

- *Gloria Dickie is an environmental journalist who describes herself as “obviously pro-bear.”*
- *Over the course of her career, she’s seen how human societies around the world interact differently with the bear species they live alongside, in what can sometimes seem like a “cruel juxtaposition.”*
- *In her debut book, “Eight Bears: Mythic Past and Imperiled Future,” Dickie explores how each of the world’s eight bear species is a microcosm of a much larger environmental issue.*
- *From the state-backed conservation of the giant panda to the “pretty much guaranteed” extinction of polar bears, Dickie tells Mongabay readers about these iconic yet so little understood animals.*

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Bears and humans have a lot in common and it’s not just that we’re mammals. We can both be ruthless hunters but also gorge ourselves on berries, nuts and junk food. Both can stand on our hind legs. And both can be gentle and playful — and deadly. Bears have an uncanny ability to remind humans of ourselves, our favorite subject. So maybe it’s no surprise that bears play such a large role in human myths, and are one of the few animals most people can recognize on sight. But not all bears are the same — and not all bears are treated equally.

In her enlightening and entertaining new book, *Eight Bears: Mythic Past and Imperiled Future*, veteran environmental journalist Gloria Dickie explores the bears we adore (think pandas, *Ailuropoda melanoleuca*) and those we treat worse than cattle for slaughter (think moon bears, *Ursus thibetanus*, in the bear bile industry).

“In Chengdu [China] near where you have the panda breeding base, you [also] have one of the rescue centers for the bile bears. That cruel juxtaposition,” Dickie points out in an interview with Mongabay. “Pandas are not hunted, they’re not used for anything, they’re worshiped next to what is arguably one of the most cruelly treated animals in the world, living side by side. That’s where the people element gets in. What is it about human psychology that we treat one bear like this, and this other bear is basically enslaved into these cruel factory farms?”

If it’s not clear by now, Dickie’s book, covering all eight living species of bears (several species vanished over the past 100,000 years), is as much about human beings as it is about bears. Indeed, the book really explores how these two omnivorous, curious species clash and coexist with each other.

“You have wildlife trafficking and poaching issues with bear bile in Vietnam. You have climate change and polar bears [*Ursus maritimus*] in the Arctic, or in the cloud forest with the Andean

bear [*Tremarctos ornatus*]. You have habitat loss and human-wildlife conflict with sloth bears [*Melursus ursinus*] in India. To me, each bear was a microcosm of a much larger issue,” said Dickie, who, after years of freelancing, now covers climate change for Reuters.

Dickie’s love affair with bears — she’s not shy about how much she appreciates her subject matter — started in the U.S. West as she watched a local community deal with trash-eating black bears (*Ursus americanus*). But it extends today around the world, from the remarkable story of conservationists trying to save the world’s deadliest bear in India, to the rainforests of Southeast Asia where arguably the world’s cutest bear, the sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*) is vanishing due to deforestation, to the top of the planet where polar bears are living on borrowed time.



A sign warns of a closure for a black bear in the area at Goldstream Provincial Park in British Columbia, Canada. Black bears routinely gather here during the salmon spawning to feast on the fish. Image courtesy of Gloria Dickie.

“Will we do supplemental feeding for polar bears?” Dickie asks. “Is that stupid because they have no habitat left [due to the loss of sea ice from climate change]? But at the same time, can you imagine the public uproar and outcry, and this will happen, when you have all of these bears starving to death. Churchill [in Canada] is the polar bear capital of the world. You have an

economy that's based on bear viewing, and then you're going to have all of these cute little polar bears starving to death."

Dickie doesn't mince words and she's not afraid to speak truth to readers. Her book doesn't try to spin a happy ending for each bear species, because many trends aren't in the bears' favor — nor ours, if we're honest.

So perhaps we don't just share our ursine cousins' food habits, playfulness and violence. But perhaps our fates are more intertwined than we think.

The following interview has been lightly edited for length and clarity.

Mongabay: Why bears? What was it about bears that grabbed you?

Gloria Dickie: We had squirrels and deer and I'd be out in my backyard taking photos of squirrels. It was that lack of wildlife that made me quite interested in big animals.

Then why specifically bears? It evolved out of my master's project at the University of Colorado, Boulder. I had moved down there in 2013 and that year there were a ton of conflicts between people and bears over trash in Boulder. The bears were coming to town every night, they were eating food and they were becoming nuisance bears. Colorado Parks and Wildlife was coming in and shooting and killing the bears.

