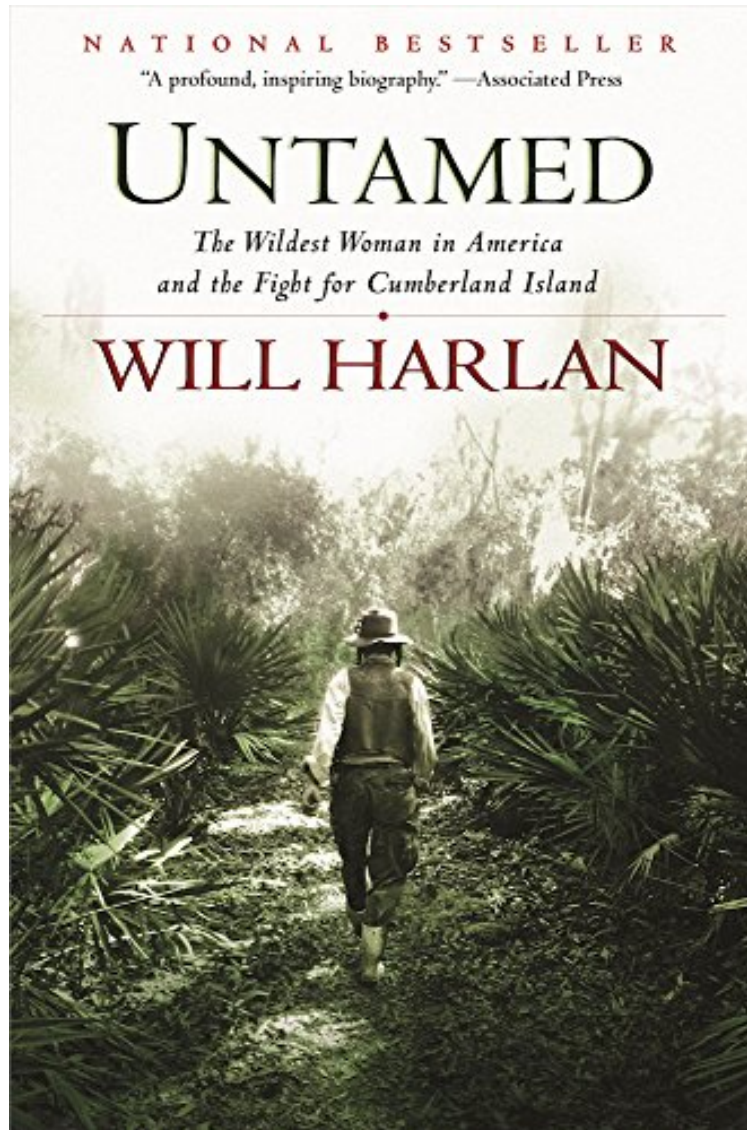


# Untamed: The Wildest Woman in America and the Fight for Cumberland Island

Will Harlan

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**Will Harlan : Untamed: The Wildest Woman in America and the Fight for Cumberland Island** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Untamed: The Wildest Woman in America and the Fight for Cumberland Island:

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful. Maybe not the wildest woman in America but one of the more

interesting women

By Dr Muddawg

Will Harlan's "Untamed" is a readable and informative screed about the life and crusades of Carol Ruckdeschel. While describing her a misfit would be an injustice, she has battled against the powers that be for decades in order to preserve Cumberland Island as a wildlife refuge. I had read a piece about her in The New Yorker by John McPhee years ago. To say her approach to saving wildlife is idiosyncratic would be an understatement. Her in-your-face confrontational attitude to the old monied residents, the National Park Service, shrimp fishers, the US Navy and hack politicians (her friend Jimmy Carter being a notable exception) may have undermined her cause at times. Hers is an interesting life down a path few would dare to take. There is no doubt the country owes her and others for the preservation of one of our most beautiful barrier islands on the East Coast. Cumberland will doubtlessly need more advocates in the future but they may not need to be quite as controversial as she to be effective.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. you will not be disappointed. You will learn much about Carol the person ...

