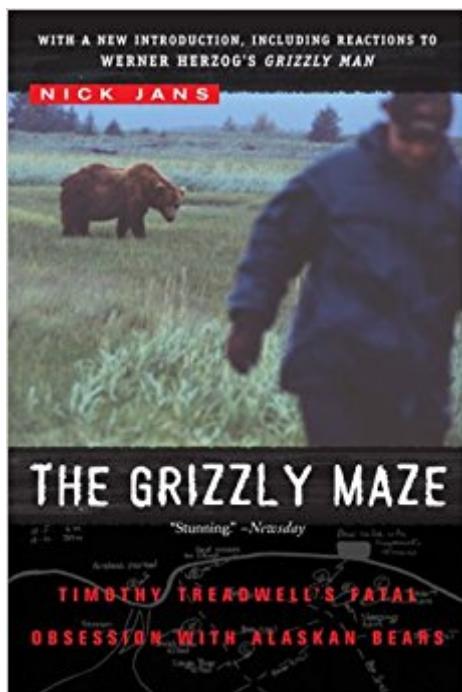


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# The Grizzly Maze: Timothy Treadwell's Fatal Obsession With Alaskan Bears



## Synopsis

With a new introduction on Werner Herzog's film entitled "The Grizzly Man" Timothy Treadwell, self-styled "bear whisperer" • dared to live among the grizzlies, seeking to overturn the perception of them as dangerously aggressive animals. When he and his girlfriend were mauled, it created a media sensation. In "The Grizzly Maze," Nick Jans, a seasoned outdoor writer with a quarter century of experience writing about Alaska and bears, traces Treadwell's rise from unknown waiter in California to celebrity, providing a moving portrait of the man whose controversial ideas and behavior earned him the scorn of hunters, the adoration of animal lovers and the skepticism of naturalists. "Intensely imagistic, artfully controlled prose . . . behind the building tension of Treadwell's path to oblivion, a stunning landscape looms." "Newsday

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Jans (*Tracks of the Unseen*, etc.) presents a fast-paced, thoughtful and evenhanded account of the life and death of self-appointed bear guardian Timothy Treadwell, who, along with a girlfriend, was killed and eaten by grizzlies in Alaska's Katmai National Park in 2003. Treadwell had for 13 summers befriended the bears, camping in territory that includes a labyrinth of trails known as the "grizzly maze." No one knows why the grizzlies, normally tolerant of humans, turned on him. Two bears had to be shot, and many people felt vindicated by his death, because bear biologists and Park Service officials had for years criticized his activities, believing that contact with humans is not in the bears' best interest. Jans is ambivalent about Treadwell (whom he never met), sympathizing

with his desire to communicate with the animals, yet admitting that the man was self-serving, courting the media and writing a mawkish book about his experiences. Jans doesn't stint on the details of Treadwell's troubled past, his gory death and the media frenzy that followed, but he tackles a broader issue as well: our evolving relationship with nature and the folly of this kind of attempt at interspecies interaction. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Adult/High Schoolâ "A self-appointed guardian of grizzlies, Timothy Treadwell and his girlfriend, Amie Huguenard, were attacked and eaten in 2003 by the very animals that were his passion. Jans presents a fair and exacting account of the events that led up to the tragedy, and, in doing so, shows readers the different sides of a complex and controversial man. Woven throughout the account are interviews with Treadwell's proponents, who believed that his motive in camping out in a labyrinth of trails in Alaska's Katmai National Park, known as the grizzly maze, was to protect the bears he observed from poachers. Readers also hear from the bear biologists and park service officials who for years criticized his behavior as dangerous and unscientific. It would be easy enough to dismiss Treadwell as a well-meaning but foolish person whose luck simply ran out. Jans gives his audience much to consider and allows them to decide. As to what type of man Treadwell actually was, the author says he arrives at his answer depending on the day or moment. The bigger issues of humans' relationship with nature and the dangers of interacting too closely with wildlife are also discussed.â "Peggy Bercher, Fairfax County Public Library, VA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I recently read Jans's other book, *A Wolf Called Romeo*, and loved it so much I thought I'd try this one. This book is a very evenhanded treatment of what is a controversial topic. That said, the last 50+ pages of the book seemed to go on too long. Perhaps Jans is so close to the story that he's more intrigued by some of the other personalities than a stranger might be. Overall, I highly recommend this book. The writing is beautiful and the story is pretty fascinating. I just think a good editor should have trimmed out bits and parts to make it a good read for a wider audience. As it stands now, certain sections feel like they are interesting for insiders only. If that makes sense.

I read this book in two days. The book is a short, non biased representation of Timothy Treadwells life. Treadwell is both Saint and sinner depending on the individual being interviewed. The book

does spend a substantial amount of time, close to the end, describing the differences between bear species and their behaviour, that I found very interesting. However I did laugh in fear when the author was explaining what to do in cases of bear attacks.

I became fascinated with this story after seeing the Herzog documentary. Mr. Jans took an extremely difficult topic and constructed a very balanced accounting, presenting all opinions and facets. His writing is crisp and highly readable. Both his analytic mind and humanity shine through.

