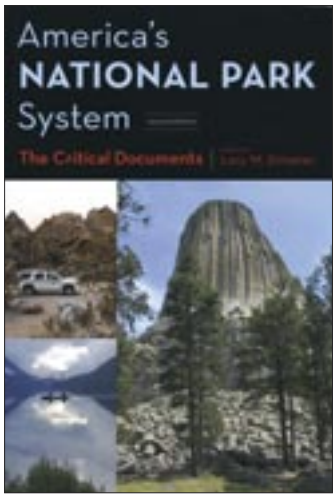
BOOKS OF INTEREST

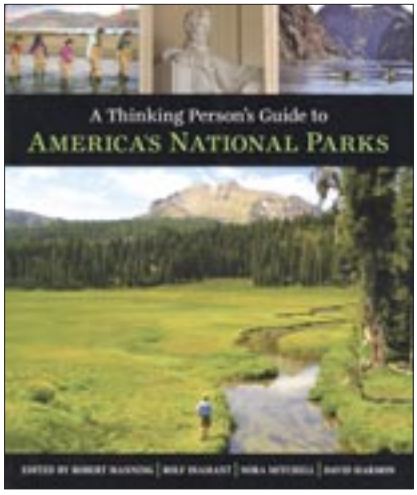
by James G. Lewis and Eben Lehman

It's rare that a documents reader is worth recommending in this column. But sometimes one comes along that will interest audiences beyond history and natural resource management students and professionals. Such is the case of Lary M. Dilsaver's second edition of ***America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*** (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). First published in 1994 and updated for the



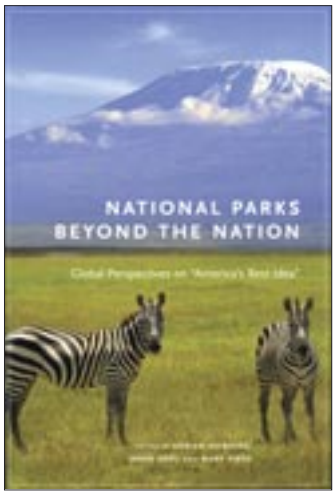
centennial, the collection is intended "to help explain this sprawling [national park] system and its complex management culture by reproducing, in their original texts, the key documents that have shaped them." To have so many hard-to-find documents presented with such lucid explanations in one place makes this an invaluable reference. Dilsaver opens the book with a succinct overview of the history of the national park system. Beginning with the Yosemite Act of 1864, the documents are arranged chronologically into eras, and the introduction to each era offers context for the documents contained within. This second edition contains nearly all the laws and reports reproduced in the first (a 1992 report discussing future needs was dropped because it is no longer relevant) and adds two new ones: a series of letters debating the decision to desegregate national parks in the South during the World War II era, and the 1976 law about mining in the national parks. It also has a new section, "Towards a Second Century, 1997–2015." Following the original appendix, which summarized lengthy documents, is a new appendix with summaries of significant court rulings and opinions. Members of Congress and officials in the executive branch would do well to read these formative documents about our cherished public lands. (JL)

An ideal book to read after browsing through the previous one is ***A Thinking Person's Guide to America's National Parks: 23 Essays on America's National Parks*** (George Braziller Publishers, 2016). Unlike the innumerable travel and tour guidebooks on individual parks and the many single-author histories of the Park Service, this book brings together ecologists, historians, naturalists, landscape architects, and other specialists who have worked for or studied the National Park Service and



the national park system to offer an engaging mix of history and personal reflection. The goal of editors Robert Manning, Rolf Diamant, Nora Mitchell, and David Harmon—all Park Service veterans and standouts in their individual fields—was to get readers to think about the "big ideas" that bind the national parks into a national park system and "broaden [their] understanding and appreciation of important issues" facing it. The tone is casual, making essays such as "Conserving Biodiversity" (by David Graber) or "Indigenous Voices" (by Melia Lane-Kamahele) accessible to the lay reader. Essays on Park Service programs and parks in urban settings and on the system's museums address topics the general public may not associate with an agency that manages iconic landscapes like the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, and Yosemite. That it is heavily illustrated with beautiful photos throughout adds to the intellectual stimulation and enjoyment. This oversized book would be as appropriate in a home of a thoughtful person who wants "to help conserve these special places" as in the dorm room of the history, environmental education, or natural resource management student. (JL)

