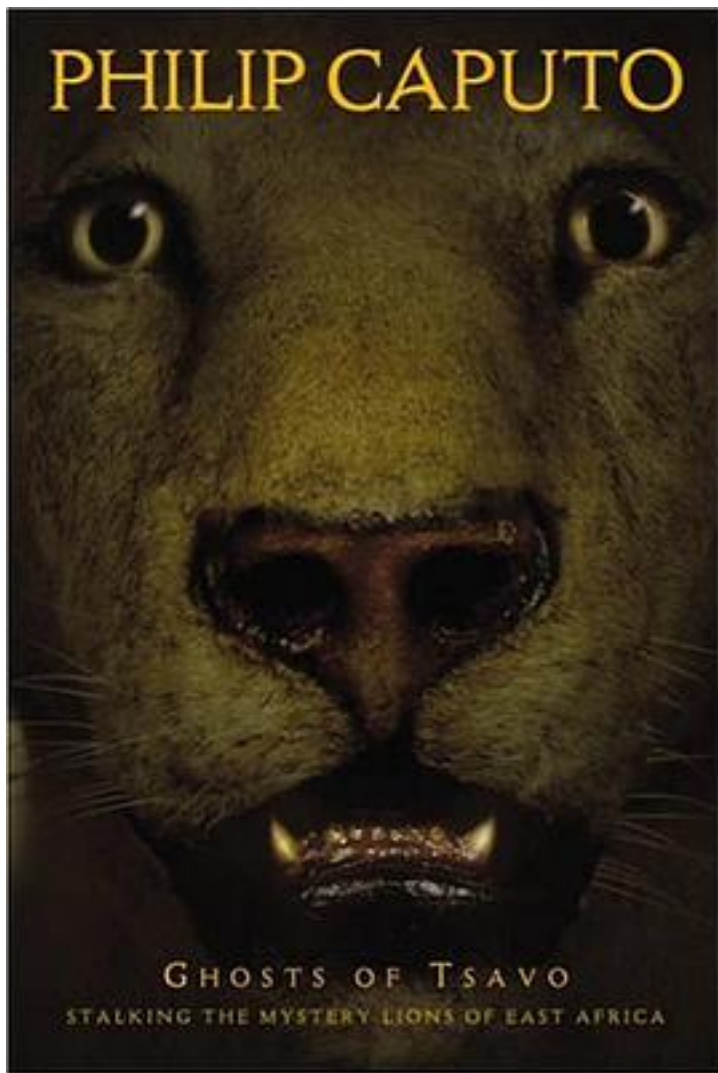


Ghosts of Tsavo



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Ghosts of Tsavo: Stalking the Mystery Lions of East Africa is both a riveting adventure travel narrative and a modern-day scientific exploration. Caputo and his small corps of discovery - consisting of a photographer, two eminent scientists from the University of Minnesota and, sometimes, a few armed rangers supplied by the Kenya Park Service - prowl the forbidding plains of Tsavo and southern Kenya seeking close encounters with Africa's most efficient killers--the massive, hauntingly mysterious lions immortalized by the 1907 publication of John Patterson's *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo*. The book chronicled the bloody exploits of two such beasts that in 1898 killed and ate 140 workers who were building a railroad bridge over the Tsavo River. The seemingly unkillable man-eaters literally stopped the British Empire in its tracks during their yearlong reign of terror. The natives came to believe these body-snatching cats - and their ilk - to be incarnate spirits of African chieftains angered by the building of a railroad through their ancestral lands. The story inspired two feature films, *Bwana Devil* in 1952 and *The Ghost and the Darkness* in 1996. But the adrenaline rush of living for months in the shadow of such fearsome critters is only half of our story. Apart from Caputo's widely acclaimed gift for dramatic narrative, what lifts this story out of the category of a thrill-seekers travelogue is the mission of discovery element pursued by the writer with his two scientist companions. The mission: Is there any truth to the recent reports (by two scientists from Chicago's Field Museum) that these fierce mane-less lions could constitute a feline 'missing link' between modern lions and the prehistoric lions that preyed on our Pleistocene ancestors. So this, otherwise, great adventure story is larded with the gravitas of scientific quest, as Caputo traces the efforts of our two biologists to unlock the secrets of the maneaters of Tsavo.

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