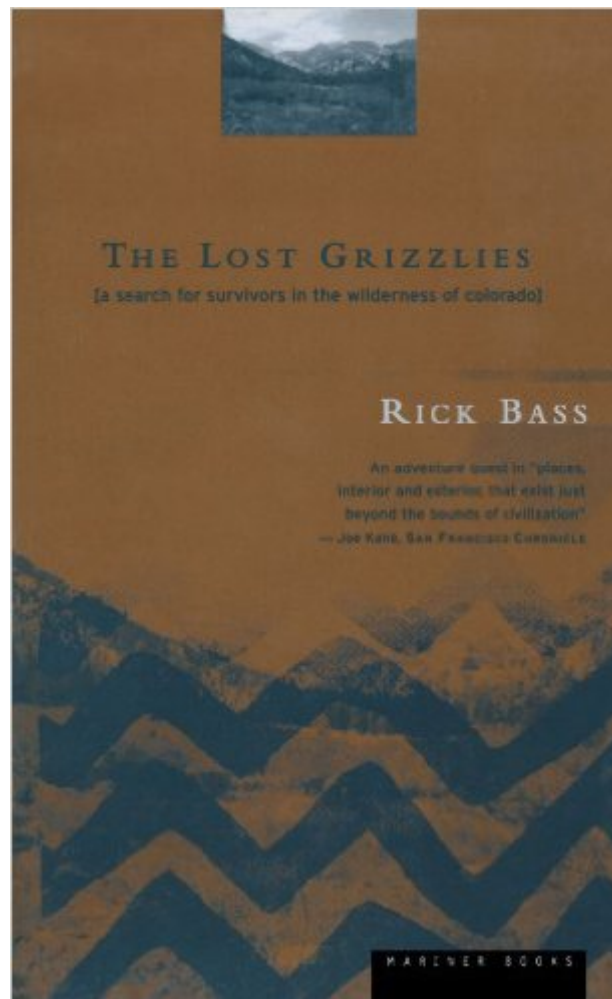


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The Lost Grizzlies: A Search For Survivors In The Wilderness Of Colorado



Synopsis

The Lost Grizzlies chronicles the ongoing search for proof that a small number of grizzly bears still lives in the isolated mountain wilds of southern Colorado. Rick Bass turns his considerable talents to an evocation of wilderness beauty and the history of human encroachment that may, or may not, have wiped out the last of these massive, solitary bears from their southern range.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I'm not a voracious reader, but I'm reasonably well-read and have spent A LOT of time in grizzly bear territory in B.C. It was intriguing for me to read of the descriptions of the terrain around the San Juan mountains in Colorado - terrain that must be very different than that of the rainforests of western Canada. Bass paints a fairly good picture of the landscape, but as one who has never spent time in the San Juan mountains, I still was left to wonder about the vegetation, the color of the soil, the type of rocks. Bass weaves an interesting tale, presenting to the reader what seems to be a slightly embellished factual account. It took me quite awhile to settle into the book due to his present tense writing style: "I walk up the trail" rather than "I walked up the trail" (past tense). He portrays his encounters with wildlife with less caution and wariness than he depicts the people in the story. I relate to his notion of peace when in nature, unsettled feelings around people. His outlook on life seems minutely cynical (or at least skeptical) but I like that in a person. I remember smiling and/or nodding at some of his observations about the world, thoughts and realizations that can come into the mind when one's perspective is annointed with the serenity, beauty, and perfection of nature. He

does an effective job of recounting the experience of the several searches of which he was part. He gives what seems to be an honest account of the troubles, successes, injuries, meals, frustrations, jokes, and other events that combined into the whole experience. So authentic and genuine were his descriptions that I could see clearly the scenes he described. I am somewhat curious about how Doug Peacock felt about Bass' portrayal of him in the book.

"The Lost Grizzlies," first published in 1997, could have been published last week or last year. There is little that didn't feel like it couldn't have happened recently. The search, after all, is still on. Going back-country with grizzly expert Doug Peacock and biologist Dennis Sizemore, Bass makes three trips into The San Juan Mountains to search for tracks, claw marks and scat. Or a bear. A bear sighting wouldn't hurt. "The Lost Grizzlies" is as much about Rick and his erstwhile collection of buddies, including the singular Peacock character, as it is about the actual search. There is time for introspection and nature-gazing and I drank every word like I was sipping from a fine bottle of tequila. (Sorry, I don't drink the George Dickel bourbon these guys prefer.) The account is complete with the supply-gathering and car repairs that go with this group's efforts and so you get a little taste of the communities near where they searched, such as Del Norte. Most challenging of all, however, is how do you go find a mammal that doesn't want to be seen? That can smell you coming from miles and miles away? That knows every escape route and hiding place? The slow-motion hikes are beautifully written: Stopping to examine an elk skeleton: "We piece the scapula and a femur and tibia together and place a few ribs back in their proper position. We spy the skull, with antlers still attached--he probably died twenty or so years ago--and reverently, we pull that from the soil, too. It's a huge royal eight-point, the only one I've ever seen. Without saying a word, we pass around the great skull and admire it. Moss has grown on the bald pate, and the antlers are worn, whittled by the teeth of squirrels and porcupines.

This book is a unique combination of comedy, real-life adventure and a luminous testimony to one of America's most endangered and mythical beasts. Bass is at his best here, capturing the hearts of his readers through an alternately hilarious and spine tingling account of his journey into the Colorado mountains in search of grizzly bears. The problem facing Bass and his two friends is that the grizzly bear is believed to be extinct in Colorado. However, several undocumented sightings and signs have convinced them that the bears exist in the remotest regions of the mountain range. Thus they are out to do all they can to locate bears and document their findings. In the resulting adventures we find the three companions tramping through woods, sliding down canyon walls,

confronting bureaucrats and tracking down bear sign. Things are complicated, and given a distinctly uneasy quality, by the behavior of Doug Peacock. Peacock, himself a well-known author and champion of the grizzly bear, is plagued by frequent and dramatic mood swings. His alarmingly volatile temper, moments of intense introspection and frequent outbursts of graphic profanity have the reader feeling like he/she is walking on eggshells. Because Bass has done such a good job of describing his friend, and how he came to be the way he is, it's easy to forgive Peacock his peculiar behavior. However, it is not easy or pleasant to read. As the story unfolds, and the three men get closer to their goal, the tension becomes almost unbearable. When Bass finally sees a bear, after months of exhausting effort and disappointment, the scene unfolds in classic Bass technicolor with heart racing clarity and insight.

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