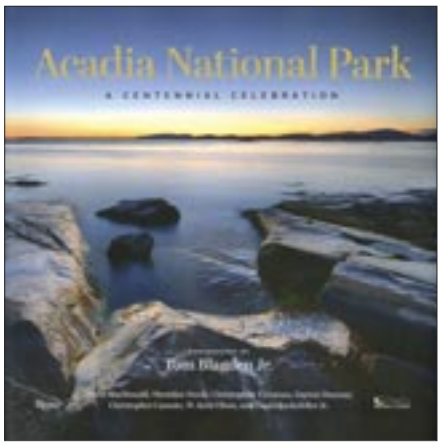
One topic of *A Thinking Person's Guide* is how America's national parks have benefited from the international exchange of personnel and ideas—in particular, the



exportation of the very idea of national parks. In ***National Parks beyond the Nation: Global Perspectives on "America's Best Idea"*** (University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), editors Adrian Howkins, Jared Orsi, and Mark Fiege of the Public Lands History Center in Fort Collins, Colorado, have assembled a collection of essays that will challenge preconceptions many readers hold about national parks, and of American exceptionalism. Wallace Stegner's exceptionalist assertion—that the national parks are

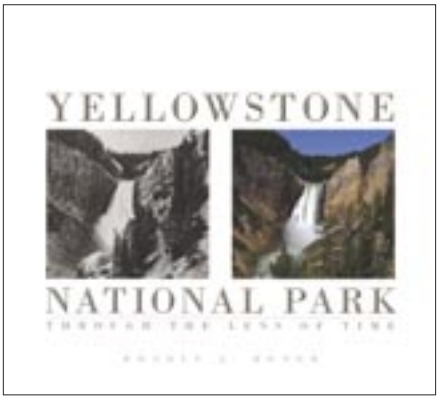
America's best idea—is the jumping-off point for fifteen scholars and writers to look at the international history of national parks. Some essays compare the experience of contiguous countries, like Canada and the United States ("Canada's Best Idea? The Canadian and American National Park Services in the 1910s," by Alan MacEachern; and Karen Routledge's "'100 Dangerous Animals Roaming Loose': Grizzly Bear Management in Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, 1932–2000"), or consider shared issues, like climate change ("The Trouble with Climate Change and National Parks," by Mark Carey, reprinted elsewhere in this issue) or outdoor sports and indigenous religious sites ("Conquering Sacred Ground? Climbing Uluru and Devils Tower," by Ann McGrath). Others focus on the parks in one country (Brazil, New Zealand, and Indonesia) or regions ("Nature Conservation in Africa's Great Rift Valley: A Study in Culture and History," by Chris Conte), or compare parks on two continents ("'Why Celebrate a Controversy?': South Africa, the United States, and National Parks," by Jane Carruthers; and "Conservation on Tour: Comparing Nations, Scientists, and Parks in the Americas," by Emily Wakild). But defining parks geographically this way is misleading. The essays address policies, the role of science and scientists in managing national parks, human relationships with landscapes, and several other topics that are common to all parks. (JL)

The year 2016 was the centenary of not just the nation's Park Service but also Maine's first national park. ***Acadia National Park: A Centennial Celebration*** (Friends of Acadia in association with Rizzoli New York, 2016) opens with short essays on the park's history by historian Dayton Duncan



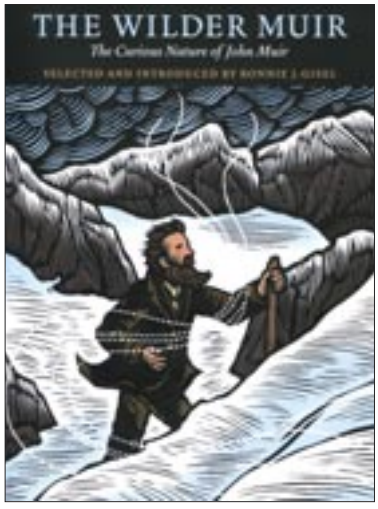
and philanthropist David Rockefeller, among others with close connections to the park. But it is Tom Blagden Jr.'s 150 stunning color photographs of the park today, laid out in this oversized coffee-table book, which exhausted my entire store of superlatives. Some reminded me of Monet landscapes; others belong in art galleries or had me wanting to cut them from the book and display them on my walls. His images of animals—an eagle in flight, a fox staring into the camera lens—are equally impressive. The sumptuous photos, some spread over two pages, draw the reader in and create such a desire to see Acadia in person that one can only agree with essayist Christopher Camuto when he says, "What a gift, to see it brought to life in these pages." (JL)

