

# THE BEST BOOKS THIS WEEK



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## Nature & Environment

### Stranded: Finding Nature in Uncertain Times by Maddalena Bearzi



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Maddalena Bearzi (*Dolphin Confidential*) developed a deep love for marine fauna during childhood summers in Sardinia. She cofounded the Ocean Conservation Society, which monitors Pacific populations of whales and dolphins, when she moved from Italy to Los Angeles in the 1990s. In *Stranded*, her third book, the marine biologist, temporarily confined to land by Covid-19 lockdowns, adopts a different tactic for exploring animal behavior: "an urban safari in my backyard and neighborhood." These nature essays exemplify evenhandedness, curiosity, and close observation. Bearzi decries her neighbors' unwarranted alarm over coyotes. The squirrels and lizards that her ungainly mutt, Genghis, longs to chase remind her of the need to live with invasive species. A local opossum teaches her to value unlovely creatures. From wasps to night-blooming flowers, her interest is wide-ranging. Her winsome black-and-white sketches head each chapter, too.

Bearzi realizes that she can connect with her surroundings "even without leaving home." She replaces her lawn with succulents and other drought-resistant native plants. Gardening is a relaxing pastime and a connection to her mother while they are separated. As a behavioral ecologist, the author views even Genghis as a subject of study, recording how he reacts to humans in masks. Nearly a year later, preparing to go back out onto the water, Bearzi exposes the plight of captive cetaceans and the perilous state of the oceans. The book is a passionate primer to appreciating everyday nature: "we can find the wild all around us if we only choose to see it." --[Rebecca Foster](#), freelance reviewer, proofreader and blogger at [Bookish Beck](#)

Heyday, \$25, hardcover, 224p., 9781597146043