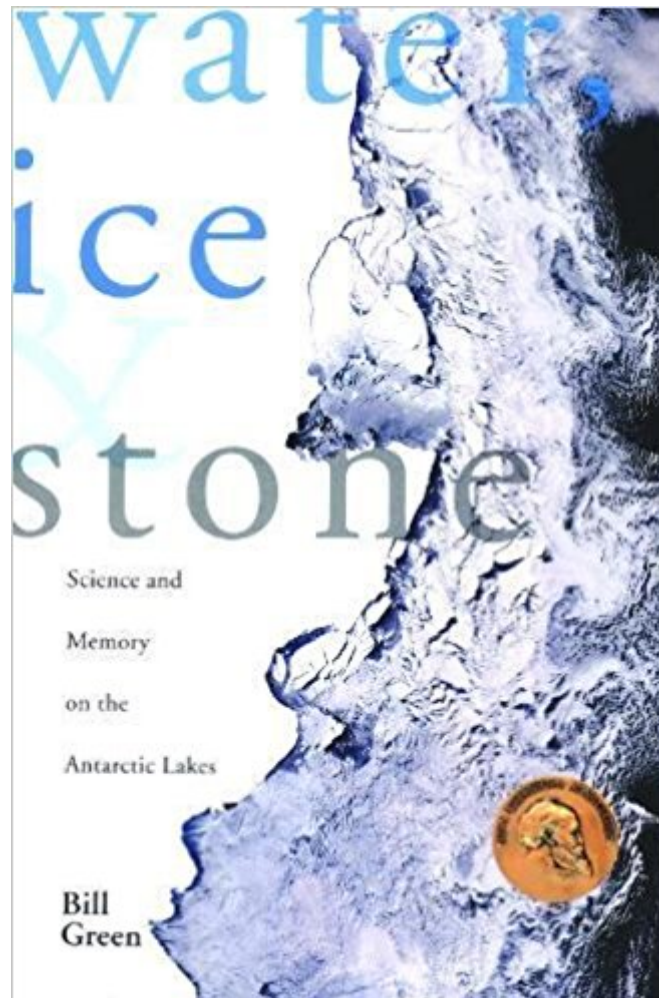




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Water, Ice & Stone: Science And Memory On The Antarctic Lakes



Synopsis

“Nature writing of a very high order . . . a joyride for those who enjoy deep explorations of logic, human frailty and the laws of nature.”
—San Francisco Chronicle
[Bill Green] prose rings with the elemental clarity of the ice he knows so well.
—PEN committee citation
A classic of contemporary nature writing, this award-winning account of Antarctica is now available for the first time in paperback. A new introduction by the author emphasizes the ecological importance of the continent within the global warming crisis. Bill Green is a professor of interdisciplinary studies at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He has been conducting research in Antarctica since 1968.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Each of the Antarctic lakes studied by geochemist Green is devoid of all but microscopic life. Nonetheless, in this "minimalist's tableau," he finds a surprising wealth of scientific insight. The same can be said of this wonderful book. Ostensibly an account of a season in the field in Antarctica, it delivers so much more by exploring the nature of science in addition to portraying the rigors of research on the frozen continent. In evocative language, Green successfully moves between arresting natural history and sophisticated but accessible philosophy of science. Particularly satisfying is the discussion of how the author, his students and his colleagues came by their fascination with, and began their search for an understanding of, the natural world. With gripping accounts of a number of near-death experiences added to the mix, the whole is a thoroughly enjoyable and remarkably informative exposition of the life of a field scientist. Copyright

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Green, a physical and geochemist, has a research interest in limnology. As the title implies, his book includes a healthy dose of science, e.g., the physics of the structure of the water molecule in all states; day-to-day methods for scientific data collection; and reminiscences of Green's life with attempts to convey awe and appreciation of the beauty of the Antarctic. The most interesting is the process of the research project itself, but the jumps in text from Antarctica to Hawaii to Ohio, past and present, are distracting. Also, there is no index to go to a particular lake's study, no bibliography to identify his numerous quotations, no map to see where he was. Campbell's Crystal Desert: Summers in Antarctica (LJ 11/1/92), also written by a scientist on the Antarctic, had better cohesiveness and flow. For extensive collections on the Antarctic or natural history. ?Jean E. Crampon, Hancock Biology & Oceanography Lib., Univ. of Southern California, Los Angeles

