

Tigers in Red Weather by Ruth Padel.
Little, Brown 2005.

For a passionate tiger-phile *Tigers in Red Weather* is both a joy and a source of pain. A joy because it describes a journey that all tiger lovers would give their eye teeth to emulate, and pain because it details all too clearly the uphill struggle facing tiger conservationists throughout the world as they seek to protect one of the planet's most beautiful creatures.

Ruth Padel makes her journey, across all the remaining habitats of wild tigers, against the background of the ending of a five year love affair, and it is clear that the distress that this engendered stayed with her wherever she went – unsurprisingly so. Some reviewers have referred to this dimension as if it were a self-indulgent distraction but I do not concur, for it makes the author a richer observer and certainly transforms her from a focussed ostensibly single issue writer into a fully rounded human being integrating her passion into a much wider whole.

There are some natural history and scientific writers, like Stephen Jay Gould, David Quammen, and Henry Beeston who write serious works with a poet's eye for language; as a poet Ruth Padel brings all the sensitivity, lyricism and superb use of language that is associated with her craft and combines it with sound research into tigers and their habitat in a most powerful way.

Tigers in Red Weather is a wonderful book – as a personal memoir, as a travel journal, as an observation of an international group of passionate and dedicated conservationists, but above all else as a tribute to the tiger, in all the lands of its current dispersion, and an expression of the sincerest hope that it will continue to survive in the wild.

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