived a great life that ended too soon. I am also happy that Romeo's story is out there for everyone to hear.

However, It's tragic that his killers did what they did and got away with it. Being a lawyer (jd cadidate as of this writing) it is sad someone didn't step in as an advocate for the wolf and use back channels like Romeo's killer's lawyer did. I wish they could still do something, but at least its consolation that both of these men incurred a lot of legal fees, lost jobs and privileges, and created public scorn they had taken for granted before the killing.

Thank you Nick Jans for writing this story. It was truly enjoyable.

Shasni Bala says

Heartwarming story, made me a little emotional. Its a good read even though memoir books are not my style, for once in a while a change of flavour is okay.

Sherry says

I may be biased because I was able to play on the lake with my dog Rusty and the enigmatic Wolf Called Romeo. Nick Jan's wrote an authentic account of a time in Juneau that really did bring people together. After finishing this book I got to thinking how Nick Jans has immortalized a bit of nature history and has written such a descriptive account of this time, that even if you didn't live in Juneau during this time, you could experience the magic. I miss Romeo!

Kim says

If this book was fiction I would not have believed it. A wild wolf being social to people and dogs for years! Nick Jans did a wonderful job of telling the story and including facts about wolves and other wildlife. Parts were tough to read but I thoroughly enjoyed this true story.

Seal says

A profoundly moving and enlightening book about a wolf that appeared out of the woods one day to accompany the author on his daily ski near Juneau, Alaska. Soon it was evident that this wolf, with no mate or pack of his own, enjoyed the company of several other locals, and particularly liked to play with their pet dogs. The town was soon divided into those who thought the only good wolf was a dead wolf, and those who felt touched and inspired by being allowed to share the company of a wild animal - by that animal's own free will.

Part memoir and part natural history, the author provides an educated portrait of a unique and mysterious personality, yet manages to treat the highly emotional issue of wildlife control in a balanced and professional manner. Romeo interacted with the residents and pets of Juneau for several years, becoming something of a town mascot, unaware of the tightrope he was walking simply to remain alive.

I would recommend this book to anyone who has a heart. Even teens who've tired of zombies and the apocalypse. Beautifully written.

Jonna Higgins-Freese says

This was one of the best books about interacting with nonhuman animals that I've read. The narrative of Juneau's relationship with Romeo was seamlessly interwoven with information about wolf biology and behavior that provided context and depth. Some of his writing is poetry reminiscent of Norman Maclean: "As a sentient, intelligent being, [Romeo] made a choice to live where he did, and to interact with us and our dogs -- not only on his own social terms, but through an adaptive understanding of our rules" (228). Or this: "Without knowing or caring, simply by being what he was, he brought people closer: friends and families, but also those who might have never met, if not for his presence. Across the years, I watched hundreds and finally thousands of Juneau residents -- two here, a half dozen there, one group after another, out on the broad sounding board of the lake -- lean on their ski poles and chat as they watched the wolf playing with dogs, trotting across the ice, or lying in one of his spots at the lake edge; and many times, I took part in such conversations So it was that the wolf melded into Juneau's story and became part of us" (229)

Brittany says

I feel like I should have liked this book a lot more than I did. Clearly, lots of other people loved it. But it didn't click for me, and the problem may have been with the writing and the pacing. The story--of a wolf that frequents an Alaskan community and makes friends with some of the dogs there--is amazing. But the telling of it left me wanting more. There wasn't much meat to it, and the author got in his own way a lot of the time. I wanted a lot more showing and way less telling.

The story that is there, I feel, would have been perfect for a longer-form magazine article; preferably with Jans' amazing photos. But for a book, there wasn't enough to support the story. The story was extraordinary, just a little bit spare for the medium chosen.

Jessica says

In the winter of 2003 Nick Jans encountered a lone wolf near his Juneau, Alaska home. Having seen wolves in the wild before, but only rarely he is amazed at how much this wolf seems to seek out human and canine attention. Over the next few years Romeo, as the wolf becomes known locally, interacts with dozens of humans and dogs - always seeking the interaction himself. Within a few years though there are a faction of local residents who are not happy about a wolf hanging around so much. There is also the increasing problem of Romeo's popularity with local residents who are thrilled to have the chance to see a wild wolf so close. Jans knows that this increased attention to Romeo could easily backfire if the wolf feels threatened and lashes out. Jans is also worried about dog owners who don't have control of their dogs or have aggressive dogs - although he never personally saw Romeo react poorly to an aggressive dog. But, unfortunately in 2009 a trophy hunter from Pennsylvania comes to Juneau with the intent of killing Romeo solely because of his local popularity. He does and when locals like Jans find out they bring it to the attention of local authorities. The trophy hunter is arrested, along with his friend who is a local resident, but their prosecution is a joke and shows that even with an animal like Romeo - in Alaska it's just another wolf that's been hunted illegally.

While Romeo's story does have a sad ending, his impact is still felt on the community in Juneau. Especially with a few people like Jans who had a more long-term, intimate relationship with Romeo. Interspersed throughout Romeo's story Jans also gives a lot of information about wolves and shows just how unique the situation with Romeo was. He also gives a lot of the complicated and sad history of human interaction with wolves, both in the Continental US and specifically in Alaska. He also includes a few beautiful pictures of Romeo that he took over the years of their interactions. Overall, even though the end is sad, this is an incredible book about a very unique wolf and how much he impacted a small community over just a few years.

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

I have to make this review short as I am so angry. This is a beautiful story of a most precious black beauty wolf that had a wonderful bond with humans dogs. He frolicked and played with them and went on walks with them and their humans. He was loved by many with exceptions of those few wolf hating jerks around. I would loved to have seen him. I was touched by the woman with cancer who's family would bring her out to see him. She loved her time seeing him. I have a great love for Harry and his dog who were best friends with

him and tried to protect him. But, as we all know would happen a damn jerk hunter killed him. Him and his friend snuck out and did it. All I have left to say is there is a special place in hell for people that destroy all beautiful things whether it be animal or human. Thank you for sharing Romeo's story. I also love he got a memorial made for him. It says ROMEO 2003-2009 THE SPIRIT OF JUNEAU'S FRIENDLY BLACK WOLF LIVES ON IN THIS WILD PLACE.

Dave Allen says

A touching and very nicely written work about the precarious life of a wolf that made Juneau its home, and also a well done portrait of that Alaskan town, the balance between what is wild and what is not and how that relates to our place in the whole scheme of things. A book I would highly recommend.

Jim Misko says

A Wolf Called Romeo, is an emotional roller-coaster. Up, when author Nick Jans is interacting with the wolf or discussing others who formed a tight relationship, and down when the scientific and legal interludes cool his fine narrative. There are comfortable level portions that are informative, and allow a reader to rest his heart rate until it comes back to walking, talking, and interacting with the wolf called Romeo. In Alaska we often get opportunities to interact with wild creatures, but this long lasting intimate, tolerable affair far surpassed an occasional relationship. Plus—this book is a work of beauty. Get it. Read it. Don't loan it out unless you keep the dust cover in the cupboard while it's gone.