The same can be said of Bradley J. Boner's ***Yellowstone National Park: Through the Lens of Time*** (University of Colorado Press, 2016). After compiling a complete set of William Henry Jackson's 1871 photographs of the Yellowstone region, taken as part of Ferdinand Hayden's U.S. Geological Survey expedition, Boner traveled through Yellowstone during the summers of 2011 through 2014 to take photographs



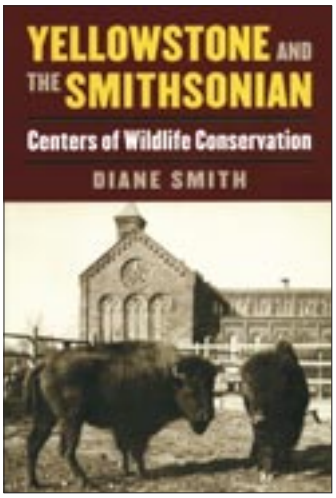
from the exact same points. Jackson, along with landscape painter Thomas Moran, provided the visual documentation of the "mythical wonderland" to accompany the findings of the first scientific expedition to the region. His photos, which verified trappers' and explorers' tales of geysers and bubbling mud, are credited with helping persuade Congress to set aside Yellowstone as the first national park. Boner opens the book with brief chapters on the history of Yellowstone explorations and the three other photographers who visited Yellowstone in 1871, one of whom collaborated with Jackson for part of the trip. He also explains the complicated wet-collodian process Jackson used for taking photographs: transporting and setting up a fragile yet bulky camera, spreading several chemical preparations onto eight-by-ten-inch glass-plate negatives, then preparing, exposing, and developing each plate in situ in a portable dark room. Jackson could produce just one usable image every twenty minutes. Boner had it much easier as a photographer but faced the challenge of identifying where Jackson had stood when taking the photographs. Since Jackson had not kept a diary of the trip, Boner turned to the diaries and journals of others on the Hayden survey or resorted to using visual clues in the original photographs. The result is a satisfying, intriguing side-by-side comparison of photos taken about 140 years apart, showing the changes—or lack of—throughout Yellowstone. Each photo pairing includes captions or descriptions by both photographers; Boner sometimes explains the challenges they faced when getting the photograph or elaborates on the differences readers should look for. (JL)

Another popular topic during the 2016 centennial was naturalist John Muir. His writings have been published in numerous collected volumes, so anyone venturing into this well-trod territory must find a fresh angle. Environmental historian Bonnie J. Gisel, who has published extensively on Muir's botanical legacy and edited a volume of correspondence between Muir and his friend and mentor Jeanne C. Carr, takes the tack of drawing from published and unpublished materials. The twenty-three "tales of Muir's wild and curious wanderings" gathered in ***The Wilder Muir: The Curious Nature of John Muir*** (Yosemite Conservancy, 2017) are selected



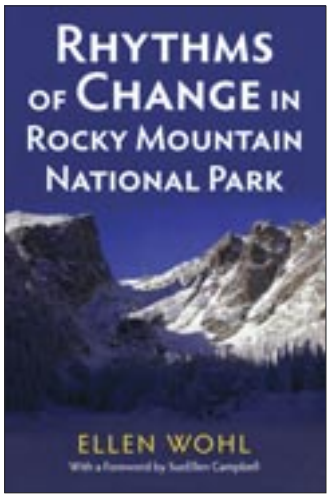
from letters, journals, articles, and books and presented in chronological order. Each "tale," introduced with a few paragraphs of context that together provide a basic biography of this multifaceted man, has a theme. Gisel begins with "Calypso Borealis." Appearing in 1864, it was Muir's first published piece on nature, celebrating what he considered "the rarest and most beautiful plant," *Calypso borealis*, the fairy slipper orchid (Gisel mistakenly says it is known as "the lady slipper orchid," which is a different genus). She ends with his 1911 journal entries written while he searched for the monkey puzzle tree, a rare species native to the Andes. Accompanied by original black-and-white engravings by Fiona King and totaling less than two hundred pages, the book is a portable reader and great introduction for those unfamiliar with Muir's life and writings. (JL)

