

## ★ **Requiem for America's Best Idea: National Parks in the Era of Climate Change**

**Michael J. Yochim**

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Pondering the impact of climate change on the national parks, *Requiem for America's Best Idea* is a nature guide and travelogue with a powerful message of environmental advocacy.

Featuring five of the largest Western parks—Olympic, Grand Canyon, Glacier, Yellowstone, and Yosemite—the book is captivating on many levels. It is a lyrical introduction to the parks' geology, history, and microclimates, packed with fascinating details about their local vegetation and wildlife, from the tiny canyon wren to the towering sequoia. It is also a rousing adventure story recounting dozens of Michael J. Yochim's trips, including rafting on the Colorado River, skiing the backcountry of the Sierra, and climbing the peaks of the High Divide. It is comprehensive in summarizing the science of climate change, with discerning views of the natural world's vulnerabilities and adaptations given rising temperatures, droughts, and wildfires. And it serves as an affecting memoir of Yochim's struggles with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), which robbed him of the abilities to hike, walk, eat, and breathe.

Yochim drew his last breath while writing this manuscript, using eye-tracking technology because, long before, he'd lost the ability to type or speak. While the disease devastated his body, Yochim's memories of the parks sustained him: "If there are any places that energize the body, mind, and soul...[if] there are any places that calm the hurried, that soothe the wounded, that quiet the troubled, they are these islands of tranquility." Weaving together accounts of the parks' changing ecosystems with Yochim's own physical decline, the book makes an impassioned case for addressing the causes of global warming.

Among the many works on the natural world and climate change, *Requiem for America's Best Idea* is an exceptionally touching, persuasive, and urgent plea for preserving these "natural cathedrals"—places of wonder, renewal, and transcendence—for future generations.

KRISTEN RABE (March / April 2022)

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