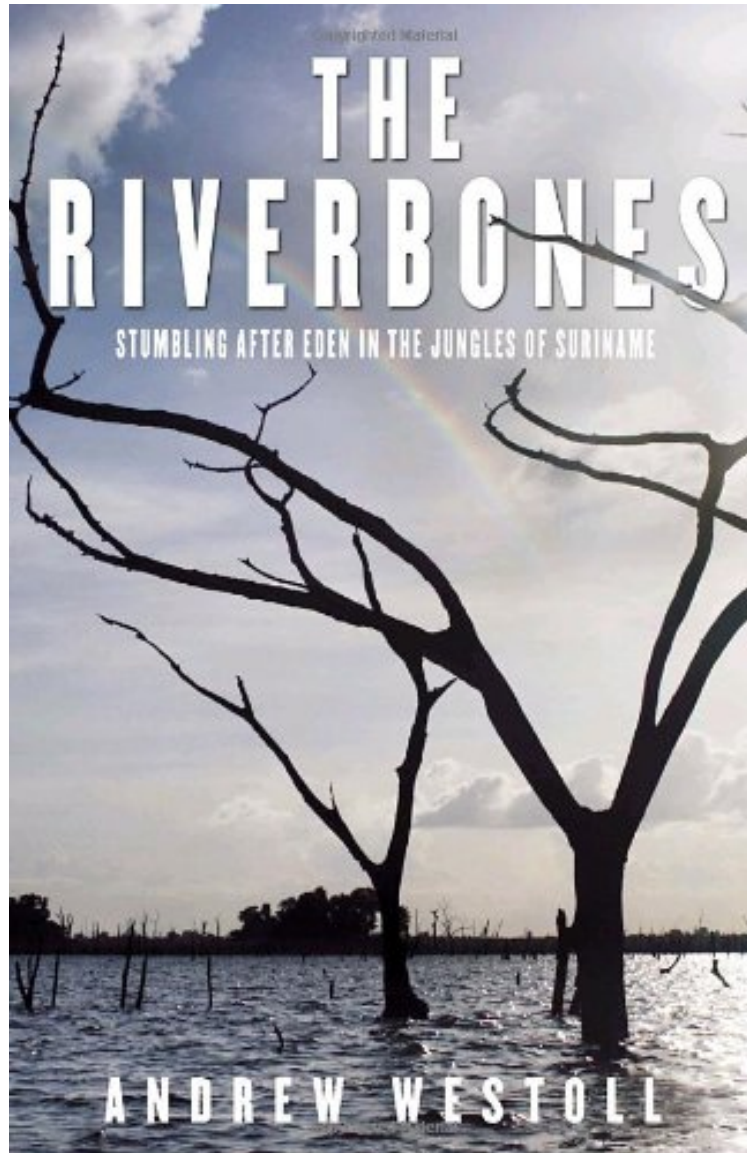


(Download pdf) The Riverbones: Stumbling After Eden in the Jungles of Suriname

The Riverbones: Stumbling After Eden in the Jungles of Suriname

Andrew Westoll

ePub | *DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF



DOWNLOAD



+

READ ONLINE

#1855735 in Books 2008-10-28 2008-10-28 Format: International Edition Original language: English PDF # 1
9.00 x .90 x 6.051, #File Name: 0771088752376 pages | File size: 39.Mb

Andrew Westoll : The Riverbones: Stumbling After Eden in the Jungles of Suriname before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Riverbones: Stumbling After Eden in the Jungles of Suriname:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. If you want to read a really good book about the recent history and the people of ...By Customer If you want to read a really good book about the recent history and the people of Suriname and about the adventures of Andrew Westoll in the former Dutch colony, try and buy this one. I say try,

