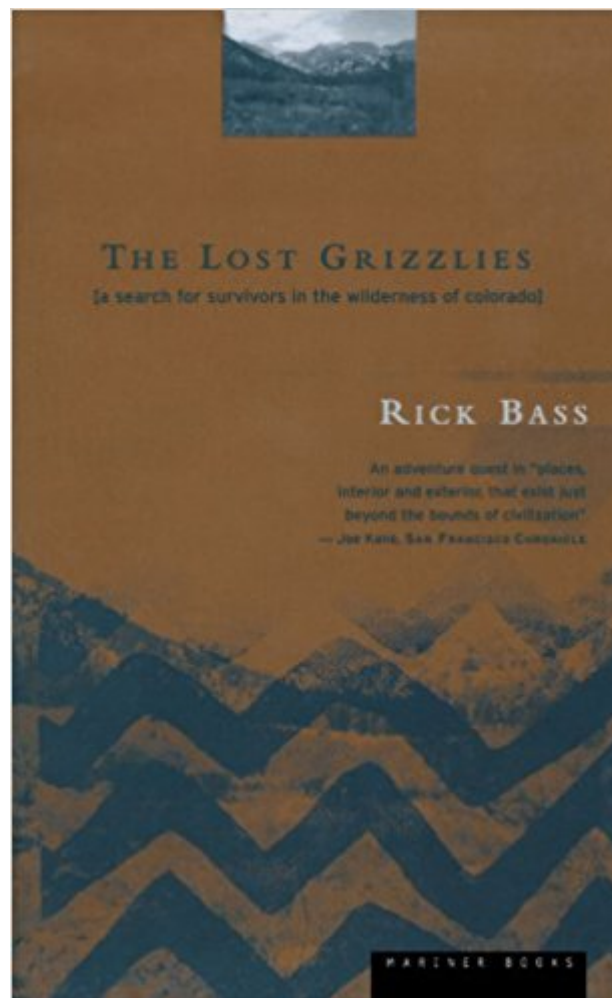




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The Lost Grizzlies: A Search For Survivors In The Wilderness Of Colorado



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

Elk and black bear are abundant in Colorado's San Juan mountains. Does the grizzly still exist there? Since 1979, when a man was mauled by a grizzly, there have been a few unconfirmed sightings. With grizzly expert Doug Peacock and biologist Dennis Sizemore, Bass (*The Nine-Mile Wolves*) made three trips to the area to follow up the sightings and to search for signs (tracks and claw marks on trees, scat) that they would send to a laboratory for confirmation. The result is an engaging account of their adventures. For all three, just being in the wilderness was exhilarating; to Bass, the awareness that the bears might exist there was the heart of this search. On a solo climb at about 11,000 feet, Bass encountered a large bear he believes was a grizzly (again, no proof). Here he conveys in freewheeling style his appreciation of the wilderness and a strong sense of camaraderie. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

YA?Grizzly bears had not been seen in the San Juan Mountains of southern Colorado for almost 15 years when a small group of men set out in 1990 to seek definitive evidence that the animals still

existed there. They sought a tuft of fur, footprints, or, best of all, photographs to convince wildlife officials that these mountains still provided a habitat for grizzlies, a habitat that should be preserved. Over the next two years, two more expeditions were made until, finally, a confrontation... "I look for a tree to climb, my heart in my throat. That glimpse of the rolling humped back and the wild, wild eyes is all I get before the bear's flight takes it down to a wooded ravine and away..." Bass eloquently describes the pristine mountain meadows, the icy streams, the old-growth forests and the men who seek to preserve them. His account is about friendship, commitment, and love of the outdoors as much as it is about bears. YAs interested in the environment, in wildlife preservation, and in adventure in the natural world will find this book exciting and informative. Molly Connally, Kings Park Library, Fairfax County, VA Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"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. The old boy died in the fall, and on the trail. Almost certainly he fell to a predator--more noble, perhaps, than succumbing to winter weakness and starvation. We lay the head where it belongs, near the scapula and some stray vertebrae--as gently as if laying a favorite old dog to rest--and continue on our way." And serious thoughts about nature and the environment: "To make the San Juans whole, to remake and heal them, we must start at the top of

