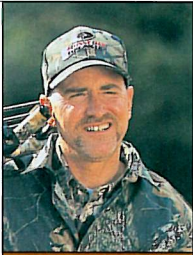


FROM THE EDITOR



Greg Tinsley
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Boone and Crockett Club

Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder

Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* requires a reading strategy. I recommend beginning it near after sunset with one break two hours in for chicken-fried venison, butter-

whipped potatoes, and skillet gravy: a good, heavy meal expertly prepared by a gold-hearted West Texas woman who knows the value of sweet tea, thick toast, and honey. By managing the trajectory in this measured way, I suggest that the high-speed flow of literary magma that is this flowered cactus will spill you out quite finished in the deep dead of night at a point when your blood has thinned and your mind has dulled, so sleep may come.

The review for the *Washington Post* essentially called it a genius's most "accessible" work. Streamers at either end of it and on the book's covers by high-powered critics all seemed to agree that the national bestseller was simply the latest spire of magnificent prose by the world's greatest living author. Certainly McCarthy's ninth book is a multifarious, contemporary horror story, a real-time western on smack, which begins with inarguably the most descriptive passage ever written about a morning hunt for a buck pronghorn in a wasteland caldera above the Rio Grande.

I read *No Country for Old Men* in the same auspicious month that our nation seemed to actually be contemplating a 700-mile-long tactical fence on the border with Mexico; just weeks after population scientists decreed that there were probably already more than 300 million people living in America and that by 2046 there'd be like 400 million. Apparently, my genetically engineered clone may have a hell of a time drawing an elk tag in the 2040s.

Just a few days before I located *No Country* and crushed it, a friend of mine, Toxey Haas, had told me about a new book, Richard Louv's *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, which had been recommended to him by several folks during the most recent Texas Parks & Wildlife Expo in Austin. Toxey was on his way to putting three

young men out on well-placed deer stands and was sort of hollerin' over the hum of a pair of diesel truck engines with some distance between us. He said, "It's about the realities, the real base-level societal problems associated with generations of American kids completely missing out on the outdoors experience. It's scary. You're going to need to read this one."

Quickly following *No Country for Old Men* with a non-fictional treatise about lost generations of outdoorsmen might be too much for my system, at least for a while I reasoned. In fact, my plan today was to stay away from the news channels for a good long while. With regard to cultural genocides masquerading as religious crusades, the epidemic of school shootings, the meth-cafes of suburbia and the crack dawgs on Gangsta Street, I needed a break from bad news delivered by dubious newsmen.

As I do too 'often over the past decade, I found myself easing into the relatively safe haven of a selection of traditional outdoors television, particularly the encore broadcast of newly self-proclaimed "break-through" hunting show. I was excited about my timing, about seeing the new show whole, because I liked most all of the guys in front of, and behind, the cameras.

Well, naturally, it was pretty much the same old stuff except for one of the show's interior featurettes, which caught me just as I was checking my eyelids for leaks. The familiar voices of talking heads brought me back to full consciousness, and I found myself watching this squirrelly back-and-forth dialog between two well-known outdoor scribes. Incredibly, the upshot of this made-up-for-TV mini debate, available in nearly 90 million homes, was of bowhunters versus riflemen... or more accurately, of us versus ourselves.

The arrogance of friendly fire is always weird. I think now that the episode's pro-and-con skit reminds me of something McCarthy wrote for one of his novel's primary characters, Llewellyn Moss, which Moss says to himself after his humanity catches up to him and makes imminent his own death: "There is no description of a fool," he said, "that you fail to satisfy." ■

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