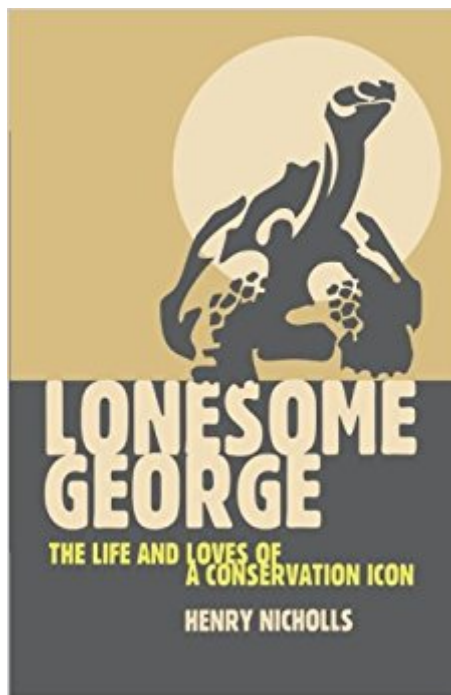




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Lonesome George: The Life And Loves Of The World's Most Famous Tortoise



Synopsis

Lonesome George is a 5 foot long, 200 pound tortoise, between 60 and 200 years old. In 1971 he was discovered on the remote Galapagos island of Pinta, from which tortoises had supposedly been extinct for years. He has been at the Charles Darwin Research Station on Santa Cruz island ever since, on the off-chance that scientific ingenuity will conjure up a way of reproducing him and resurrecting his species. Meanwhile, countless tourists and dozens of baffled scientists have looked on as the celebrity reptile shows not a jot of interest in the female company provided. Today, Lonesome George has come to embody the mystery, complexity and fragility of the unique Galapagos archipelago. His story echoes the challenges of conservation worldwide; it is a story of Darwin, sexual dysfunction, adventure on the high seas, cloning, DNA fingerprinting and eco-tourism.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Galapagos Islands--the wellspring of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution--are the home of giant tortoises, for which the islands are named. Scientists recognize 14 different types of tortoises, 9 of which evolved in isolation on separate islands in the archipelago. The tortoises of the most northerly island, Pinta, were supposed to have been extinct since 1906, but in 1971 a biologist discovered a single, lone tortoise. Lonesome George, as he was later christened, was captured and transported to the tortoise-breeding center at the Charles Darwin Research Station on the island of Santa Cruz. Further searches of Pinta turned up no more tortoises, and it appears that Lonesome

George was the last of his kind. Science writer Nicholls tells the story of Lonesome George, of his rise to conservation poster boy, and of his status as a tourist attraction. This marvelous look at the conservation of nature, as embodied in one enormous reptile, is highly recommended. Nancy Bent

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"Like the best human-focused biographers, Nicholls uses his unusual subject as a springboard into more universal territory. He aptly portrays Lonesome George as a sort of reptilian Forrest Gump, an unwitting bystander continually thrust to the forefront as society's defining crises play themselves out around him."--Wired

"This marvellous look at the conservation of nature, as embodied in one enormous reptile, is highly recommended."--Nancy Bent, Booklist

"Is he gay, impotent or just bored? Read this fascinating book for the full story. It skilfully blends historical derring-do with cutting-edge conservation biology."--NewScientist

"Told with real affection and humour...a fitting tribute to one of the voiceless victims of human progress."--Guardian

"A warmly enjoyable book...a pleasure to read."--www.popularscience.co.uk

"Nicholls' lively tale takes the reader on a journey through the Galapagos - and how much there is to lose."--BBC Focus Magazine

"This is a wonderful tale of an almost mythical beast. Rich in historical detail George's story is one of pathos, despair and hope with some quirky reproductive biology thrown in for good measure. Nicholls has done us all a service, reminding us of the fragility of life in general and of one very special chelonian in particular." -- Tim Birkhead, author of Promiscuity and The Red Canary

"Not simply the story of a tortoise but the tale of that icon of evolution, the Galapagos archipelago, and of the heroics and (sometimes) seeming futility of the conservation movement. The science is compelling, the tone is light - highly recommended."--Olivia Judson, Seed Magazine

"It is a cracking tale - and crackingly well told. It is also salutary. Giant tortoises are indeed extraordinary - but not as strange as human beings."--Colin Tudge, author of The Secret Life of Trees

"If Darwin were alive today he would be fascinated by Henry Nicholls' splendid account of this solitary survivor from Pinta Island. A must for anyone who cares about extinction or has a soft spot for the remarkable history of a very singular animal."--Janet Browne, author of Charles Darwin: A Biography

"The literary device of placing a reptilian icon at the centre of a dynamic play about science, conservation and our attitudes to nature results in a highly readable book that has much to say about the ways we flounder around in our attempts to protect things that seem important to us."--Nature

"Lonesome George will do for the cause of science and preservation in the Galapagos what Jonathan Weiner's The Beak of the Finch did a decade

before--entertain, enlighten and encourage us all to do our part to preserve not just these islands, but Earth itself. --Michael Shermer, author of *In Darwin's Shadow*, in *THE SKEPTIC*

