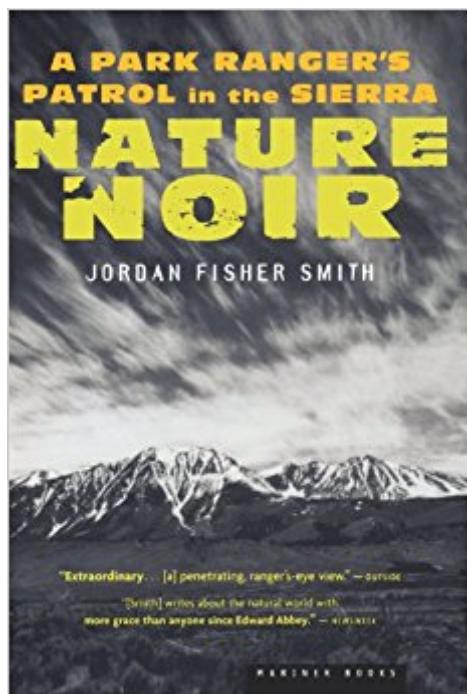


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Nature Noir: A Park Ranger's Patrol In The Sierra



Synopsis

A nature book unlike any other, Jordan Fisher Smith's startling account of fourteen years as a park ranger thoroughly dispels our idealized visions of life in the great outdoors. Instead of scout troops and placid birdwatchers, Smith's beat -- a stretch of land that has been officially condemned to be flooded -- brings him into contact with drug users tweaked out to the point of violence, obsessed miners, and other dangerous creatures. In unflinchingly honest prose, he reveals the unexpectedly dark underbelly of patrolling and protecting public lands.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Slated to be drowned by a dam, the California state park patrolled by the author of this haunting memoir is a "condemned landscape" of gorgeous river canyons hemmed in by exurban sprawl and peopled by eccentric gold miners, squatting families, drug dealers and miscellaneous drunken, gun-waving rowdies, a place where "turkey vultures floated... savoring the hot air for the inevitable attrition of heat, drought and violence." In his 14 years there, first-time author Smith encountered fights, beatings, suicides, daredevil canyon divers and the corpse of a woman jogger killed and half eaten by a cougar. His conflicted task of facilitating the communion of humans with the wilderness while keeping the humans civilized and the wild places wild becomes a mission against the "half-assed and watered-down... gray area" that is the modern world's "perpetual state of uncertainty." The clash of nature and civilization is a resonant theme, but it doesn't of itself yield compelling insights, and sometimes the author's essays add up to little more than shaggy-dog stories. But Smith writes with a novelistic sense of character, atmosphere and pacing, in a prose

style that's wonderfully evocative of landscape and its effects on people. It will cause readers to both thrill and shudder at the call of the wild. > Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Eloquently meditative . . . [Smith writes]with a gritty candor -- think of a gun-toting Norman Maclean or Wallace Stegner." -- Alan Burdick *The New York Times Book Review*"Gloriously unlike anything I've ever read before . . . gives entree into a strange, dark, and mesmerizing outdoor world that's absolutely unforgettable." -- Caroline Leavitt *Boston Globe*"He writes about the natural world with more grace than anyone since Edward Abbey." *Newsweek*"Extraordinary . . . *Nature Noir* marks the debut of a terrific new nature writer, one whose penetrating, ranger's-eye view of the Sierra Nevada recalls the plain-spoken timbre of Edward Abbey and David James Duncan." *Outside*"Gracefully weaves scenes and stories with context, history and reflection, in ways recalling the best of John McPhee." *Los Angeles Times*"Our editors recommend . . . In his taut drama . . . Jordan Fisher Smith does much to dispel the notion of park users as docile birdwatchers in hiking shorts or rangers as kindly wildflower guides in khaki hats." *The San Francisco Chronicle*"A wonderful antidote to the treacly Ansel Adams image of our parks." *The Wall Street Journal*"Astonishing and fine . . . graceful, disturbing. . . [a] remarkable, hard-to-classify book." *Cleveland Plain Dealer*"Smith offers a fresh perspective on our threatened environment . . . *Nature Noir* reflects the spirit of an era as did *Desert Solitaire*." *Charlotte Observer*"A nature book unlike any other. . . infused with wonder, laced with heart-stopping descriptions of natural beauty and peppered with gritty, anti-romantic, all-too-real tales of cops 'n' bad guys in the great outdoors." *The San Diego Union-Tribune*"By turns funny, poignant and surprising . . . an intimate memoir of the career of a state-park ranger. Not just any ranger, but one with a wicked pen, patrolling a doomed landscape." *Seattle Times/Post-Intelligencer*"Nature Noir is by far the best book written by or about the modern park ranger I have read." -- Tom Wylie *Bloomsbury Review*"Not only an electrifying tale of bringing the law to the wild west in the 1980s and '90s but also a graphic piece of writing from someone who has learned his craft from the royalty of American naturalists: writers like Gary Snyder, Aldo Leopold and Edward Abbey." *Buffalo News*

Park Rangers do not simply wander like John Muir naturalists. This book shows law enforcement, humanity at its worst and best, geology that matters and can cost lives if not understood, and the ridiculous budgetary decisions spending needlessly and/or refusing like Scrooge to provide for

natural resources and the people who protect them. The author's muddy shoes and hands offer up experience on the written pages.

For anyone who loved Edward Abbey's Desert Solitaire, Nature Noir is a must read! Jordan Smith shares an insiders' perspective of our State Parks through a Rangers' eyes that starts out mostly as a nuts and bolts memoir then turns deeply personal and moving. The state park landscape serves as the stage for a surreal stew of characters ranging from naive "nature lovers" to criminals to crackpots. Anyone who waxes nostalgic about the good ol' days when rangers didn't carry guns will be reminded that the most dangerous animals in our parks are not the wildlife. The underlying shadowy politics of preservation and exploitation of our open spaces get a rare critical light shown on them by the author which exposes the "business end" of the state park system. This is a unique story that deserves a look from anyone who cares about the wilderness legacy we leave future generations and about the people who are tasked with protecting that legacy.

Great book for anyone interested in becoming a park ranger or who's interested in the park service, dams, and general outdoorsy topics in general. Beautifully written, some parts are very poetic, others are humorous, and some are dark but real.

A very interesting tale of life as a park ranger is Kallyforniya. He should be thankful he got to retire when he did. It's a lot worse now. With the legislature sucking off more and more of the tax dollar for their pet projects designed to keep them feeding from the public trough, any public trough, just so long as they don't have to get a real job, the budgets for jobs like park ranger and game warden get cut further and further making their job not just dangerous and difficult but almost impossible.

In purchasing "Nature Noir" I expected that it would deal primarily with the day-to-day activities of a park ranger. However, the author has woven together an intricate and fascinating pattern that takes into account human history, geology, and mankind's impact on the natural landscape. At times the author writes with the soul of a poet in describing nature and man's place in it. At other times, he vividly describes the danger of enforcing park regulations when dealing with armed men that have chosen to leave society and want only to be left on their own. A very fascinating read (and "listen" thanks to audible). I know "Nature Noir" is a book that I will reread in the future.

This was a very good book about not only a Ranger's experience with the park service, but nature

and the environment.

Having spent 32+ years in law enforcement and a lifetime outdoors I found Smith's mixture of stories as a LE Ranger, historian and environmentalist kept me reading to the end in one sitting. I'm waiting for his next book due out this month. One of the few authors with whom I would like to spend a day or a week.

Very interesting and informative book and probably more meaningful because I live in the area that is written about. Nevertheless -- it gives a perspective on the life of a park ranger that surely, nobody would have imagined.

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