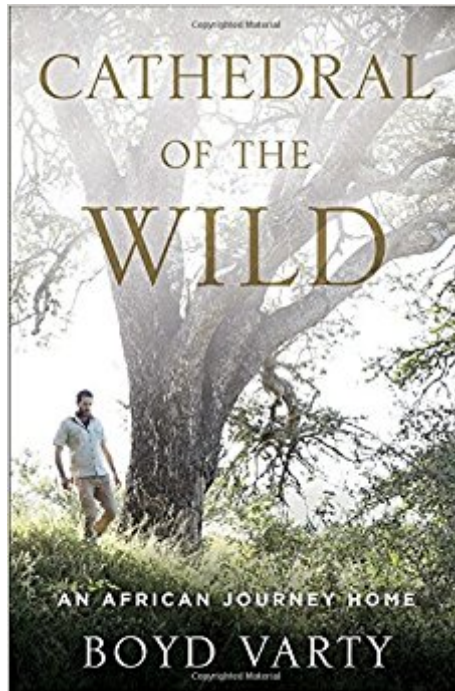




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# **Cathedral Of The Wild: An African Journey Home**



## Synopsis

Boyd Varty had an unconventional upbringing. He grew up on Londolozi Game Reserve in South Africa, a place where man and nature strive for balance, where perils exist alongside wonders. Founded more than eighty years ago as a hunting ground, Londolozi was transformed into a nature reserve beginning in 1973 by Varty's father and uncle, visionaries of the restoration movement. But it wasn't just a sanctuary for the animals; it was also a place for ravaged land to flourish again and for the human spirit to be restored. When Nelson Mandela was released after twenty-seven years of imprisonment, he came to the reserve to recover. *Cathedral of the Wild* is Varty's memoir of his life in this exquisite and vast refuge. At Londolozi, Varty gained the confidence that emerges from living in Africa. "We came out strong and largely unafraid of life," he writes, "with the full knowledge of its dangers." It was there that young Boyd and his equally adventurous sister learned to track animals, raised leopard and lion cubs, followed their larger-than-life uncle on his many adventures filming wildlife, and became one with the land. Varty survived a harrowing black mamba encounter, a debilitating bout with malaria, even a vicious crocodile attack, but his biggest challenge was a personal crisis of purpose. An intense spiritual quest takes him across the globe and back again "to reconnect with nature and rediscover the track." *Cathedral of the Wild* is a story of transformation that inspires a great appreciation for the beauty and order of the natural world. With conviction, hope, and humor, Varty makes a passionate claim for the power of the wild to restore the human spirit. *Praise for Cathedral of the Wild*

"Extremely touching . . . a book about growth and hope." —*The New York Times*

"It made me cry with its hard-won truths about human and animal nature. . . . Both funny and deeply moving, this book belongs on the shelf of everyone who seeks healing in wilderness." —*BookPage*

"This is a gorgeous, lyrical, hilarious, important book. Boyd Varty is as brilliant a storyteller and as kind a companion as you'll ever meet. He describes a life that has been spent forging a new way of thinking and being, in harmony with both Nature writ large and the human nature that is you. Read this and you may find yourself instinctively beginning to heal old wounds: in yourself, in others, and just maybe in the cathedral of the wild that is our true home." —Martha Beck, author of *Finding Your Own North Star*

"*Cathedral of the Wild* is the captivating story of the joyful, occasionally terrifying, but always interesting life of Boyd Varty. It is also a tale of healing, and of one family's passion to restore our broken connection to nature. Be prepared to fall in love with Varty, his sister, his parents, his uncle, the ideals they fiercely hold to protect the African bush, and the wild animals and people that surround them. With his campfire wit and poet's ear, Varty is a wonderful new voice in adventure writing." —Susan Casey, author of

The Wave: In Pursuit of the Rogues, Freaks, and Giants of the Ocean  
From the first chapter of Cathedral of the Wild, Boyd Varty's South Africa grabs your heart, rather like the giant mamba he encountered as a boy. The deadly snake moved on, but Varty's stories stick.  
"Richard Louv, author of Last Child in the Woods and The Nature Principle

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Londolozi Game Reserve in South Africa has been the Varty family home for four generations. Located just west of Kruger National Park, it is a world-famous private wildlife preserve that attracts international visitors and broadcast-media attention. Varty recounts how his family restored dry, overgrazed land abandoned by ranchers, establishing a healthy habitat for a wide range of wildlife, including elephants, lions, impalas, baboons, and crocodiles. This entertaining family saga is filled with distinctive characters, especially the author's uncle John Varty, an irrepressible filmmaker who has survived numerous life-threatening accidents and clashes with business partners and government officials. Like his uncle, the author has cheated death, having been cornered by a poisonous cobra, held by gun-bearing robbers, and attacked by a crocodile. Written by a relatively young man, this quick-reading memoir may be just the first of many lively African tales. --Rick Roche

