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## Preface

Loren Eiseley, the great naturalist and insomniac, wrote: “[B]ut in the city or the country small things important to our lives have no reporter except as he who does not sleep may observe them. And that man must be disencumbered of reality. He must have no commitment to the dark as do murderers and thieves. Only he must see, though what he sees may come from the night side of the planet that no man knows well. For even in the early dawn, while men lie unstirring in their sleep or stumble sleepy-eyed to work, some single episode may turn the world for a moment into the place of marvel that it is, but that we grow too day-worn to accept.”

Indeed, nature’s nightly marvels linger unfamiliar to most people. However, for those who choose to enter it, the night world reveals unexpected delights. Diminished light sharpens our nonvisual senses. Our attention to sounds and smells becomes piqued, offering intimate encounters with organisms that sweep through the night as easily as we navigate by day. Undeniably, immersion into the night world

significantly broadens our perspective, even for those explorers who are seasoned biologists and naturalists. This book is a compilation of narratives from professional field scientists and naturalists who have found a driven magnetism within the nocturnal world. These prominent authors weave together accounts of the experiences they had working days and nights on very little sleep as they trekked through wild areas across the globe. Readers witness moments of discovery and astonishment, the compelling urges that push investigators through the dangers and challenges of conducting field studies in remote and unforgiving habitats.

These intimate essays encompass the surrealism of a sea ablaze with bioluminescent algae, avoiding the wrath of an African bull elephant, the experience of being bitten below the belt by a large and highly venomous red ctenid spider, unexpected confrontations with North American bears, cougars, and rattlesnakes, unconditional acceptance by a family of owls, dodging erupting volcanoes and hurricanes on Caribbean islands, shaking through nighttime quakes on the Pacific rim, and swimming through stratified layers of feeding-frenzied hammerhead sharks in the seas of the Galapagos Islands.

It is my hope that readers will gain insight into the world of field research being conducted by genuine biologists rather than the skewed portrayals sanitized and packaged for the audiences of Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, and Hollywood movies. For every author in this compilation, there are hundreds more in the field working in uncomfortable and dangerous conditions because they are driven by an intrinsic and profound passion for scientific inquiry and understanding. It is our intent to honor their pursuits with this insightful book and to reveal the rarely observed world of nocturnal field research.

**Rick A. Adams**