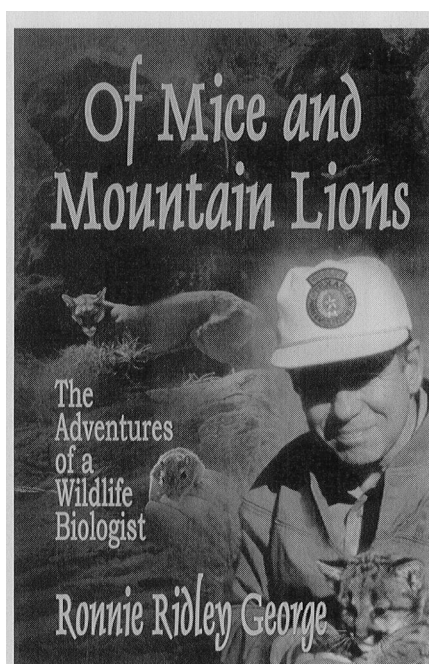


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Book Reviews



OF MICE AND MOUNTAIN LIONS: THE ADVENTURES OF A WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST, by Ronnie Ridley George. 2004. 170 pp. Eakin Press, Austin, Texas. \$19.95 (softcover). A review by **Hal L. Black**.

Reading this book will encourage some students to more eagerly remain steadfast in their pursuit of degrees in wildlife resources, range management, and conservation biology. Others may change majors and stay inside with their computers. Obviously, Ronnie George saw that the benefits of a career managing and researching wildlife and wildlife habitat outweighed the moments of cold, humidity, rattlesnakes, and the like that might be called the costs of this profession.

"Who wouldn't want to read these stories?" was a question that kept coming back to me. So did "How many more does he have?" and "How many more are unwritten by the numerous field biologists in their 'gone-fishin' years?" The wonderful col-

lection of stories made me more committed to writing my own and might also encourage others to sit and write and share their own stories with a larger audience.

The quotes at the beginning of chapters tie in nicely to the stories that follow. "A badger in the flower bed," "Why are you burning our house?" "You don't sweat, do you?" "We don't want to accidentally surround the female lion"—these all shout: "READ ON."

George was especially good at showing how the commonplace stuff of life is fun and important. Who hasn't had a Derby Café in his or her life? And who hasn't found the food and folks at their Derby more to their liking than at a fast-food stop?

Because of George's writings, I feel as if I know Iowa (especially the winters) and Texas much better. Maybe it's just the way they talk in Texas; if it is, I like it. The expressions "run down your elbow juicy," "muddy-water sailors," "burned up a bunch of film," and "not for a mere governor" made me want to sit down with him over cornbread at Derby's and hear his stories. I think, too, he could be the kind of guy who might want to hear some of mine.

Again, thousands of stories like George's are out there, and this book might help ferret them out.

Now to the customary criticism. Only one: Chapters 27-30 could have been omitted. The tenor and the direction of the book changed here. As a reader, I was into the stories that I felt characterized his career. The first 120 pages were great; the last 36, although interesting, should have contained more stories from the field.

It is evident that George remained interested, even in later years, in experiencing wildlife in three dimensions and then sharing with laymen the excitement of mice and mountain lions.—**Hal L. Black**, *Professor of Integrative Biology, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; e-mail: hal_black@byu.edu.*