

## A MEETING WITH THE ANIMALS, ON THEIR OWN TERMS

IN *BEYOND WORDS: What Animals Think and Feel* (July 14), Dr. Carl Safina turns his attention to wolves, elephants, and whales to ask big questions about nature.

In the first segment of the book, Safina traveled to Kenya to commune with wild elephants and experienced a reversal. “I really did go there thinking I would understand elephants by understanding how they are like us,” he says. There, he met American conservationist Cynthia Moss, Director of the Amboseli Elephant Research Project, who gave him a new perspective. “She said, ‘I’m not really interested in how they are like us. I’m interested in how they are like them.’”

In the next segment, Safina traveled to Yellowstone National Park, where wolves have been reintroduced in recent years. “Having the good fortune of being with some of the best people in the world was fantastic,” Safina says. “It was extraordinary to me to meet with Rick McIntyre. The things he related to me were breathtaking.”

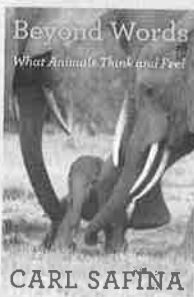


Carl Safina

Photo courtesy April Saul

Asked if his book is meant to drive readers to activism, Safina has a thoughtful answer. “I think the main thing is to support policies that let other creatures have the room they need to live and be who they are,” Safina says. “I would like for people to realize that the lives of animals are vivid to them and they want to stay alive as much as we do. There’s nothing less valid about the life of an elephant or a whale than a human being. They are more of a net positive in enriching our lives and I think it would be good if we all got that perspective and other people shared this idea of leaving them room. It’s really all they need and it’s really all I’m asking.” — C.M.

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CARL SAFINA

organization was first designed to rescue American captives during the Iran hostage crisis, and although the crisis was resolved before JSOC could unleash its elite units, the group grew exponentially over the next two decades. Naylor (*Not a Good Day to Die: The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda*, 2005) provides a whirlwind tour of the organization’s many covert operations, from apprehending Manuel Noriega in Panama to hunting war criminals in the former Yugoslavia. But the author’s primary interest is the war on terror, beginning with 9/11. Not only does he characterize JSOC as the allied forces’ most essential wing, but he also describes the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as a major opportunity for American task forces. As Lt. Col. Pete Blaber put it, “At this point, the staff of our higher headquarters was ready to approve just about anything we brought to them—and they did.” Naylor delivers an unquestionably comprehensive history, but the prose sometimes drowns in names, dates, and clinical anecdotes. Occasionally, the author provides vivid visual descriptions, but most of the book is devoid of human faces. The prose is written in emotionless Army-speak, and many of Naylor’s sources spoke, as can be expected in such a book, on condition of anonymity. As one nameless official describes JSOC, “It was so, so top secret that it was extremely difficult to do our job.” In the prologue, the author admits that this secrecy slowed his research. His information is strong, but his story is monotonous, and the final chapter dully peters out.

**Packed with anecdotes that will appeal to dedicated military buffs, but the encyclopedic prose will lose average readers. (16-page color photo insert; 2 maps)**



### MARY MCGRORY *The First Queen of Journalism*

Norris, John  
Viking (352 pp.)  
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Mary McGrory’s life (1918–2004) as a Pulitzer Prize-winning Washington columnist is so interesting that it’s hard to understand why there hasn’t been a book about her until now. Enter Norris (*The Disaster Gypsies: Humanitarian Workers in the World’s Deadliest Conflicts*, 2007, etc.) with this balanced, page-turning biography.

Despite the subtitle, it seems McGrory might have been the last queen as well: in her regal bearing and imperious manner, her influence on politicians and journalists, and her manner of getting others to do her bidding. Early on, it seems a little off-putting that so much is made of her romantic life (or public lack thereof), her attractiveness, and her gender in general. Ultimately, however, being a woman who found her voice and came to power during the McCarthy era is crucial to her journalistic singularity. McGrory may well have been a feminist icon, but she wasn’t above playing the frail female when it worked to her advantage or employing her considerable charms in ways that might undermine journalistic objectivity. She dated the future President John F. Kennedy (once), was propositioned

