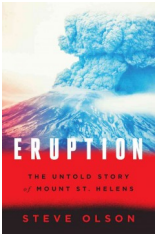


Science & Nature

# Eruption: The Untold Story of Mount St. Helens



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We lived in Alaska when this volcano blew spectacularly in 1980. Two months later, we flew from Seattle to the east coast, and the pilot flew over the great mountain, so everyone could get a glimpse at the destruction. Yet, it wasn't until ten years later that we made the trip to Southern Washington and visited the monument itself.

My husband and children and I stared in horror at the skeleton trees still standing, and at the grey scar that extended for miles down the mountain. In that moment we felt the cataclysmic power of nature. Other than the dead trees, the landscape looked like it could have been on the moon or some barren planet.

Ten years later my husband and I returned, and this time we were amazed by the rebirth of forests, the greenery. You could still see the damage the eruption had caused, but much of the forest was verdant again. Amazingly green and vibrant. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on April 11, 2016

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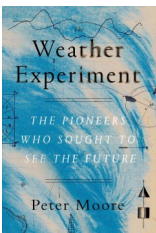
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# The Weather Experiment: the pioneers who sought to see the future



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People around the world are fascinated by weather generally and in particularly these days with

so many unusual events. This intriguing book describes the explorations and discoveries of people who changed weather from a local phenomenon into a science that explains the why, where, and how of weather.

More importantly these new scientists could warn people before harsh storms struck to allow them to postpone travel, particularly by sea, or to mitigate the damage.

On Nov. 23, 1703 an intense storm rammed England with no warning. The Great Storm, as it came to be called, sent ships from the North Sea into Sweden. Many were shipwrecked; thousands of others drowned. Leaders discussed the need for weather forecasting to warn the population of danger before it struck and produced casualties and massive property damage. But alas little happened until the nineteenth century.

Did you ever wonder how meteorology got its name? Historically, "meteors" referred to any object in the sublunar zone. This included meteors of course, but also lightning, rainbows, clouds, and gusts of wind. The famous Dr. Johnson of dictionary fame defined meteors as "any bodies in the air or sky that are of flux and transitory nature." [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on December 28, 2015

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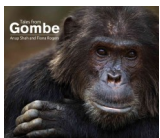
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## Tales from Gombe



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If you're fascinated by some of our closest animal relatives, the chimpanzee, this delightful collection of photographs will delight and inspire you.

Gombe National Park in Tanzania is where Richard Leakey and Jane Goodall first studied these fascinating primates over fifty years ago.

The married photographer pair, Shah and Rogers, made many trips over a period of ten plus years to the park. What makes this book special is to see how individual chimps changed over the years, from babyhood to young adult, to young adult to mature, from mature to old.

The photos show the chimps doing daily activities, hunting, food-gathering eating, grooming, nursing and taking care of their young, even displaying as powerful males and females do to show who is boss and on top of the hierarchy.

What I liked most were the family portraits, a line of chimps in a row, siblings and one or both parents.

For many years, scientists have named all the chimps in one family with names beginning with the same consonants for instance: Frodo, Freud, Fanni, Flossi, Faustino, etc. Representing the G family are Galahad, Gaia, Gizmo, and Google, among others.

It's amazing how distinct the chimp's faces are, just as distinct as those of humans. Also, how intelligent and expressive their eyes are. The book's text describes the struggle for power in each community and how certain chimps are loners, while others go off and join other communities.

It also describes how they help each other, how siblings look after their younger family members, how even adults stay close to their parents.

Several photos document tool use by chimps, including the famous termite-foraging with long grasses that Dr. Goodall first discovered in November, 1960 that amazed scientists around the world.

This is a very beautiful book that will also fill you in on some of the latest chimp research in Gombe. For more on Goodall's fascinating work and life, try [Jane Goodall: a Twentieth Century Life](#) by Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen.

Posted by Dory L. on March 10, 2015

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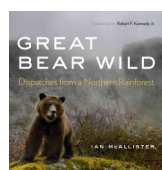
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## [Great Bear Wild: Dispatches from a Northern Rainforest](#)



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If one area of our continent calls to me more than any other it's the Northwest, that region of coastal rain forests that extends from northern California to Alaska.

This magnificent book of photographs covers one of the few unspoiled areas left there, the Great Bear Rainforest.

