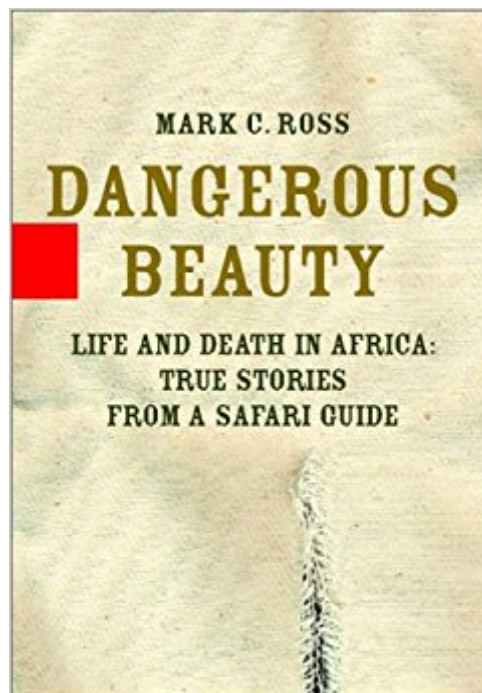




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# **Dangerous Beauty: Life And Death In Africa: True Stories From A Safari Guide**



## Synopsis

On March 1st, 1999, American safari guide Mark Ross was camped with four clients in Uganda, searching for endangered mountain gorillas. By day's end, two of these clients and six other tourists were dead at the hand of Rwandan rebels slipping across the border from Congo. As a man who loves East Africa, Ross felt betrayed by this horror that made headlines around the world. He writes, The continent has always been the love of my life. Now there is trouble between us. *Dangerous Beauty* is the story of that love and that trouble. Ross is one of the most seasoned and skilled safari guides at work in Africa today, and he writes here about his close-hand encounters with danger and natural beauty in Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Uganda. He describes his walks in the bush and the way he teaches his clients to read the unearthly silences and stillnesses in the wind that signify trouble. He writes about deadly charges by elephants, encounters with lions, cheetahs and Cape buffalo, and the electric excitement of witnessing the mass migrations of wildebeest and zebras. He writes in detail about the terrible events of 1999 and their aftermath. Ross also conveys the tranquility of dawn in the wild, and the times when the extraordinary loveliness of the land and its power bear down on the guide and his safari companions.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 322 pages

Publisher: Miramax Books (August 15, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0786866721

ISBN-13: 978-0786866724

Product Dimensions: 6.6 x 1.2 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 15 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,197,125 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #42 in [Books > Travel > Africa > Rwanda & Uganda](#) #917 in [Books > Travel > Africa > General](#) #1435 in [Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Wildlife](#)

## Customer Reviews

Ross writes in the crusty, venerable tradition of explorers, game guides and great white hunters that includes Hemingway and Peter Capstick. Such firsthand reporting on "the Dark Continent" has been made anachronistic by eco-politics and excellent documentaries. Nonetheless, this American farm boy revels in the realization of his African-adventure dream: an eco-tour business operating mostly

in Kenya and Uganda. Ross leads clients around preserves into camera range of hunting lions and charging buffalo (he targets the African hunter's "Big Five," including leopards, rhinos and elephants). These campfire tales of dramatic approaches on game are told as moment-by-moment stalk scripts that often defy Ross's own narrative powers. His in-the-dust reporting style isn't as elegant as his tracking skills. The punchy Wild Kingdom-style sermons at the end of many chapters detract from Ross's quite capable narration of the dangers of travel in Africa. Moreover, the continent's transcendent beauty isn't particularly well served: these unillustrated accounts often cry out for photographs. In 1999, tragedy interrupted Ross's affair with East Africa: his safari party was kidnapped in Uganda's mountain gorilla preserve. Two of his eight clients were murdered by Rwandan rebels who escaped into Congo. Ross was left with a sharp sense of responsibility that he cannot reconcile with his "Endless Safari" scenario. Sadly, his absorption in spectacular wildlife and noble tribesmen distracted him from the actual Africa boiling around him. Ross's romanticization may well ignite some farm kid's dreams, but Adelino Serras Pires and Fiona Claire Capstick's *The Winds of Havoc* features better writing in the same vein. First serial rights bought by *Talk* magazine. (Aug.) Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Ross was born and raised in the U.S. but longed for and dreamed of Africa. After college he moved to Kenya and became a full-time safari guide, leading tourists to the best views of the resident wildlife and teaching them about the ecology of East Africa. This idyllic life changed dramatically in March 1999, when Rwandan rebels kidnapped him and four safari clients, along with other tourists, in Uganda. By the end of the day, two of his clients and six others had been murdered and the rest traumatized and brutalized. The horror of this experience totally changed Ross. The events of March 1999 form the beginning and the end of his narrative, bracketing a moving account of a life spent doing what one loves most. Ross tells of how he came to Africa, what life is like on an extended safari, and of the numerous animals he and his clients observed. The immediacy of this memoir will linger long after it is read. Nancy BentCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Good writer, paints a great picture for you with his words. Interesting book about a tragic situation...Africa is not a place to take lightly despite it's beauty..you are no longer in Disneyland. This is not the San Diego Zoo nor the Safari Park...you're entering a country with very serious political, health and economic problems, not to mention infrastructure issues...try not to forget that! If the disease doesn't get you, or the mosquitoes, or other problems...even if things may seem settled

