



Stories from Afield: Adventures with Wild Things in Wild Places

Bruce L. Smith

Bison Books (Oct 1, 2016)

Softcover \$18.95 (210pp)

978-0-8032-8816-4

Smith introduces audiences to a primordial, pristine, and rapidly vanishing world, with a reminder that its future is in our hands.

Some people are lucky enough to know from an early age exactly what they want to do with their lives. Bruce L. Smith's 1950s childhood, spent roaming freely among western Michigan's woodlands, lakeshores, and marshlands, fed his fascination with wild places and the creatures that lived in them, and influenced him as he plotted the course of his life. In *Stories from Afield*, Smith, a gifted storyteller, recounts how his childhood experiences with fly fishing and snapping turtles morphed into higher-stakes adventures.

When his service with the marines during the Vietnam War left him wounded and deeply aware of the fragility of life, Smith made a commitment to make a difference, and conserving America's remaining natural heritage seemed a worthy goal. His tales, gathered over a thirty-year career as a wildlife scientist and manager in the Rocky Mountain West, abound with vivid descriptions of harrowing experiences, including being snowbound with no radio communication at ten thousand feet, facing overnight temperatures of thirty below zero; being caught in an avalanche at eight thousand feet, alone and without lifesaving equipment; enduring storms on mountaintops; and close calls with black bears and grizzlies. He also shares the wonder and awe of watching elk calves joust in emerald meadows, and of seeing glistening trout pulled from cascading streams; of transcendent times in the remote, rugged sanctuary of mountain goats; and of silent nights under a canopy of sparkling stars.

"I am simply awed at times by the immensity and grandeur of it all," writes Smith. "Perhaps protohumans, thousands and millions of years ago, felt the same: like merely fragile specks on the land. That is what wild places and the wild things that live there do for us; they return us to our roots and a more harmonious place on the earth."

Stories From Afield is more than one man's memoir of a life spent in service to America's rich wild heritage; in sharing the joy, wonder, humor, and dangers of being immersed in wilderness, Smith introduces audiences to a primordial, pristine, and rapidly vanishing world, with a reminder that its future is in our hands.

KRISTINE MORRIS (Fall 2016)

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