By John P. Terry

Untamed, as told by biographer Will Harlan, is a gripping true story of eco-heroine Carol Ruckdeschel. "Carol Ruckdeschel" Harlan tells us early on, "is the wildest woman in America. She eats road kill, wrestles alligators and dissects dead sea turtles that wash ashore. She lives on a wilderness island in a ramshackle cabin that she built herself, and she eats mostly what she hunts, gathers and grows. She is a hard drinking, gun-toting, modern day Thoreau who is even more outspoken in protecting her Waldernesque Island." In self defense, Carol, shot and killed a "lover". As you read on you understand her to be more an impassioned courageous fighter for wilderness preservation than a gun toting cowgirl. Her story is an iconic epic in the modern clash between the forces of conservation and diversity and those of exploitation. Depending on how tamed or not your perspective, she is an eco-heroine or a whacko.

Her "Waldernesque Island" is Cumberland Island off the coast of Georgia. Cumberland Island is one of the world's most biologically diverse islands and an important nesting spot for sea turtles. In no small part due to Carol's efforts in 1972 Cumberland Island was designated a National Park. Untamed reveals many layers to Carol's remarkable story. Her courage and passion helped save the Island from development and to gain it National Park status. This struggle brought her into direct and bitter conflict with such diverse adversaries as the Carnegie and Rockefeller families, National Park Services, tourists and poachers. If Harlan's opening comments spark your curiosity to read the book, you will not be disappointed. You will learn much about Carol the person and the self-taught marine biologist and how passion and unflagging courage can make a difference. You may learn more about yourself and where you fit in the struggle.

Untamed raises very important questions about labeling as a means of social control. Why think Carol a whacko? A lot of people do. How else can you explain a woman who does such bizarre things as eat road kill, shoot suitors and scare off turtle egg poachers at gunpoint and more? Who determines by what standards and for what purposes that another earns the "scarlet letter" of deviant? There is a long history going back to Socrates of dissenters being labeled, devalued and punished by bullying, shunning, persecution and even death. Carol embraces and defends the natural world's diversity and its sensual, tactile, spiritual force as an essence never to be replicated by museums, zoos or aquariums. Untamed will gift you the image of Carol in the red glow of the setting sun riding the back of a great sea turtle from the shores of her island into the sea – two sentient beings intricately connected in a vast seemingly endless universe of union and mystery. How beautiful. How hard we must struggle to pass the importance of this beauty, this spiritual intimacy on to our children and they on to theirs to form the perpetual chain of stewardship.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. riveting

By Mariela M. Brown

I everything about it. Literally it was hard to put the book down. What passion, what love, what courage Carol showed. Loved the book. I read it for. A Book Club but ended enjoying it every minute of it. Loved the way the author told the story, and learned a lot about the wild, the turtles and their marvelous lives.

Carol Ruckdeschel is the wildest woman in America. She wrestles alligators, eats roadkill, rides horses bareback, and lives in a ramshackle cabin that she built by hand in an island wilderness. A combination of Henry David Thoreau and Jane Goodall, Carol is a self-taught scientist who has become a tireless defender of sea turtles on Cumberland Island, a national park off the coast of Georgia. Cumberland, the country's largest and most biologically diverse barrier island, is celebrated for its windswept dunes and feral horses. Steel magnate Thomas Carnegie once owned much of the island, and in recent years, Carnegie heirs and the National Park Service have clashed with Carol over the island's future. What happens when a dirt-poor naturalist with only a high school diploma becomes an outspoken advocate on a celebrated but divisive island? Untamed is the story of an American original standing her ground and fighting for what she believes in, no matter the cost.

A New York Times Bestseller  
A Barnes Noble Discover Great New Writers Series pick  
One of 's Top 100 Books of the Year  
A Daily Beast Best Nonfiction Book of the Year  
Winner of the Langum Malott Prize  
Winner of the 2015 Society of Environmental Journalists Rachel Carson Environment Book Award  
An Advisory Council for the Georgia Center for the Book's "Books All Georgians Should Read"  
"Vivid. . . Ms. Ruckdeschel's biography, and the way this wandering soul came to settle for so many decades on Cumberland Island, is big enough on its own, but Mr. Harlan hints at bigger questions. Who does this island belong to? The Park Service, the Carnegies, Carol—and, for that matter, the turtles? What is the difference between stewardship and ownership? Carol Ruckdeschel found a home as