politically...many areas are in chronic crisis and may leave you subject to marauding gangs. They don't call Africa the "White Man's grave yard" for nothing!

Mark Ross gives an excellent account of his career as a safari guide in modern Africa. The stories of his encounters with dangerous wildlife are interesting, but more entertaining are his stories of experiences with various types of clients he has guided. I have always wanted to visit Africa, and plan to as finances and the political climate permit, but for now books such as this help fill the void. Mark Ross is one of the finest writers of these so called adventure books. As you can see from the other reviews, the worst encounter Mark Ross faced is when he and several of his clients were kidnapped by a rebel army while attempting to see Mountain Gorillas. The story of his and some of his clients ultimate escape is both frightening and exhilarating. One should not focus only on the kidnapping event, as the rest of the book is equally informative and entertaining. This is truly a fine book of true life adventure.

A great read told from a professional's view and participation. You will; not be disappointed.

...and the immediate question this book raises is exactly who are the animals? On one level, and for about two-thirds of it, the book **DANGEROUS BEAUTY** is a well written, evocative retelling of the author's life as a safari guide in Kenya. His adventures and close encounters with tembo (elephant), chui (leopard) duma (cheetah) and of course simba are par for the course for someone who makes a living from tracking, studying and photographing the wild animals of East Africa's savannahs. However, neither he nor any of the four American tourists that he took on safari to Uganda in March 1999 in search of the Mountain Gorilla could possibly have anticipated this particular wild animal encounter. The only guerillas found were near the border with Congo and were in fact machete-wielding Rwandan Hutu rebels who pounced on them and another group of mostly European tourists and promptly kidnapped 14 of them. They were bundled into the Impenetrable Forest region of Southern Uganda with no idea of what fate lay in store for them. I remember the news stories of the events, the burnt-out vehicles and rest-huts as the first clues that something horribly wrong had happened to them; and the subsequent man-hunt by the Ugandan army. Ross's telling of the story of their capture and the cruel and senseless murder of eight members of the group is harrowing. He led five other survivors to safety. They emerged from this ordeal stunned, numb, and shocked. Ross says his relationship with Africa was changed. "The continent has always been the love of my life. Now there is trouble between us." This gruesome

lesson about man's inhumanity and capacity for violence far beyond anything in the natural world remained with Ross. Nevertheless he eventually was able to put it into perspective and still carries on with his safari's from Kenya. Here the reality is that the danger from animals rather than man remains both much more likely, and also a much more acceptable risk.

Africa commands the attention, curiosity, and primal emotions of most human beings. Mark Ross says that people who come to Africa to go on safari with him almost always report that for as long as they can remember they have had a deep yearning for Africa, to see the animals roaming the Serengeti as they have been doing for millions of years, and to FEEL the place where human life first emerged. The book is elegantly written -- Ross describes settings and events beautifully and meticulously but makes/allows the reader to fill in the emotional content. He recreates a perfect-pitch Africa for those of us who have been there (I once spent three weeks in Kenya and Tanzania) and also, I feel certain, for those who have never been. Ross is a trained biologist, and it shows. He delivers a deep experience of Africa's animals, geography, people, and politics -- that alone would make for a satisfying book. But the chilling beauty of this one is that, while we're immersed in our on-the-ground experience of the place, Ross also forces us to confront another question that lurks within us all: "What would it be like to experience a sudden emergency -- and how would I, personally, react?" Ross' account of the tragedy in the rain forest is riveting and sickening -- I would recommend reading that part of the book (the last 70-some pages) early in the day, not before bedtime. But its pages are hard to resist. By the end I felt like I had stalked lions in the bush (and like I knew their thoughts) and also felt personally violated, as though I'd stared down the barrel of a gun held by someone else, and then seen that someone else casually murder people I was very close with. Like the safaris he leads, Ross' book is first-class in every way. You put it down knowing that you've just spent twenty years and 322 pages with a remarkable individual. And you've learned quite a bit. If it cost \$..., it would be more than worth it.

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