



DISCOVERY

AS I REFLECTED on a variety and abundance of meat eaters, I was struck by the fact that here in Africa, for the first time in my experience, I was seeing something that approached the “balance of Nature.” We had tallied thousands of antelopes that day, at the end of the most difficult period of the year for wildlife—the seven-month dry season. Yet we had not seen a single weak, emaciated, or crippled animal. Any ill or weakened creature would have been run down, killed, and devoured by the “sanitary brigade”—the ever-hungry and ever-searching carnivores. I thought of American parks, where mountain lions, wolves, and other predators have been practically eliminated and where underfed deer and antelopes may live for months before dying of starvation.

VICTOR H. CAHALANE (1901–1993), United States

Leopardess, Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686–1755), France



A MIRROR OF MY OWN IMAGINATION

EACH TIME I LOOK into the eye of an animal, one as “wild” as I can find in its own element—or maybe peering through zoo bars will have to do . . . I find myself staring into a mirror of my own imagination. What I see there is deeply, crazily, unmercifully confused.

There is in that animal eye something both alien and familiar. There is in me, as in all human beings, a glimpse of the interior, from which everything about our minds has come.

The crossing holds all the power and purity of first wonder, before habit and reason dilute it. The glimpse is fleeting. Quickly, I am left in darkness again, with no idea whatsoever how to go back.

ELLEN MELOY (1946–2004), United States

Polar Bear, Sir Edwin Henry Landseer (1802–1873), England