

Part of the Pride

My Life Among the Big Cats of Africa



Kevin Richardson
with Tony Park

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About a year ago, film started to circulate on YouTube(R) of a remarkable man named Kevin Richardson, an animal custodian in a South African animal park. The film showed Richardson in his day-to-day work, looking some of the world's most dangerous animals directly in the eye, crouching down at their level, playing with them and, sometimes, even kissing them on the nose--all without ever being attacked or injured. The films' popularity skyrocketed and Richardson became an international sensation. In "Part of the Pride," Kevin Richardson tells the story of his life and work, how he grew from a young boy who cared for so many animals that he was called "The Bird Man of Orange Grove" to an adolescent who ran wild and, finally, to a man who is able to cross the divide between humans and predators. As a self-taught animal behaviorist, Richardson has broken every safety rule known to humans when working with these wild animals. Flouting common misconceptions that breaking an animal's spirit with sticks and chains is the best way to subdue them, he uses love, understanding and trust to develop personal bonds with them. His unique method of getting to know their individual personalities, what makes each of them angry, happy, upset, or irritated--just like a mother understands a child--has caused them to accept him like one of their own into their fold. Like anyone else who truly loves animals, Richardson allows their own stories to share center stage as he tells readers about Napoleon and Tau, the two male lions he calls his "brothers"; the amazing Meg, a lioness Richardson taught to swim; the fierce Tsavo who savagely attacked him; and the heartbreaking little hyena called Homer who didn't live to see his first birthday. Richardson also chronicles his work on the feature film "The White Lion" and has a lot to say about the state of lion farming and hunting in South Africa today. In "Part of the Pride," Richardson, with novelist Tony Park, delves into the mind of the big cats and their world to show readers a different way of understanding the dangerous big cats of Africa.

Part of the Pride: My Life Among the Big Cats of Africa Details

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Taylor says

It was interesting to see this side of Kevin Richardson and read about his relationships with his animals, and how he got to be the man he is today. I have been trying to branch out from fantasy and young adult literature and I'm glad I picked up this book.

I have loved lions and other big cats since I was a kid. Africa's predators was something that fascinated me growing up and I always wanted to know more about them, so read about how someone has developed strong bonds with them was very eye opening. A lot of Kevin's views I agreed with and there were things he said that really made you think. As someone who has grown up with dogs my whole life, I could also understand the bond that he had with his animals, as it was something I also experienced with the pets I had.

I really enjoyed this book and the experiences that Kevin shared in the book. He is someone I admire and respect.

Lyudmila says

The book is pretty monotonous and not well written. I guess I can't expect much since Kevin Richardson is not a writer, but still it was kind of disappointing. I love his way of interaction with animals, I learnt a lot from the book not only about animals but also about wild vs captive animals and some of the misconceptions on this issue. However, I didn't like Kevin's opinion about lions kept so that rich people can go and boost their ego hunting and killing them. Liked the book, but it wasn't what I expected to be. I felt as if Kevin was defending himself all the time, and constantly implying his way is the right way. Also, I didn't like how he treats animals he refers to as "my animals" in comparison to other animals who aren't his... sort of.. I don't want bad things to happen to my animals, and if my animals aren't involved, I don't care that much.

Christina says

This is an AMAZING book!!! Kevin Richardson is definitely my new hero/role model. I read this book because I want to work with big cats when I am older, and when I heard of him I just /had/ to read his book. Kevin is really humble about what he can do, and seems like a really nice person. I am really jealous of him, and wish I had the money to go to Kingdom of the White Lion and volunteer or something. The book was REALLY interesting, and I couldn't put it down. I finished it really quickly. I had to light a ton of candles at night to see, since we were out of power from Hurricane Irene. :) He puts humor into his stories, like Lenny the cheetah. I found that very amusing. Although, there were times when reading the book that I felt the weight of a situation, like when he described how Homer died. I recommend his book to EVERYONE. I've been telling my parents, sister, and grandma that they should read it because it's great. I learned a lot, and it really did change my opinion on animals such as hyenas, which I didn't know much about. They are actually really smart. xD I would be happy if the book never ended and I got to read it forever. It made me want to find Kevin Richardson and make him teach me everything he knows. Or email him or something. I'm convinced I'm his biggest fan. :)

Theresa says

Kevin has spent most of his adult life working closely with predators, mainly lions and hyenas. I admire his approach to his relationships with them. He understands them as individuals and loves them as friends and family. When he started working with lions, he did everything wrong, according to the lion specialists. He sat with them, played with them, exposed himself as vulnerable. Yes, he did get injured some times, but he understood it was from his mistakes rather than the fault of the animal. As he illustrates, it's not enough to love animals; you have to respect and listen to them if you want a true relationship. While I don't agree with all of his attitudes about animals (he believes that eating animals is fine) I love the descriptions of his bonded relationships with them.

Mathilda Grace says

Einfach nur toll.

Ich verfolge die Dokumentationen von Kevin Richardson schon seit Jahren und das Buch bietet noch mal einen viel detaillierteren Einblick in sein Leben und vor allem seinen Umgang mit den wilden Tieren, denn er erzählt frei von der Leber weg von seinen Anfängen und auch seinen Fehlern.