It's located on the mainland slightly north of Vancouver and extends past Prince Rupert to the border with Alaska. Talk about wild: salmon, bear, wolves, sea lions, great Douglas firs and hundred-year-old cedars all thrive there.

Ian McAllister, who lives nearby and works as an ecologist, has taken many incredible photographs of the wildlife and the plants. He also photographed the native people, including a few of the matriarchs of the Gitga'at clan.

The photos are thrilling including some of spirit bears—a bear I was not familiar with. They are white black bears (yes, that's right) produced by a recessive gene. They are not albinos, so a spirit bear could have black-furred bear mother and siblings. Francis Kermode, a museum curator, first named them.

The chapter on sea wolves shows how tough making a daily living is for the wolves who have bred on this coastal area for centuries. They must swim between islands to find food, and one young male, ostracized by his family is shown swimming away from all that he has known after his family boots him away because they cannot feed him.

In one charming photo, tens of curious stellar sea lion bob on the Pacific's surface—only their heads showing. They stare straight at the photographer. McAllister reports that these wonderfully intelligent and agile creatures are making a comeback in the waters off the Great Bear.

If you've ever seen the starfish in the Northwest, you know that these echinoderms are huge

and often bright orange. McAllister also takes incredible photographs of colorful underwater creatures: purple urchins and striking rose anemones. Some interesting shots focus on both above-water and below-water life in the same shot.

Like many pristine landscapes left in the world, McAllister reports that the area of the Great Bear Rainforest is under threat from oil drilling. Additionally, there are plans to create a large port in seas that are often stormy and dangerous. This motivated McAllister to publish these beautiful photographs. But the text of the book also provides much information about the creatures of the region. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on March 3, 2015

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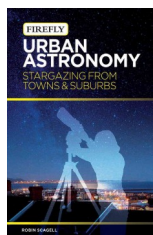
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## Stars, Planets, Moon



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I know the title sounds like an oxymoron, but if astronomy excites you, don't let living in the heart of town make you give up exploring the night skies.

I myself have seen countless meteors and conjunctions, a changing panoply of shining planets, and many constellations right from town. There was also the night of the bright red aurora borealis that I first mistook for a major fire when I was biking home from work. To say nothing of lunar eclipses and "super" full moons.

Written by the vice-president of Britain's Society of Popular Astronomy, this handy guide is very applicable in the states. What I like best about it is, Scagell's can-do philosophy, not only can you feel awe when looking at planetary bodies, but he invites the reader to do actual astronomical research and to participate as a citizen-scientist.

And don't think you need to spend massive amounts of money for the highest tech equipment. He recommends a good pair of binoculars for sky-viewing and reports that they even have many advantages over telescopes. He does recommend telescopes too--aperture and field of view should be the deciding factors.

He also advises the city astronomer on things and props he can use to cut or eliminate light pollution, such simple things as simple as a black cape to wear over you and your telescope to cut out glare.

In eight well-researched chapters, Scagell pours his passion for the least earthbound of sciences. Chapter 4 covers the targets of star search. All the usual ones: sun, moon, the near and far planets, the constellations but also other astronomical phenomena such as zodiacal light, noctilucent clouds, artificial satellites, double stars, clusters, nebulae, and deep sky objects. Although not necessarily geared for the beginner, all terms are so well explained that the guide

can work for both the 25-year amateur astronomer and the neophyte. A four page table at the end lists many deep sky objects that can be seen even from cities.

So, on these dark, clear nights, grab your black cape, your binoculars or telescope, and delve into this fascinating science that connects us to other mysterious worlds.

Posted by Dory L. on January 13, 2015

[Urban Astronomy: Stargazing from Towns and Suburbs](#)

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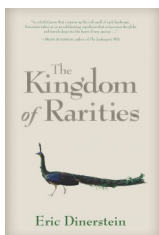
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## The Kingdom of Rarities



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In another life, I would love to become a wildlife biologist; it combines things I loves such as working with animals, walking, observing deeply, and travel. This book does all of the above plus makes you more curious about the flora and fauna around us. Why are robins common and not Kirtland?s warblers? Why are deer abundant and not jaguars? Eric Dinerstein, the author, started his scientific career studying tigers and later rhinoceroses. He is now Chief Scientist at the World Wildlife Fund. In *The Kingdom of Rarities*, he travels to many continents to explore the rare creatures and plants living there.

