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HILLARY ROSNER

ROAM

Wild Animals and the Race to Repair
Our Fractured World



READER'S GUIDE BY CHRIS GILBERT

1. “Now consider that paved roads, the quintessential icon of human connectivity, serve this function for no other species but us. When you start to really internalize that fact, it’s impossible not to see the world in a whole new light. Think about it: For most other species on the planet, the roads that connect us serve the exact opposite function” (p. 14). Examine your location from an animal’s perspective. Aside from roads, what other taken-for-granted aspects of human development serve as obstacles for wildlife?
2. Rosner notes that “research has repeatedly demonstrated the same thing: Fragmenting habitat into islands leads to huge losses of biodiversity” (p. 37). And, as detailed throughout *Roam*, biodiversity loss creates additional problems. What are some of the cascading consequences for wildlife and humans?
3. “One reason corridors can be so effective for conservation is that they aggregate. Individual corridor projects might be relatively small-scale or hyper-local, such as turning your backyard into a pollinator garden, or replacing your lawn with native plants that provide food and shelter to a host of birds and bugs” (p. 54). How does Rosner illustrate the importance of corridors, big and small, throughout the book? Relatedly, what opportunities do you have to initiate small-scale or hyper-local corridor projects in your own area, and how might they connect to larger conservation efforts?
4. Underscoring the significance of climate corridors, Rosner writes, “as climate change alters ecosystems, even in seemingly tiny or imperceptible ways, animals’ existing home territories may no longer be adequate, and they will venture off in search of what they need. Whether they can reach those potential new habitats depends on the matrix—on what’s in between” (p. 91). With this idea in mind, reflect on “the matrix” in your location. How could climate change impact animal migration in your city, state, or region? What climate corridors, if any, exist where you are, and what new ones might be necessary?
5. “I’d been invited along by two bat biologists—one American, one Mexican—who are working with a local conservation area and the ejidatarios, as the residents are called, to preserve and regrow a corridor of agaves that can help both bats and humans” (p. 119). How exactly are agave corridors beneficial for humans and bats? What additional examples of mutually beneficial corridors can you identify?
6. “Consumers, Ibarra pointed out, could demand change. ‘People that think they are totally removed from the game have the power to change the game,’ she said. ‘They’re not removed from this. There’s responsible consumption’” (p. 129). What are some examples of responsible consumption? How can individual purchasing decisions promote ecological connectivity and conservation?
7. “These ideas have been the basis for successful conservation programs in the US, including the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park—where their absence thanks to human obliteration had altered the landscape and their return allowed trees to regrow along streams and rivers, which enabled beavers to come back, which created new wetland habitat for a range of species, and so on” (p. 144). As referenced above, a key feature of rewilding is the reintroduction of predators to an area. How do you explain this idea of a predator regenerating an ecosystem, and how does this serve as a powerful example of ecological connectivity?

8. “The paper’s findings presented a familiar but increasingly urgent quandary for conservation. Getting more people outdoors and into nature has long been seen as key to convincing them to value and protect it—but not if the cost is loving natural areas to death” (p. 166). From your perspective, how much human involvement in nature is enough? Where is the line between too little and too much, and how should we balance access to nature with preservation?
9. As detailed in Chapter 7, several species are actually thriving because of human activity. What are these species, and what enables them to thrive in an increasingly fragmented environment? What does their success reveal about adaptability and its limits?
10. Rosner opens Chapter 8 by noting that “social inequality and loss of biodiversity are closely intertwined” (p. 225). In what ways are these two things connected? Given this connection, what potential solutions exist that could address both social inequality and biodiversity loss?
11. “There were so many ways to break the hidden but crucial links holding ecosystems together, so many examples where seemingly minor actions in one place reverberated far away. But those seemingly minor actions worked both ways: They could also help fix things...The most crucial ingredient, always, is people who care” (p. 285). Throughout *Roam*, Rosner details the efforts of those who seek to (re)establish natural connectivity. Which examples particularly struck you and why?
12. “It’s time for us, as a species, to be allies with nature again. We must find ways to expand, rather than continue to limit, the available options for other species. The more we reduce those options, the more work we create for ourselves” (p. 319). From your perspective, what will it take to redefine our relationship with nature? What roles can individuals, communities, and institutions play in this process?
13. As discussed in the Epilogue, why is the act of bearing witness so important? In what ways can bearing witness to nature’s beauty and demise inspire hope and action?
14. In the Author’s Note, Rosner writes, “In this uncertain and disconcerting time, there is one thing about which I remain certain: Curiosity breeds hope” (p. 7). As you reflect on the book, how has your curiosity been sparked? What is a species, environmental group, and/or location mentioned in the book you might explore further?
15. “‘The greatest lie that humans ever told,’ wrote the British author Katherine Rundell, ‘is that the Earth is ours, and at our disposal’” (p. 7). In what ways has this dominant belief distorted our relationship with the natural world and the “marvelous, majestic, magnificent creatures” (p. 7) that inhabit it?