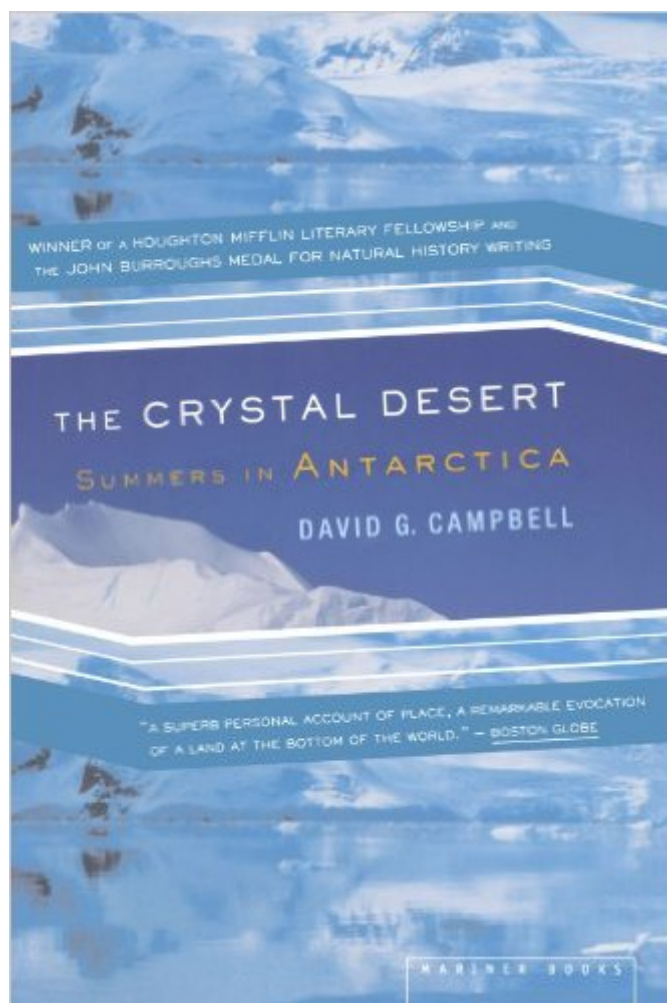


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The Crystal Desert: Summers In Antarctica



Synopsis

THE CRYSTAL DESERT: SUMMERS IN ANTARCTICA is the story of life's tenacity on the coldest of Earth's continents. It tells of the explorers who discovered Antarctica, of the whalers and sealers who despoiled it, and of the scientists who are deciphering its mysteries. In beautiful, lucid prose, David G. Campbell chronicles the desperately short summers on the Antarctic Peninsula. He presents a fascinating portrait of the evolution of life in Antarctica and also of the evolution of the continent itself.

Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: Mariner Books (May 7, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0618219218

ISBN-13: 978-0618219216

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

I picked up this book in preparation for my trip to Antarctica in 2016 to trace the route of Shackleton's legendary Endurance expedition on the hundredth anniversary of the crew's rescue from South Georgia and Elephant Island. The first few pages, with its lyrical and poetic approach to describing the strange and gorgeous environment of the Antarctic Peninsula, lulled me into thinking this would be a frozen version of Annie Dillard's PILGRIM AT TINKER CREEK, i.e., an experiential narrative offering personal reflections and wisdom derived from nature. But then I hit "the wall": pages and pages of dense scientific description of the flora and fauna. Dillard doesn't bewilder her reader in this way; she offers scientific facts only to the extent needed to draw her philosophical conclusions. I revised my expectations, realizing that this would be a book mainly of interest and comprehensible to Campbell's fellow scientists. But I decided to stick with it. Since I am obsessive about looking up any word I come across I don't know, my reading slowed to a crawl because in many places I was looking up a new word every other sentence. Keep a dictionary handy if you're

not a biologist! Some of the words weren't even in the Oxford, and I don't mean just scientific terms, but some vernacular words as well. However, I did learn a lot from this odd, difficult book. Odd, because of the idiosyncratic selection of topics. This is not a comprehensive scientific and historical survey of the Antarctic, but a compendium of the author's particular expertise and enthusiasms. Odd, too, because a lot of the extended information included in the end notes would have been better included in the text.

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