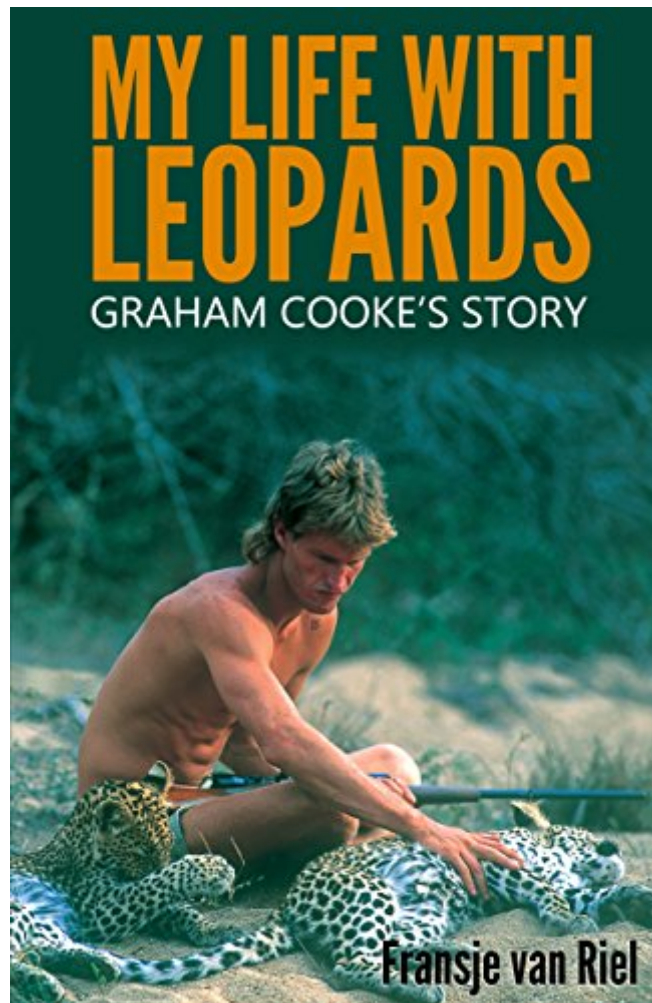


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My Life With Leopards: Graham Cooke's Story



Synopsis

"Set in the spectacular wilderness of the South African lowveld and later in Zambia's Luangwa Valley – both vividly portrayed – this is as poignant a tale of unrequited love as you are ever likely to read. And, like the best animal stories, it tugs at the heartstrings without ever descending into anthropomorphism." Brian Jackman, BBC Wildlife Magazine

"Anyone who has read Joy Adamson's books will rekindle some of that awe of experiencing life in the company of our big cats. Graham Cooke's tale is no less engaging, as written as a first-person account by Fransje van Riel. ... From the start it is clear that over a year Cooke formed a very close bond with his charges, and it's this emotional entanglement that makes the story all the more heart-rending... Author Van Riel does a sterling job of evoking the sights and sounds of the African bush with lush descriptions, and brings readers directly into Cooke's world. I'll admit that the ending brought a tear to my eye." Nerine Dorman, author and editor

"Vividly told, beautifully written with lovely descriptions." Andre Eva Bosch, author and journalist

"A must-read for any wildlife enthusiast." Adel Groenewald

"This compelling story is a must-read for anyone who loves nature and the challenges of helping two young leopards get back to their wild world. Well written, entertaining and emotional; to be enjoyed." Richard Leakey

"No other book I know takes you so deeply into the secret world of the leopard." BBC Wildlife

In 1993 game ranger Graham Cooke was given the opportunity to parent two six-week-old leopard cubs. Establishing himself and his charges in a small tented camp in the middle of the South African bush, Graham set about his task of habituating the cubs to the dangers of the wild in preparation for their eventual release. But first he had to gain the young leopards' trust. Boycat, the slightly bigger male cub proved to be an easy-going character and, after his initial reservations, he soon settled in. His sister Poepface however was not that easily swayed. Her complex character and strong reservations appeared to persist, despite Graham's efforts to win her trust. Eventually Poepface relented and so began a love story; a powerful bond. When a year later Graham prepared the cubs for their release in the remote South Luangwa Valley he knew it was the beginning of the end. Joining the cubs on daily walks to familiarise them with their new home. Graham knew that soon it would be time to let go. Set in both in the bushveld of South Africa and the wilderness that is the South Luangwa Valley in Zambia, My Life with Leopards is a story with the universal theme of love, loss, danger and heartbreak.

