

= Raptor Red =

Raptor Red is a 1995 American novel by paleontologist Robert T. Bakker . The book is a third @-@ person account of dinosaurs during the Cretaceous Period , told from the point of view of Raptor Red , a female Utahraptor . Raptor Red features many of Bakker 's theories regarding dinosaurs ' social habits , intelligence , and the world in which they lived .

The book follows a year in Raptor Red 's life as she loses her mate , finds her family , and struggles to survive in a hostile environment . Bakker drew inspiration from Ernest Thompson Seton 's works that look at life through the eyes of predators , and said that he found it " fun " to write from a top predator 's perspective . Bakker based his portrayals of dinosaurs and other prehistoric wildlife on fossil evidence , as well as studies of modern animals .

When released , Raptor Red was generally praised : Bakker 's anthropomorphism was seen as a unique and positive aspect of the book , and his writing was described as folksy and heartfelt . Criticisms of the novel included a perceived lack of characterization and average writing . Some scientists , such as paleontologist David B. Norman , took issue with the scientific theories portrayed in the novel , fearing that the public would accept them as fact , while Discovery Channel host Jay Ingram defended Bakker 's creative decisions in an editorial .

= = Background = =

Paleontologist Robert T. Bakker originally suggested the genus name Utahraptor for a new dinosaur specimen that had been found by an amateur bone @-@ hunter in Utah . Bakker was at the time consulting with the designers of the Jurassic Park film , whose largest portrayed Velociraptor ? called the " big female " in the script ? was coincidentally the same size as the newly discovered Utahraptor . Bakker was motivated to write the book by both his interest in dinosaur behavior and his desire to marry science and entertainment , saying that " nature is a drama . It is the most ripping yarn ever written . You 've got life and death and sex and betrayal and the best way to approach it is through individual animals . " According to Bakker , " It was fun to put myself in the mind of a raptor , especially since being a top predator is so challenging ... much harder than [ being ] a herbivore . " He credited the turn @-@ of @-@ the @-@ century naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton 's works that focused on life from the perspectives of grizzly bears and wolves as having inspired him to write the novel from the dinosaur 's point of view .

Raptor Red was an attempt to introduce Utahraptor to the public , as well as explain some of Bakker 's theories regarding dinosaur behavior . Bakker 's raptors are shown as monogamous , relatively intelligent and social creatures , an assertion he defends , saying " the life of dinosaurian hunters was hard . Most skeletons we excavate have clear marks of old wounds . To survive and raise their young , the predators needed more than sharp teeth and strong claws . They needed social bonds . " Bakker also advances his controversial theory that an asteroid impact did not kill the dinosaurs in the Cretaceous ? Paleogene extinction event , but rather a disease spread through migration .

Another of the novel 's goals was to dispel the common perception of predators as evil and portray them as creatures to be admired and empathized with . " Being a top predator is difficult , " Bakker said , noting that fossils of big predators often show multiple broken and healed bones , as well as signs of serious infections , all evidence of a harsh lifestyle . He continued , " Most predators had some trauma , they had been beaten up ? for a simple reason : Dinner fights back . " The behavior of the raptors and other animals featured in the novel was based on a combination of fossil evidence and observations of modern animals , such as chimpanzees and alligators .

Bakker received a large advance for the novel from Bantam Books , rumored to be in the six @-@ figure range . The book was prominently featured at the American Booksellers ' Convention in Chicago , alongside Michael Crichton 's The Lost World . Coverage of the event noted that both novels were on the trailing end of the dinosaur fad fueled by Jurassic Park , as the new trend in American books was shifting toward politics in the aftermath of the 1994 US elections .

Raptor Red was initially published as a mass @-@ market paperback and hardcover book , and

was later released as an audiobook by Simon & Schuster Audio , read by Megan Gallagher . Bakker 's audiobook royalties ? at least \$ 34 @, @ 000 by November 1995 ? were donated to the Tate Museum in Casper , Wyoming , where he was curator .

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Setting and characters = = =

Raptor Red takes place approximately 120 million years ago , in the Early Cretaceous period of the Mesozoic . At the time , a land bridge had formed between Asia and the Americas , this allowed groups of foreign dinosaurs to invade present @-@ day Utah ; one of these foreign species is Utahraptor . Raptor Red 's name comes from the symbols the dinosaur learns as a hatchling to self @-@ identify with . Bakker gives an individual view of each species of dinosaur or ancient creature in the same style as Red 's experiences ; these include a baby Gastonia who instinctively attacks what it does not understand with its clubbed tail , and a whip @-@ tailed diplodocid who enjoys beating up predators . Bakker prominently features the adventures of a " fur @-@ ball " ( mammal ) , Aegialodon ; according to the author , the emphasis was added because the Aegialodon is on the direct ancestral line to humans . Aegialodon , however , did not live in the same time and place as Utahraptor , hailing from England about 136 million years ago . Some of the other animals featured in the novel were closer in time and place to Utahraptor but not strictly contemporary . For example , fossils attributable to Acrocanthosaurus and Deinonychus are known from the same rock formation as Utahraptor ( the Cedar Mountain Formation ) , but from sediments about five million years younger .

= = = Plot = = =

In the book 's opening , the title character and her mate ambush a herd of Astrodon , which are large herbivorous sauropods . The Astrodon are surprised , thinking that their bulk deters smaller predators . Utahraptor , however , are much larger than any resident raptor , and proceed to take down an Astrodon with teamwork . When Red 's mate climbs onto the dead Astrodon , the corpse rolls in the mud , trapping the male under the bulk of the animal . Despite Red 's best efforts , her mate suffocates . Despondent , Red wanders around the floodplain , nearly starving since a Utahraptor cannot successfully hunt big game on its own .