When the National Park Service was established in 1916, Yellowstone—the nation's first park—was already forty-four years old. The early decades of Yellowstone are the subject of Diane Smith's ***Yellowstone and the Smithsonian: Centers of Wildlife Conservation*** (University Press of Kansas, 2017). Smith focuses on the treatment of and attitudes toward wildlife in the park during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Yellowstone's early years, the park served as a national source for zoo animals and museum displays. The book delves into the importance of Yellowstone to the Smithsonian Institution and explains



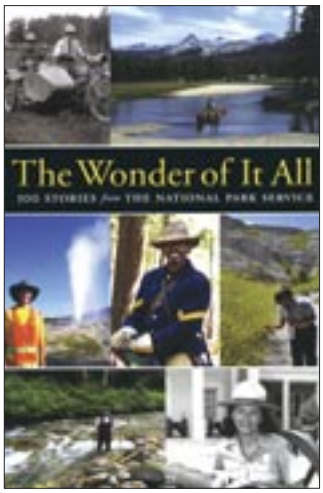
how the Smithsonian came to rely on the park for its animal specimens. Exhibits of preserved large mammals mounted by the Smithsonian for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia proved immensely popular and provided a template for further exhibition work. The Smithsonian began regularly exhibiting large taxidermies of Yellowstone animals, which served to showcase the American conquest of the western frontier. This soon evolved into the display of living animals, including bison, behind the Smithsonian Institution building in Washington, D.C., during the late 1880s. After the establishment of the National Zoo in 1890, Yellowstone remained a source for the animals the American public clamored to see. The U.S. Cavalry, which replaced the corrupt civilian administration in 1886 overseeing Yellowstone Park, filled requests by the Smithsonian and zoos for living and dead wildlife specimens. Smith recounts the developments in systems of trapping, displaying, and shipping wildlife across the country, as well as emerging conflicts between science and conservation as the park became a primary source for museum and zoo animals. The book provides insight into how two American institutions worked to educate the public while also conserving American wildlife for future generations. In addition, Smith's work reveals how Americans understood and interpreted the American West during this era through a culture of both living and dead animal displays. (EL)

Rhythms of Change in Rocky Mountain National Park (University Press of Kansas, 2016), by Ellen Wohl, might have been subtitled "A Year in the Geologic Life of One of America's Great Parks." Wohl, a



professor of geology at Colorado State University who has long focused her research on the nearby park, dedicated a year to studying the effects of people "using this ecosystem over the past two centuries." Following nature's rhythms, she organizes the book by the calendar and discusses what typically happens during each month—snowfall or snowmelt, the ebb and flow of tourists into the park—and what she has observed. She also incorporates a geologist's temporal scale to address what has changed over thousands of years. Doing so allows her to address the consequences of human activity, including historical mining, logging, ranching, tourism, and the removal of predators, along with contemporary effects from fire management, air pollution, and climate change on the park's ecosystems. To Wohl, at least two themes emerge from these observations. The first "is the fundamental unevenness of change." A not-unusual three-day rain event in September 2013 unexpectedly, for the first time in decades, loosened thousands of cubic yards of sediment that slid into valley bottoms; nevertheless, geologic processes have barely altered the region's topography since the last ice age. The second theme is the importance of the unseen. Diverting water through an underground tunnel and introducing exotic fish species, to name two examples, may have important consequences for freshwater ecosystems, and the nitrogen composition of the soil, which is changing for several reasons, is affecting plants and animals. Writing in the first person, the author takes the reader along on a cautionary scientific journey. When it comes to climate change and the role of humans, what is happening in this national park is happening all around the world. (JL)

One essential yet sometimes overlooked aspect of America's national parks is the importance of the rangers and other employees who work the parklands every day. These men and women protect the parks and introduce the visiting public to some of our most precious landscapes. ***The Wonder of It All: 100 Stories from the National Park Service*** (Yosemite Conservancy, 2016) gathers the recollections of rangers, naturalists, and many others about their work and experiences in parks throughout the nation. In the book's preface, Jonathan B. Jarvis, then the director of the National Park Service, states that "employees and our many park friends are, at our core, storytellers through place. I have said many times that we must speak for three entities that have no voice: the people of the past, the children of the future, and nature itself." The one hundred