the latest in a series of women who have tried to protect Cumberland Island. The difference being that, rather than being a Carnegie, she is a benevolent invasive species of one.”—Wall Street Journal“Harlan intimately and expansively profiles a fearless Southern island dweller. . . . A moving homage and an adventure story that artfully articulates the ferocities of nature and humanity.”—Kirkus s“Carol Ruckdeschel isn’t quite your mother’s idea of a role model, but she is my idea of an inspiring woman. Her gifts are many, her commitment resolute, her contribution world-class. And boy—as you’ll read—has she had fun. What a story! It’s as beautiful as the island she loves.”—Carl Safina, author of *The View from Lazy Point* and *A Sea in Flames*“Now this is an adventure story. Untamed is the true-life saga of a brilliant, beautiful woman who became her own tall tale. Just to survive, Carol Ruckdeschel had to become as elusive and mysterious as the creatures she first set off into the wilderness to study. Hunted by her enemies, stalked by an ex-lover, living off the land, Ruckdeschel found herself locked in a battle of wits to stay alive and pursue her scientific passion. This is no *Sad Girl on a One-Year Quest for Love and Backbone*; Carol Ruckdeschel is on a mission, and she’s smart and lethal enough to deal with anyone who tries to stop her.”—Christopher McDougall, author of *Born to Run*“A true action hero, Carol Ruckdeschel is using her powers of insight, persuasion, and personal commitment to protect a wilderness island off the coast of Georgia. She’s not just bemoaning the tragic decline of the natural world that sustains all life on earth, humans and turtles included. She is also putting her own life on the line to save what’s left. Thanks to Carol, there is hope for wild creatures who have preceded humankind by hundreds of millions of years—and hope for an enduring future for ourselves as well.”—Sylvia Earle, record-setting oceanographer, National Geographic explorer-in-residence, 2009 TED Prize winner, Mission Blue founder, Time’s first Hero of the Planet, and author of *The World Is Blue*“Wild country produces wild people, who sometimes are just what’s needed to keep that wild cycle going. This is a memorable portrait.”—Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature*, winner of the 2013 Gandhi Peace Award, founder of 350.org“Get ready to inhale steaming carcasses, gun smoke, and salty sea air. Harlan has a magic touch for storytelling. He rings out every sensory detail in this compelling sketch of a controversial, no-holds-barred life.”—Jennifer S. Holland, National Geographic writer and New York Times bestselling author of *Unlikely Friendships*“Open this book to the brine of salt marsh, the musk of turtles and sea breezes, and the astonishing story of Carol Ruckdeschel. From the first line I was captivated by this biography of a fierce and enigmatic passion for wildness, mesmerizing and beautiful. May we all learn something of love from it.”—Janisse Ray, author of *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*“Untamed is not only a page-turner but also a show-stopper. Its engaging protagonist, Carol Ruckdeschel—a combination of Jane Goodall and Annie Oakley—is kaleidoscopic in her paradoxes: ‘brutal and benevolent, savage and sympathetic, cutthroat and compassionate.’ Harlan has written an environmental classic that belongs on the shelf alongside Carson, Leopold, Muir, and Thoreau. This crafty, adventurous biography reads like a good novel and leaves readers in tears. It’s a tale of an American hero told by an American hero, and the collaboration is luminous.”—Thomas Rain Crowe, author of *Zoro’s Field: My Life in the Appalachian Woods*“This is going to be a winner. I loved it—and was even choked up a time or two by Carol’s passion to save wild Cumberland. An ‘undertow of awe’ sweeps beneath the entire story. As Carol’s life reveals, the battles for wilderness are many and the victories are short-lived, but ultimately the fight comes down to one thing: pure, unwavering love.”—Brooke Williams, author of *Halflives: Reconciling Work and Wildness*“Deliciously engrossing. . . . Readers are in for a wild ride.”—Citizen-Times (Asheville)“This is one gorgeous book, a testament not only to Will Harlan’s obvious writing chops but also what the best in journalism is all about, the passion to dig and go beyond the obvious. Harlan’s unflinching, inspirational biography of Carol Ruckdeschel . . . shows the reader her amazing character, spine and spunk . . . Untamed is a unique portrayal of a unique crusader . . . Very thought-provoking stuff, with beautiful writing and an eye-for-detail.”—Society of Environmental Journalists