



★ **Ice Rivers: A Story of Glaciers, Wilderness, and Humanity**

Jemma Wadham

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Glaciologist Jemma Wadham's anguish over her field of study being besieged by climate change underpins *Ice Rivers*, which introduces seven diverse glaciers. It's an emotional, masterful science narrative that's coupled with scenes from Wadham's personal and professional life.

Wadham's glaciers are dazzling and distinctive. They have snouts and complex geographies; they creep and slide; they are studded with plant and microbial life that nourishes poles and mountain ranges. Some lie atop huge ancient lakes and methane reservoirs; others are riddled with icy shafts funneling meltwater into rushing underground rivers. Most of all, they are important climate regulators that lock up much of the planet's freshwater stores—and they are melting at alarming rates.

The book relates the adventures, dangers, and joys of field work at inhospitable wilderness sites. Sleeplessness, monotonous rations, and relentless cold and wind are offset by the “communal mirth” of meals, music, and shared excitement over fresh discoveries and successful experiments. Wadham's sensual writing about the exquisite beauty of pristine landscapes, intense wildness, and the satisfaction of mastering difficult skills and equipment is punctuated by bits of self-deprecating humor.

There are insights into the challenges of being an expedition leader and a rare woman in a “ruffy-tuffy macho field,” too. Wadham's exploits rappelling down moulines, chain-sawing ice, and pushing through with a broken kneecap and an undiagnosed brain tumor (not at the same time) display her toughness and dedication, but are balanced by revelations of personal loss and fears about the aftermath of unprecedented, rapid changes in the environment.

Edifying and expressive, *Ice Rivers* documents how glaciers are integral to their icy ecosystems, to vulnerable human and wildlife populations, and to Earth as a whole. Wadham is an artful storyteller who makes a passionate case for taking bold, swift action on climate issues.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (September / October 2021)

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