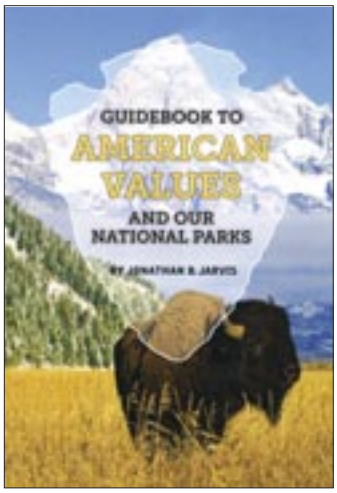


personal stories collected in this book do just that. Each story is connected to a place within the park system, revealing experiences from the past, connections to the natural landscape, and the importance of parks for future generations. The stories range from the dramatic to the powerful to the mundane. Accounts of daring rescues and near-death experiences stand alongside stories of teaching lessons to children or the simple appreciation for daily views. Together, they all beautifully illustrate the storytellers' love for the job as well as their love for the special places where they spend each workday. These engaging stories inspire the reader to visit these memorable places and to witness first-hand the important work done by those protecting and welcoming visitors to America's most cherished public lands. (EL)

Memoirs by former Park Service rangers can be equally engaging but sometimes not so laudatory. A ranger may love the job, be highly respected, but become disillusioned with the bureaucrats who run the agency. This is what happened to Robert M. Danno, a chief ranger in three major western parks who saw his career and reputation destroyed in a matter of weeks for simply doing his job. In his self-published book, ***Worth Fighting For: A Park Ranger's Unexpected Battle against Federal Bureaucrats & Washington Redskins Owner Daniel Snyder*** (Honor Code Publishing, 2012), Danno chronicles how his own highly decorated career in law enforcement met with ruination when he cited Daniel Snyder, the powerful owner of a professional football team, for illegally cutting down 130 protected trees in the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historic Park to improve his view of the

Potomac River. Instead of resulting in justice, blowing the whistle revealed corruption throughout the agency and consequently brought condemnation for Danno; the action the Park Service took was not to support Danno but to attack him and drive him from his job. Criminal charges were brought against him, not Snyder or the Park Service officials involved in the cover-up. The first half of the book traces Danno's exciting and admirable twenty-year career working in Yellowstone, Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, and other parks, where he also did search-and-rescue and wildland firefighting in addition to his law enforcement job, before turning to the real subject of the book—a cautionary tale of what can happen when a federal employee blows the whistle. A coda to the story: a year after the book came out in 2012, after eight years of reprisals, Danno won a settlement against the Park Service and was transferred to the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center in Missoula, Montana. (JL)

The 1970 National Park General Authorities Act observed that the National Park Service had "grown to include superlative natural, historic, and recreation areas in every major region of the United States… united through their interrelated purposes and resources into one national park system as cumulative expressions of a single national heritage." The direct links between our national heritage and the variety of sites in the national park system are shared in ***Guidebook to American Values and Our National Parks*** (Eastern National, 2015), by Jonathan B. Jarvis. Written while he was serving as the eighteenth director of the National Park Service, the book ponders what national parks have to offer



Americans. In his introduction, Jarvis poses the question, "Where can someone go to find and bear witness to a host of American values in action and feel the sense of place where that value is most powerfully established and displayed?" The answer, of course, is in the national parks. Jarvis takes up familiar American values—bravery, creativity, justice, immigration, respect, honesty, exploration—and connects each to sites in the park system. The value of adventure, for instance, is connected with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail; charity is a value highlighted at the Clara Barton National Historic Site in Maryland; civil rights are honored by showcasing the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, the Selma to Montgomery National Historic trail, and other sites; and inspiration is exemplified by the Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota and Yosemite National Park in California. In addition to being a good overview of many national parks, the book is also a unique way to honor the centennial of the national park system. Connecting the park system to the foundational American values is the perfect testament to these protected sites that express what it means to be an American. (EL) □

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