Niemand ist perfekt und das musste er immer wieder auf die harte Tour lernen, teils mit schlimmen Verletzungen und entsprechenden Schmerzen.

Schonungslos und ehrlich - großartig erzählt.

Tammy Cease says

Absolutely loved this book. As soon as I finished it, I wanted to read it again. I love what he does for the animals in his care. They just don't live in cages for the rest of his life. What a blessing he is to these animals. I would love to go visit/volunteer at his sanctuary. This will be a book that I will read again!!!!

Diane says

I should have loved this book, but I didn't. Cats, of any size, are my favourite animals ... and that may have been why I couldn't love this book. It wasn't really about the lions, it was about Kevin Richardson. He came across as someone who has a large ego, and spent a great deal of the book talking about himself. The lions were only mentioned in connection with Kevin ... which I suppose is fair enough, considering the title of the book ... Part of the Pride: MY Life Among the Big Cats of Africa. He's also one of those folks who do whatever they please, no matter how foolhardy that action might truly be.

I do respect his love for the lions, and other animals, he is involved with. He is a most fortunate man to have had the privilege of interacting with these magnificent cats. Perhaps, someone else should have written the

book, and then I might have enjoyed it more. Hard to say.

2 Stars = Blah. It didn't do anything for me.

Kimberly says

In this book I headed off to my favourite country South Africa for my Around the World in 52 Books Challenge and what an adventure it was! Lions, hyenas and jaguars oh my!

A few years ago I watched a short documentary called Dangerous Companions about Kevin Richardson and his friends (lions, hyenas, giraffes etc.) I like many other people was amazed by the connection he had with them and every time I see a lion special on I think of him. So it was much to my surprise that while looking for another book in the library database that I found that he had a book! Of course I had to put it on hold immediately and within 2 days I finished it.

I love the way that the book was written. It wasn't written in away that was too "uppity". It was written in a very casual manner and I really think that worked to the books advantage because lets be honest we want to read about this man and his bond with the animals he undoubtedly loves a great deal.

I enjoyed learning about his early life which he says was far from perfect and freely admits that he was a troublemaker in his youth. Which to me made it even more appealing because who wants to read about someones perfect life? Not me. I think that the reason he's so good with animals is because he feels more of a connection to them than the people in his life. I understand that bond but on a smaller scale...with my house cats, rodents, birds and our dog. I know it's not incredible but trust is trust.

I loved reading about his animals, and learning their stories, learning their little quirks, and seeing just how unique each of them is. But what I loved most was learning how he had to work for them to accept him. Many people think that he has a special gift but I believe that maybe he knows how to read these beautiful and powerful animals better than the rest of us because he pays a little more attention to the rest of us. I mean there is something about him that allows him to be "part of the pride" or else the lionesses would not let him near their newborn cubs, allow him to sleep with them play with them. These animals are beautiful souls with feelings and this book proves that they are capable of having a remarkable bond with this man built on mutual trust and respect.

His stories are incredible and breath taking when you think about the animals that he's talking about. Now I won't spoil any of the book for you by talking about the different animals, I think it would be much better if you read it yourselves.

I highly recommend any and all animal lovers to read this book it's amazing and inspiring!

Ana says

Do you think that you can like a book and not like it at the same time? Well that's kind of my predicament. While I agree with some of the author's views, there are some things I don't agree with. But more on that later.

I'm sure you've heard of Kevin Richardson. Or as he's known in Africa: The Lion Whisperer. Forget the horses, whisper near the big cats. What a cool job eh? The answer, of course, depends entirely upon your personal views.

I'll start with the things I liked. Mr. Richardson's book provides many interesting stories with vivid details.

Fateful meetings.

One was called Napoleon and the other, which had yet to be christened, had the most incredible clear eyes. Conventional wisdom - or perhaps superstition – was that one should never trust a lion with clear eyes. Like a lot of things people told me about lions over the years to come, and conventional wisdom in general, that little gem turned out to be bullshit. I had no way of knowing it at the time, but these two young lions were to become my best friends – my brothers.

No lion is the same.

Maditau became the best mother lion I have ever met. She's a classic beauty who has never had an unsuccessful litter. Maditau is the responsible one who has no time for fooling around. Tabby, on the other hand, is a lion who's having too much fun in life for kids to ruin it for her. She's boisterous and voluptuous. She's sort of the Angelina Jolie of the lion world. She's the kind of lion who's always keen for some fun and games. For her, life's too short to let it pass by lazing under trees.

Hyenas are not douchebags.

The truth about hyenas is that they are intelligent predators who hunt as well as scavenge. They live in strictly ordered clans where the females rule supreme. The highest ranking male in a hyena clan is still subservient to the lowest ranking female. It's a little like marriage.

People are douchebags.

I was shocked when our local television showed images of a lioness in a cage being shot during a 'canned' hunt. Canned hunting is a term for shooting an animal which has been bred for the sole purpose of being killed as a trophy, for money. The lioness had been lured closer to the hunter by placing one of her cubs in a neighboring cage.