the pyramid, restoring and protecting the habitat of the great predators such as the bear, wolf, lynx, and wolverine. We must also repair the base of the pyramid. The water must be kept free of cyanide, and the soil must be held in place by forests, rather than washed away by the scrubbing action of cows and sheep."Bass believes there are bears. Or, at least, compounds belief with hope and some logic and the result is a sense that you might be able to will a grizzly into your midst. Just maybe. Finally, on a solo hike at a high elevation, comes the encounter that we have waited for and Bass believes and makes us believe, too. Alas, all the exacting scientists and fussy wildlife officers want actual physical evidence--even a fresh hair will do--but Bass and the team are unsuccessful in producing such a worthy tidbit. (No spoiler alert there.) Or are they? Bass is sure he saw a grizzly. Sure but not, you know, positive. He has no proof. The moment was brief, but close. It's a heart-pounding scene.I could launch a couple dozen superlatives about Bass' writing style, but I'll just leave it at this--I was drawn along effortlessly from the first word to the last.So the outcome is no surprise, but the journey is immensely satisfying with Bass' smooth and engaging prose as our guide. I wish Bass would go back and write an update. It's time.

I've wandered these same hills and canyons that are not named in this book, I've felt the vibe and energy that even the thought of a grizzly can bring, yet sadly I've not seen one or even what I would consider sign of one. I loved this book and I wish an updated version would come out, perhaps a whole new book on the search for these bears that "don't" exist.

Few write as well about wilderness as does Rick Bass, and this beautiful volume is no exception. To read this book is to join Bass and his naturalist partners on a real-life trek deep into the wilderness of the San Juan Mountains in search of an animal long believed absent from territory they once dominated. Structured not unlike a mystery, the book is filled with engaging suspense, clue by clue, and pulls you farther and farther into the wood. By the end, you are just as invested as they are in their hope to unearth proof this amazing animal still exists in a deep spread of wilderness it so belongs. Beautifully written, this is a naturalist's page turner. Excellent work.

This is a very unique book written by an author that has a wonderful way with words. Its kind of a book about discovery and people with different ideas but one common goal, to see a grizzly bear.Rick Bass tells this book in three parts. Each describes a trip that he takes out to the San Juan Mountains in Colorado to determine if there are still Grizzly Bears in the area. They are thought to be hunted out, but more and more evidence points to the fact that they may still be roaming the

mountains, just infinitely more solitary than they ever once were. Each trip takes place a year apart and has some reoccurring people that join him. Most noticeably is Doug Peacock, a wilderness guy who could arguably be called the heart of the operation. He leads the expeditions and seems to organize things while being somewhat solitary himself. Once in awhile the mission for bears will be sidetracked by the discovery of chanterelles and the subsequent eating of them. As a narrator Bass presents himself pretty well, although I found it a bit disconcerting that he mentions medical problems but never really says what's going on exactly. It makes you worry about him and distracts from the actual telling of the book since he never really goes any further with it. His descriptions of the other people are fair, but I think he does tend to over-characterize them a bit. At times, Peacock does not even seem like a real person. I liked the premise of the novel although it does go somewhat slow at times. Bass gets caught up in his tale and he starts focusing on trivialities when he could be moving the story along. But his writing is beautiful and it does make up for that. He is very descriptive and you can almost feel his emotions through reading his words. And his description of the mushrooms they fixed during the book absolutely made my mouth water. And I do think he did a favor for the bears of San Juan Mountains; he makes them mysterious which in turn makes them more special and could even help their cause as people fall in love with their story. Definitely an interesting book. If you're into non-fiction this is one to read. The Lost Grizzlies Copyright 1995 240 pages Review by M. Reynard 2011

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