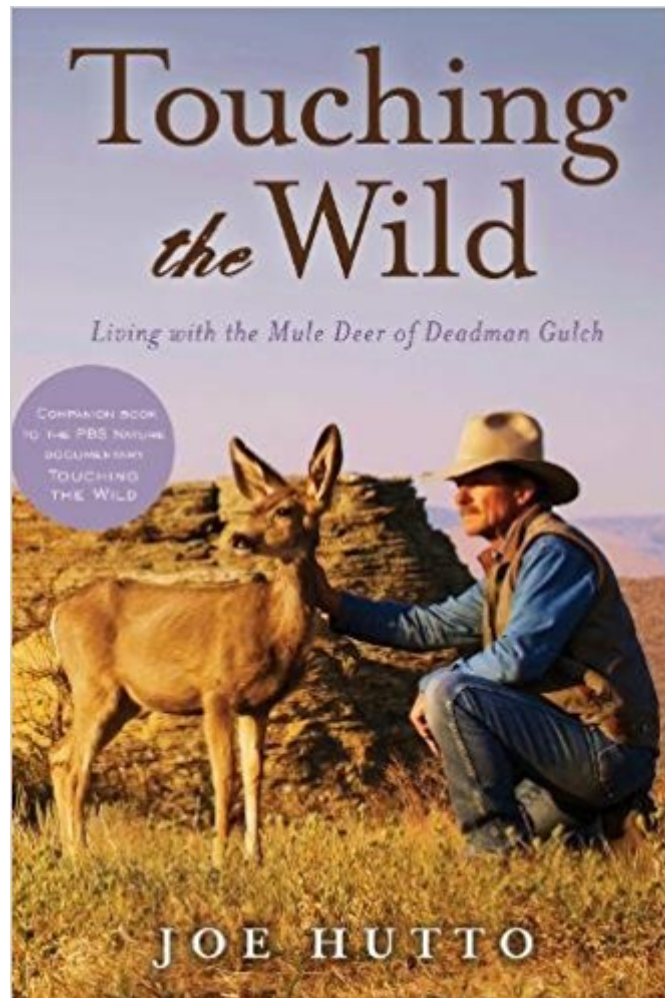




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# Touching The Wild: Living With The Mule Deer Of Deadman Gulch



## Synopsis

Emmy Award-winning filmmaker, writer, and naturalist Joe Hutto has done it again.

*Touching the Wild* is the enchanting story about one man who has lived with a herd of mule deer in the Wind River mountains of Wyoming for almost seven years. Why, you may ask, would a person choose to do such a thing? His response: how could you not? For Joe Hutto, close proximity to wild things is irresistible. In *Illumination in the Flatwoods* he unveiled the secret lives of the wild turkey to great critical acclaim. In *Touching the Wild* he turns his acute sense of wonder and affinity to one of the West's quintessential "big game" animals: the mule deer, a species in peril due to environmental factors. Wily, thoughtful creatures, mule deer are not inclined to make foolish friendships with their primary predator—man. But due to the intense curiosity of one small doe, and the resulting introduction to an entire herd, Joe Hutto has been allowed unprecedented access and insight into the minds and behavior of this special animal. Spending every day among the herd, he develops uncanny connections with the deer, learning individual and group dynamics as well, unveiling just how much we have in common with these delicate beings. Each season brings new joy as fawns are born and heartache as matriarchs pass away, or hunting takes its toll, or a fawn is orphaned. But what overwhelmingly emerges from *Touching the Wild* is the enormous respect Hutto has for all wild things and the recognition that we have so much to learn from them about their world, ourselves, and the fragile planet we share. Throughout the book are gorgeous full-color photos.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**\*Starred Review\*** Well known for *Illumination in the Flatwoods* (2006), which describes his two years living with and studying wild turkeys, Hutto has also intimately observed wood ducks, bighorn sheep, and other animals. A move to an old ranch in the Wind River Mountains of Wyoming brought him into contact with the resident mule deer, and a particularly friendly doe initiated contact with him and his wife, eventually bringing her family group into their yard. Thus began a seven-year study of the deer as Hutto habituated them to his presence and was able to integrate himself into their society. Recognizing individuals allowed him to discern family relationships and to observe how the deer conducted their day-to-day lives, and by noting subtle changes in behavior, he was able to learn what they meant. Naming the deer by physical traits and their personalities, Hutto makes the individuals very accessible for readers, who not only will learn quite a bit of mule deer ecology but also care about their fate. Full of color photographs of Hutto with the deer, this companion book to an upcoming documentary on PBS's *Nature* will charm anyone who has ever enjoyed a distant view of deer. --Nancy Bent

“Beautifully written and observed, *Illumination in the Flatwoods* is a work of art worthy of its subjects. The book takes us to a place we might never have even dreamed and gives our minds the courage to believe things our hearts have always known.” (Rick Bass - Praise for *Illumination in the Flatwoods*.)

