



The Gift of the Deer

Helen Hoover

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One Christmas Eve an emaciated deer stumbled across the yard of Helen Hoover's remote cabin in northern Minnesota. Barely surviving the brutal winter, gaunt from starvation, blind in one eye from a hunting wound, he became the central character in Hoover's popular book *The Gift of the Deer*. Hoover and her husband Adrian named this deer Peter, nursed him back to health, and observed Peter and his growing clan for four years. *The Gift of the Deer*, first published in 1966, sold over 50,000 copies and is Hoover's best-selling book. This paperback edition is beautifully illustrated by Adrian Hoover, and readers young and old will delight in this touching story of two north woods families.

The Gift of the Deer Details

Date : Published April 1st 1998 by Univ Of Minnesota Press (first published 1966)

ISBN : 9780816631285

Author : Helen Hoover

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Genre : Animals, Environment, Nature, Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Biography Memoir, Science, Natural History, Biography

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From Reader Review The Gift of the Deer for online ebook

Jena says

In vivid detail, Helen Hoover writes of the mystical beauty of undisturbed nature. She paints marvelous word pictures of the changing seasons, and the animals who inhabit the Minnesota wilderness that she has come to call home. This book is centered around her interactions with a small family of wild deer, who visit her log cabin for food, and the gifts she receives because of their presence in her life. Mrs. Hoover chronicles the development of the little deer family, from malnourished Peter's first visit on Christmas day through the birth and development of his twin fawns a few years later. With the respect of a true lover of nature, she captures the essence of each individual deer without imposing "human" characteristics upon the woodland creatures. In other words, she respects that there is something unique and beautiful within the animals, without adding unnecessary human qualities. This is the beauty of all her books.

Melissa Hedges- Rankin says

Found in our inherited library, this book will draw you in, especially if you love nature. An injured deer finds its way to the Hoover's cabin. The couple aid the deer who they name 'Peter' and the deer comes back season after season bringing other deer with him. The detailed observations of the deer were described in such a way where each deer had individual endearing (pun intended) characteristics. Highly recommend for animal and nature lovers.

Roma Giannina says

Simple, quick read. I wouldn't say anything was earth shattering. Nice writing, but not unbelievably moving. Anyone who has spent time in the minnesota wilderness (or anywhere in the woods) and has a patience and love of being nature's voyeur might find this to be too simplistic. At times, the personification of the deer grew old, and for an author who touts respecting nature and animals, she doesn't follow her own advise as to not interfere with the natural course of things. I.e.: keeping wild animals wild.

Seemed to me a book perhaps written for youth to teach them respect of nature. For those of us who live and breath the wilderness, and love and respect deer enough to participate in quality deer management, this seemed pretty hokey.

Megan says

A most unexpected, beautifully written, deeply refreshing, and highly informative personal and natural biography of the author and her husband and several generations of a whitetail family in northern Minnesota.

Blaine Morrow says

Deer lovers will embrace this book. I lived for a while with a deer family that spent many nights licking the salt from my driveway, and I found the author's involvement with Peter and his growing family understandable. There are some insights into the ways of the forest, though there are also some things the Hoovers do that did not seem to me consistent. Good writing.

Christina says

I love Helen Hoover's books about life in northern Minnesota. Her portrayal of all the animals she and her husband encounter brings the creatures to life in a very unique way. This book is focused primarily on the deer that visit the cabin over the course of a few years. Hoover's prose is beautiful, and the illustrations by her husband are absolutely charming.

Sassacaia says

This was mom's book club pick and I loved it. It was a recounting of a Minnesota woman's experience with deer they befriended while they were living in a cabin in northern Minnesota. They were there for several years so got to meet several new generations of the deer. It was a touching, sweet story. Sad too. I really enjoyed it.

John Mulholland says

I am envious of the life these two were able to lead. I would love to have this experience.

Red says

I read this book the first time as a preteen, when I was visiting my Grandmother one summer, always looking for something new to read. Her collection of Reader's Digest Condensed Books, was a much perused source. I found this book, and the story has stayed with me ever since. These last few years I've felt the urge to visit with Peter and his deer family again. I was thrilled to find the book back in print. (Order on-line from Amazon.)

While I'm reading this I feel like a true time-traveler within my own lifetime. This true story takes place in the early 1960's. Our narrator is living with her husband in her family's homestead in the pine woods of northern Minnesota. There is the "summer house", a wood frame building with no electricity and no insulation. Winters are spent in the 2 room log cabin (also no electricity, and I'm not sure about the plumbing situation yet). They don't have a phone or a car, and the nearest town is 30 miles away. In the summer they go shopping by taking a boat up the river to town (or catching a ride from a neighbor, the nearest is 5 miles away). In the winter all of the shopping (including grocery) is done by mail! And whatever they buy is left at their mailbox, a mere 3 mile hike down the road through the woods.