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I live just a few miles from Oxford, Ohio and Miami University, where Dr. Green does his work when he's not away from civilization, and have sailed or swam many times at Acton Lake, which he uses in an early chapter to introduce the science of limnology, or the study of lakes. This is a complex and ambitious book, and the result is thoroughly engrossing. It is an introduction to lake science, an adventure tale, and an account of how a scientist plans and executes his work, but these are just at the surface. It is also a personal exploration of the author's own memories and motives. Ultimately, it is a book about what moves mankind to keep learning and exploring, presented using the author as his own example. Wondering about the powerful emotional draw that Antarctica exerts on him, the author is reminded of his boyhood, when Great Lakes winter storms would transform his town's landscape with a featureless cover of snow, allowing him to explore what became, in his imagination, an unexplored land. He describes the beauty that can be found, if one will allow himself, in the terrifying nothingness of the universe, whether it be seen in the vast coldness of space or the inhuman bleakness of an ice-covered continent. Some of his colleagues found Antarctica intolerable, probably for the same reasons. He writes..."The ice seemed a reminder of the universe at large, of the universe as accident, as matter blown and strewn and expanding, 'heartless' as Melville had described it, all moon-filled and dry, hung with poisoned worlds, incinerating stars, vacuums of frozen light. Loneliness, the warm sun as memory, as myth, the blankness of white landscape, in which we see no trace of ourselves, no artifact of our genius and cunning...". Reading this, I was taken back to my own boyhood to find my love of exploration

awakened as I stood studying the cold and vastly distant stars from my back yard, and felt the fearful thrill of being sucked upward into the eternal void...

This is one of the most exquisite books ever written- do not let the subject matter deter you- I promise you'll be awed!

Water, Ice & Stone is a beautiful mix of real science and thoughtful introspection on life, water, and research. It is well worth reading.

As a classicist and poet, I am shy - if not wary - of "hard science". I stumbled upon this book by accident, browsing the non-fiction shelves in the public library. It is unique! I have ordered it - and I'm not even quite finished with it - I am reluctant to finish this first reading, although it is five-star enjoyment. *Water Ice and Stone* is a "braided river" (read it and you'll see why the phrase is in quotation marks) of a) Green's personal passion for his field and his subject that took him to the Antarctic lakes again and again; b) scientific explanations of that field that are accessible and fascinating without being either patronizing or unscholarly; c) the personal reminiscences and experiences that led to his choice of profession and to the Antarctic; d) the daily observations, colleagues and acts of living while he was there; and e) the beauty and wonder and astonishment and inspiration that this world we live in has to offer any of us who will take the time to look, to understand, to see. The book is science and it is poetry; it is wonder and it is analysis; it is a marvel. My highest accolade for books in fields that I did NOT take up is: it makes me almost wish I had become a.... *Water, Ice and Stone* left me an almost-geochemist.

This is a truly remarkable book. Green captures the excitement of scientific research in a beautiful, remote and challenging environment, in a way that is accessible to both scientists and non-scientists. He weaves together the scientific story with his own personal and family narrative. He has the mind of a scientist and the heart of a poet. The writing ranks with that of Loren Eiseley, Barry Lopez, and Terry Tempest Williams. Some technical material (periodic table, geologic time line) is included at the back, but (as a scientist) I would like to have seen a more substantial technical appendix, with chemical equations, Eh-pH stability diagrams, some profiles of metal concentrations in the Antarctic lakes, and selected references to the scientific literature (especially the author's own papers). I hope we see more books soon from this brilliant author.

I am a chemist. Few scientists can write well for general readers. Bill Green is an exception. He explains complex concepts clearly for everyone. This book is interesting for all. His writing has been described as poetry by exceptional writers. I look forward to reading his new book, Boltzmann's Tomb. I hope he continues to write for the general public. Bodie Douglas

Bill Green offers a perspective on Antarctica that is fascinating mixing his own personal philosophy, thoughts, spirit, and scientific knowledge to share a world few humans will ever witness. If you love nature and the intricacies of how the world evolves on a geophysical scale get this book. If you want an idea of one man's perspective on a snow bound land and how it has made a powerful impact on his life get this book.

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