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Customer Reviews

I read this just before leaving to visit Zambia. Cannot believe that anyone lived the way he did but it certainly was interesting to be in Zambia and be thinking about someone who was so dedicated to a couple of animals in that environment.

Graham Cooke's story of his close bond with two young leopards touched me greatly. Beautifully told, i felt i was carried along with every step of thier journey to the end and grew to know these brave young leopards and the game ranger who cared and nurtured for them with such passion and love. Containing fabulous photographs picturing the leopards journey from the wilds of South Africa to Zambia, this is a must have read for all those who love Africa ...it's beauty, it's wildlife and it's dangers. 5/5

Anyone who has read Joy Adamson's books will rekindle some of that awe of experiencing life in the company of our big cats.Graham Cooke's tale is no less engaging, written as a first-person account by Fransje van Riel. We enter the world of the somewhat whimsically named Boycat and Poepface, a brother-and-sister pair of leopard cubs, and follow their antics from the bush camp in

Londolozzi to the Zambian wilderness and their eventual release. From the start, it is clear that over a year Cooke formed a close bond with his charges, and it's this emotional entanglement that makes the story all the more heart-rending. Humans and leopards live in two different worlds, and this is something Cooke understands. Nature is red in tooth and claw, and the cubs must learn to survive in a dangerous world, or die. Author Van Riel does a sterling job of evoking the sights and sounds of the African bush with lush descriptions, and brings readers directly into Cooke's world. Some memorable moments include Cooke's description of the hat game he used to play with Boycat or the chaos the cubs caused during filming in a Maasai homestead. But not once do we forget how dangerous the African bush is. Cooke's brushes with danger serve as stern reminders that the untamed areas are exactly as the name suggests - a wilderness, where man had better tread softly. With this in mind, readers had best beware that any real-life account involving wild animals is bound to reflect nature's harsh existence. What is abundantly clear is that Cooke gave his all to make a personal sacrifice, facing death in the process, to see to these big cats' eventual release. This is not a story about conservation, but a snapshot, illustrating a brief moment when two very different worlds touched. I'll admit that the ending brought a tear to my eye.

A fantastic read! So well written that I felt as if I was in the bush with Graham and the leopards. Fransje's descriptions not only sets the scene but also the atmosphere of Graham's life with these two leopards. Through the joys and the sadness one feels as if you are part of this journey. Wonderful read and would highly recommend the book for anyone's Christmas stocking.

A heart-felt, touching story of Graham's experience raising to leopard cubs. Being an animal lover, I was engaged in the story, but when I step back and consider some of the unnecessary details provided and the mundane descriptions of the locations and activities, I realized it was the story that grabbed me, not the writing.

Graham Cooke's story told through Fransje van Riel's words is an amazing story of courage, love, triumph, and sadness as he rears two amazing leopard cubs to re-wild back into the plains of Africa. Heartfelt and emotional, this book will make you smile and touch your heart. The writing will make you feel like you're in the heart of Africa. Anyone with interest in big cats and a love of wildlife should read this book.

I have had the good fortune to camp out and trek through the South African wilds of Kruger Park.

Reading this graceful, touching story was the next best thing to being there again. Pleasurable Kingdom: Animals and the Nature of Feeling Good (MacSci) The Exultant Ark: A Pictorial Tour of Animal Pleasure Second Nature: The Inner Lives of Animals (MacSci)

The story of Graham, Boycat, and Poepity evokes a world of innocence, beauty, and simple devotion. This is a must read for those passionate about animals. Through Graham's voice, the reader is gently guided through a true love and all it brings to those who dare to experience it.

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