"Extremely touching . . . a book about growth and hope."  
"The New York Times" "It made me cry with its hard-won truths about human and animal nature. . . . Both funny and deeply moving,

this book belongs on the shelf of everyone who seeks healing in wilderness.ââ"BookPageâœThis is a gorgeous, lyrical, hilarious, important book. Boyd Varty is as brilliant a storyteller and as kind a companion as youâ™ll ever meet. He describes a life that has been spent forging a new way of thinking and being, in harmony with both Nature writ large and the human nature that is you. Read this and you may find yourself instinctively beginning to heal old wounds: in yourself, in others, and just maybe in the cathedral of the wild that is our true home.ââ"Martha Beck, author of *Finding Your Own North Star* ÂâœCathedral of the Wild is the captivating story of the joyful, occasionally terrifying, but always interesting life of Boyd Varty. It is also a tale of healing, and of one familyâ™s passion to restore our broken connection to nature. Be prepared to fall in love with Varty, his sister, his parents, his uncle, the ideals they fiercely hold to protect the African bush, and the wild animals and people that surround them. With his campfire wit and poetâ™s ear, Varty is a wonderful new voice in adventure writing.ââ"Susan Casey, author of *The Wave: In Pursuit of the Rogues, Freaks, and Giants of the Ocean*âœFrom the first chapter of *Cathedral of the Wild*, Boyd Vartyâ™s South Africa grabs your heart, rather like the giant mamba he encountered as a boy. The deadly snake moved on, but Vartyâ™s stories stick. Here is a rare and moving tale of a young man who learns that the greatest dangers, at least to the human soul, are not to be found in the natural world, but in the emptiness beyond itâ"and that even mambas carry the power to heal.ââ"Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods* and *The Nature Principle*âœ[An] intense, insightful memoir that brings together several wise observations about the relationship between nature and humanity . . . Varty faces his own trials . . . leading to a spiritual renewal that elevates this memoir above the usual wilderness narrative.ââ"Publishers Weekly (starred review)

I truly loved this book, and gave it four stars instead of five only because of a certain unevenness in the overall memoir. But it tells a wonderful story- of a young man growing up in South Africa to a family of dedicated conservationists, encountering predators on a daily basis, learning about the natural world in an intimate way that is sadly unusual in the 21 st century. The story of Varty's upbringing and of his family is extremely engaging, amusing and original, and he draws a lovely, complex portrait of each family member. The relationship he had with his father is particularly well-drawn in the early chapters as the author describes an intimacy based on facing danger together , working together closely on a daily basis. In the mid-section of the book, I became a bit irritated by Varty's somewhat repetitive stories of his adventures with his uncle, a wildlife film maker who would heedlessly put his nephew into unwarranted danger for the sake of his films. Varty seems not quite able to offer a perspective on this man that encompasses both his love and

admiration, but also anger or distress about the insistence that being a man requires signing on for absolutely unnecessary danger. Later in the memoir, however, in a most affecting manner, the author describes his coming to terms with traumatic episodes in his life and with changes in his and his family's situation that require an acceptance of his vulnerability. He also discovers again and again his reverence for living in nature, and his commitment to conserving it. Varty's writing about nature is thought-provoking, enchanting... and simply beautiful.

This book is so much more than stories of a young man growing up on a family game reserve in so Africa -those stories are charming and paint a picture of an Africa long gone but the real story is of a family's growth and commitment to the land and the animals. It is also the story of the authors deeply spiritual journey from a dark place to light. I highly recommend this book to anyone who likes to go beyond the superficial.

What a fascinating book. The author writes about not only himself but of his amazing family and the journey they have gone through, first as hunters and then into conservation as they developed an almost unusable piece of property, into a thriving game preserve, called Londolozi, situated on the western border of the Kruger National Park, which together with some other parks make up the Greater Kruger National Park in South Africa. It not only talks about his life growing up tracking animals and learning to live off the land, but it also has us follow him as he begins a spiritual journey to find himself, and how to make him be able to once again delve into what has always been an important, part of his life, Nature. This book is non stop, from living on the edge of danger, or on a high of living in such an amazing setting, and getting to know so many fascinating people and situations. I will let you discover all of the wonders he and his family encounter, some scary, some laugh out loud hilarious, but which always in my opinion will have you clamoring for more. Very well written in an easy to read style, this is the type of book I love to read, one where I will learn, and want to know more. I am sure we will hear more adventures from this author as he young, and will have a lot more to add to his adventures, I cannot wait.

I spent time on the game reserve next to Londolozi. I loved reading about the origin of this reserve, the families struggles and ultimately ability to overcome adversity. The book is well written and engaging!

I thoroughly enjoyed this insider's account of growing up in wild Africa. Notwithstanding,

being mistaken for lunch by a crocodile, and face offs with charging elephants, the joys of being immersed and connected with nature cannot be rivaled. His reflections are poetic, sensual and amusing. Varty shares the trials faced by his family to restore overgrazed lands to provide land wild animals can survive, and thrive on. Theirs is a story of hard won victories in conservation and the battle to prevent species from going extinct. Today, Londolozi, the family land and safari headquarters, is one of the most elite and sought after safari sites in South Africa. In my view Varty has had a lot of good placed on his table, but to his credit he is humble in the telling of a long journey to the place his very tight-knit and loving family enjoy today. Linda Ballou-Author Lost Angel Walkabout-One Traveler's Tales

A very interesting book about youngsters growing up in an African safari park. The interaction with the leopards was particularly fascinating and the family's desire to switch from being hunters to conservationists riveting. The author and his sister had a very unusual upbringing in these surroundings. Unfortunately they also experienced some severe trauma like being attacked and robbed in their home in Johannesburg. The author's grappling with all the traumas and the unusual things he did to rid himself of what seemed to be a severe depression, detracted from a very well written book about life in the African bush.

Wonderful read. Well written with Mr Varty's spirit truly coming through. What South Africa was like and how it has changed. How the human spirit can triumph over adversity. I just wish I could access his uncle's documentary films.

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