

## A Week in Yellowstone's Thorofare: A Journey Through the Remotest Place

**Michael J. Yochim**

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*This book is a deeply moving and informed exploration of the beauty, mystery, and community of the natural world.*

In *A Week in Yellowstone's Thorofare*, Michael Yochim weaves together elements of memoir and natural history to create a compelling profile of those who fought to preserve and protect the nation's wild places.

The remote Thorofare at the south end of Yellowstone National Park, described as one of the few remaining wilderness areas in the United States, is the centerpiece of the work. In 2014, Yochim spent a week canoing the perimeter of Yellowstone Lake with friends, and each day of that trip shapes a chapter. He knows the wilderness well, having worked more than two decades as a park planner. A night in a rangers' lodge inspires a review of the journal entries of past "keepers" of the Thorofare. A day of quiet contemplation interrupted by the whine of a motorboat prompts a fascinating discussion of the competing interests of conservationists and sportsmen.

While the focus is Yellowstone, Yochim's study raises vital questions on broad issues: how we define and experience wilderness, how public policy debates impact the national parks, and the profound importance of keeping the wilderness wild.

But there's another level of poignancy in this powerful work. Yochim reveals his recent diagnosis of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), which has taken a severe toll on his ability to walk, talk, and care for himself. He recognizes that his week in Yellowstone, riding as a passenger in a canoe, will likely be his last, and his desire to relish each moment in the wilderness he loves underscores the quiet urgency of this work.

Some of the strongest passages come as one recognizes the parallels between the resilient yet fragile nature of this wilderness and Yochim's own fragile yet determined condition: "I hope that as communication gets more difficult or even impossible for me, this book becomes my voice, allowing me to speak in the way that only a book can, even after the waters of Yellowstone Lake have received my ashes."

This book is Yochim's legacy, a tribute to a fragile, nourishing, and powerful wilderness, a deeply moving and informed exploration of the beauty, mystery, and community of the natural world.

KRISTEN RABE (Fall 2016)

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