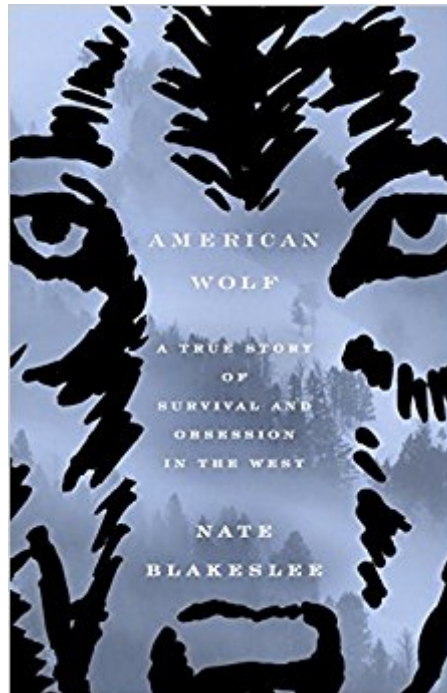




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# American Wolf: A True Story Of Survival And Obsession In The West



## Synopsis

The enthralling story of the rise and reign of O-Six, the celebrated Yellowstone wolf, and the people who loved or feared her. Before men ruled the earth, there were wolves. Once abundant in North America, these majestic creatures were hunted to near extinction in the lower 48 states by the 1920s. But in recent decades, conservationists have brought wolves back to the Rockies, igniting a battle over the very soul of the West. With novelistic detail, Nate Blakeslee tells the gripping story of one of these wolves, O-Six, a charismatic alpha female named for the year of her birth.

Uncommonly powerful, with gray fur and faint black ovals around each eye, O-Six is a kind and merciful leader, a fiercely intelligent fighter, and a doting mother. She is beloved by wolf watchers, particularly renowned naturalist Rick McIntyre, and becomes something of a social media star, with followers around the world. But as she raises her pups and protects her pack, O-Six is challenged on all fronts: by hunters, who compete with wolves for the elk they both prize; by cattle ranchers who are losing livestock and have the ear of politicians; and by other Yellowstone wolves who are vying for control of the park's stunningly beautiful Lamar Valley. These forces collide in *American Wolf*, a riveting multigenerational saga of hardship and triumph that tells a larger story about the ongoing cultural clash in the West between those fighting for a vanishing way of life and those committed to restoring one of the country's most iconic landscapes.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[*American Wolf*] is a startlingly intimate portrait of the intricate, loving, human-like

interrelationships that govern wolves in the wild, as observed in real time by a cadre of dedicated wolf-watchers—•in the end, a drama of lupine love, care, and grief. —•Erik Larson, author of *The Devil in the White City* and *Dead Wake* —•“Wild, poignant, and compelling, *American Wolf* is an important, beautifully wrought book about animals, about values, and about living on this earth. —•Susan Orlean, author of *The Orchid Thief* and *Rin Tin Tin* —•“A transcendent tale of the American West.” —•S. C. Gwynne, author of *Empire of the Summer Moon* and *Rebel Yell* —•“Gripping and fascinating! Wolf versus wolf, wolf versus man, man versus man. —•Margaret Atwood, author of *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *Hag-Seed* (via Twitter) —•“Beautiful, detailed. . . [*American Wolf*] centers on the rise, reign, and family life of O-Six, matriarch of the Lamar Canyon pack and so well-known to park visitors that the *New York Times* gave her an obituary. —•Publisher’s Weekly (starred) —•“Utterly compelling.... Blakeslee’s masterly use of fiction writing techniques to ratchet up the tension will hook a wide swath of readers. —•Library Journal (starred) —•“Nate Blakeslee has achieved the Jack London-like feat of creating a great story whose main character is an animal.” —•Nicholas Lemann, author of *The Big Test* and *Redemption* —•“There are so few wolves in the West that each one can cast a kind of enchantment. This fine book takes one animal, and uses it as a way to understand the vectors that whipsaw the last wild places. It will linger in your mind and heart. —•Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature* and *Radio Free Vermont* —•“*American Wolf* is an intimate and riveting book about America’s most iconic and embattled predator.... A wonderful and welcome addition to the pantheon of nature literature. —•John Vaillant, author of *The Tiger and The Golden Spruce* —•“A well-rendered story... evenhanded but clearly and rightly on the side of the wolves. —•Kirkus Reviews —•“Gorgeously written, and offering stunning insights into both animal and human nature, *American Wolf* is a masterly feat of science journalism. —•Michael Finkel, author of *The Stranger in the Woods* —•“As in a great novel, we are swept along in a multi-generational saga involving matters of character, courtship, and shifting social relations.” —•Tom Kizzia, author of *Pilgrim’s Wilderness* —•“Heartbreaking front-line coverage of our war on the wild.... Blakeslee hauntingly gives the victims faces, families, and stories. A quietly angry, aching, important book. —•Charles Foster, author of *Being a Beast* —•“A compelling environmental drama of the reintroduction of wolves to the Rockies, as clear-sighted on human politics as it is on wolf politics.” —•Neil Ansell, author of *Deep Country* —•“The *Game of Thrones* story of

