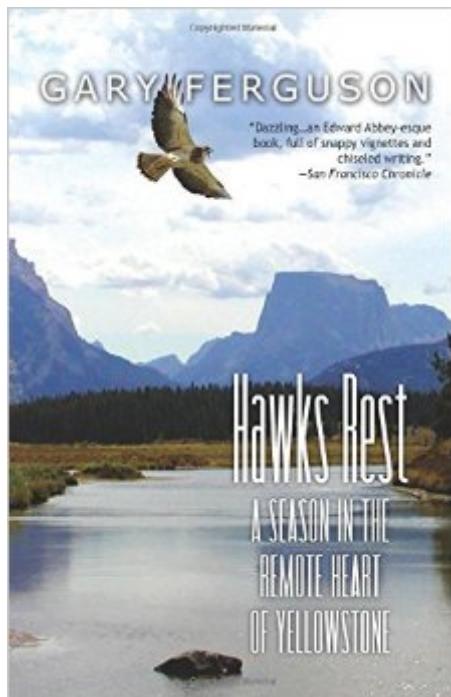


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Hawks Rest: A Season In The Remote Heart Of Yellowstone



Synopsis

"Among the many pleasures of reading Gary Ferguson's *Hawks Rest*, is finding the prose even more accomplished than remembered, the wit more agile, the observations more revelatory, its stance in the world proved once again so precisely wise. *Hawks Rest* is a book I will return to again and again."¹ MARK SPRAGG, author of *Where Rivers Change Direction* and *An Unfinished Life*"Gary Ferguson is one of the preeminent historians of the American West, and of the place and value of wilderness within that history. Hawk's Rest is an intense journal of the politics and ecology of one of America's wildest cores, in Yellowstone National Park. In many ways, this book is an important portrait of one of the foundations of our country's democracy, and of the struggles to hold on to that idea."² RICK BASS, author of *All the Land to Hold Us*"*Hawks Rest* is a long step toward a user's guide to wilderness, and a reverential and beautifully said hymn to the wild."³ TIM CAHILL, author of *Hold the Enlightenment* and *Jaguars Ripped My Flesh*"A lyrical and often tough-minded evocation of a summer spent in the Yellowstone backcountry, a place that is, unexpectedly, full of larger-than-life characters, some of whom are admirable and some of whom are not."⁴ WILLIAM KITTREDGE, author of *Hole in the Sky* and *The Nature of Generosity*"Dazzling⁵;an Edward Abbey⁶-esque book, full of snappy vignettes and chiseled writing."⁷ SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE"A sharp and ironic sense of what it's like to live in the American outback, twenty-first-century style."⁸ NATURAL HISTORY MAGAZINE"A well-written work⁹;if you love Yellowstone, a great treat."¹⁰ DESERET NEWS" Ferguson evoke(s) feelings of solitude, timelessness and aching beauty in the smallest details."¹¹ THE OREGONIAN

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Customer Reviews

The most remote spot in America: the southeast corner of Yellowstone. Home to wolves, grizzlies, ornery misfits, and -- for a summer -- the experienced naturalist Gary Ferguson. He vividly portrays the landscape (beyond the teeming masses at Old Faithful) that make Yellowstone so beautiful and important. He also investigates some of the fascinating political issues that rule this isolated area. Whether you're planning a trip to Yellowstone or just want an armchair escape, this is a great journey.

Gary Ferguson's "Hawks Landing" provides readers with a glimpse of life for a summer in the backwoods of Yellowstone, something that many dream about, but few ever do. This book is a marvelous and engaging read. It's easy to lose track of time when you're reading this book. Let's face it, Ferguson is an excellent writer. He has a style of prose that is poetic and understated. It's hard to count the number of times that you find yourself thinking, "Wow, that is described perfectly." Ferguson also manages to pull off something very difficult - the ability to meander from topic to topic without losing the reader or ticking them off. Many travelogues and journal-style books make huge leaps and unrealistic expectations on the readers. Ferguson's texts wanders like a fulfilling hike through the backwoods, taking inventory of many different sites and scenes. Most books like this aren't as skillfully written which make them interesting, but not as satisfying as "Hawks Rest." While Ferguson's views on things like grizzly bears, wolves and outfitters are pretty self-evident, he doesn't necessarily foist his views on the reader demanding that they accept them unconditionally. He also seems to give enough information that the reader is allowed to come to their own conclusion. If you like a good journal-style book with lessons in history and biology, then this is a delightful find. Other books may try to describe Yellowstone's geysers, wildlife, mountains or streams, but this book seems to tell more of Yellowstone's soul.

Although in his endorsement on the back cover William Kittredge says that this book "...is a long step toward a user's guide to wilderness..." it is in fact largely about long-standing border conflicts and culture clashes in the remote, but by no means inaccessible, southeastern boundary-lands of Yellowstone National Park, especially the Thorofare region. One might better say that it is about threatened ways of life: that of the local outfitters whose living depends upon access to lands

protected for them by the government they so resent, and upon the elk herds that prosper there; that of those whose passions wear on it more lightly, and who eschew more conventional lifestyles to live out those passions, and finally, that of the wildlife that inhabits the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, now, as always, on tenterhooks. Few people are more qualified than Gary Ferguson to understand the origins and ramifications of the issues for all concerned. The book is clearly written. Interspersed with revelatory passages about man vs. man vs. nature are classic Ferguson paeans to the glory that is Yellowstone, leavened with entertaining contemporary and historical anecdotes. My only negative comment about this book, a must-read for those seeking a thorough understanding of Yellowstone's precarious place in this world, is that the copy-editing (if any) is astonishingly poor. Some may not be put off by these gaffs, but such sloppiness risks diminishing the author's credibility among other readers, and that does "the cause" no good.

If you're looking for nothing more than a happy-go-lucky escape, where Bambi runs free and all is right with the world, don't bother with Hawks Rest. But if you want an honest look at the most remote place left in the lower 48 - both the beauty and the insanity - this is the book. While living in Wyoming I came to this region on several occasions, mostly as a hunter, and I saw first hand the kind of cronyism that exists there: illegal salting, chain saws, and a hatred of wolves that was clear off the charts. The LA Times had it right: Hawks Rest is "an eloquent tribute to a threatened place and its lone protectors."

Ferguson's book takes us to a corner of the US that not many people will ever see - - the Thorofare region in the southeast part of Yellowstone National Park. This region boasts the point in the lower 48 states farthest from any road-though if islands are eligible, the prize really belongs to Point Houghton on Isle Royale. Unlike Point Houghton, the Thorofare is a busy place despite its remoteness. Ferguson is working for the US Forest Service for a summer in the Thorofare. He's staying at the USFS cabin, "Hawk's Rest," which provides the title of the book. Besides him and his National Park Service colleagues, three kinds of people show up in the Thorofare - - backpackers, outdoor leadership programs for teenagers and young adults, and outfitters with their hunter clients. Ferguson discusses each group but gives most of his attention (and his vitriol) to the outfitters. If he is to be believed, the outfitters act as if they have property rights, and act as if they are a law unto themselves. They're rude to him, and they treat the other groups with contempt. Though the book is about the Thorofare as a whole, your reaction to the book will depend on your reaction to the outfitters in it. Ferguson starts and ends the book with a discussion of the route he

took there and back. The route there, beginning at his home in Montana, is a wonderful journey for the reader. His return route is not very interesting for the reader nor, it seems, for him. At that point he was glad to be going home. That's too bad, because I wasn't ready for the book to end. He writes very well, and his story is engaging throughout.

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