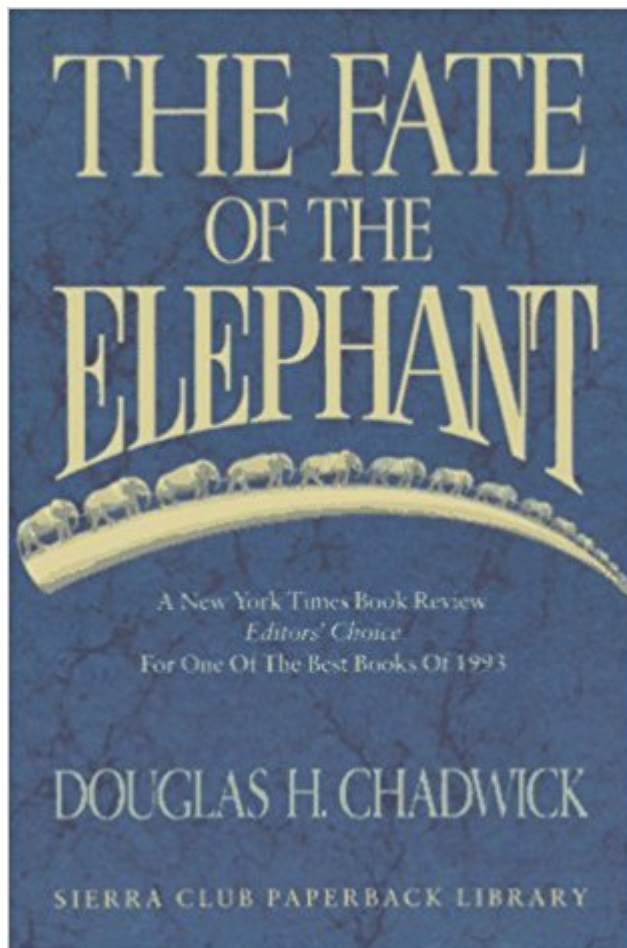




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The Fate Of The Elephant



Synopsis

Noted wildlife biologist and author Chadwick provides a comprehensive exploration of the natural history and modern fate of the world's elephants, centered around the theme that "we are discovering a creature greater in many ways--and more like us--than we had ever imagined it to be. Even as we are destroying it." Annotated bibliography. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

It's no longer news that animals are being driven to extinction at an astonishing rate, with some scientists now estimating that 1,000 species disappear each year. What is news is that the species are increasingly familiar to us: lions, grizzly bears, gorillas, whales, black terns--and elephants. In the 19th century, writes Douglas Chadwick in this superb journalistic study, Africa boasted more than 10 million of the giant pachyderms; there are fewer than half a million today, a situation mirrored in Asia. The slaughter is largely the result of the illegal ivory trade, conducted through such nations as Japan and Singapore, which ignore international conventions to keep the barbarous supply rolling. Sanctions on those nations are needed, says Chadwick--but so is much more. This sobering book offers an encyclopedic look at the life history of the African and Asian elephants, which, unless something is done now, may not be long for the world.

On assignment for National Geographic magazine, Chadwick (A Beast the Color of Winter) spent most of two years observing elephants in American zoos and throughout Africa, India and southeast

