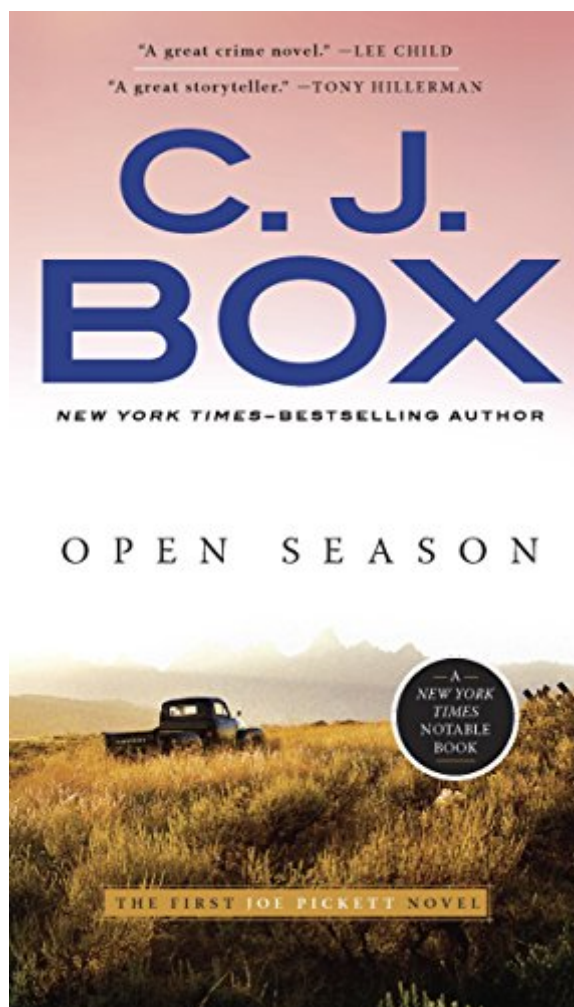


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# Open Season (A Joe Pickett Novel Book 1)



## Synopsis

The first Joe Pickett novel from #1 New York Times bestselling author C. J. Box. Joe Pickett is the new game warden in Twelve Sleep, Wyoming, a town where nearly everyone hunts and the game warden "especially one like Joe who won't take bribes or look the other way" is far from popular. When he finds a local hunting outfitter dead, splayed out on the woodpile behind his state-owned home, he takes it personally. There had to be a reason that the outfitter, with whom he's had run-ins before, chose his backyard, his woodpile to die in. Even after the "outfitter murders," as they have been dubbed by the local press after the discovery of the two more bodies, are solved, Joe continues to investigate, uneasy with the easy explanation offered by the local police. As Joe digs deeper into the murders, he soon discovers that the outfitter brought more than death to his backdoor: he brought Joe an endangered species, thought to be extinct, which is now living in his woodpile. But if word of the existence of this endangered species gets out, it will destroy any chance of InterWest, a multi-national natural gas company, building an oil pipeline that would bring the company billions of dollars across Wyoming, through the mountains and forests of Twelve Sleep. The closer Joe comes to the truth behind the outfitter murders, the endangered species and InterWest, the closer he comes to losing everything he holds dear. From the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There are so many things about C.J. Box's debut mystery that make it one of the best mysteries I have read, and hands-down the best first novel I've experienced in ANY genre. There is the moral compass and humanity of its protagonist, Joe Pickett: the Wyoming game warden as straight as he is flawed, the vivid descriptions of the wilds of Wyoming, the navigation of the story line as it twists through several shades of gray and the exquisite treatment of Sheridan, a child character as well-written as they come. When the poacher who held up Pickett with his own gun winds up dead on his backyard woodpile, Joe is puzzled by the poacher's choice of resting place and has no idea the significance of the cooler found next to him. This is Pickett's introduction to a world of corporate exploitation, political angling and the threats against his family and his passion that drums up the stakes with every page turned. At times clumsy, always well-meaning and ultimately heroic in spite of his limitations, Joe is humanized in a way that preserves the nobility of the pure protagonist and makes us wish we could be as right when we were wrong. Box is an author who has stepped into the genre with a clean, fast and remarkably adept first novel. Keep an eye on C.J. Box. ....

