



Chernobyl's Wild Kingdom: Life in the Dead Zone

By Rebecca L. Johnson

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After the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear explosion in Ukraine, scientists believed radiation had created a vast and barren wasteland in which life could never resurface. But the Dead Zone, as the contaminated area is known, doesn't look dead at all. In fact, wildlife seems to be thriving there. The Zone is home to beetles, swallows, catfish, mice, voles, otters, beavers, wild boar, foxes, lynx, deer, moose even brown bears and wolves. Yet the animals in the Zone are not quite what you'd expect. Every single one of them is radioactive.

In *Chernobyl's Wild Kingdom*, you'll meet the international scientists investigating the Zone's wildlife and trying to answer difficult questions: Have some animals adapted to living with radiation? Or is the radioactive environment harming them in ways we can't see or that will only show up in future generations? Learn more about the fascinating ongoing research and the debates that surround the findings in one of the most dangerous places on Earth.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 5–8—In April 1986, Reactor Number 4 in the Chernobyl nuclear power plant exploded, emitting a flood of radioactive material that devastated the surrounding countryside. The residual radioactivity permeating soil, water, plants and animals led to the creation of a miles-wide Exclusion Zone closed to human residents and dubbed the Dead Zone by the press, the general public, and scientists alike. Scientists have continued to study the ecology of this site during the intervening years, and Johnson's lucid text describes their methods and findings in this chunk of land on the border between the Ukraine and Belarus. She has read their written reports and consulted scientists in the field to determine long-term effects on local wildlife after almost 30 years of exposure to varying doses of radioactivity. While some animals and plants appear to have been adversely affected, a large number of species seem to be coping relatively untouched. Even some former human residents (mostly elderly women) have returned to small hamlets and farms on the edge of the Zone, and poachers appear to be active in the area as well. (Other humans, massively exposed at the time of the explosion, have not fared so well.) The readable text is interspersed with dark red sidebars on such topics as how the researchers maintain safety in hot zones, the resistance of some plants to effects of long-term radiation, and reports of the damage suffered by human evacuees from the contaminated zone. Small color photos and maps provide visual evidence and geographical information. A final chapter reports on the tsunami-driven nuclear failure in the 2011 Fukushima disaster and ponders the future for similar "accidents." Thought-provoking.—Patricia Manning, formerly at Eastchester Public Library, NY

About the Author

Rebecca L. Johnson has always loved to read, and her tastes in books in grade school were quite a mix adventure stories, animal stories, lots of nonfiction science, but also mysteries, science fiction, and some adult books, too. She remembers reading Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* when she was 10 years old. It was a challenge, but she became so engrossed in the story that she could hardly put it down.

Rebecca started writing books shortly after she graduated from college, first college biology textbooks and then special high-interest pieces on different science topics that went into middle school and high school science textbooks. Her first book for kids was about pheromones, chemicals that some types of animals use to communicate. Lerner published that book back in the late 1980s, and they have published quite a few more of Rebecca's books over the years.

Doing research for books has taken Rebecca to a lot of amazing places where she's had fantastic opportunities to work with real scientists and at times help them with their research. Over the years she's spent about 9 months in Antarctica and many weeks scuba diving with researchers on Australia's Great Barrier Reef. She has also traveled as deep as 2500 feet below the ocean's surface in the Johnson-Sea-Link submersible, several times. The world is full of wonderful places, but visiting the deep sea was a life-changing experience, and Rebecca has never looked at anything in quite the same way since.

Most of her books so far have been nonfiction, but Rebecca is working on a young adult novel at the moment. It's quite a change, but she has to admit that it's really fun to be able to make things up!

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Lapham:

The reserve with title Chernobyl's Wild Kingdom: Life in the Dead Zone includes a lot of information that you can find out it. You can get a lot of profit after read this book. That book exist new understanding the information that exist in this guide represented the condition of the world today. That is important to yo7u to be aware of how the improvement of the world. This book will bring you in new era of the the positive effect. You can read the e-book on your own smart phone, so you can read this anywhere you want.

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