So Ade & Helen live as her grandparents lived 50 or 60 years earlier. (When you're living that rustic, it might as well be 100 years earlier.) But when I first read this book, in the same decade it was first published, no car or phone was not that unusual an occurrence and so left little impression on me. Forty years on, our lives have made a quantum leap in technology, and from here contemplating this simplicity of existence is a much different affair. I feel like I am reading about a family in the Little House years rather than the Eisenhower/Kennedy era.

Sarah Sammis says

In the 1960s, Helen and Adrian Hoover shared their Minnesota cabin yard with a family of whitetail deer. The first to arrive was a starving young buck whom they named Peter. After Peter there came Mama, Pig, Brother, Starface, Little Buck, Pretty and Fuzzy. These four years are the basis of *The Gift of the Deer*.

These deer were not pets but the Hoovers did what they could to make a safe environment for them, free from hunters and with enough available food to last the long, harsh winters. While Helen journaled about their experiences, her husband sketched them. His sketches are included throughout the book along with a family tree.

The Gift of the Deer details the challenges of living in rural, wooded areas, especially during the long winters. There is much discussion of the planning needed to survive with enough fuel for cooking and heating and enough food for those times when the roads are impassible.

I enjoyed the first year (Peter's year) most but after a while the observations became more of the same. As the book continued I found myself skimming more and reading less. I kept reading mostly for the Adrian Hoover's illustrations.

Diana says

I always try to read a book about nature for my first book of a new year, so I grabbed "*The Gift of the Deer*", because Helen Hoover was such a phenomenal writer & I was not disappointed. This is the second book by Ms. Hoover that I have read, and she had such a eye for the natural world, that each chapter is like a little treasure for those of us who adore the great outdoors. Highly recommended.

Judy says

When life gets too hectic and frustrating, I turn to the natural world. Getting away from it all is important for my mental health. If I can't get up and go, the next best thing is to read something that can transport me there. This book does just that. Hoover gives just enough description for me to picture the setting and the time of year, and she does so without needing to provide every detail. My imagination can fill in the missing pieces. Her writing focuses on several generations of a family of white-tail deer.

There's so much here about the behavior of the deer that now I want to read some of the current research on mule deer. She named the deer, which makes it possible to know exactly which animal she's describing. Here's an example of a paragraph (p 92) that describes the parents (Mama and Peter) communicating with

their offspring (Pig and Brother).

Peter ... reappeared in the cleared area near where Pig and Brother were jumping from grain pile to grain pile and Mama was eating in a more sedate manner. Peter turned toward the road and stood guard, only his ears moving as he followed sounds too faint for human hearing to catch. After the others had made a good start in cleaning up the grain, he turned his head toward them and flipped his ears forward. Mama in turn looked toward him with her ears forward. Ten seconds later Mama tapped Brother lightly on the neck with a hoof and nudged him in the rump with her head. He turned toward her and the long look with ears forward passed between them. Then Brother trotted up to take over the guard duty and Peter came in to feed.

Karen says

"I went back to my cabin with its lamps and its stoves, its clock and typewriter and books, the markers of generations of civilization behind me. And I knew, feeling a little sad, that by those generations I was forever set apart, an alien in this wild and ancient land." But a keen observer and storyteller who invites us into our northern Minnesota winter cabin to experience with awe that wild and ancient land.

Hannah says

Once again, Helen Hoover has drawn me into her beautiful natural world. This offering, based upon her life in the wilderness with husband Adrian from the mid 1950's to the early 1970's, concentrates on a deer that the Hoovers saved from starvation one Christmas Eve, and befriends for nearly 4 years. Each year brings new deer to their cabin, although their first (and I imagine favorite), Peter Whitetail, is present throughout all four years.

Hoover's detailed observations of the deer reveal their individual characteristics, quirks, and mannerisms. From gentle, generous Peter to fiercely maternal and shy Mama, greedy and undisciplined Pig, beautiful Pretty, mousey Fuzzy, and a host of other deer, Hoover's descriptions delight and educate in a fascinating and whimsical way.

The end of this book is bittersweet and poignant. Hoover strikes a good balance between how nature takes its course, and how man often interferes - with sad consequences.

I can truly say I loved this book and the observations Hoover offered. This is a keeper on my bookshelf.

Carmine says

Lovely, and especially interesting to me as a Minnesotan, lover of wildlife and wilderness, and budding naturalist. Not sure how it fits into the broader view of wild places during that era (1950s-1960s), as opposed to today...for example, gardening with native flowers isn't really on Helen Hoover's radar, and it's a bit disconcerting to read about somebody so appreciative and attuned to her far northern setting planting a garden of Sweet Williams (exotics native to Southern Europe) and such. But that is still the approach of conventional gardening in America even today so can't really fault her for that. Regardless, Hoover

obviously was devoted to learning about and conserving native flora and fauna on her property, and the life she and her husband created for themselves feels peaceful and fulfilling. Peter the deer is the star of this tale, and I will love Helen Hoover forever for rescuing his life. However, I do not think "taming" wild animals (by hand-feeding, for example) or trying to interject ourselves into their lives really works to their benefit, so there were many moments of ambivalence for me in reading this memoir.
