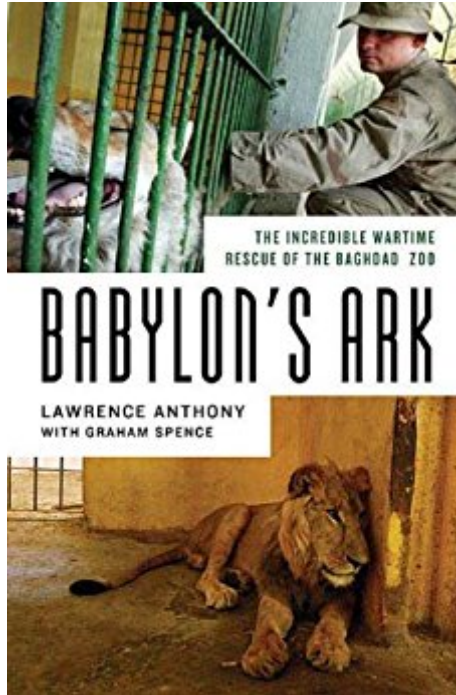


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Babylon's Ark: The Incredible Wartime Rescue Of The Baghdad Zoo



Synopsis

When the Iraq war began, conservationist Lawrence Anthony could think of only one thing: the fate of the Baghdad Zoo, located in the city center and caught in the war's crossfire. Once Anthony entered Baghdad he discovered that full-scale combat and uncontrolled looting had killed nearly all the animals of the zoo. But not all of them. U.S. soldiers had taken the time to help care for the remaining animals, and the zoo's staff had returned to work in spite of the constant firefights. Together the Americans and Iraqis had managed to keep alive the animals that had survived the invasion. *Babylon's Ark* chronicles the zoo's transformation from bombed-out rubble to peaceful park. Along the way, Anthony recounts hair-raising efforts to save a pride of the dictator's lions, close a deplorable black-market zoo, and rescue Saddam's Arabian horses. His unique ground-level experience makes *Babylon's Ark* an uplifting story of both sides working together for the sake of innocent animals caught in the war's crossfire.

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Customer Reviews

I'm not much of a nonfiction reader, but after hearing about Lawrence Anthony's book on the CBS Sunday Morning News I had to have it. Ever slowed down the car to let a squirrel or goose get out

of your way? Ever caught a small bird or mouse in your garage and taken it outside to set free? Although your animal-loving efforts are certainly appreciated, you will never believe the conflicts Anthony faced to save the Baghdad zoo. Arriving on the cusp of the war, Anthony discovers most of the animals have died of starvation or been stolen by looters. With only 36 animals left, guns firing in the distance, food and supplies stolen, and only a handful of people for a staff, Anthony questions whether he should shoot the animals to end their misery or do what he came to Iraq to do. Save the zoo! As an outsider, Anthony paints an amazing picture of a war-torn country, surrounded by American troops, but his focus stays on the animals. The story he tells of the animals that have survived, either because they have sharp claws or teeth (or both) and could defend themselves, is just haunting. His struggles to provide food, water, and safety are a never ending battle. It was also good to read how many American soldiers helped provide aid. Some soldier's bought an entire flock of sheep with their own money for Anthony to use as food for the carnivores. Lawrence was also responsible for setting up an Iraqi SPCA which closed down a black market zoo and rescued tons of animals that were in even worse conditions. They also went in search of Saddam's million-dollar Arabian horses after they came up missing from Saddam's palace, and they rescued a pack of lions from Uday Hussein's abandoned palace.

One thing that can set humans apart from their relatives is that they are quite capable of showing remarkable compassion to other life forms. They unfortunately also can be crueler than other species in ways that are unbelievably ugly. Lawrence Anthony is one of those compassionate people who can make one proud to be human, as much as the crimes against both humans and animals of such pathological personalities as Uday Hussein make one ashamed. In "Babylon's Ark: The Incredible Wartime Rescue of the Baghdad Zoo" Anthony tells a riveting story about how he and a team of international zoo and conservation workers, including the incredibly brave Iraqi zoo staff, managed to rescue many of the animals held at the Baghdad Zoo at the start of the Iraq War, as well as Uday Hussein's private zoo and the unspeakable Luna Park "zoo." To animals at all of these facilities Anthony and his helpers (including some fine young men of the U.S. military and their officers) were angels of mercy. From a blind bear to starving tigers and lions, they bring numerous wild animals back from the brink and gain support for the zoo to be properly maintained for the future. The story of the two dogs still living in a cage of starving lions at Luna Park also lends some credence to the idea that attachment to other species is not totally limited to humans. Wars tend to dehumanize people and any humane action in the midst of violence can soften the horror to some degree. Anthony and the other workers at the Baghdad Zoo produced something more precious

than just saving a few animals- they brought an island of sanity to the insanity of war! All did not end well- one of the tigers so lovingly saved was shot by a drunken U. S.

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