The author has done a great job in creating a well-balanced account of the Timothy Treadwell tragedy by delving into opposing viewpoints in detail without allowing the "preachiness" of either side to take away the point that 4 lives (2 humans, 2 bears) were lost. An aspect of the book that I did not anticipate, but thoroughly enjoyed, was multiple discussions on human-bear interactions in the past and in the future. Again, the author does a great job of presenting opposing viewpoints for consideration without hammering home an agenda on right vs wrong. Also surprising and incredibly touching is the author's account of himself as a hunter and his viewpoints that have evolved on that time period and the influences on that evolution, including the Treadwell tragedy. Very good writing style, very easy to read, and very thought-provoking.

Having seen the Werner Herzog film, I was curious for an after story account. Hans has resourced the evidence and presented a good post mortem that is very readable. The book slows down in the final chapters, dealing with speculation and bear safety data. Treadwell made the fatal error of believing his own hype. He simply lost his perspective, if he ever had it in the first place. The tragedy was his senseless death and that of his partner and of two beloved bears.

This is really two books in one; only the first half is about Timothy Treadwell. The second half is a mishmash of general bear lore. The author never actually met Treadwell, but was a journalist who worked on the story about Treadwell's death and was thus on the site and involved with the investigation. He also extensively interviewed everyone who knew Tim well. The biographical information on Treadwell is rather scant. Although to be fair, the title makes it clear that the emphasis is on his work with bears and his death, rather than a comprehensive biography. The definitive biography on Treadwell has yet to be written (and perhaps none is needed.) The reader learns Treadwell's real name, where he grew up, and about the athletics he participated in during high school and his two years of college. But we don't learn anything about his family, early life, or

why he was estranged from his family. I would like to have seen more research done on this part of his life. The info about Treadwell's work with the bears is excellent, however, as are the details of the investigation into the fatal bear attacks on Timothy and his friend Amie Huguenard. Jans' is the most balanced and fair account of Treadwell's work that I have seen. He neither vilifies nor venerates Tim as others do, but acknowledges both aspects of Tim's personality and work. I also would have liked to see more about Amie. She wasn't the celebrity Tim was, but she lost her life because of him and deserves to be remembered. There is almost nothing here about her background, but Jans does do a good job of exploring and explaining their relationship. One particularly striking thing in this book is that the author was able to connect the killer bear to Tim's nicknames for him, and find photographs of him in Tim's work. Most other bear experts and the people who worked with Tim in Alaska concur with Jans' identification. The first half of the book - the part about Timothy Treadwell - is definitely the most exciting. The second half has little to do with Tim and doesn't seem to belong in this book. It feels like filler. It's a rather meandering collection of bear facts, Inupiat Eskimo mythology regarding bears, and the author's experiences with bears. I don't mean to imply that it isn't interesting or worthwhile - it is - just that it would be better suited to a book of its own and could be better organized. Nick Jans' expertise and experience with bears is undeniable, as is his respect and admiration for them. He talks about his deep and lasting regret for having later hunted and killed a bear who, two years earlier, had spared the lives of himself and a friend when they peered into his winter den thinking it was empty. Jans also knows and has worked with most of the top scientists in the field of bear biology and behavior, including Dr. Stephen Herrero. In fact, another one of the highlights of this book is Jans' extensive referencing of a then-ongoing study by Herrero and a colleague (Smith) that had not yet been published. Through it, Jans gives us Herrero's most up-to-date (at the time of this book's publication in 2005) information and opinions, some of which have changed since the publication of Herrero's own book *Bear Attacks: Their Causes and Avoidance*. I was also interested in the information about a huge trained Kodiak (a type of grizzly) bear named Bart. He appeared in numerous commercials and movies including *The Edge*, the French film *The Bear, Quest For Fire*, and (although Jans doesn't mention this one but I remember seeing Bart the Bear's name in the credits) *Into The Wild*. But again, these things have nothing to do with Timothy Treadwell, the subject of the book as implied by its title. At times the language is a bit awkward, such as this example: "So - can you get away with violating common sense and turning your nose up at bear precautions and still breathe right?" Some have accused Tim of having a death wish, deliberately taking suicidal risks. Jans doesn't think so, nor do I. After reading this book it seems clear to me that Timothy Treadwell was simply immature. He never really grew up

emotionally and thus still had that teen/young adult attitude that bad things only happen to other people. He had a foolishly inflated, but still very real, confidence that his relationships with the bears would keep him safe. Treadwell was also something of a liar and a con man. I've seen clips of Tim's videos, and they are almost laughably amateurish and unscientific: he's obviously making it up as he goes along. While claiming to serve as a role model and educator about bears for kids, much of Tim's behavior around the bears was shockingly irresponsible. Yet Timothy Treadwell was passionate about his work, and he did accomplish some remarkable things (staying alive for 13 summers while taking the risks he did is one of them.) Jans does an excellent job in showing us the whole person that was Tim. Although *The Grizzly Maze* has its flaws, it is a worthwhile, informative, and very interesting read. Note that if you read the Kindle edition of this book as I did, you will miss out on the superb and very helpful photographs. I ended up checking out a copy from the library to look at them, so I might as well have saved myself the price of the Kindle book. I wish now that I had purchased the dead-tree book, with its photographs, for my permanent library instead. (274 pages)

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