One of the places he and his scientific team visit is Irian Jaya, a remote island on the Indonesian archipelago. It combines two aspects of places that often give homes to rare creatures: remoteness, and being situated on an island. Another factor that makes Irian Jaya home to rarities is its geology?its steep mountains and gorges serve as barriers to invasive species which have become common on many other islands. The description of Dinerstein?s flight to this research spot is compelling; it was incredibly risky just to land a plane there. But well worth it because the scientists found many rare creatures quite close to them and not shy at all with humans. The scientists were amazed by how many species divided their habitats vertically.

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Posted by Dory L. on July 11, 2013

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# Garbage! Water! Or Why I Love Non-fiction



GARBOLoGY  
The True and Utterly True Story



I read a lot of narrative non-fiction - historical, microhistory, natural sciences, travel, and environmental. I read these to be better informed, but also for pleasure so my ultimate test for a narrative non-fiction book is whether it would have made a better magazine article. I hate finishing something that I think was interesting, but could have been boiled down into a 20 page magazine article with the same impact. I've recently read two non-fiction books passed the magazine article test and then some.

*The Big Thirst: The Marvels, Mysteries & Madness Shaping the New Era of Water* by Charles Fishman isn't about how to make changes in your lifestyle with regards to water conservation. It isn't a how-to book for urban or rural planners. It is a book that will challenge what you think you know about water from the big picture including where it comes from and what do we really mean by "clean". This book will also identify our emotional connection with water and will put those assumptions to the test. Near the end of the book, an economist presents a model for future water use that makes sense for both dry places like Las Vegas and Australia should also be considered for wetter places like Atlanta and even Bloomington. There are pages and pages of research, calculations and notes at the end, but the book was captivating, accessible and provides much food for thought. [Read more](#)

Posted by sbowman on May 16, 2013

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## Animals in Winter: Preschool Science and Math



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As any parent knows, young children are curious about the world. At the library, we explore a range of topics during Preschool Science and Math. When the weather turns cold, I turn to one of my favorite themes for preschool science: Animals in Winter. Here are some of the activities we did in December!

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Posted by Christina J. on December 11, 2012

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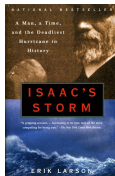
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[Winter](#)

[Oh, the Things You Can Think](#)

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## Hurricane Books



I hope everyone on the east coast is staying safe after the destruction of

Hurricane/Tropical Storm Sandy. Today's storms are met with an overload of information: pictures on social media, non-stop news coverage, live reporting and high tech computer models of the storm's projected path. But if you are in the mood for a more in-depth read about storms, check out a few of these titles.

The 1900 Galveston Hurricane was one of the deadliest on record. Over 6,000 people died in this massive storm, which was complicated by the lack of technology and a complete understanding of weather patterns. Erik Larsson is an excellent non-fiction author and in *Isaac's Storm* he tells the detailed story of the storm, but also of the meteorologist, Isaac Cline who failed to make the best use of the information he saw. The historical details of weather prediction combined with the suspense of the building storm make for an excellent read. [Read more](#)

Posted by sbowman on October 30, 2012

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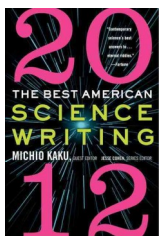
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## The Best American Science Writing, 2012



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Science has always appealed to me, but it's hard to carve out enough time to keep abreast of all the new science books; that's one reason I really enjoy the *Best American Science Writing* series. It's always fun to discover trends and reconnect with intriguing topics in the field. One good aspect of contemporary science writing is that the authors really write well and can summarize complex subjects in easily understandable language. So what's on science writing's 2012 burner? Medicine, for one. The first four essays explore medical themes, among them:

new heart vessels for babies born with weak hearts, and immune systems trained to kill cancer cells. As Denise Grady's article about the latter reveals, after an experimental treatment one man suffering from leukemia lost over two pounds of cancer cells. And a year later his cancer was in total remission.

My favorite essay in this collection is Evan Ratliff's "Taming the Wild." It's about a Russian research team that has been breeding foxes for over fifty years. Their foxes are now so tame that not only are they adopted for pets, but they share many puppylike traits such as spotted coats, wagging tails, floppy ears and curly tails. A contrasting group of foxes has been bred for aggression and, believe me, you'd want to stay clear of their cages. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on October 1, 2012

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