Boulder was pushing to get a bylaw in place to create bear-proof or bear-resistant garbage bins. It was the first city of its size in North America to try and do that. It's like, "Oh, this trend is occurring," where there's this tipping point being reached between people and bears in this one little town that sits at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

Then when I talked to people: This issue is happening across the Rocky Mountain West. We're seeing more conflicts between bears and people. That was my first foray into that world of bears.

The black bear issue led to more bear reporting. I was working on Yellowstone grizzlies [*Ursus arctos*]. They were trying to delist them [from the Endangered Species Act] at the time. [Then] I started [writing] polar bear stories [and] I thought, "Wow, these three bears are really interesting," but I wonder what's going on with the world's other bears?

Also, I was just eager to get out and work more as a foreign correspondent, doing international environmental reporting.

I had Google Alerts set up for other bears to see what was happening with them. And then “Oh, there’s all these species that no one’s ever heard of!” I couldn’t find any books that talked about these other bears. There just wasn’t much nonfiction out there.



A Yellowstone grizzly (*Ursus arctos*). Image by Ania Tuzel via Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).

There was *Search for the Golden Moon Bear* by Sy Montgomery, but that was all I could find about the lesser-known bears, like sloth bears, moon bears, spectacled [Andean] bears, sun bears. Then I was at an SEJ [Society of Environmental Journalists] conference, and I just elevator-pitched the project during a book pitch slam: *Eight Bears*.

The editor [leading the event] was intrigued and followed up with me after, and that’s who I ended up working with on the book. Basically, it was a combination: I loved animals and we didn’t have any [when I was a child]. It was a market gap, and it was me wanting to get out into the world and explore the threats facing these bears.

I didn’t have an almost-mauling incident. People want to know: “Were you almost killed by a bear?”

Mongabay: Please, Gloria, have been killed by a bear, *almost!*

Gloria Dickie: Would have been a great lead!

Mongabay: Have you had any really intense encounters with bears?

Gloria Dickie: Not overly, to my regret. But I also think this points to the current state of how we interact with wildlife. We picture these vast expanses of wilderness, but so often when you encounter wildlife it's more: I've seen bears eating garbage; I've seen bears next to construction sites in the Rocky Mountains; I've seen bears behind bars on bile farms; I've seen polar bears from a buggy on the tundra. That's just how we view wildlife. Right?

Maybe you'll get lucky and you'll be out hiking and you'll stumble across a bear. Most people don't have that encounter with an animal. Most of the time it's through these very manufactured landscapes and viewing opportunities that we've created to be artificial.



A mother grizzly with cubs in Waterton Lakes National Park, Canada. Image by Janusz Sliwinski via Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).

Mongabay: That perfectly leads into my next question. It was really interesting reading your book because I realized part way, “Oh, this is as much about humans as it is about bears.” It’s really about that relationship between humans and bears.

Gloria Dickie: It’s not like a bear biology book per se. If people pick it up expecting a guide to the biology of bears, it’s not what it is. It’s how we interact.

Mongabay: Yes. You go back in the beginning, to deep cultures and all these different beliefs, and then you thread through. Was that the initial part of your vision for this book or did that come out of your work on it? How did that idea of “I want to do a book about bears, but I want it to really be about bears and people” come about?

Gloria Dickie: That was the initial conception. I thought eight bears, eight is a very manageable number for a book. Eight chapters, right? A lot of books have that length. To me, it was the threats facing bears and using each bear as a narrative vehicle to explore a different environmental issue.

You have wildlife trafficking and poaching issues with bear bile in Vietnam. You have climate change and polar bears in the Arctic or in the cloud forest with the Andean bear. You have habitat loss and human-wildlife conflict with sloth bears in India. To me, each bear was a microcosm of a much larger issue facing biodiversity writ large around the world.

Animals can’t speak for themselves, right? You have to find the people who care about these animals. As a journalist, you’re going to find the scientists, you’re going to find the people on the frontlines of conservation, or even the other side, the bio-farmers. You’re going to tell those stories through the people, to tell the bears’ stories.



A sloth bear (*Melursus ursinus*). Image by ucumari Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).

