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Review of *Meant To Be Wild: The Struggle to Save Endangered Species Through Captive Breeding* by Jan DeBlieu

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Meant To Be Wild: The Struggle to Save Endangered Species Through Captive Breeding. Jan DeBlieu. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1991. 302 pp. Photographs, line drawings, index, and bibliography. \$12.95 paper, (ISBN 1-5559-1074-2).

In the early 1970s, when I watched Frances Hamerstrom's initial attempts to achieve captive breeding of golden eagles, and later to induce red-tailed Hawks to complete most of their life cycle in captivity, I thought the practice to be only a novelty and biological sideline. I had no idea that the captive breeding and re-release of wild species into their natural environments would become such an accepted and important technique. Indeed this book documents many such attempts and some notable successes.

The author's personal experiences with the breeding and reintroduction of the red wolf first along the North Carolina coast, and then in Great Smoky Mountains National Park form the best part of the book. She has an obvious

and deep commitment to this pioneering effort, but does not bias her report of the event with her own feelings. Instead she manages a balanced account of the failures, of which there were many, and the successes. All the while, she manages to convey the near-impossibility of this task of releasing a supposedly wild animal that has been bred in captivity. Much attention is given to the decline in genetic vigor due to the inbreeding of small stocks and, in the cases of the Florida panther and red wolf, the possibility of hybridization by other subspecies (Florida panther x cougar) or species (red wolf x coyote). Ironically, a mixture of subspecies has worked well, and even seemed to prove adaptive in the reintroduction of peregrine falcons, the most successful story of a captive-bred species reintroduced into the wild.

It was the breaking of the wilderness that started a cascade of change that was quickly fatal to some species. Species are presently monitored under the watchful guard of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which administers the Endangered Species Act. A recent survey reported in this book says that the status of only sixteen percent of endangered species is improving, while thirty-seven percent are stable, and thirty-four percent are declining. Two percent of listed species are considered already extinct. But the sad fact is that species exist that are unknown either in population status, or for lack of taxonomic information, may not even be recognized as endangered until they are gone. It is the premise of this book, "that the way society perceives nature will determine the fate and possible restoration of rare and endangered species."

In addition to the species mentioned above, the status and reintroduction attempts of the whooping crane, Puerto Rican parrot, Arabian oryx, golden lion tamarin, and black-footed ferret are described in detail. One of the most disconcerting aspects, in addition to the biological work, is the extensive public relations work that must accompany any actual reintroduction. This does not mean simply publicity. Elaborate reassurances are needed to animal welfare activists about such items as the application of radio collars to wolves and panthers, and even for city dwellers concerned that pigeons may be killed by reintroduced falcons!

DeBlieu also emphasizes the artificiality of the captive breeding, and wonders in the book whether animals will be allowed to range freely or be restricted to carefully managed preserves, refuges, or zoos in the future. This book carefully crafts the idea that we, as a rapidly multiplying species, have produced a condition where many other species, "can no longer survive without some form of good will or charity from humans." It documents our initial attempts in this direction, and should be read by a wide audience, not

only wildlife biologists, who are already aware of many of the projects described. **William C. Scharf**, *School of Biological Sciences, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.