



## Man the Hunted: Primates, Predators, and Human Evolution

By Donna Hart, Robert Wald Sussman, Robert W. Sussman



**Man the Hunted: Primates, Predators, and Human Evolution** By Donna Hart, Robert Wald Sussman, Robert W. Sussman

Although “Man the Hunter” is a popular description of our ancestry, the central importance of hunting is firmly fixed only in the archeological record of relatively recent human history. *Man the Hunted* argues that primates, including the earliest members of the human family, have evolved not as hunters but as the prey of any number of predators, including wild cats and dogs, hyenas, snakes, crocodiles, and even birds of prey. Eyewitness accounts, data collected by the authors, and the published reports of naturalists establish the astonishing extent to which living monkeys, lemurs, apes, and even humans fall victim to a wide variety of predators, some of which even specialize in the consumption of primates. Additionally, the fossil record demonstrates that primates have been prey for millions of years, a fact that necessarily shaped the evolution of our earliest ancestors in body and behavior. Skillfully combining information from a number of lines of evidence, *Man the Hunted* casts an entirely new light on the natural history of primates and the evolution of fossil and modern humans.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Contrary to the familiar image of the aggressive, spear-wielding "caveman," our hominid ancestors were more hunted than hunters, more preyed upon than slayers of large predators, contend wildlife conservationist Hart and anthropologist Sussman. The authors note that as anthropologists and primatologists have studied various primate species in the African and Asian rainforests, many myths have been dispelled about how aggressive these primates (who resemble our ancestors) were and how they reacted to predation. And as more early hominid fossils have been discovered, researchers have come to realize that they were small enough to make a tasty snack for a pack of large hyenas. One skull bears twin holes that match exactly the fangs of a leopard; another displays scratches that suggest the victim was carried off by a very large bird of prey. Modern-day humans are still preyed upon in many places: mountain lions have ambushed joggers in California, and in southern Africa, the crowned harp-eagle occasionally carries off a small child. The authors maintain that our need to socialize stems from early hominids' improved odds of survival when they banded together against predators. Some readers may raise an eyebrow at the suggestion that our predilection for a beautiful scenic view evolved from our ancestors' scanning the African grasslands for danger, but the authors' novel proposals merit serious consideration. B&w illus. (*Mar.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

In an agile, knowledgeable presentation, the authors contest a popular conception about human evolution: that ancestral hominids were hunters. Hart and Sussman, anthropology professors, think that the support for that idea is flimsy. However, its advocates, such as Louis Leakey, have been influential. Leakey insisted that humans were not "cat food." We were, demur the authors, and food for bears, hyenas, snakes, and eagles, too. To make their case, which eminent paleoanthropologist Ian Tattersall extols in a preface as "the first comprehensive synthesis of the information available about predation on humans," Hart and Sussman marshal both fossils and behavioral studies of living primates. The authors' prose is wryly irreverent, as if intended to keep a lecture class awake and interested. Even readers who instinctively shy away from science would enjoy reading this book. *Gilbert Taylor*

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About the Author

**Donna L. Hart** has been a longtime professional in wildlife conservation and currently teaches in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Missouri–St. Louis. **Robert W. Sussman**, Washington University (St. Louis), is recent editor of *American Anthropologist* and has served in editorial capacities with numerous other journals in anthropology and primatology.

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