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MERLIN – THE STORY OF A WESTCOUNTRY LEOPARD

A True Tale of Our Times

Written and Illustrated by Trevor Beer

Merlin is the true tale of a black leopard loosed into the British countryside by its owner. This was a fairly common occurrence following The Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, which brought tighter legislation to bear on exotic pet owners. Since then naturalist and writer Trevor Beer has followed and documented many reported sightings and this 'factional' account of the life of one such escapee, Merlin, a black leopard, is recounted in this book.

During the 1980s the legend of The Beast of Exmoor grew when media hype focused on large numbers of sheep killed, allegedly by big-cats of the puma and leopard type. If reports could be believed, as many as "80 sheep killed in 90 days", suggested animals of huge cunning and ferocity were roaming the British countryside. Cats "as big as large calves, mastiffs and Alsations" were seen all over the moor and beyond.

In an attempt to redress the over-reaction of the media, and also to bring to the public attention a clearer view of the truth behind these tales, the author here provides a rational and sympathetic story of the life of an exotic and beautiful animal surviving, against the odds, in an alien environment.

That these animals exist is beyond doubt but we need a better understanding of them if we are to live and let live.



Trevor Beer, author and naturalist, is known to thousands as a result of his regular Nature Watch column in the *Western Morning News*, from which his popular book took its title. From his home in Barnstaple Trevor has devoted much of his life exploring the natural history of North Devon, working tirelessly for the conservation and protection of the flora and fauna of the region he has come to know so well. In 2002 he received the MBE for his contribution to wildlife conservation.

Also available from Halsgrove:

Trevor Beers' Country Folklore and Legend

Trevor Beer's Five Owls

Trevor Beer's Down Memory Lane



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