because it's only available second hand. It's a pity that it has not been translated into Dutch. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Crankygrandma Really fantastic book. Ecological devastation scary. Well worth reading. 18 of 22 people found the following review helpful. Beyond Rumours By CTAThis book is recognizably one of a genre - the author has evidently taken his pattern from the books of famous 'travel' writers including Paul Theroux and Bruce Chatwin, whose works he mentions in passing. That being said, it is a good read - certainly the best in English about Suriname - which touches on most of the key social and economic issues in the country today. Apart from a few minor inaccuracies - such as stating that 'bami kip' (a Javanese dish) is the Hindustani staple (which is 'roti kip') and that the red material of which the unpaved laterite roads are made is bauxite (a whitish substance) - the book has two main faults. First, it suffers from the notion that by 'roughing it' one can get a much more authentic picture of a country than the usual tourist. This book disproves the assumption that a view of a society from the bottom up is any less skewed than a view from the top down. Despite mentioning one of them (Annette) by name, the author doesn't seem to have met any of the well educated, highly competent, multi-racial Surinamese professionals working for the Government and NGOs. In fact, apart from the Maroons and Amerindians with whom he spent time in the jungle, he seems to have socialized mainly with white outsiders - Peace Corps volunteers, Dutch investors and students. From the North American perspective, one of the great things about Suriname is that (at least in Paramaribo where the vast majority of the population lives) virtually everyone - even a vagrant I encountered - is fluent in English. You wouldn't think so from this book. Secondly, although this is not a frivolous book - the author goes well beyond Rumours (a hotel bar in Paramaribo), travelling off the beat track in Suriname, and is familiar with a lot of literature about the country, including the books of Steadman, Walsh and Price - the author insists on sharing with the reader all his human frailties, recounting every time he gets drunk, uses dope or goes to a brothel. Evidently, he is the type of Canadian who, having been rigorously sheltered from alcohol consumption during youth, cannot have a drink without ending up drunk. Perhaps this is done to lend authenticity to the narrative; but, while his personal angst is understandably important to him, it adds nothing of interest to the book from the reader's viewpoint.

A young man uncovers myth, history, and murder while searching for the soul of an unknown and magical place. Andrew Westoll spent a year living the dream of every aspiring primatologist: following wild troops of capuchin monkeys through the remote Central Suriname Nature Reserve, the largest tract of pristine rainforest left on earth. But that was only the beginning. Westoll left the world of science altogether when he departed Suriname six years ago. But the country itself stayed with him and became a strange obsession. Nestled above Brazil and the Upper Amazon Basin, Suriname has a legitimate claim to the title The Last Eden, as ninety percent of this mysterious country is covered in thick, neo-tropical jungle. Westoll read everything he could find about the old Dutch colony wild stories about secretive Amazonian shamans, superstitious tribes of ex-African slaves, outlaw Brazilian gold-miners, a ghostly lake with the dead canopy of a drowned rainforest at its surface, and an unsolved political murder mystery that continues to haunt the nation. Five years passed, and Westoll yearned to return to the rainforest. Then the opportunity finally arose. Westoll didn't think twice he immediately quit his job, gave away most of his possessions, and kissed the love of his life goodbye. For the next five months, he explored the most surreal country in South America for a glimpse of its quintessential soul. He struggled up dark neo-tropical rivers, immersed himself in Surinamese Maroon culture, and met a cast of characters whose eccentricities perfectly mirrored the strangeness of their land. Westoll maps the natural and human geography of this exotic land while hunting for closure to his strange obsession with it. In the end, he tells a spellbinding story of survival, heartbreak, mystery, and murder.

"Suriname, an almost secret place: very few people know this is the cradle of many famous football players, and almost nobody knows that these sport stars are the historical heirs of the Maroon slaves who once defeated Dutch colonialism. Andrew Westoll went deep inside the jungle, looking for a sacred, tiny, shining, blue frog, and discovered that perhaps hell and heaven have the same address." Eduardo Galeano Compelling freewheeling and vividly written. The book is clammy with humidity, dense with allegorical undergrowth. Globe and Mail About the Author Andrew Westoll is an award-winning journalist specializing in issues of science, travel, conservation, and culture. A former biologist and primatologist, he now writes regularly for many of Canada's premier venues, such as The Walrus, Explore, Outpost and the Globe and Mail. Westoll won gold at the 2007 National Magazine Awards for his travel piece "Somewhere Up a Jungle River", an adapted excerpt from The Riverbones. He is also a past Fellow of the Literary Journalism Program at the Banff Centre for the Arts. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Unfortunately, Fritz is right on time. We go little bit na busi, he yells over the thumping break-beats. He points up the beach toward a stand of thick jungle. I follow him out to the shore, exhausted and terribly hungover. Fritz tells me about the flood. He was born in the village of Kadju, on the banks of the old Suriname River. When Fritz was about twenty, the waters began to rise. The people knew it was coming his friends had been earning good wages for over a year at the dam site, hauling stone and clearing jungle, making way for the concrete monstrosity that was rumoured to have magical properties. They'd heard this giant wall could turn rushing water into light, refrigeration, even music. It's hard to say whether Fritz's friends recognized the irony desperate for steady work, these young

