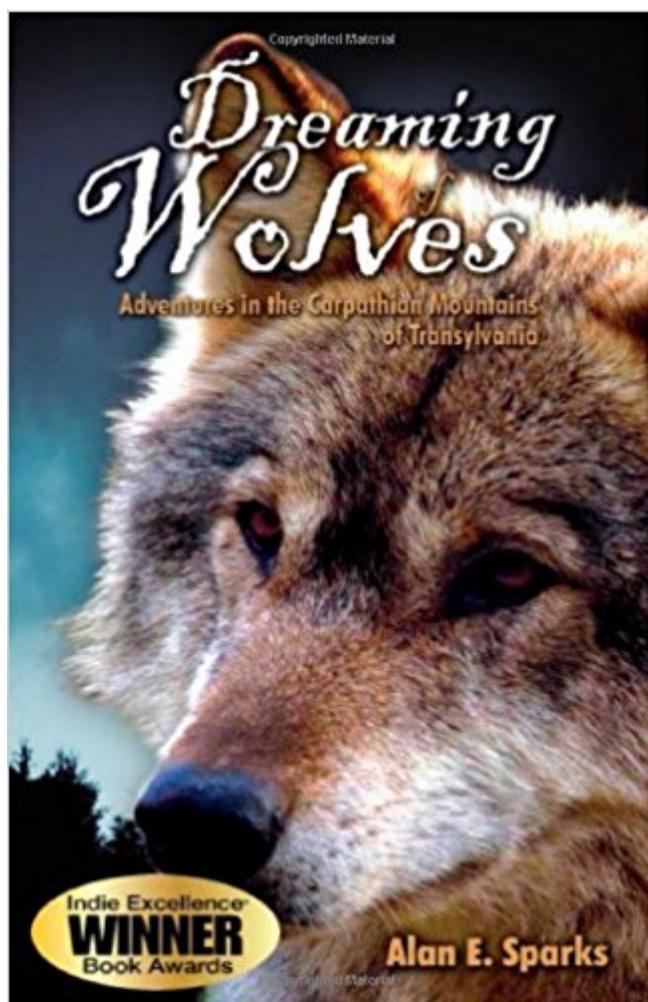


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Dreaming Of Wolves: Adventures In The Carpathian Mountains Of Transylvania



Synopsis

Winner, National Indie Excellence Book Awards for Nature (2011); Finalist, National Indie Excellence Book Awards for Adventure (2011). An extraordinary portrait of the lives of wolves, the researchers who study them, and the rustic highlanders who share their landscape - in the mysterious wilds of Transylvania. Here we take an enchanting journey, tracking wolves through the deeps snows and dark forests of Romania, where "Old Europe" still hangs on, hardly touched by modern trends or discovered by western travelers. Guided with humor, insight, and vivid description, we make a memorable trek, fending off belligerent shepherd dogs and foul weather to discover history, legend, and myth: Ancient "wolf-warriors" (Dacians), colorful Romani (Gypsies), legendary vampires (Dracula), and more. Contemplating the benefits of wilderness, the joys of self-discovery, and the nature of time and consciousness, we are also entertained with 32 pages of stunning color photographs.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'Life flashes past many eyes: resident, tourist, voyageur, even those of wolves. Dreaming of Wolves provides introspection through the eyes of a wolf. Alan's journey explores an inward look at mid-life crises, personal feeling, community economics, ethnic survival, cultural bias, and national politics while trying to [understand the life] of a pack of Romanian wolves. To know life, his life, the author travels to a remote, foreign setting seeking knowledge about wolves, and learns about himself. Yes, it is a travelogue, a personal adventure, but it is also a narrative explaining wolf ecology and

behavior versus rural cultural integrity and history. Read it to understand wolves and to understand people at the delicate interface where a few wolves exist almost secretively next to rural people still attached to their lands and agricultural practices. I recommend Alan's work not only as a natural history reference but for showing that we can exist with wild animals even as planet earth approaches an overflowing human population.' -- Dr. James C. Halfpenny, President, A Naturalist's World and author of *Yellowstone Wolves in the Wild, Field Guide to Mammal Tracking in North America, Winter: An Ecological Handbook* "[Provides] rare insight into the behavior of wolves, as well as a close-up look at life in the backcountry and small towns of the Carpathian Mountains. The author's experiences tracking wolves, combined with the people he meets and his descriptions of the locale, make for a compelling and invigorating story. Sparks writes well, even eloquently at times. A thoroughly enjoyable read for animal lovers and explorers alike." -- Kirkus Discoveries "This is indeed [a] book written by an incredible observer of character and landscape, a sensitive listener and ultimately a passionate conservationist." -- Kirkus Discoveries "Buy it, read it carefully. It's a book I will not be letting anyone borrow. It has a heart and a very powerful one..." -- Wolf Print Magazine (UK) "As purposeful as a wolf's gait through a Draconian night, the literary potency of this book strikes direct registry into our human cellular connection with the way of wolves. Over 200 thoroughly researched pages offer a humbling, humorous, and fascinating penetration into a rare Transylvanian world exquisitely unveiled through intricately woven themes of wolves, humans, and the dance of consciousness which unites all beings..." -- Steve Ilg, author of *Total Body Transformation* and founder of *WholisticFitness.com* "An entertaining and truly inspirational story... Alan Sparks teaches us to not settle for the status quo and to live life as an adventure!" -- Don Strankowski, president Ascend Career and Life Strategies and author of *Get Hired!*

Wonderful read, engaging and informative.

