



# Chernobyl's Wild Kingdom: Life in the Dead Zone

*Rebecca L. Johnson*

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After the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear explosion, scientists believed radiation would make the area a barren wasteland. Today the Dead Zone is teeming with wildlife. But every plant and animal is radioactive, leaving scientists wondering how their survival is possible.

## **Chernobyl's Wild Kingdom: Life in the Dead Zone Details**

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## **From Reader Review Chernobyl's Wild Kingdom: Life in the Dead Zone for online ebook**

### **Holly says**

I read this book as part of my required reading for my master's program. The overall aesthetics of the book will no doubt appeal to young adults – the title, Chernobyl's Wild Kingdom, sounds fun and appealing, and as a nonfiction book, the incredibly short length will no doubt be appreciated. The content within is informative and engaging without getting bogged down with too much scientific detail, and provides resources for further explanation and research. This is a perfect nonfiction book for teens and young adults.

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### **Amy Soma says**

I've long been fascinated by Chernobyl since writing a research paper about it in high school. This book gives an unbiased look at the long lasting impact of nuclear disaster and educates a new generation about Chernobyl.

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### **Rachel Reads Ravenously says**

3.5 stars

An extensive look at the area surrounding the Chernobyl plant that malfunctioned and exploded decades ago, it's a look at the present condition as well as a history overview of the past. The surrounding area was extremely damaged and an exclusion zone erected for safety. Now, almost thirty years later, scientists are studying what's left of the radioactivity and its effects on surrounding wildlife and people. Animals are able to live in the exclusion zone just fine, some people have moved in nearby and hunters roam the land to hunt the wildlife. It begs the question, is Chernobyl habitable again?

A very thought provoking work. Many tweens today have no clue about this historic and traumatic event of a nuclear power plant exploding and launching radioactive material that stretched very far. The structure of the book is very well done, as the main story is told there are red side bars with extra interesting information that the reader may like to know. Split into five chapters, spanning from the history of Chernobyl's accident, to how it affected living creatures nearby, to its overall legacy. There is also a wonderful blend of subjects from history, to science, to animals all combined together, so even if this book is only being used for a report there is at least some aspect that all tweens may be interested in.

While this book is perfect for a history report, it can also easily be read for personal enjoyment for young readers, whether it's specifically on this subject or more information on the Ukraine and its history. The book is very well written and explains the events in an understandable way and yet is not condescending to the young reader. The author also connected this past event with future ones, like Japan's nuclear accident pointing out that we can still repeat histories mistakes.

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## **Debra says**

Amazingly short 64 page look at Chernobyl and the mammal, bird, and insect life still existing in the Exclusion Zone(Dead Zone). It starts with the experiment that would trigger the explosion of Reactor #4, (The startling thing was that from the start of the experiment to the explosion was under a minute), then continues with how the situation was "handled" and the effects on the citizens of the area and the resulting countries that experiences the fallout from the disaster. A very good overview if you are unfamiliar with the subject.

I was amazed that people are studying the effects on the animals by catching them and reading their internal radioactivity and comparing the reading to the measure of the radioactivity in the area they were living in. They are then banded and often equipped with a dosimeter to measure the external radiation they are exposed to. The whole thing is fascinating.

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## **R. G. Nairam says**

I put this on my "history" shelves, but it is pretty heavily about science, although done in a way this non-sciencey person could follow (that's probably because it is for children. hush.).

Really good information in here! Also nice formatting and pictures. Sometimes the set-up of sidebars and additional information sections in these kinds of books drive me crazy, but these worked well with the main text. There's also a moderate bibliography in the back.

I would've liked it to be at least a couple chapters longer, but maybe that's because I'm an adult.

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## **Hilary says**

After the horrible nuclear disaster at Chernobyl, most of the people were evacuated. Some died, and many other have felt the lasting effects of the radiation exposure caused by the explosion. The effects are not only physical, but mental and emotional as well. What we don't often hear about is the lingering wildlife in the fallout zone of Chernobyl. Scientists have witnessed thriving wildlife population of many different species, despite the fact that they are "glowing" with radiation. This book answers some interesting questions about how the animals are surviving, and what effects the lethal doses of radiation are having on them as generations pass. Great care was taken to address many curiosities, and the text was complimented fantastically by pictures and diagrams. I liked that the author gave a decent background on what exactly happened at the plant as well as the political and social plunders surrounding the entire situation. Johnson did a wonderful job delving into such a fascinating topic!

