

Arctic Solitaire: A Boat, a Bay, and the Quest for the Perfect Bear

Paul Souders

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Across a three-year period, photographer Paul Souders took four unaccompanied boat trips to Canada's Hudson Bay. His objective was to find "the polar bear of [his] dreams" and photograph the wild animal "living, hunting, and swimming among the melting Arctic sea ice." Souders ultimately succeeded, but he got much more than he bargained for. *Arctic Solitaire* documents the author's escapades in a personal narrative that is engaging, sometimes harrowing, and often very amusing.

Souders faces all manners of challenges on *C-Sick*, his appropriately named boat, including raging seas, suspicious natives, supplies that wash overboard, and dangerous encounters with all kinds of wildlife. Along the way, the author's keen eye for observation and his talent for firsthand reportage make for a riveting story. His ability to mock his own shortcomings and misadventures lends a particularly humorous aspect to his storytelling. In one instance, when Souders is convinced that he's finally found that perfect polar bear, he begins to snap frame after frame with his camera—only to realize later that he never removed the lens cap.

Souders conveys the wonder of his exploits through delightful imagery:

To sit in the warm sun, breathe air crisp and tangy with salt, and watch the secret life of a wild animal—maybe this is what I should have been striving for all along.

Later, he describes a particular bear encounter this way: "For these few fleeting moments, I had been given a chance to witness a scene of rare beauty. Those minutes were the rarest of gifts." As an added bonus, Souders interweaves many of his stunning photographs throughout the book.

In freely sharing what he sees and experiences, Souders immerses his audience in a captivating adventure, offering an intimate view of both the perils of lone exploration and the stunning beauty of the wild. The result is a rare, enchanting treat for any reader.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (September/October 2018)

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