

BOOK REVIEWS: INDIAN AUTHORS AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

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N is 3 and a half and he has been obsessed with learning about animals since March 2015. He had a few days of learning about animals in school last March and has never looked back. His toy animal tub is overflowing and so are his soft toys.

He makes stories with them, wants to hear about stories with them and asks questions pertaining to them. What they eat, what are their young called what are groups of frogs or fish or ... called, why are humans also called animals, if reptiles are cold blooded do they feel cold a lot and so on and so forth. 

I often don't know the answer and I consult Google at times for a 3-year-old boy's questions. Yes I am in a lot of trouble thank you! His friendships based on their 'animal' quotient. The only boys he hangs out at the park are those who are also roaring like a tiger or making T Rex noises or charging like Bison. So yes suffices to say he is a little obsessive that way.

While at a kids' exhibition we noticed a stall by the Bombay Natural History Society that had some bilingual books on animals and bought them. He was really interested in them. So since his holidays are on I decided to visit the BNHS store next to the museum and we bought a few lovely books.



There is one that talks about mammals in Indian forests and another that has stories about animals we don't like but don't know well. And a couple about birds illustrated and told in a very enjoyable manner. These are all Indian birds, Indian wildlife conservation issues, all real, but told as fiction. For example in the book: mammals mighty and meek, there is a story of a bunch of tourists going on a safari to spot a tiger and a close encounter with a tigress and then the story from her point of view. It puts questions in his mind and my own and it develops a sense of empathy with other creatures we are sharing this planet with.

The theme is recurring and so it gets a little repetitive, about how we humans have taken away jungles and homes of these animals and how they're all having to live in smaller spaces and how they're adapting. Still, they made an impact on me and how I think, so I can imagine what it may do to such young minds.

Completely going off topic but unless these young'uns start appreciating their reality and the mistakes we have made as a species at this age where they feel deeply and things really matter and they aren't jaded yet, you never know what changes they may bring.

We've been reading way past his bedtime these days as I've been learning new things too and we've been hooked. What better way to spend time with your child than discovering a common interest and pursuing it together?

We also went to this shop in the fort area in Mumbai called [Comet media foundation – Learning Ladder](#). It's a lovely space stocked with toys and books from NGOs and small enterprises. We ended

up buying quite a few bilingual books – English – hindi and English - Marathi and are loving them. They are a lot simpler than what we usually read but since we're not used to reading in another language it works well to challenge him to listen and comprehend well. The bilingual books are from the publishers: [Pratham books](#) and [Tulika books](#).



One book we really enjoyed is called Stone Eggs from Tulika books and as with all the others mixes fact with fiction and talks about dinosaurs that roamed India and how they're different from many of the others we hear about commonly like the T Rex and many others.

We also got one called Philautus frog from Pratham books– a tree frog that lives in the Sayadri range and his journey and the rich foliage and creatures he encounters which is quite interesting.

On a tip from a friend I've recently ordered [Ambushed](#) – based on tiger conservation efforts in India, written for kids and will update this space once we read it.

It's vacation time and we've been reading waayyy more than usual and therefore I felt the need to shake up the norm and venture a little further than the regular.

N has been asking about poachers, and how men (humans) did this and that, and asks about when he can go live in a forest to protect animals from hunter and most importantly will I go with him? :) (I melt). I've heard him when he plays with his soft toys talk about poachers, and forest guards and make up stories with new entrants. But more importantly he thinks, cares, empathizes and is beginning to feel for a world outside our cushy existence at a tender age that I feel nice about.



While this is not exactly a book review as I've written about a topic in general, the aim of this post is to illustrate how books can be a great medium to explore interests with your child at young ages. It's great fodder. It may be animals for one and something else for another but the key is to follow their lead and expand their horizons.

Thanks for reading. Do let me know in the comments what you've been reading with your child lately. I am always excited when I get a new book tip!