"Want to hear about my trip and see my photos?" Anyone who has ever been held hostage by a long-winded friend with 500 pictures snapped from a car window knows the momentary panic of having to make a choice between politely declining and caving in with a reluctant assent. But Alan Sparks is no amateur storyteller, and the first page of the book guarantees the reader will never be bored. Sparks knows how to spin "true-life" adventures that invite readers to share his experiences. As for photos, the collection of color pictures that enhance the timeless narrative is beautiful and vivid. This book is many things, all of them wonderful. It's an armchair traveler's delight, a lively,

honest and often hilarious memoir, an odyssey of the spirit, a reflection about time and consciousness, and a treasure trove of meticulously-researched wolf information. Recounted in first-person, often in the present tense, Sparks shares his experiences in the mountain forests of Romania with a page-turning narrative that sweeps the reader along as companion and fellow traveler. The "listener" goes with Sparks for the ride. And what a ride it is, a journey enhanced by pages of beautiful color photos. If you've never thought about going to Romania, you will after you look at the pictures. Hiking and getting about in wolf country anywhere in the world is not easy. And the rugged landscape of the Carpathian Mountains is a challenge even for Sparks, fit and experienced though he is. Wolves are highly mobile, traveling great distances throughout their territories hunting for food. They are elusive, but their presence is always felt in the steep forests even though catching glimpses of them is often pure luck. Alan Sparks has so much knowledge of wolf pack behavior and so much respect for these great predators that he never tries to portray wild wolves as anything more or less than what they are - fascinating, intelligent, adaptable animals. This is a story brimming with humor (Sparks has that rare capacity for poking fun at himself), introspection, pathos, keen observation and solid information. Thus, for lovers of wildlife and wild places, the book is a delightful discovery. And for people interested in wolves, it's a must!

In just a handful of months, the author immersed himself in a foreign world, existing almost outside of time. The adventure, though brief, seemed like another lifetime. As the author takes a life altering turn in his life, seeking a change of career and lifestyle in the pursuit of his passion for wolves, the reader is immersed in a tale of old-world traditions, creeping modernity, and the relationship of rural Romanian people with their natural environment. The reader enters a bewildering world as the author struggles to understand the human culture, the way of the wolf, and one's place in the universe. This book is part travelogue, part wolf biology, and part philosophical self-discovery. The natural environment of this area of Transylvania is lovingly described. The reader will gain an appreciation for how wolves survive and exist along the interface with civilization. It is a revealing look at a region off most peoples' geographical and life maps.

Travelogue in the form of a journal from March 5 to May 24, 2003. After the loss of his job as a software engineer, Alan Sparks decided to quit his ten year-long career in Colorado and applied, after some hesitation, for a volunteer position with the Carpathian Large Carnivore Project (CLCP), a ten-year research project located near Zarnesti at the foot of the Piatra Craiului Mountain, in the Southeastern Carpathians, Romania. The project is about to come to an end and is likely to be

transformed into a tourist destination. The transplantation into a culture completely strange to him. his initial ignorance of the Romanian language and the primitive living conditions in the "wolf hut" put his commitment and his idealism to a stressful test. After a few days, however, he participated fully in all domestic chores, (kitchen duty, regular cleaning of the wolf pen, chopping fire wood, etc.), the observation of the wolf packs' behavior and migration patterns, and getting along with the local farmers whose priorities and concerns are sometimes opposite those of the research team. Carried by his passionate love for wolves, dogs and animals in general and by his enthusiasm for the preservation of the pristine mountain scape around Zarnesti, Spark submitted readily to the most demanding tasks of his job. Sparks often digresses from the narration of the concrete events of the day and provides the reader with fundamental -- and very welcome -- information regarding Romania's two thousand year-old culture, history and folklore. It was more problematic for this reader to integrate his remarks about quantum physics and the theory of relativity (entry of April 13, for example). Being myself someone who left his heart impaled in Romania, and who is familiar with the region of Zarnesti, Bran and Piatra Craiului, and having followed to some extent the work of CLCP, I read this book with great interest and satisfaction. I could confirm from my own experience many of Spark's concrete observations, other details I was grateful to learn. I appreciated in particular the author's profound knowledge of the life of the wolves. It made this book a most pleasant read.

I love this book! From the moment it arrived at my door I could not put it down. Having come from the high-tech corporate world myself, Alan's experience in Romania strikes me as an amazing adventure. I appreciate all his stories and his sense of humor. The story of Andrei the horse still makes me laugh when I think about it. I'm hoping Alan will write more books.

The author did a nice job covering his adventures in another land. It was interesting to see how someone left the white collar world in the USA to study and write about wolves in a land with a very different lifestyle and culture. You may think you it would be easy to just pick up and go on such an adventure but as the book explains there are many issues to consider and deal with. Den in Maine.

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