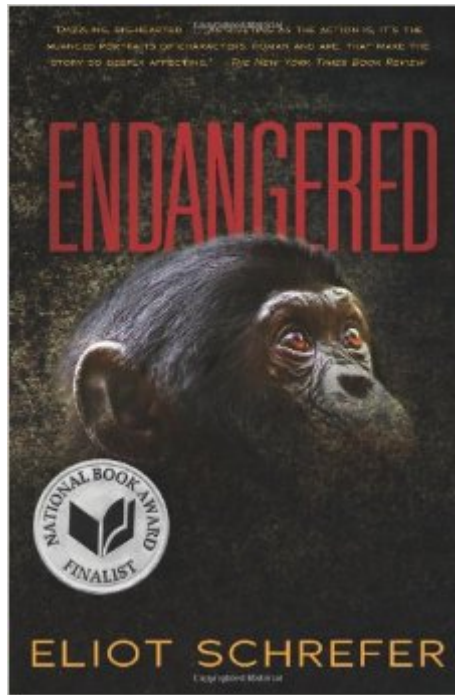


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# Endangered



## Synopsis

From National Book Award Finalist Eliot Schrefer comes the compelling tale of a girl who must save a group of bonobos -- and herself -- from a violent coup. Congo is a dangerous place, even for people who are trying to do good. When Sophie has to visit her mother at her sanctuary for bonobos, she's not thrilled to be there. Then Otto, an infant bonobo, comes into her life, and for the first time she feels responsible for another creature. But peace does not last long for Sophie and Otto. When an armed revolution breaks out in the country, the sanctuary is attacked, and the two of them must escape unprepared into the jungle. Caught in the crosshairs of a lethal conflict, they must struggle to keep safe, to eat, and to live. In *ENDANGERED*, Eliot Schrefer plunges us into a heart-stopping exploration of the things we do to survive, the sacrifices we make to help others, and the tangled geography that ties us all, human and animal, together.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars See all reviews (111 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

In the interests of full disclosure, I know Eliot a little bit personally and we publish our books with the same publisher. That said, I know a bunch of writers personally and this is the first time I've ever actually gone to and reviewed any of their books. I'm doing it this time simply because this is an awesome book that I really think everyone needs to read. Thrillers are everywhere at the moment (They're the new vampires. Oh, wait, maybe the new angels? The new mermaids? Whatever) but

it's incredibly rare that you find a thriller that's about a lot more than just running and dodging and gunfire. *Endangered* is exciting and compulsively readable, sure, but it also grounds you in the terrifyingly real world of the Congo and deals with real issues and real people in a way that's smart and compassionate while still being tough minded. Sophie's journey to escape the violence around her while protecting her bonobo charge is certainly exciting but more than that it charts her evolution from an inexperienced and naive girl to a responsible and courageous (and very clever) young woman. Hope you all go grab yourself a copy. I'm sure you'll be glad you did.

With great humanity, pitch-perfect story-telling, and unsentimental clarity, *Endangered* tells the story of a girl and an ape in one of the worst wars the modern world has known. As in the Congo itself, there is violence and cruelty, but there is also laughter and hope. Sometimes it takes an animal to help us find our humanity, and sometimes it takes Eliot Schrefer to tell that story beautifully.

I really loved this book: the author writes wonderfully, and his portrayal of Sophie, who matures slowly and progressively through the telling of her story, was terrific. Most endearing was the increasingly tight bond she formed with Otto, an infant bonobo she rescued very early in the book. As their relationship grew, so did Sophie's maturity. Given that the intended audience for *Endangered* is YA, Mr. Schrefer did an excellent job of telling a what would otherwise be a complex story without sacrificing too much in the way of drama. I've traveled all over Africa, and while I've never been to Kinshasa, I have spent time in the troubled east, in and around Lake Kivu. The author wrote of a Congo I recognized, a complex and sometimes horrible (and yet beautiful place). Rare is a work of fiction about Africa that gets 'it' right, but this was just such a book. I read a few other reviews that commented on how Sophie's survival was unbelievable and that Schrefer should have placed his story in one of the all too real conflicts that the Congo has faced since 1994. I think these reviews miss the point. The real likelihood is that had this story taken place in the 'real' Congo of, say, the second Congo War of 1998, Sophie would have been dead the first week. Sometimes, to tell a great story, realism is sacrificed... that's why novels are called fiction. In any case, *Endangered*, rose above itself: not merely a coming of age story about a young girl, it was also a story about a nation too many of us know little about. It was a deserving finalist for the National Book Award, and would have made a worthy winner.

*Endangered* is not just a gripping thriller; it's also beautifully, thoughtfully written. Eliot Schrefer's descriptions of bonobos are fascinating and heartwarming, and he's created a protagonist with far

more complexity and nuance than your average young adult novel heroine. As an adult, I thoroughly enjoyed *Endangered*, but the pace barrels forward in a way that I'm sure would appeal to teens as well. This is that rare YA book that you will savor as both a satisfying work of literature and a window into an often-forgotten part of the world. Who needs mermaids when you've got much more magical creatures in the real world--bonobos!

*Endangered* is a marvelous book for teens, but it is a book adults should read as well. It deals with the plight of endangered bonobos, but not in a didactic way. Rather, the reader experiences along with Sophie, the young protagonist, the perilous political situation in the Congo and is led to see through Sophie's eyes all the complexities that make saving the bonobos difficult. In her attachment to Otto, the bonobo infant she rescues and assumes responsibility for, we see why saving the bonobos is so important. Her harrowing trek through the jungle with Otto and the constant threats they endure make the book impossible to put down. The perils Sophie and Otto face reveal in microcosm the precarious state in which the people of the Congo exist.

*Endangered* by Eliot Schrefer (2012) If you follow the book award season, you've probably already heard about this National Book Award Finalist from 2012. Either way *Endangered* is an important book about the political unrest in the Congo and the horrible state of affairs for Bonobo monkeys in the area. Sophie spends every summer with her mother in the Congo and expects this year to be much of the same. Until she becomes the reluctant (and unlikely) foster mother to a baby Bonobo she names Otto. Then war breaks out and Sophie is isolated and trapped with the Bonobos at her mother's conservation preserve. Schrefer went to the Congo to research this book and it shows in the details and nuances of the setting and Sophie's relationship with Otto and the other Bonobos. The story is gripping and exciting. Because of the emphasis on action and survival, this is a great book for any reader. *Endangered* would also be a particularly strong choice for reluctant readers and/or readers who are hesitant to read books with a female narrator. Reading *Endangered* it is immediately obvious why this book was a National Book Award finalist. As the story progresses it is also apparent why this book did not ultimately win. While Sophie and Otto are great characters in a page-turning story, Sophie's voice was not always convincing. Sophie is fourteen during the events of the story. While her narration is insightful and contemplative, it also often sounds like a much older character. The epilogue is also frustrating. Without getting into spoilers it felt very incongruous to have an epilogue years later and have one of the supposed key things about Sophie's life be that she is engaged and has dated several boys. There were so many other things to say, other details

to share. After a totally empowering, dramatic read the epilogue brought Endangered to a close on a slightly sour note.\*This book was acquired for review from the publisher at BEA 2012\*

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