

Hunting Trips of a Ranchman & The Wilderness Hunter

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Written during his days as a ranchman in the Dakota Bad Lands, these two wilderness tales by Theodore Roosevelt endure today as part of the classic folklore of the West. The narratives provide vivid portraits of the land as well as the people and animals that inhabited it, underscoring Roosevelt's abiding concerns as a naturalist.

Originally published in 1885, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* chronicles Roosevelt's adventures tracking a twelve-hundred-pound grizzly bear in the pine forests of the Bighorn Mountains. Yet some of the best sections are those in which Roosevelt muses on the beauty of the Bad Lands and the simple pleasures of ranch life. The *British Spectator* said the book "could claim an honorable place on the same shelf as Walton's *Compleat Angler*." The *Wilderness Hunter*, which came out in 1893, remains perhaps the most detailed account of the grizzly bear ever recorded. Introduction by Stephen E. Ambrose.

It's no secret that America's most bully president was also its most bully outdoorsman and conservationist; what's often forgotten was how beautifully and authoritatively he wrote about the wilderness and his considerable experiences there. These two pre-White House narratives--*Ranchman* was originally published in 1885, *Wilderness Hunter* eight years later--are rich and vivid. The former chronicles Roosevelt's sojourns in the Dakota Badlands; the latter is an extended love letter to the pleasures and challenges of outdoor life. So what if some of his 19th-century ideas seem politically incorrect by the standards of the next century--magnificent prose is still magnificent prose. "Nowhere, not even at sea," writes the future First Hunter in one haunting passage, "does a man feel more lonely than when riding over the far-reaching seemingly never-ending plains ... [but] after a man has lived a little while on or near them, their very vastness and loneliness and their melancholy monotony have a strong fascination for him." By comparison, the isolation and weight of the Oval Office must have seemed like an afternoon stroll in the park. "Roosevelt's sojourns in the Dakotas, Montana, and Wyoming had a powerful influence on his outlook and politics. Most of all, his time in the West brought him great joy, a joy that is apparent in every page of *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* and *The Wilderness Hunter*." --Stephen E. Ambrose

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