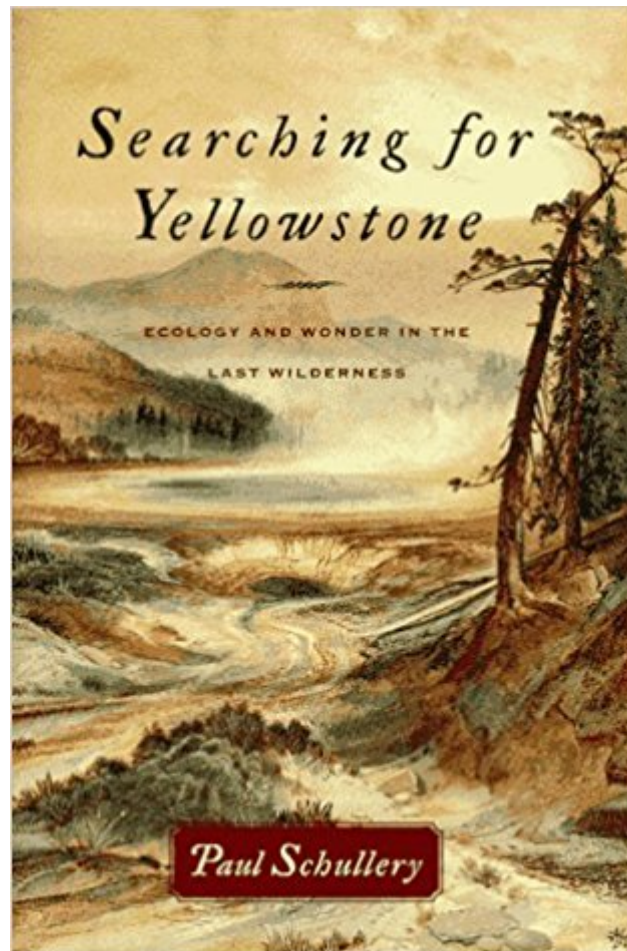




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Searching For Yellowstone: Ecology And Wonder In The Last Wilderness



Synopsis

Combining exhaustive research with twenty-five years of experience at Yellowstone, Paul Schullery paints a dramatically new picture of Yellowstone park. He shows how Yellowstone's "discovery" by whites followed 10,000 years of occupation and use by native Americans. The search for Yellowstone is as vital and unpredictable today as it was in 1872, and Paul Schullery makes an urgent, eloquent, and startlingly practical case for ensuring that Yellowstone lasts another 125 years.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In 1997 Yellowstone celebrated its 125th anniversary as a national park, the keystone in the federal system of reserved and protected places. The celebration was somewhat marred by debates over wolf reintroduction, road improvement, resort building, and "bioprospecting," the search for economically useful plant materials. Paul Schullery, a longtime resident and student of the park, tells us that such debates are not new. In his deeply personal yet sweeping history of Yellowstone, he shows that the place known from the start as "Wonderland" has always been the subject of pro- and anti-development forces, has always been seen through sometimes bitterly contrasting points of view. With balance and grace, Schullery weaves his narrative through countless such arguments, noting that "Today's parks, for all the press of humanity lined up to get in, still seem short of friends, or at least lacking in just the right combination of friends to ensure adequate budgets and reasonable protection." His fine book may help widen Yellowstone's circle of champions.

For its 125th birthday, Schullery (former ranger-naturalist, park historian, and chief of cultural resources at Yellowstone National Park) offers an environmental history of the world's first national park. From its geological birth, through the experiences of humans who have traversed the area for hundreds of years, to contemporary questions of bear management, elk herd reduction, and the reintroduction of wolves, the history of Yellowstone is not simple?and neither is humankind's quest for its meaning. By reviewing, condensing, and analyzing past and current literature and offering his personal insights, Schullery describes the ever-changing process that is its essence. Readable and tightly organized, this book fills a long-empty niche: a one-volume history of Yellowstone?America's best idea. Recommended for all libraries.?Patricia Owens, Wabash Valley Coll., Mt. Carmel, Ill.Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book presents itself as a history of Yellowstone. However, it's also an extended reflection on the park by someone who loves it dearly, someone who has worked for the National Park Service in Yellowstone for years and is very knowledgeable about the park. Schullery writes very well, and the book is a pleasure to read. The most striking characteristic of this book, in comparison with others, is how remarkably even-handed it is. Schullery takes controversial issues such as fire management, elk shooting, wolf reintroduction, and brucellosis-infected bison and presents them in an even-handed way, sympathetic to both sides. He recognizes that most people go to Yellowstone to see Old Faithful and the Grand Canyon, eat, and go shopping; that's not what he likes to do, but he isn't critical. Yet, somehow, he manages to cock an eyebrow here and there and make you rethink a position that you had previously held quite firmly. This would be a great book to read before a visit to Yellowstone, or as something to put in your pack while you're there. Highly recommended.