Mongabay: As I was reading, it was interesting to think about bears as such iconic, popular animals. Little 2-year-old children know what a bear is. But we have the polar bear and the panda bear, probably the brown bear that are popular, right? Well known globally. Then you have these bears that almost nobody knows of like the sloth bear, the Andean bear, the sun bear, which is a beautiful, cute animal.

Gloria Dickie: It's amazing, has the longest tongue. Ten inches [25 centimeters].

Mongabay: Yes. And the moon bear. I'm curious, do you have any theories as to why some bears have become so popular in our imagination and others have lived in obscurity?

Gloria Dickie: Yes. Scholars have theorized on this point, and I addressed it a little bit in my book. They describe it as the North American or the circumpolar bear cult tradition. Northern cultures have always been very obsessed with bear iconography throughout time. Why is that? Part of it is that a lot of northern cultures, bears are — it's not completely true — but bears are the main thing that we have. Whereas a lot of tropical countries you have such a rich biodiversity.

You have so many big animals, you have big cats often. True, Siberia has tigers, and we do have mountain lions. But bears are the biggest thing that you would see in the forest. Within those cultures, too, it's the duality of the nature of the bear that I think sets it apart. They're not just simply a predator. They're a very complex behavioral species. I think that can perhaps explain it, but I do think it's strange. Maybe some of those [less mythologized] bears might live in very dense rainforest where it'd be more difficult to see the sun bear high up in a tree eating honey.

Yes, people have thought about this for a long time. It was something that struck me. I mentioned it in my chapter on the Andean bear going down to the Inca museums, and their art had monkeys and jaguars and tapirs and harpy eagles and you're like, "Where's the bear?" They have no bear iconography.

Whereas you go to a museum in Canada or the U.S., there's tons of cultures like the Hopi bear clan. There are so many Indigenous cultures that are very into bears

Mongabay: Your book, as you said, looks at these eight different bears and it finds some that are in deep trouble and some that are actually in recovery. You talked a little bit about Boulder, and North America's bears seem to be experiencing a boom, at least the black and the brown bear. How optimistic are you that Americans and Canadians can learn to live with these bears and that that boom can continue? Especially can the grizzly continue to expand its range? And do you feel there's a point at which this is going to become unsustainable?

Gloria Dickie: Yes, when it comes to the grizzly bear to start, we're coming out of a boom period, right? The grizzly has, I think, around 1,400 to 1,700 individuals left in the lower 48 states. Tons in Alaska. Lots of brown bears throughout Russia and other parts of Europe. The grizzly bear specifically in the lower 48 was almost extinct ... and they brought it back from the brink of extinction, and now it's expanding. Populations are almost connecting, but you are seeing this reverse in sentiment now to, "Oh, there's too many bears. They're killing my livestock. They're a threat to me."

You're seeing certain states like Montana trying to introduce more hostile bills and legislation to deal with that. You're seeing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service trying to remove protections from grizzly bears. I think we are seeing a slight, perhaps, reversal now of decades of progression when it comes to animals that could kill you.

Then black bears too. I think there are around 900,000 American black bears, so there's a ton of black bears. I think in terms of a species-level threat, we're not going to see American black bears go extinct. That gets into that question of the individual. What do we owe bears? Should we be killing them for getting into our garbage and, by doing so, leaving orphan cubs in the wilderness to starve to death?

I think that's a more difficult question because it might not have a population-level impact, but you could have a lot of animal welfare issues, or sad outcomes for those bears. You also are seeing some really interesting changes just in terms of hibernation, which I get into in the book too.

Bears aren't hibernating in some areas anymore because of climate change and the availability of human food, like garbage year-round. We're fundamentally altering the behavior of these animals through our own actions.



Sun bears in a tree in Cambodia. Image by Rhett A. Butler / Mongabay.



A Kodiak brown bear (*Ursus arctos middendorffi*). Image by Yathin S Krishnappa via Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0).

Mongabay: That gets me to one of the most surprising things, for me at least in the book, was the sloth bear.

Gloria Dickie: People love the sloth bear.

Mongabay: Oh my God. That was a harrowing part of the book. I don't want to give away too much, but basically you're dealing with a human-wildlife conflict issue in the sloth bear. I was also really impressed by the people who live around sloth bears, and there's not a discussion of should we open up legal hunting? Or should we cull these fierce animals, or we should wipe them out? At least not from what I read in your book. Can you talk about how there seems to be this sense in India of, we live with these dangerous animals and we have to learn a better way to live with them, but the answer isn't just wipe them out?