Cheeky cheetahs.

A woman who is well rounded – all around – is considered attractive to many African men. Lenny the cheetah was an all-African male. Lenny darted away from those of us who were stroking him, and quick as a flash he was behind us. He lunged at the female volunteer he had singled out, wrapped his paws around her waist, and bit down on the piece of the girl he wanted- her behind. I was in a difficult position. I could hardly say to a group of volunteers, 'Sorry, you can't go in with Lenny because Lenny likes booty.'

Some parts of this book made me mad. For example: despite his great love for lions, Mr. Richardson isn't opposed to canned hunting. He said, and I quote, *'I don't have a problem with people such a Dirk, the professional lion farmer and hunter, breeding lions for hunting. It is his constitutional right in this country to make a living this way.'* Oh, and by the way, hunting lions in the wild is also ok, as long as it is done professionally. *shakes head* I wonder how he'd feel if someone started shooting at Tau, Napoleon, Meg and Ami. Animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others.

I lost my cool when Lady Liuwa's name came up. For those of you not in the know, Lady Liuwa was the sole survivor after massive poaching and illegal trophy hunting wiped out the species in the Liuwa Plain National Park in the 90's. For years Lady Liuwa lived alone, roaming Liuwa Plain without a pride. She was so lonely that she had come to humans, looking for company. She developed a close relationship with a wildlife cameraman, who documented the plight of this amazing lioness. National Geographic made a documentary about her called Lady Liuwa: The Last Lioness.

It never ceases to amaze me how resilient lions are. They are true survivors. They live their lives with tremendous dignity and grace.

I still don't know what to make of Kevin Richardson. I have no doubt that he loves his lions. I have no doubt that he's an animal lover. But some of his statements have left a bad taste in my mouth.

For those interested- here are two videos you might enjoy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNCzS...>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5c-i...>

R.M. Tafari says

Very Informative and an easy fun read

I am currently working on a Fantasy novel which has lions as its protagonists and Kev's book has really helped me with character development. May his relationships with his lions continue to be numerous and prosperous! I also hope that in the future he can write an introductory segment in my novel, educating the world about the harm humanity has done to these majestic creatures and point me in the right direction to help with aiding/protecting wildlife.

Allison Willis says

I tend to agree with Cory on this one. A fantastic subject but a monotonous read, and very repetitive. For all his comments that he doesn't consider himself unique- a lion whisperer- Kevin Richardson actually seems very impressed with himself and what he does. I found the book a bit self indulgent. Disappointing because the lions are amazing. I shouldn't judge I suppose, if this was my life I would pinch myself every day how lucky I was too.

Angela Maher says

This is a must read for anyone who admires Kevin Richardson. I enjoyed the stories of his youth as much as his stories about his animal friends. The tone of the book is enjoyably conversational. I hope he brings out more books in the future.

George Holmes says

I stopped reading it in the second chapter because I hadn't cared to read about his childhood, also that his work was in a Zoo. Call me shallow, but I want to read things like the books by Adamson's, or the Helfer's.

Michele Harrod says

Well, it probably goes without saying that I would love this book, but particular mention has to be made for this man's unique bravery, and lack of 'ego'. These things have allowed him to break the mould of 'man overpowers nature' that far too many people adopt when they work with animals. We either try to overpower them, with the use of force or restrictive spatial access, or we remain fully removed from them, and lose the opportunity to truly interact with our earth kin : the animals that share our planet with us. I admire, envy, and am in complete awe of this man, who not only recognised his brothers and sisters in the animal kingdom, but who defies convention, and has mastered his own intuition, and levels of respect and understanding for them - in ways that allow him to truly connect and have very real, and mutually beneficial, relationships with them. Having read this while in South Africa on an EcoLife, 'Vets in the Wild' expedition, (when lent it by one of my fellow travellers who is on his way now to do volunteer work at Kevin's park), I now cannot wait to hear more about his adventures, and his time spent with Kevin Richardson. And spending time with Kevin, to truly learn and understand his techniques, is now top of my bucket list. This, I believe, is how we should all connect with animals. All of them!!!!

Pradnya Bhagat says

An amazing fast paced read if you want to escape the realities of everyday life and enter a **genuinely existing** fairy tale world.

Kevin's fairy tale no more requires the most beautiful princesses and princes to make it enchanting, instead this time it's The Big Predators Lions and Hyenas stealing your heart.

The amazing relationships that Kevin Richardson has built with his animals over the years and the passion with which he expresses his understanding with his every animal (even if it has hurt him) will definitely keep you wanting for more even after you finish reading the book.

In addition to stories about Kevin's relationships with animals, the book also comments on the wildlife conservation problems Africa is facing. With the intensity of the problems highlighted, he doesn't pretend to be all goody-goody with so called ideal but impractical solutions when he presents his pragmatic views on wildlife conservation approaches. But, that surely doesn't make you doubt his love for animals a bit.

Do give it a read if you think you love animals!