Red follows a familiar scent and is reunited with her sister , a single mother with three chicks . The two hunt together and bring food back to the nest for the young . A white pterosaur , one Red has seen since she hatched , helps the two by finding carrion and prey in exchange for a helping of meat . On one hunting expedition , when the two adult Utahraptor are stalking a herd of Iguanodon , Red spies a young male Utahraptor that is watching their prey . He begins a courtship dance for Red , but Red 's sister chases him off , hissing . Her growls agitate the Iguanodon , who stampede ; the male hastily leaves . After climbing into a tree to escape a flash flood , Red encounters the male raptor again , who performs a courtship dance while hanging onto the tree branches . Red 's sister begrudgingly allows the male to stay with them , provided he steers clear of her chicks .

For a while , Red and her pack are happy , feeding off the plentiful carrion left by receding flood waters , but the pack 's way of life is upset by an invasion of large Acrocanthosaurus , huge meat @-@ eating dinosaurs . The added competition for food puts strain on the pack , as does the unexpected death of one of the chicks . A fight erupts between the male raptor and Red 's sister . Red , torn between a prospective mate and her kin , tries to defuse the situation . Two Acrocanthosaurus watch the commotion and take the opportunity to attack the Utahraptor . Meanwhile , a Kronosaurus ambushes one of the chicks on the beach . Seeing the danger , Red lures the female Acrocanthosaurus into deep water where the larger predator is dragged under by the Kronosaurus . Red saves her family , but at a price ? her consort is forced away by Red 's sister .

Facing continual threats from the Acrocanthosaurus , Red , her sister and the chicks are forced up into the mountains . They encounter ice and snow for the first time , and kill a segnosaur in a cave , turning the den into their nest . The older chick accompanies the two adults on hunting expeditions . One day the raptors encounter a strange creature they have never seen ? a whip @-@ tailed diplodocid who inflicts wounds on Red and her sister ; the older chick is forced to set off alone and find the pack 's food . This calamity coincides with the arrival of a large pack of smaller raptors known as Deinonychus . Sensing the weakness of the Utahraptor pack , they surround the nest and wait for the wounded raptors to become weak enough to attack .

Red 's sister dies , and Red is crippled and defenseless against the smaller dinosaurs . The Deinonychus close in and wait for Red to die , but are driven back by a sudden attack ? the older Utahraptor chick returns with Red 's consort to defend the nest , driving back the Deinonychus . Some time later , the old white pterosaur circles over Red 's mountain stronghold , and finds the pack has grown considerably . Both Red and the older chick have found mates and have chicks , who are having fun rolling down a hill . The satisfied pterosaur leaves with a mate and offspring of his own .

= = Reception = =

Raptor Red was favorably received by critics and the mainstream press . Much praise was given to Bakker 's anthropomorphising of the dinosaurs ; a reviewer for the Toronto Star said that " Raptor Red does for dinosaurs what some nature writing does for creatures alive today : it turns data into stories . And stories are what all of us need to make these animals ? even dinosaurs ? come alive . " Mark Nichols of Maclean 's said that Bakker 's success lay in making the reader hope that the dinosaurs were indeed creatures as Bakker portrayed .

In contrast to this positive reception , Entertainment Weekly felt that the anthropomorphising of the dinosaurs veered close to " a Disney cartoon . " Other criticisms from the press included a lack of character needed for truly engrossing fiction . Reviewers described Bakker 's work as " thoroughly heartfelt , " despite flaws such as inconsistent writing ; Men 's News Daily , a site which focuses on social values , suggested that Bakker 's raptors " possess a quaint , special appeal in today 's social climate " . Megan Gallagher 's narration of the audiobook , combined with continuous sound effects and dramatic music to create an " aural picture , " was also praised . Entertainment Weekly gave Raptor Red its " Best of Breed Award " for a " captivating novel about animal life " .

Many critical reviews of the work came from scientists who objected to Bakker 's looseness with scientific fact . The paleontologist Thomas Holtz noted that Bakker combined fauna in ways not directly supported by the fossil record ; for example , several of the dinosaurs featured in the books lived millions of years after Utahraptor died out . Michael Taylor , curator of vertebrate paleontology at the National Museums of Scotland , panned the book , saying that " Raptor Red is an accurate portrayal only within the context of uncertainties over the reconstruction of fossil animals as living forms ... Bakker 's postscript never really admits these uncertainties . " David B. Norman criticized the book as " no more than a children 's adventure story ? and a rather poorly written one at that ... The merging of science and fantasy is at its worst in books like Raptor Red because none but the experts can disentangle fact from fiction ; this type of nonsense turns an uninformed reader into a misinformed one . " Jay Ingram , from the Discovery Channel , published a rebuttal , saying , " The most important point is that Bakker 's portrayal of the dinosaurs in Raptor Red is vivid ? vivid in a way few museum displays or factual accounts can be . And if it turns out in the long run that some of the speculation is unwarranted , who cares ? Bob Bakker has given us a unique window onto the era of dinosaurs . "

According to Bakker , the novel 's success led to interest in a movie deal from Hollywood . According to Daily Variety in 1996 , producer Robert Halmi Sr. made deals with Jim Henson 's Creature Shop for film adaptations of Animal Farm and Raptor Red . No official project has been announced .