modern western wolves, [unfolding] in just as riveting a fashion. It is an absolutely mesmerizing read. • Dan Flores, author of *Coyote America: A Natural and Supernatural History* “American Wolf gives us true profiles of wolf lives lived in their actual families. And when humans get involved, the trajectory of their lives forever changes.” • Carl Safina, author of *Beyond Words: What Animals Think and Feel* “Written with heart, but not sentimentality, *American Wolf* is nothing less than Shakespearean tragedy played out against the backdrop of our troubled relationship with nature.” • J.B. MacKinnon, author of *The Once and Future World*

Nate Blakeslee is a writer-at-large for *Texas Monthly*. His first book, *Tulia*, won the J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize and the Texas Institute of Letters nonfiction prize, and was a finalist for the PEN/Martha Albrand Award. The *Washington Post* called *Tulia* “one of the most important books about wrongful convictions ever written. Blakeslee lives in Austin, Texas, with his family.

*American Wolf: A True Story of Survival and Obsession in the West* by prize winning author Nate Blakeslee, is my choice for the best nonfiction book of 2017. It is an entirely factual recounting of the story of 0-Six, an Alpha female wolf named for the year of her birth. Born in Yellowstone Park, she and her mate led the Lamar Valley pack. She was a fierce protector. She was also a great hunter who was able to bring down an elk by herself to feed her family. This isn't just a bucolic story of wolves raising their litters and caring for each other, although the reader will learn an amazing amount about the compassionate and fascinating behavior of wolves. It is a story, with 0-Six at the epicenter, of politics, lawyers, the environment, ecology, hatred, fear, love, loss, and beauty. The descriptions of the packs in Yellowstone and what happens to them over the few short years when the government decides to allow hunters to once again hunt them (after the wolves had been protected) will anger you and leave you feeling helpless. That is not a reason to avoid this book however. *American Wolf* has some memorable people you will be introduced to, as remarkable as the wolves you will come to love. It is very interesting that these people do not interfere with the natural course of things as far as the wolves' cycle of life is concerned. Only once is one wolf air dropped some meat. He is dying because he was shot by a hunter and he is caught in a crevice he can't get out of. Three days later he is dead. You will learn as much about human behavior as you do about the wolves. We are not so very different. Notes, extensive interviews (even with the man who killed 0-Six) and videos were used to write this book. The author's descriptions of the wolves are amazing. He brought 0-Six and her family alive for me. If I didn't want to go see

wolves in the wild before, I do now. I hope I get the chance.

