

# KIRKUS REVIEWS

## TITLE INFORMATION

### **WILDLIFE IN WILD LANDS**

*Photography for Conservation in Southern South America*

Laura Crawford Williams

My Wild Life Press LLC (240 pp.)

\$49.95 hardcover

ISBN: 978-0-9983714-0-5; November 1, 2017

## BOOK REVIEW

Debut author Williams presents a book of wildlife photographs from the Southern Cone of South America.

This well-translated bilingual (English and Spanish) book of animal photography depicts the rainforests and wetlands in the southern part of the South American continent. In such an environment there are, of course, many animals to see, from a jaguar cleaning his fur to a number of common vampire bats roosting in a hollowed-out tree (an image that is just as unsettling as it sounds). The book then moves to other environments in this portion of the continent, such as Andean Patagonia. It's in the book's incorporation of such locales that the reader truly begins to see the biodiversity of the region. The animals pictured include the expected, such as king penguins, which "are very careful about choosing the safest place to enter the surf"; the frightening, such as the Chaco golden knee tarantula that's "bred and sold in pet stores"; and the bizarre, including the southern screamer, which appears much like a duckling despite its strange name. Williams accompanies each photo with a short description that usually gives a fact about the animal ("The Black Vulture inhabits relatively open areas") and, if necessary, commentary regarding the danger to its survival ("The South American Tapir is a nearly endangered species"). The book concludes with a behind-the-scenes look at what it took to generate such images—one photo shows the author changing a tire on an SUV, for instance—and shows the many people involved in making the book project possible.

Endnotes such as these are informative, but the overall focus is firmly on the animals and the places in which they live. The images are all of professional quality, but they're at their best when their subjects are engaged in action. The average reader has likely seen plenty of photos of, say, a jaguar sitting in a jungle, but seeing something like a dolphin gull at work building its nest presents intriguing context on how an animal specifically interacts with the world. A picture of a South American gray fox carrying one of its kits to a new burrow provides an intimate look at what it means to survive in the wild. In contrast, an image of two burrowing parrots is striking due to the odd look of the birds (with their greenish heads and looks of total concentration), but otherwise, it's not much different from images of avians that one might see in other, similar collections. Taken altogether, however, the book very clearly shows the wide array of often strangely named creatures in rainforest areas; they're home to much more than just the colorful parrots that laypeople might expect. Indeed, readers who are largely unfamiliar with the locale will find this book most engaging. Who knew that there was something called a Patagonian hog-nosed skunk, for example—let alone that it "will stamp its feet when feeling threatened"?

Pictures of an impressive range of wildlife, although some creatures are more surprising than others.

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