Great reading before a trip to Yellowstone.

After reading this book I understand Yellowstone's past, present and future better. I visit Yellowstone every year and this book will help me get more out of my visits.

History resides in the heart of every National Park but in some, think Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Mesa Verde, and Yellowstone, that history seems wrapped so deeply in controversy it is all but impossible to sift through it. One is left with either taking the interpretive signs at face value or reading books so steeped in self-absorbed author-based agendas there is no way to discern fact from bison manure. Paul Schullery's book is different. Schullery is willing to take on controversy,

present both sides (if they are valid), and move on with all-but-no emotion. This book made Yellowstone for me. On my fourth trip to Yellowstone this last month I read *Searching for Yellowstone* during my five days in the park. The book is well-written, flows nicely, and is very well researched (skim the 55 pages of notes and references at the end for an idea). Schullery takes on the big questions (Elk, forest fires, who found the park, native uses, and what the park is supposed to mean). He truly allows us to "search for Yellowstone". While reading, wandering through the geysers and hiking the hills, I used his text to understand what this park has come to mean and what it should mean in the future. I think his whole section on what buildings should be preserved puts a lot of the controversy in context. Really? Preserve the strip mall at Canyon? "Historically, the educational metaphor most commonly applied to Yellowstone has been that of a great outdoor laboratory in which the workings of nature are exposed for our study and edification. In fact Yellowstone has become a sort of university, where we are the students and the landscape is the faculty and where an amazing array of human interests are tested." Paul's book is the perfect guide for exploring Yellowstone a little deeper.

Highly recommended reading for anyone interested in knowing the "Yellowstone story" at a deeper level than the interpretive signs or tourist pamphlets. This would be excellent (and easy) "pre-reading" for anyone contemplating a first trip to Yellowstone....but it is also a fascinating and sometimes surprising eye-opener for someone (like me) who was somewhat familiar with Yellowstone already. From the perspective only a former Yellowstone employee and prolific writer/researcher could bring, Schullery persuasively argues-not unlike the "new western historians" in their iconoclastic reassessment of the American west and its history)-that Yellowstone is not so much a place as a process...a process of how we as Americans define a national park. Schullery's measured tour through this process provides a sobering reminder to inveterate tree-huggers like me that a national park is not a wilderness area, as much as I might like it to be in terms of "hands off" preservation. Schullery's approach is matter-of-fact, methodically researched (I actually enjoyed reading the copious "notes" section separately after having finished the book) and myth-busting at times (e.g. that surprisingly, the total number of developed acres in Yellowstone has actually decreased during the last 40 years rather than increased). He doesn't even spare himself, needling enthusiastic fly-fishers like himself with the sad-but-true fact that if we treated the ungulates of Yellowstone the same way fishermen do a Yellowstone trout (which was probably introduced in the first place rather than native), we would be cited for abusing the wildlife. A very readable and important book.

This was a "can't put it down" book, unusual for a historical treatment which often, it seems to me, avoids cutting to the crux of a matter and rambles on and on. I particularly like the authors willingness to tangle horns with Chase on the elk controversy and the National Park Service on the Langford "birth of the national parks" campfire. I'm writing a book on the national parks with a little history and while I was delighted to see Chase lambasted I was shocked about the debunking of the campfire story. A history which came out about the same time as this book - Sellar's Preserving Nature in the National Parks - retains the story, and I had read Bartlett, and though it was years ago, also Haines, without zeroing in on the "myth assertion". I had to go back and attach a big caveat to the story, which I feel much better about now. It's a wonderful book; keep them coming (looks like the wolf story, after Casper, is going to be a story crying for a proper historian someday).

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