While still a Wyoming state game warden trainee, Joe Pickett ticketed a man fishing without a license. The man turned out to be the state governor. One week after being assigned to Twelve Sleep County, Joe fines outfitter Ote Keeley for shooting a buck out of season. However, Ote takes Joe's gun away and points it at the game warden's head before calmly accepting his ticket. Though he continues working hard, Joe has never fully recovered from the Keeley incident. A few months later, Keeley reenters Joe's life when his daughter finds the outfitter dead at the woodpile near the Pickett home. Next to the corpse is a cooler containing pellets of excrement. Joe and fellow warden Wacey Hedeman assist sheriff Bud Barnum with the investigation. However, soon Joe is in trouble with his superiors, his pregnant wife for jeopardizing his job, and with a killer trying to add a nosy game warden to the list. OPEN SEASON is an entertaining police procedural tale that works because the author steps out of the box by insuring his star is not superman. Instead he is just an average Joe struggling with learning his new job, obtaining a decent standard of living for his family, and still trying to do the right thing. The story line is filled with twists and turns so that the audience is led into thinking the wrong person is the villain. The endangered species issue is well designed within the plot with C.J. Box cleverly laying it out so that the reader can decide on this complex question. Fans

will want more Wyoming mysteries starring a guy named Joe. Harriet Klausner

Dare I say "different" when speaking of a mystery/thriller? Just when I think I have seen every possible setting, hero/anti-hero, cozy, hard-boiled, police procedural out there; along comes "Open Season" with something new and fresh. Joe Pickett is as nice as they come, but prone to embarrassing errors. His family plays a starring role, not only with him but also as an integral part of the story. His wife and two daughters don't play cute characters or trite supporting roles; there would be no story without them. Edgar-nominated, Mr. Box's debut novel is set in a Wyoming that could only be written by a native. Someone said a writer should write what he knows about; Mr. Box has followed the advice. He makes Wyoming so real, you can smell the air and feel the forest. He is also honest enough to admit all parts of Wyoming are not nature's paradise, but strikingly ugly. He understands and depicts the particular politics that are unique to small or under-populated states. When almost everyone is on a first name basis with the governor, everyone is in on some kind of a deal or another. Joe is particularly shocked and offended when a body is found on his backyard woodpile. When three other bodies are found at the victim's outfitters camp, the case is closed quickly and neatly as a falling out among the four of them. Joe is not satisfied, no one is quite who they seem to be, and corruption at every level is gradually exposed. The closer Joe comes to a solution, the more his family is endangered until tension is at the snapping point. "Open Season" has an agenda: the Endangered Species Act and is it a well thought out piece of legislation. Mr. Box thinks not, and whatever the reader believes, the book will give them something to consider. The characterizations are excellent; I was surprised at how much I cared. "Open Season" has my vote for the best mystery of the year.

There are many things to like about C.J. Box's first novel. For one thing, the protagonist, Joe Pickett, is a game warden in Twelve Sleep, Wyoming, a great setting. Box also does a good job with complications when a local hunting outfitter is found murdered in Joe's backyard. Joe had caught the outfitter poaching, but had been relieved of his gun when he'd begun to write the citation (Joe is much more fallible and believable than a lot of genre heroes). The game warden whom Joe had replaced is a local legend who'd quit his job to work for InterWest, a natural gas pipeline company with plans to build across the state (Unless those persnickety environmentalists find a reason to squelch matters). Joe is also having trouble making ends meet on his salary and his mother-in-law, who's always felt he wasn't good enough for her daughter, Marybeth, arrives to help with the children. The legendary game warden offers Joe a job with InterWest and he's tempted to take it.

When two more dead outfitters are found and a possible suspect is also gunned down, most everybody is satisfied that the case has been solved. Except Joe. It's all much too cut and dried for him. Probably the most engaging character in the book is Joe's seven-year-old daughter, Sheridan, who witnessed "the monster" stumble into Joe's backyard and pass out on the woodpile, leaving a little box full of animal feces from several Miller's weasels, an endangered species, whom Sheridan takes on as pets. The plot of OPEN SEASON leaves a bit to be desired. There's an ambiguous chapter where a man, who's been watching her play with the weasels, threatens Sheridan. There are only two possible suspects, and when you eliminate the obvious one, there's only one. And he's too much of a maniac to be credible.

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