I've just finished reading this book for the second time, about a year apart. It hit me in the gut even harder this time than the first. In the past week it's been almost impossible to get these mule deer out of my mind. Not only is this book excellently written, it's written with humor, honesty and most of all, with so much love and compassion that it leaps out at you through the pages. You can set the book aside when you've finished reading, but you simply can't set aside the troubling thoughts about what is happening to this beautiful species of animal, along with so many others in this world. Based on the authors interaction with this herd over many, many years, it's clear these are amazing, intelligent, charming, family oriented and loving creatures. It's apparent they learn quickly, have long memories of others in their past and they are very concerned and saddened when one of their group is injured or killed. And...it's clear that we are losing record numbers of them in such a very short period of time. Please, please do yourself, and the mule deer, a favor and read this book. I guarantee it will stay with you, and maybe if each of us are concerned enough to do something, changes can be made quickly enough to avoid losing the very last one forever. What a loss to our

humanity that would be! Thank you, Mr. Hutto, for writing this book. I will never forget it.

Everyone who wants to kill animals for "sport" should be forced to read this book. When you kill a deer, the loss is felt deeply by that deer's mother, child, sibling, etc. Excellent book, very moving and enlightening.

I purchased this book after being moved by the PBS episode on Hutto and his relationship with mule deer, and was not disappointed. The first chapter was a bit of a slowburn and overly descriptive about all life around his home, but hang in there. It does get better, much better. Hutto brings a new perspective to animal science and animal watching, asking 'What can we learn if we're not defined by the taboo of not getting too emotionally invested in our focus animals?'. His insight, philosophical and literary, is truly inspiring to read. He demonstrates the worth of citizen science and clearly had a lot of biological knowledge that he held himself back from divulging too much of, seemingly for fear of turning this into too much of a biology text. While I didn't mind the pure science portions, I felt his personal descriptions of the deer he knew, and his deep emotional explanations of his relationships with those deer could have carried the book alone. While only peppered throughout the book, they were brilliant. I also liked his wrestling with the emotions of not only being a lifelong hunter, and questioning modern "hunting" in regard to its harm of these particular mule deer. It showed an evolution of thought we should all attempt more often. I think as more animal species become depleted around the world, works like Hutto's will become increasingly important to either saving them, or, documenting for future generations why we knew so much and did so little to save them.

To cherish all living things as sacred is a sign of wisdom. In "Touching the Wild" we encounter great wisdom. Living from a deep awareness of our oneness with all living things, Joe Hutto takes us along on a paradoxical pilgrimage: in touching the wild mule deer, we touch the deepest part of ourselves. Mysteriously, walking with them, we find we are walking on holy ground. "If you touch one thing with deep awareness, you touch everything" ~Rumi

Beautifully written and photographed as well as heart-wrenching as Joe Hutto chronicles the lives and myriad challenges faced by the mule deer he comes to know and cherish.

Outstanding book written by someone who sensed how to get accepted into the safe zone of a distinctly spook-prone prey animal herd. Not written from a romanticized Bambi standpoint at all, it's

quite realistically explained how these animals think and how their survival instincts drive them. He accepts the high mortality rate among the species (sometimes with great difficulty in the case of having gotten to know a particular animal well). And he understands that hunting is a fact of life, only wishing that it would be restricted to the seasonal rules (which have purpose) and not done for pure sport alone. While it's a book you can pick up and put down, it's absorbing and brings you into understandings you wouldn't have otherwise. Good writing!

This is the story of the author and his wife who live in the mountains on a mini-ranch in Wyoming. He is a trained scientist. The book covers a time span of seven years telling how a herd of Northern American Mule Deer share their space along with a lot of other wildlife. The focus of the study is on the Mule Deer. The author, Joe Hutto gets to know the deer as individuals and names them as he learns about each of the personalities. The Mule Deer are declining to the point they will become extinct if steps are not taken to help their numbers. Anyone who loves animals will like this book and will also learn a lot about a species not so well known.

I bought the book because we became "parents" of a fawn mule deer doe after her mother was killed accidentally by a farmer's equipment. She has lived at our home in the woods since August of 2013, and even stayed during the winter, which brings us a foot or two of snow on the ground all season. Hutto's book was helpful to me in understanding some of her behavior, as well as my own.

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