Asia. He also followed the ivory trade, visiting carvers and shops in Tokyo, Delhi, Hong Kong and Bangkok. His marvelous account depicts elephants at work and at play, profiles the people who work with them and sadly notes that their habitat is in decline. Chadwick's description of his African adventures covers much of the same ground as Ian and Oria DouglasHamilton's *Battle for the Elephants*; his report on the Asian elephants is especially welcome, since their story has been generally neglected. Chadwick visits an elephant reserve and a training camp in India; an expert on white elephants takes him to see the King's herd in Bangkok; in Malaysia, he watches a rescue team capture and relocate a wild elephant. In addition to telling many fascinating stories, Chadwick reminds us that the elephant's future is bleak: too many people, too little land and unstable governments all threaten the animal's survival. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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In a mere 475 pages, Douglas Chadwick's *The Fate of the Elephant* manages to thoroughly cover a range of subjects almost as large as the elephants that serve as its focus. Originally assigned by National Geographic as a piece on "elephants of the world," each chapter in the book opens in a new setting, from the elephant enclosure at an American zoo, to the parts of Africa and Asia where elephants can still be found in the wild. From the workshop of Japanese ivory artisans to a Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) conference in Switzerland, he also journeys to elephantless areas where their presence is still felt. Knowing a little about man's history with elephants, I assumed—even daresay expected—that at least some parts of the book would be dedicated to the kind of finger-pointing induction of guilt that has come to be seen as a means to inspire action on the part of the general public. Refreshingly, there is none of that to be found here, yet the final emotions that the reader comes away with are no less strong. Chadwick does not trivialize the fact that, for him, writing *The Fate of the Elephant* was as much a personal exploration of a subject of lifetime interest as a travel adventure undertaken for the sake of National Geographic. His frankly portrayed moments of sheer joy and of utter frustration become highs and lows for the reader as well. Along these same lines, Chadwick skillfully avoids simplifying those engaged in the struggle over what should be done with elephants into "good guy" and "bad guy" camps. Though having just seen the body of a faceless and bloody young bull elephant lying in the bush, he does not celebrate when reports of killed poachers come across his radio. Liking poaching to the illegal drug trade, he knows that the crises of a burgeoning population have pushed many of those living on the margins into these high-risk jobs, while those orchestrating it all sit out of the way in relative safety. The ever-growing human population also drives habitat degradation, the

other main threat to African wildlife. It comes as a shot of realism when Chadwick points out that these days, even Africans have to go to parks and zoos to see African wildlife. Describing the World War I bolt-action guns with which many park rangers must ridiculously face off against AK-47-toting poachers, Chadwick highlights one of the great challenges to wildlife conservation: economics. Not only does poaching rob resources from local economies, but even legal industries such as tourism pay few monetary returns at the local level. He advocates the need to make conservation economically viable to local people, not just something imposed by the government of the moment. Chadwick integrates scientific concepts in a subtle way that guarantees that even those simply looking for a good "animal tale" will come away as more knowledgeable armchair naturalists. Judging from the brevity of his bibliography relative to the amount of material packed into the book, this integrated approach may be the same way that Chadwick picked up much of his technical knowledge of elephants—not by purely poring over scientific texts as much as by living alongside some of the best in the field, in the field. The only missing element in Chadwick's work seems to be information about the time period in which he was in each place. While perhaps intended as a testament to the timeless quality of life spent in elephants' presence, it seemed most peculiar in a book whose message was a sense of urgency, that time was of the utmost importance.

While Douglas H. Chadwick's extraordinary book is titled "The Fate of the Elephant" and does an incredible job of presenting the decidedly bleak future of this magnificent animal in the face of an incredible human-induced onslaught, it does more than just examine that issue. At its heart, this book is about the fate of the "natural world

Incredibly detailed reporting and an easy, conversational writing style make this one of the most rewarding books I have ever read. The author writes of travelling the world, observing human and elephant interactions in dozens of different countries; part travelogue, part eco-primer, and wholly absorbing. And Chadwick makes a convincing case for keeping the African elephant on the endangered species list. This book is perhaps even more important now than when it was published — only recently CITES (the UN group that makes the endangered species list) decided to allow some southern African countries to sell ivory again. I'd love to see the author's thoughts on these new developments. Anyone concerned with conservation or animal welfare should read this book. Personally, I found Chadwick's work so interesting and educational that after reading it I booked a trip to Africa to see these great beasts — before the opportunity is gone forever

It has a lot of good information on poaching in North Africa and a lot of other places in the world that elephants were poached at. It really makes you see the world like an elephant as though you were an elephant. It brings out your greatest fantasies about elephants that you would never dream of. This book was just really great.

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