Gloria Dickie: I was really impressed by that too when I was reporting. I was working on a separate draft of that story for a media outlet at the time that I won't name. They kept wanting to frame it as, "Oh, Indians are so intolerant of sloth bears. Sometimes they'll kill them in revenge." I said, "I think that's the wrong way to frame the story," because think about how we treat wildlife

that kill people in North America: That's a death sentence. Yes, there are revenge killings of sloth bears that kill people. Understandable to an extent.

These people are scared. They're the poorest of the poor often. Very disenfranchised. India, in general, is pretty progressive when it comes to living alongside dangerous wildlife compared to North American cultures. To what extent, I guess, do people just feel like perhaps they're forced to? What else can they do? In some of these rural villages I think you have people more ingrained in conservation, and in wilderness areas in India. That's just where they live.

When you clear a forest and put up a brick cement-like fortress house, you become, I think more hostile to the natural world. Whereas, when you're intermixed with it, perhaps it leads to more leniency.

India has certain programs where you get money [as compensation]. For example, if a tiger attacks you, you get a payout. They're trying to facilitate coexistence through economic incentives occasionally. There are programs like that.

I think it's fascinating. I think it's the grace extended, in some cases, towards sloth bears and the fact that some of the scientists that I speak with, they've dedicated their lives to trying to save these bears that are the world's deadliest bear. They do kill the most people. They leave horrific injuries in some cases. And conservationists are trying to get people to champion their survival, which is a huge, huge ask.



Dickie interviews Mahasingh Meravi in the village of Beltola, Madhya Pradesh state, India. Mahasingh had been mauled by a sloth bear while collecting mushrooms in the forest. Image courtesy of Gloria Dickie.

Mongabay: It's just an amazing chapter. People should get the book for that chapter alone — and for all the other ones too. You have a chapter also on the moon bear and the sun bear. You went to Vietnam and you visited bear bile farms. That was pretty harrowing.

I'm curious, having been there and reported on this, what do you think is the ultimate solution to this problem? Is there one? Is synthetic bear bile perhaps an option? Do you think it would work? Do you think it's more about outlawing these practices and then following up with punishment? With the fact that it's so big in China, is there a way that we could rid ourselves entirely of these sorts of really cruel farms?

Gloria Dickie: I think the situation in China and Vietnam and other countries in Southeast Asia is a bit different. China's bile farms are like large pharmaceutical companies. They're mass-scale farms. They generate a lot of money. The situation in Vietnam is that families have bears and they're not making a ton of money off of it. It's almost a status symbol at this point to still have

bears, but it's not like the rhino horn or tiger penis where they're making tons of money from this. A vial of bear bile might sell for a few dollars.

I'm not convinced that synthetic bear bile is the solution. A lot of times when something becomes fake, it increases the price of the wild thing. People say "Oh, I want the real thing," and it skyrockets in price.

I think that what Vietnam is now doing is the correct approach, which is to try and get all of these bears into sanctuaries. But you have to have community buy-in to do that. I think the work that certain NGOs are doing, which is to really ingrain themselves into these communities — they operate alternative medical clinics for people that get children involved, learning about moon bears early on — I think that's starting to be successful.

There's this one village I went to, this one area that had the most remaining wild bears left in Vietnam, and no one had ever offered to give up their bear to sanctuary. They've been like, "No, we're united. We're not going to crack." Then, a few weeks after I left, the first farmer surrendered his bear to a sanctuary, and since then a bunch more bears have been surrendered in this district. They've been successful in getting these people to part with their bears.

I think China would be a lot more complicated than that. It's a much larger industrial-type scale. There's that attitude in traditional Chinese medicine of "This is our culture. The West criticized our culture." I think that's a much more complicated issue to address.

Mongabay: I want to talk about the panda. There was a wonderful chapter on the panda. When you and I were kids, the panda was super endangered. I feel like that's one of those first animals that you learned about if you were a child of the '80s or '90s.

Gloria Dickie: Sad commercials.



Dickie participated in the “panda keeper” volunteer program at Dujiangyan Panda Base in Sichuan, China, while reporting for the book. Image courtesy of Gloria Dickie.

