



Rhythms of Change in Rocky Mountain National Park

Ellen Wohl

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To contemplate an alpine lake or a ribbon of white water twisting down the face of the Rocky Mountains is to appreciate the majesty of this block of bedrock thrust up from Earth's interior, weathering eons of nature's assaults. To learn what humans, in our brief lifespan, have done here is to acquire a sobering sense of our place in the natural world. Ellen Wohl's account of a year in the life of Rocky Mountain National Park reflects a lifelong interest in these rhythms and disruptions. Informed by a deep and intimate understanding of the landscape, her Rocky Mountain journal is a lyrical distillation of experience and knowledge that shows us the century-old national park as a microcosm of the natural world in the thrall of time and humanity.

Conducting readers through the park's seasons, Wohl describes the processes that unfold over the ages as continents drift and mountain ranges rise, as glaciers carve the land and profound changes in the atmosphere alter the environment. Working on the landscape in a humbler way are beavers and elk, beetles and, not so humbly, humans, who tinker with natural rhythms in ways big and small, as obvious as logging, road building, and feedlot run-off, and as subtle in the short run as climate change. Along the way, we observe the effects of nature's more violent moments: flash floods that wash out roads and inflict damage downstream, high winds that flatten whole hillsides in minutes, wildfires that strip the woods in an instant or smolder all winter long.

A work of quiet power, *Rhythms of Change in Rocky Mountain National Park* traces Wohl's year-long journey, deftly guiding us through the changing seasons of one of America's most awe-inspiring natural places in all its curiosity and wonder—and in its exposure to the larger forces inexorably altering the natural world.

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