I have been in awe of wolves for as long as I can remember. Their strength and beauty, their speed and endurance, and their family bonds that are like few other animals. For years, I have read about them, admired them, and have even had the privilege of seeing a few at Wolf Haven in Washington state. In fact, there is a cookbook that was published years ago that gets mentioned at some point in the book - I have that cookbook. I have carried that cookbook around through more military moves than I care to remember. I even looked up the very recipe I read about when I finished the book. So as I was saying, everything about wolves is incredible to me, not least of which is the story of their introduction to Yellowstone and the amazing recovery the park as a whole began to experience. So it was with some excitement - tinged with trepidation - that I picked up Nate Blakeslee's book. For all of the science that wolves have in their corner, for all of the people they have pulling for them, there remain those who believe the wolf is a fur-covered plague - an animal who has no meaning for existence other than to be killed. And no true and honest book about wolves can avoid this painful fact - which means, at its core, heartbreak for the reader who is a wolf advocate. The book covers the life - and yes, the death - of O-Six, a female wolf who led a very successful pack within the boundaries of Yellowstone. It covers the reintroduction of the wolves to the park, including much of the politics involved in that decision and in the years thereafter. Unusually, Blakeslee intersperses the fascinating details of the wolves with that of the hunter who killed O-Six. His real name is not given, and it is easy to understand why. There are alternating chapters throughout between what is happening with the wolves, and the thoughts and actions of the hunter. It makes for an unusually suspenseful account in a non-fiction book, but it works extremely well. Though I knew where the story was going - where it *\*must\** be going - I still held my breath, and I'm not ashamed to admit that I cried. I cried for all of the people who had followed this amazing wolf for so long, I cried for her pack, and I cried for the lack of understanding that led to that point. Before I get vilified for being a snowflake - let me be clear: I grew up in a hunting family. We lived for years on the deer and the elk that we brought in, as well as the food we grew in our garden. I have no problem with those who hunt for food. I've done it, and my family does it. However, the idea of taking a life simply for the kill is abhorrent to me - as it should be to everyone. Killing just for the sake of killing is wrong, and should be condemned as such. The only downside to the arc that I got is that it had no pictures. I do hope that the finished version will have some, because I feel that it would be a tremendously impactful addition, for readers unfamiliar with the O-Six saga to be able to see and admire the pack(s). Otherwise - Blakeslee has done an incredible job showing wolves for the amazing

creatures they are, making clear the politics that gets played with these creatures' lives, and showcasing the amazing people who give their all for these animals every single day. It's an amazing book, and one that I hope will open the eyes of more people to the enduring American spirit that is our American Wolf.

I wish I could give this book more than 5 stars - I thoroughly enjoyed it! Wolves in Yellowstone were hunted and killed until they were eradicated in the 1920s. In 1995 there was drive to bring the wolves back to Yellowstone - and this has been fraught with controversy. Ecologists have seen improvements in the ecosystem since the wolves return. Hunters dislike competing with the wolves for elk. Ranchers fear losing their livestock to hungry wolves. Amidst this backdrop there is 06 - a beautiful gray wolf, an amazing hunter, a true alpha female. Born in 2006 and first coming into her own 2 years later, Nate Blakeslee brings the story of this wolf into focus. Through the eyes of those who loved and respected her - Rick McIntyre and his fellow "wolf-watchers" - the reader comes to know this wolf through her courtship, hunting abilities, and her pups. Blakeslee always respects the fact 06 was wolf, and in that there is mystery and a wildness. 06 belonged to her environment, and Blakeslee keeps her there. In this book we learn about the Wolf Project of Yellowstone, and the individuals whose dream it is to bring the wolves back to Yellowstone. We also meet the residents nearby, hunters and ranchers, and learn their concerns about living in close proximity to these wild, mysterious hunters. Blakeslee brings us all of this in writing that clear, concise, interesting and understandable. He describes Yellowstone so that the reader can be transported to beautiful valleys in summer, and the cold solitude of winter. I so thoroughly enjoyed this story and got very swept up in it. I've learned things I didn't know, and this book makes me want to continue to learn. Loved this!!

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