Mongabay: Exactly. But today it is really such a positive story in many ways. The population is growing. China has put so much money into protecting all these areas. Not to say that the panda is out of the woods, but it’s one of those few species that is recovering, an optimistic story in the Anthropocene. Can you see any lessons in that for other species that maybe haven’t gotten those millions of dollars? How can we make more pandas out of other species? Or is it just that this animal is what it is and no other species can take advantage of the panda’s recovery?

Gloria Dickie: I think it's having an animal like this under an authoritarian government. I think that is true. That was what struck me the most. When you have to move fast, as you so often do in conservation and extinction issues, in some cases, democracy is not the best way to do that.

You actually want to have a very top-down, iron-fist approach to trying to save something. China is in a unique position because they have the monopoly on pandas. No other country has pandas; it only lives in China too. If China doesn't do it, no one's doing it. They have to do it. It's this very lovable animal and they have the strength of their government to be able to say, "We're going to set aside an area three times larger than Yellowstone National Park to protect this animal. We're going to figure out how to breed this animal."

It's a model that I think is really hard to replicate in other countries because there's so many restrictions on what you can do and people act so slowly. I'm sure species have gone extinct because of wait times through the democratic system.

A caveat, though: pandas are increasing, but they're still vulnerable to extinction. They are still the world's rarest bear. There are fewer than 2,000 left, but they're no longer quite as close to the brink of extinction.

I think what China needs to do now, and what this book gets into a little bit, is they've been successful in breeding pandas in these wonky, crazy breeding bases, often for use as diplomatic tools to ship them to other countries. Now they need to focus on: how do you get these pandas in the wild? They protected the habitat. There's lots of restoration efforts for forests in China. There is space for these bears to go to now. How do you get them back into the woods?

That's perhaps the next phase of what we'll see with panda conservation in China.

At the end of the book, I explored what bears do I think will persist. For me, the panda, even though it's the lowest population, I feel very hopeful for the panda. I don't think it's going anywhere. China won't let that happen, which, kudos to China for not letting that happen. Then I think there's obviously people who complain, "Other species haven't gotten funding. The panda gets everything." Yes, but like I'm biased. I'm obviously pro-bear. Take all the money, panda! [Laughs] I do think it's a really interesting case study.



Dickie feeds Fei Fei, a 23-year-old panda at Dujiangyan Panda Base in Sichuan, China, in 2018. Image courtesy of Gloria Dickie.

Mongabay: Yes. It's so unique. Thinking of Chinese wildlife, it's not like they do that for other species, right? They've lost species in recent years, like the baiji. It is interesting that something about this bear captured the Chinese imagination, but also captured the world's imagination. The government, like you said, was able to say, "We'll do whatever we can."

Gloria Dickie: In Chengdu, for example, near where you have the panda breeding base, you have one of the rescue centers for the bile bears. That cruel juxtaposition. Pandas are not hunted, they're not used for anything, they're worshiped next to what is arguably one of the most cruelly treated animals in the world, living side by side. That's where the people element gets in. What is it about human psychology that we treat one bear [so well], and this other bear is basically enslaved into these cruel factory farms?

Can you imagine a bile farm for pandas? Oh, my God.

Mongabay: That's mind-blowing to think about. It's so interesting how the human imagination has determined the fate of these species. That gets to another question. Polar bears, you reveal, are your favorite bear.

Gloria Dickie: Indeed.

Mongabay: For better or worse polar bears have become this symbol for climate change, right? They've become iconic. Obviously, they were very famous before this. They're the largest land predator. There are so many things about them that is amazing. How do you feel about them being used as a symbol for climate change? How useful do you think that's been in terms of getting attention for climate change? Or has it been not useful?

Gloria Dickie: It's crazy how much progress we've made on bringing emissions down because of polar bears. [Laughs] Hashtag sarcasm.

I don't have an image problem with the polar bear. I think that the polar bear, in my opinion, is the appropriate poster child in many ways for climate change, but it's one of the hardest animals to save. Any animal that depends on sea ice — you can't do conservation on the ground with polar bears. You have to do it at an atmospheric level. You have to do it globally, and that makes the polar bear's fate not so happy because we're not moving in the right direction on climate.