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## **Bill Leach says**

The Chernobyl nuclear accident resulted in the creation of the Exclusion Zone, which was abandoned by virtually all humans because of the high radiation levels. The area has become one of the largest nature preserves in Europe and animal life has flourished in spite of the radiation. Larger animals include at least a

thousand boar and 200 wolves. More moose live in the Exclusion Zone than elsewhere in the Ukraine. Some rare species have expanded, such as the White-tailed Eagle and the Noctule and Barbastelle bats which have not been seen in the area for fifty years. A herd of Przewalski's Horses has flourished although some poaching has occurred.

While Iodine-131 initially killed off much life, the next most dangerous nucleotides are Cesium-137 which gathers in soft tissues and Strontium-90 which settles in the teeth and bones. The expectation was that animals in the zone would develop cancers and would suffer DNA damage. Research was carried to look at these effects.

The surprise was the excellent condition of the Bank Voles where neither cancers nor DNA damage could initially be found. Later research showed that subsequent generations had changes in their mitochondrial DNA, although they did not seem to affect the viability of the voles. Researchers see this as an example supporting the idea of radiation hormesis, a controversial theory that low levels of radiation stimulate cellular repair mechanisms.

Studies of Barn Swallows show definite radiation effects including tumors and structural changes. In areas of high radioactivity, spider populations are depressed.

A short but interesting book.

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## **Chris says**

Engaging and informative.

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## **Aleap says**

This title was provided by NetGalley and Lerner Publishing Group in exchange for an honest review.

The 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant explosion left many scientists and laymen alike under the impression that the areas surrounding the plant would be a lifeless, barren wasteland that could not support life. Humans who lived within the Exclusion Zone were evacuated within days and many who were exposed to the worst of it immediately following the explosion grew sick or died from the exposure to radioactive fallout. The wildlife, however, stayed in place and to the surprise of many, some appeared to be thriving and perfectly healthy. Although scientists don't agree on whether certain levels of radiation are helpful or harmful to living creatures -they have evidence to argue both sides of the matter- they continue to study the wildlife in an attempt to determine the long-term effects of living in such a hotbed of radioactivity. Tables, maps, and occasionally haunting, occasionally disturbing images support accessible and informative, but always fascinating, text. Johnson does an exceptional job of presenting pertinent background information to a generation that is likely entirely unfamiliar with the accident and expertly provides multiple viewpoints on the state of wildlife in the zone, making it clear that science isn't always clearcut. An abundance of

captioned, large color photographs as well as historical images are coupled with in-text definitions and supplemental breakout boxes to make this well-designed title visually appealing and easy to navigate. The well-rounded back matter includes author's note, glossary, source notes, a selected bibliography, print and digital additional resources, and an extensive index. This title would make an excellent resource for those studying the environment but would serve equally well as a source of pleasure reading to those interested in wildlife, world history, or the sciences.

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### **Heather Gunnell says**

Staff Pick

This is a great introduction to the Chernobyl disaster. I was only a toddler when it happened, so I only knew the bare minimum about what really happened. It is fascinating to think that wildlife is somehow surviving in the Exclusion Zone. Whether or not it's thriving is up for debate, but it's there.

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### **Nancy says**

This was a book written for young readers with a basic knowledge of science. One does not need a university education to realize how terrible these events are. Anyone who reads this book will, I hope, see how it is imperative for all educators of children and YA, as well as adults who were not alive in 1986, to include works like this one, and other resources recommended by its author, Rebecca L. Johnson.

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### **Heather Gunnell says**

Staff Pick

Heather

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### **Pam says**

Middle school nonfiction. Discussion of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and the ensuing radioactive fallout. Why are there animals and plants thriving in the dead zone?

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### **Meredith says**

An absolutely fascinating and also terrifying book about not only Chernobyl, but also nuclear power in general. Basically, we're all going to die. Reading this sort of thing always freaks me out, and it always

makes me feel like human beings are honestly lame. The fact that nature is thriving more in a nuclear dead zone than it does around human beings is pretty pathetic.

The one downside to this book: not enough pictures! I would have spent a lot of time looking at pictures of animals wandering around the dead zone.

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### **Dm says**

I enjoyed this title immensely. It is well written, informative (without going over my head or talking down) and excellently organized. It is also brief. A perfect taste of important information. I love that it included sections on Japan's nuclear disaster, data on where other nuclear reactors exist in the world, source notes, a select bibliography and information about free complementary education resources....and more! What a great little resource. I can't wait to recommend it.

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