Maroons supplied much of the raw muscle required to destroy over half of Saramaka, their homeland. All over Saramaka, people in forty-three villages packed up their meagre possessions and left the land their ancestors had fought and died for. Some of Fritz's neighbours went north, to the government-funded transmigration villages, while others went south to the Upper Suriname region, where the flood waters never reached and where the river still flows. This decision north or south held deep ramifications. Those who fled south were moving deeper into Saramaka territory, hoping to regain a traditional riverside life for themselves and distancing themselves farther from the coast and its Western influences. Those who fled north moved to the equivalent of refugee camps for displaced Saramaka. Here they would live near the fetid shores of the reservoir, within a three-hour drive of the capital city, surrounded by people from different villages and kinship lines, in a melting pot of Saramaka families. I ask Fritz where Kadju was originally located. Langa fara, he says, waving his arm over his shoulder without stopping. A long way away, somewhere in the middle of the lake. Kadju is everywhere, he says. Kadju is nowhere. We reach the stand of trees and I follow Fritz into the darkness. We walk for a few minutes across the soft forest floor. Then Fritz stops, kneels down, and carefully pushes a pile of dead branches to one side. Beneath the debris, twelve tiny plants reach their first leaves up through the soil. The leaves are so new they glow. Fritz brushes the soil from the fragile leaves. Their radiance makes the jungle surrounding us seem old and tired. This is my orchid place, says Fritz, circling his hand above his head. And now I see them. Hidden beneath piles of brush, perched in the trunk forks of slim saplings, nestled into the dark recesses of nurse logs, a garden of young orchids, not yet flowering, speckles the forest with points of emerald light. For a few, orchids embody ecological interconnectedness because of their remarkable co-evolution with the insect species that pollinate them. But it is their beauty that captivates the many, and it is their seeming fragility that Fritz enjoys. He carefully drags the branches back over the twelve new plants, hiding them from view. The music still pounds from Watra Dagu and we can feel the beats thumping beneath our feet. We sit on a rotten log in the middle of his garden and Fritz tells me his plan for Tonka: an education centre, a herbarium, a restaurant, a bar. He wants to bring kids here to teach them what he knows. The schools in Suriname are teaching children the wrong things, he says, city things instead of forest things. He wants the children to understand just how precious their jungle country is. You can have practice with no theory, he says, but you can't have theory without practice. Fritz never went to school. He learned everything he knows by walking in the bush. And so he builds. Whenever he has the time and the wood he puts up more buildings on Tonka. He takes in tourists to pay the bills, to fund the creation of his forest school. The guesthouses are actually meant for Surinamese schoolchildren. The ground floor of Watra Dagu, now strewn with exhausted, hungover ravers, was intended as a lecture hall. Efu yu no leri, yu lasi, says Fritz. If you do not learn what you have, you lose it. Other countries lose everything, he says, gesturing at his orchids. But we still have. Fritz taps my knee. The project will cost 75,000 Euros, he says. He asks me if I have 75,000 Euros. I tell him no, I'm sorry, and then he asks if I know anyone with that kind of money. I shake my head. He gives a wan smile. I talk about me too much, he says after a short silence. Now we talk about you. I can't take you to see okopipi. Why not? You must ask permission from government. I tried that. They told me no. Then you no go. I've spent the last few weeks daydreaming of the great Fritz von Troon leading me into the southern savannahs, the land of the Trio Indians. I don't think he understands what I'm asking. Why can't we go? I ask. Government say no. I stare at Fritz. You mean secret, he says. Yes. Secret. Fritz thinks for a moment. When? January. I have contracts, he says. I go na busi in January. He'll be in the bush. For how long? Fritz counts on his fingers. April. My heart sinks. I can't afford to stay here until April. I am already living off my credit cards, racking up debt. There's only so much credit I can get. We sit for a time without speaking. The distant music has turned to reggae, Caribbean dub beats wafting through the trees. You want to go in secret? asks Fritz after a while. I nod. You must ask permission from the Trio Granman. The Indian chief in Kwamalasamutu. If you don't ask him, he won't let you off the plane. How do I do that? I ask. Fritz stands up and reaches into the crook of a nearby tree, where an orchid is nestled on a bed of moss. He gently lifts one of its leaves and peers underneath. He is a friend of mine, he says. I will radio him for you.