"Nicholls is a brilliant storyteller and narrative stylist in the finest tradition--an emotional but fact-filled call for action. --The Skeptic

"Concincious, comprehensive and balanced. Everyone with an interest in conservation should read this account and consider its implications. --Trends in Evolution and Ecology

"Well written and fascinating--Nicholls's passion for his subject and sense of humour are always evident. --Times Literary Supplement

"Manages to package human drama, reproductive biology and a conservation message with humour and exemplary clarity." --Folha de S.Paulo

"Highly readable. I encourage you to read this succinct book and pass it on to your colleagues, even children. --EMBO Reports, Professor Jeffrey Powell, Yale

"In terms that are at once accessible and breezy, he makes an unequivocal case for the sole known remaining individual of the Galapagos giant tortoise subspecies, *Geochelone nigra abingdoni*...Nicholls is a master raconteur...the chapters themselves are marvels of elucidation...Nicholls' effort is both timely and redoubtable, and demands critical attention now." --John Matthew, *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*

Haven't finished reading this book yet. I own a California Desert Tortoise and am interested in the background of their lives.

I read this book to bring myself up to date on the story of Lonesome George and Henry Nicholls does a great job of outlining the events which have affected George's life from his discovery in the early 1970s to the time of publication. The book is easy to read, is well documented and also provides quite a bit of information about the conservation politics of Galapagos.

Bought this after he died. Though I have photos of him when I was in the Galapagos, some years back. Fantastic creature. Too bad he was alone!

I read this book while sailing in the Pacific. I had just got back from the Galapagos literally 3 days before George died and was inspired to pick up this read. I felt an unexplainable sadness once I had found out the last of a species had been lost. Seeing him alive in his encounter was what all animal exhibits are for me, sad. Unlike many of the tortoises on the islands, George was non-active when I observed him. Perhaps he knew he was going to die, or maybe he was depressed. What

WAS obvious was that he was not TRULY living. The Galapagos are changing (unfortunately, for the worse) and this book lightly covers these facts.but..... on to the book review. Though I did enjoy the read, I feel the title is a bit misleading. This book is more about world conservation awareness (and I highly recommend it for that purpose alone). I was hoping to strictly read about 'Lonesome George,' but rather the author uses George as a symbol of specie conservation. Again, the book is both humorous and informative, and the scientific discussions are all well connected to George, but I just wished it had focused more ON HIM. That being said, I DO RECOMMEND THIS BOOK. I'm inspired that there are people out there that dedicate their lives to the preservation and study of beautiful lives. However, if you're looking for an autobiography of 'Lonesome George,' this one leaves many years and details of his life to your imagination.

"I like the thought that when my son grows up, I will take him to the Galápagos and introduce him to George." A sad scientific story about the death of a species and the lonely plight of its last remaining survivor, a giant tortoise from the island of Santa Cruz in the Galapagos given the name Lonesome George-perhaps it should have nicknamed the Galapagos islands given what was taken and plundered from it by the greedy hands of humans. Henry Nicholls has written a witty, sad and informative book detailing the background and plight of the Santa Cruz tortoise and threatened species in general-he has a skill for communicating scientific concepts and terminology into accessible language for the layman like me and also for making the story of Lonesome George sing. I'm only sorry that Henry and his young son will never now get the chance to meet this gentle, lonely soul. Let's hope excellent books like this one help prevent such horrible losses in the future.

I check back every now and then what is recommended for reader's of this book, as I would like to find a similarly enlightening and entertaining non-fiction. Lonesome George is the story of the most probably last tortoise of his subspecies, and conservation efforts to try to find him a mating partner. The book is written with a superb narration that never gets too technical or boring, as we get a lot of stories in the story: about the writer's discoveries in the Galapagos, the efforts to find surviving tortoises, and the overall conservation agenda. Not only an excellent introduction to ecology issues through a fascinating story, but one of the best written non-fictions I have ever read. Still look for if you like this than you will like that recommendations years after reading.

Lonesome George is not just the last of his sub-species of Galapagos giant tortoise, he is also an icon for animal conservation. In Henry Nicholls' new book, the very first full book on Lonesome

George since his chance discovery in 1972, we get a crystal clear picture on what it will take to preserve George's race: the Pinta race of giant Galapagos tortoise. And though, the chances for survival seem slim, Nicholls digs up every conceivable speck of hope and lays it out for us in his own quirky style. When I'd finished reading the book I was left with a feeling that I knew George intimately and that I understood the hurdles biologists, zoologists, conservationists and tortoise lovers are up against in trying to save the Pinta race. Not to be missed is the part about George's Swedish human 'girlfriend' and their steamy escapades. The book also features extensive examples of other animals in peril and how they've been saved or lost. A joy of a read packed with hard facts, moving passages and important lessons. Go George!

The famous last Pinta Island Giant Tortoise, died on 24th June, 2012. This interesting book tells of Lonesome George's unexpected discovery and how it came about, his history and more recent situation, and attempts to redress it. A thorough book, this covers all aspects of the origins, nature and relationships of the Galapagos Island tortoises, while recounting the particular story of Lonesome George himself, and Henry Nicholls' conversational style makes for very enjoyable reading on a subject that could have been grim. A worthy tribute to a fascinating subject.

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