



Only Kayak: A Journey Into The Heart Of Alaska

By Kim Heacox

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Finalist for the 2006 Pen Center Usa Western award in creative nonfiction.

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Only Kayak: A Journey Into The Heart Of Alaska By Kim Heacox Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Writer and photographer Heacox delivers a genuine, deeply moving account of the past 25 years he has spent living in Glacier Bay, Alaska, "the last wild shore, nine hundred miles north of Seattle and nine hundred years in the past." This work's title comes from the first kayaking trip Heacox took there in 1979. As he explored the bay with a friend, they found themselves the sole kayak in that body of water, "alone, and escaped, left to wonder how long it could last, this wildness and grace." Heacox's ability to use this tension—between the beauty of the Alaskan wilderness and the creeping encroachment of modern life—is the thread that unites his varied observations, and it's what gives the book its uniqueness and keeps it from being another pale imitation of *Coming into the Country*, John McPhee's late-1970s classic on Alaska. Heacox (*An American Idea; Shackleton*; etc.) deftly renders highly personal accounts of life with his wife and constant companion—especially a horrific account of her near-death from hypothermia in a winter storm—and the development of his friendship with Michio Hoshino, who became a famed photographer of bears before an untimely death. He also offers a fascinating look at his own development as a conservationist. The combination of these various elements makes for a charming reverie on Alaska's past and a thoughtful look at its future. Map. (May)

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From [Booklist](#)

One hundred years after naturalist John Muir made his first trip to Alaska, National Park Service employee Heacox is paddling the waters of Glacier Bay with Richard Steele, a fellow summer recruit. The year is 1979, and their goal is to visit untrammeled wilderness, and to be the only kayak in the bay. Although some 25 years have passed since that summer, Heacox is still enamored of Alaska, and the valuable friendships he made there. He is an intrepid spirit well suited to Alaskan life, and has little patience for those who don't meet his standards. "Make access easy, and a place dies," is his motto, and therein lies the paradox that Heacox tries to resolve in this book. He knows that cruise ships are damaging to the bay's ecosystem, for example, yet he also realizes that it would be nearly impossible for the elderly visitors to enjoy the coastline by kayak as he does. As he wrestles with such conundrums, Heacox creates a nicely balanced environmental portrait of Alaska's ice-cut coast. *Rebecca Maksel*

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Review

"[A] tender chronicle of a miracle in process, with glints of its rarity thrown by the handful from these pages."--*Kirkus Reviews*

"Writer and photographer Heacox delivers a genuine, deeply moving account of the past twenty-five years he has spent living in Glacier Bay, Alaska."--*Publishers Weekly*

"'Make access easy, and a place dies,' is his motto, and therein lies the paradox that Heacox tries to resolve in this book. . . . As he wrestles with such conundrums, Heacox creates a nicely balanced environmental portrait of Alaska's ice-cut coast."--*Booklist*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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