I think it's a bit tricky. People who live in the Arctic, Inuit people, will say, "Oh, polar bears are increasing. We're seeing more of them." There's a big tension between Western scientists and Indigenous knowledge, Inuit knowledge, when it comes to what's happening to polar bears right now in the Arctic.

The science is unavoidable: As you lose sea ice, you lose polar bears. Maybe [traditional peoples] are seeing a temporary uptick in some areas, but they're seeing more of them because they're looking for food. They're coming in.

I think that's a little tricky. A lot of the world's polar bear populations might be doing OK right now, but they're heading towards a cliff where it will just drop at the end of the century. We haven't seen that yet, but I think the next few decades for polar bears will be pretty sad.



A female polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) and its cub on dense drift ice. Image by AWeith via Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0).

Mongabay: I feel like it's also that kind of canary in a coal mine for us, right?

Gloria Dickie: The Arctic is warming six times as fast as the rest of the world. It's not good. If you can't bring the sea ice back, this is a species that has no future beyond zoos.

Mongabay: How do you feel about that? Do you feel like it's one of those species where at least it's in zoos? Maybe like when the Earth cools enough, we can rewild them.

Gloria Dickie: Bring them back. Oh God. That gets into the whole ethics-of-zoos question, which I feel like I'm not the best person to speak to you.

I will say, one of the questions scientists are trying to get people to talk about right now is in southern or western Hudson Bay in Churchill. That's one of the southernmost populations; the polar bears there will be in trouble within a few decades. The population has already declined quite a bit and scientists are asking whether we're going to start feeding them. Will we do supplemental feeding for polar bears?

Is that stupid because they have no habitat left? But at the same time, can you imagine the public uproar and outcry, and this will happen, when you have all of these bears starving to death? Churchill is the polar bear capital of the world. You have an economy that's based on bear viewing, and then you're going to have all of these cute little polar bears starving to death.

It's something that I think wildlife managers are already talking about. I think that's maybe the more timely question. We'll see in our lifetime. Right? We might see that play out, yes.

Mongabay: Wow. That's incredible. What does a global future for bears look like to you?

Gloria Dickie: I didn't want to end this book on a sense of false hope. That's one of my pet peeves with a lot of environmental reporting: you have 200 pages outlining this very sad, quasi-apocalyptic scenario. And you add, "Don't worry, it'll be OK. We'll figure out a solution."

No, there are certain bears that we are pretty much guaranteed to lose, like polar bears. Scientists will tell you beyond the end of the century, only a few, very small populations of polar bears will exist in the last ice areas.

If we can't turn the tide with climate change in cloud forests, then the Andean bear [could be lost], or sun bears: they also have very small populations, [and are highly stressed by] habitat loss, palm oil, it's a huge issue. There are a lot of bears that are pretty much on that brink of extinction, and we will decide their future in the next few decades.

Polar bears are probably already gone. Then we have a few brown bears, black bears and the panda [left]. I think they will persist because of human action much longer and because of where they live in the world too.



An Andean bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*), also called the spectacled bear. Image by Paul Korecky via Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 2.0).

Mongabay: Work to be done. Things to be done.

Gloria Dickie: Work to be done and we will see. In so many of these things, whether it's climate change or extinction, the world is not really headed in the right direction.

Mongabay: Yes. Agree. Gloria, you've had a lot of success as an environmental journalist and a writer, and you have your first book coming out. Concern is rising among the young people of the world about climate change and biodiversity loss. What advice would you give someone who is interested in a career in environmental writing, environmental journalism. What wisdom would you offer? Would you tell them to do something else? [Laughs.]

Gloria Dickie: Good question. No, I don't discourage people away from journalism. I think it's a pivotal role. I think it's never been more important in many ways. I do think you have to check the mindset at the door, of like, "Oh, I'm going to raise awareness and this will change the world." I didn't get into this profession thinking, "Oh, what I do is going to change things." I thought, "I want to document things. I want to document history and bear witness to what's unfolding."

Sure, occasionally reporting does influence change, but people have been writing about climate change for decades and emissions are still rising. The rate of the rise has gone down, but they're still rising. I think if that's your notion, that might not be the best path for you, but I think it's still a very rewarding path. It is heartening to meet the scientists: how hard they're fighting to save the sloth bear or to save the Andean bear and figure out what it needs. You're always looking for those rays of hope and people doing the right thing.