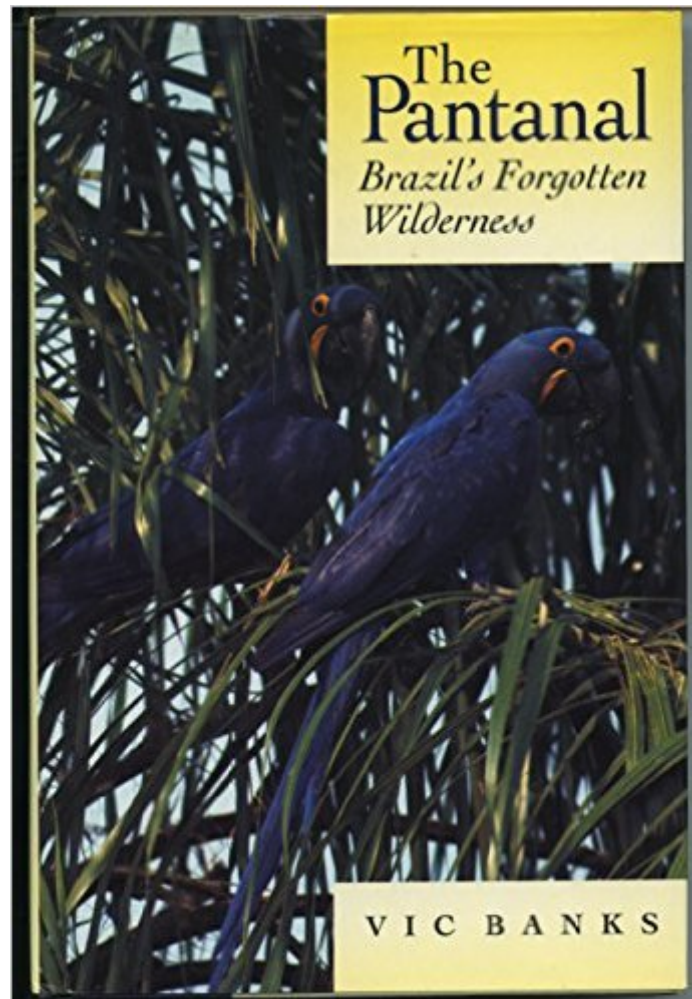


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The Pantanal: Brazil's Forgotten Wilderness



Synopsis

Book by Banks, Vic

Book Information

Hardcover: 254 pages

Publisher: Random House, Inc.; First Edition edition (September 24, 1991)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0871567911

ISBN-13: 978-0871567918

Product Dimensions: 1.2 x 6.5 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (6 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

This is a well-written and highly personal account of a naturalist-photographer's adventures and misadventures in one of the least known regions of the Brazilian interior, an area teeming with natural beauty that is rapidly being destroyed. The book begins as a light-hearted journey undertaken by an equipment-laden photographer who negotiates his way into the heart of the Pantanal amid much naive bumbling and enthusiasm. It ends on a note of despair as we encounter the ultimate expression of man's cruelty both to himself and to nature, an illegal wild-life market in a Rio suburb where rare birds are caged and mutilated. Along the way we learn much about the history and geography of the Pantanal and of the political corruption that is endemic to Brazil, which has increasingly come under international scrutiny for practices of which no nation is wholly innocent. There are powerful portraits of leading conservationists, such as the brilliant cinematographer, Arne Sucksdorf, and the famed ornithologist, Helmut Sick. The key to Banks's effective presentation of his ecological message is his personal involvement throughout the narrative: the problems of poaching lead to a day with an incredibly inept and thuggish police patrol; the problems of gold-mining and mercury poisoning lead to a day in the pits. We are treated, moreover, to the full range of Brazilian society, from cowboys and peasants to high-placed officials; comrades and friends jostle for space alongside more dubious types. All in all, this is a fine achievement that should be read by anyone with an interest in environment affairs, Brazilian

folkways, or, simply, human adventure candidly told. It is considered the leading introduction to the Pantanal and is the basis for a prize-winning film.

After visiting Pantanal, I came back and revised my review to raise the rating to 5 stars. Everything seemed familiar to me when I was visiting; I knew the names of all the animals and was so excited to see hyacinth macaws, remembering how elated Vic was in the book when he found some. I found myself harking back to the book constantly, as if I had a friend along with me during the journey. I wonder how Vic would react to the changes in today's Pantanal, some for the bad (continued agriculturization) and others for the good (more focus on ecotourism). Vic Banks knows Brazil: he can identify on sight dozens of species of exotic birds, reptiles, and other unusual animals that make their home in the Pantanal, one of the most ecologically diverse places on earth. The book includes many fantastic nature photos taken by the author. Yet this book is not just about flora and fauna, but the entire life of the Pantanal, including the people who live there, from the farmers who are eking out a poor living with their cattle, to the gold miners who are reaping riches by destroying the land, to the army and government workers who are fighting a seemingly losing battle to stop wildlife poaching and the despoiling of this incredibly rich region. Banks' love for this place and his deep concern about what will happen to it comes through in every interaction he has. His book, which was written in 1991, doesn't leave much room for hope that Brazilian authorities are going to find a way to protect this incredible area - so I really wonder how much has been lost since he made this epic visit. The subtitle of the book is "Brazil's forgotten wilderness" and I believe it remains so today.

Superior book about a little known (to me) region. I was so enthralled, I booked a tour to the Pantanal. Thanks to the book, I was quite well-informed. It was the trip of a lifetime enhanced by this book.

Excellent read. Brings back many of the sites and sounds of the Brazilian Pantanal, experienced in many visits. A very special place, wish that it could be 'protected for posterity'. Photographs help to portray the area, together with the 'story'. Harriett Stubbs

The Pantanal is a wonderful place. I am just sorry it is now being over run with development.

Can promptly and is what I expected

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