



We Bought a Zoo: The Amazing True Story of a Young Family, a Broken Down Zoo, and the 200 Wild Animals that Changed Their Lives Forever

By Benjamin Mee

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When Benjamin Mee decided to uproot his family and move them to an unlikely new home—a dilapidated zoo where more than 200 exotic animals would be their new neighbors—his friends and colleagues thought he was crazy. Mee’s dream was to refurbish the zoo and run it as a family business. The grand reopening was scheduled for spring, but there was much work to be done and none of it easy for the novice zookeepers. Tigers broke loose, money was tight, the staff grew skeptical, and family tensions reached a boiling point.

Then tragedy struck. Katherine, Ben’s wife, had a recurrence of a brain tumor, forcing Benjamin and his two young children to face the heartbreak of illness and the devastating loss of a wife and mother. But inspired by the memory of Katherine and the healing power of the incredible family of animals they had grown to love; Benjamin and his kids resolved to move forward, and today the zoo is a thriving success.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Between his wife Katherine's diagnosis of glioblastoma and her quiet death less than three years later, Mee (*The Call of DIY*), his siblings and his mother bought a bedraggled zoo, complete with decaying buildings, a ragtag group of animals, an eclectic staff and a reputation that had been quickly going to the wolves. In this occasionally charming (to his children: Quiet. Daddy's trying to buy a zoo) but overly wordy book, Mee writes about caring for his dying wife and their two young children, dealing with Code Red emergencies (when a dangerous animal escapes its confines), hiring staff, learning about his new two- and four-footed charges and setting his sights on refurbishing his zoo into a sanctuary for breeding and raising endangered animals. Mee tends to meander with too-long explanations for one-sentence points, and the awe he feels about each individual animal is repetitive. Coupled with Britishisms that are never explained and a curious lack of varied wild animal stories, this book that was obviously meant to make animal lovers roar with pleasure will only make them whine with frustration. (*Sept.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

When writer Mee's father died, his mother needed to sell the house and move to a smaller place—so the entire family decided to buy a zoo. Mee's sister had seen an advertisement for the sale of the Dartmoor Wildlife Park, a small zoo in Devonshire in the southwest of England. After a long series of negotiations, licensing snafus, and the inevitable family conflicts, the author, his mother, and his brother moved into the park's rundown house and started running a zoo. Though they owned the grounds and its 200 animals outright, they still had to pay 20 staff members, feed the animals, and upgrade the grounds. During the first week, a jaguar escaped, and the author and his brother began to realize what they'd gotten themselves into. Through eradicating the plague of rats, clearing out years of rubbish to reveal usable buildings, and battling with banks for operating expenses, the author and his staff gradually pulled the zoo back from the brink of closure. The emotional appeal of the zoo's rescue is wonderfully limned in Mee's practical, good-humored prose. --Nancy Bent

Review

DAILY MAIL "Mee writes most movingly about his wife's fatal illness, his children coming to terms with this, his sprightly old mum and, of course, his 200 wild animals in all their diverse glory." THE BELFAST TELEGRAPH "We Bought a Zoo by Mee is a genuinely heartwarming true story of triumph over devastating events." SHORTLIST "An engaging tale from someone who dared to do something different." THE WESTERN DAILY PRESS "One of the most inspiring books I've read." INTERNATIONAL ZOO NEWS "Hard to put down." ABERDEEN PRESS & JOURNAL **** "Most people who spotted the advert appealing for new owners for an ailing zoo would not even have considered the possibility. Much more likely, they would have dismissed the idea out of hand. But one adventurous family saw a challenge and were prepared to meet it head on."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Adam Nelson:

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Omar Stewart:

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