

Satellites in the High Country: Searching for the Wild in the Age of Man

Jason Mark

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Mark gives an invitation to flee modernity and embrace mysterious nature as he shares the poetic insights he found in the wild.

Satellites in the High Country: Searching for the Wild in the Age of Man, by Jason Mark, is a first-person account of an everyman who aims for the depths of nature.

Mark has answered the call that so many modern people have been tempted by but have ultimately ignored: the pull to disconnect from the trappings of modernity and connect to the least-tamed parts of earth. While many similar seekers flock to the edges of civilizations, Mark goes beyond the edge, striving for the heart of the wilderness in several different regions of the United States. What he finds is surprisingly human and complex, rather than the idealized simplicity of nature. The story begins in the depths of humanity; while hiking, he's injured and in utter isolation, "Suddenly I felt very vulnerable."

Mark's voice is the guiding force in the book; but rather than being a wandering travelogue, it's a well-developed, broadly reaching personal narrative. He presents what he sees in his travels, as well as his thoughts and feelings about it, but he also presents the wider context—such as the conflict over the Drakes Bay Oyster Farm, where all sides claim to be prioritizing the environment. Mark's narration has a compelling immediacy, like when he's listening with trepidation to identify the howling on the edge of the camp. While there is wisdom to gather from the earth, what Mark finds is poetic mystery: the more people seek to know, the more mystified they become, and this bewilderment is freeing.

Mark's insights about animals and natural surroundings are intelligent and well researched, but his journalistic rather than academic style ensures they're accessible to casual outdoorsmen. The illustrated maps mix information and art.

MELISSA WUSKE (Fall 2015)

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