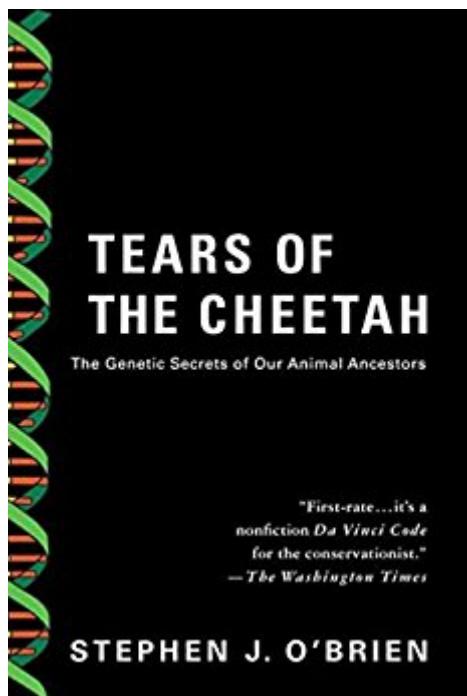


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# Tears Of The Cheetah



## **Synopsis**

The history of life on Earth is dominated by extinction events so numerous that over 99.9% of the species ever to have existed are gone forever. If animals could talk, we would ask them to recall their own ancestries, in particular the secrets as to how they avoided almost inevitable annihilation in the face of daily assaults by predators, climactic cataclysms, deadly infections and innate diseases. In *Tears of the Cheetah*, medical geneticist and conservationist Stephen J. O'Brien narrates fast-moving science adventure stories that explore the mysteries of survival among the earth's most endangered and beloved wildlife. Here we uncover the secret histories of exotic species such as Indonesian orangutans, humpback whales, and the imperiled cheetah—the world's fastest animal which nonetheless cannot escape its own genetic weaknesses. Among these genetic detective stories we also discover how the Serengeti lions have lived with FIV (the feline version of HIV), where giant pandas really come from, how bold genetic action pulled the Florida panther from the edge of extinction, how the survivors of the medieval Black Death passed on a genetic gift to their descendants, and how mapping the genome of the domestic cat solved a murder case in Canada. With each riveting account of animal resilience and adaptation, a remarkable parallel in human medicine is drawn, adding yet another rationale for species conservation—mining their genomes for cures to our own fatal diseases. *Tears of the Cheetah* offers a fascinating glimpse of the insight gained when geneticists venture into the wild.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Tears of the Cheetah is an interesting book on many fronts. The author gives an inciteful historical overview of the extinction of species over time. He also presents a thorough picture of HIV from it's inception and through it's migration across multiple species. He provides food for thought on the potential extinction of humans as well. While the book begins somewhat slow for my taste it improves in mid and later chapters. This is a clear understandable presentation of complex and complicated subject matter like DNA mapping, etc. I highly recommend this book for those readers interested in species health, recent scientific advances and the survival of the human species. The book documents the increasing rapidity of medical advances at the microbiotic level of human DNA predicting the eventual eradication of numerous diseases.

It is quite interesting and not only does it educate, but also explains O'Brien's experiences in his investigations.

This is such an amazing book!! I would highly recommend this to anyone

Needed it for a class. Pretty interesting book

I've learned so much from Tears of the Cheetah. While the subject is rather deep; (scientific), it was well written and easy to read. Dr. O'Brian was able to blend history, science and personal experience into a well-written book.-TJ

The book content is great and well worth reading for an overview of the state of genetics in the animal world. The editing in the book is terrible with vast stretches of run on words without appropriate spacing. Took a while to figure out a few sentences-try reading an entire sentence without spaces! very annoying

Smiles for Tears of the Cheetah. O'Brien has the ability to explain very scientific concepts in easy to

understand language.

I am a biology graduate student and was thrilled to get back to reading science for a general audience when I got this book. The book delivered great stories of how our understanding of biology (mainly genetics and evolution) has grown by real leaps and bounds lately. Each chapter is a different scientific adventure of the O'Brien lab; the book reads very much like an *Odyssey*. Sometimes the chapters are closely related (his work on the titular cheetahs clearly helped when he studied lions) and other times only the thinnest of threads brings (the amazingly well-written chapter on HIV seemed a bit out of context). This makes for a great style, as the stories are brief and get right to the interesting meat of the material. If you know academics, everything usually gets stretched out longer and the whole kitchen sink is discussed, but this chapter format avoids those typical traps. These chapters are not just the science but also the social aspects of conducting science. There's the drama of personality clashes on international collaboration, the sweaty, dangerous work in the Everglades, South America and Africa, and the tragedy mixed with hope in the stories on HIV research. A textbook this is not, it moves and each story is just that: a story, not a summary. Know nothing about biology? Yes, you can still read this book. While O'Brien does tend to assume some facts are common knowledge, he puts things in context so that you can at least get an idea. At times you can hear O'Brien's editor requesting explanations and these are sprinkled in often enough to get by. These sections are infrequent and short, so even if you just skip them you'll still get an appreciation for how cool the science is. As a biology grad student, I would rate the most technical language as easily understood by a someone with a few biology college courses under their belt, but even a high school understanding should make the majority of the details accessible.

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