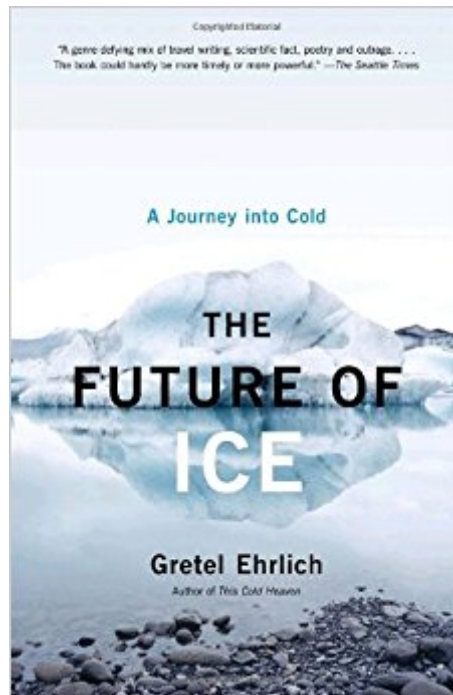




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The Future Of Ice: A Journey Into Cold



Synopsis

This book was written out of Gretel Ehrlich's love for winter for remote and cold places, for the ways winter frees our imagination and invigorates our feet, mind, and soul and also out of the fear that our "democracy of gratification" has irreparably altered the climate. Over the course of a year, Ehrlich experiences firsthand the myriad expressions of cold, giving us marvelous histories of wind, water, snow, and ice, of ocean currents and weather cycles. From Tierra del Fuego in the south to Spitsbergen, east of Greenland, at the very top of the world, she explores how our very consciousness is animated and enlivened by the archaic rhythms and erupting oscillations of weather. We share Ehrlich's experience of the thrills of cold, but also her questions: What will happen to us if we are "deseasoned"? If winter ends, will we survive?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this lyrical meditation on deep cold and its potential demise through global warming, Ehrlich (*The Solace of Open Spaces*; *This Cold Heaven*) backpacks among the glaciers of the southern Andes, winters in a Wyoming cabin and sails with the research ship *Noorderlicht* to the Greenland ice pack. Her prose is as sharply observed as poetry and nearly as compressed, and her narrative favors short scenes as fragmented as the breaking ice sheets she encounters. Though it occasionally dips into underpowered assertion ("We're spoiled because we've been living in an interglacial paradise for twenty thousand years"), it often soars to the sublime ("We are made of weather and our thoughts stream from the braid work of stillness and storms"). Ehrlich includes plenty of facts (the

area covered by glaciers has diminished by 75% since 1850; increased meltwater from Greenland may actually make Europe colder), but her book is less about science than about sensation: loneliness and the relentless circling of the snowed-in mind; the rumbling of a glacier as its azure ice crumbles away; the whistling, ululating calls of the bearded seal. It does not lay out the workings of global warming nor attempt to provide blueprints for how to rescue what we are losing. It stands, instead, as a passionate elegy to what is melting away. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Will winter cease to exist? With no end to heat-increasing pollution, the season of restorative cold may well be imperiled, and veteran nature writer Ehrlich wonders if "the end of winter might be the end of life." After chronicling her remarkable sojourns in Greenland in *This Cold Heaven* (2001), she now reports on equally astonishing treks at either end of the earth, where the great polar ice caps reflect the sun's heat back into the sky; where penguins, polar bears, and seals are utterly dependent on deep cold; and where pollutants amass in toxic concentrations. Ehrlich testifies poetically and expertly to the bracing glory and ecological significance of winter as she recounts her demanding cold-weather experiences in Montana, among glaciers in Chile, and in the Arctic. Her involving account is richly veined with personal disclosures, philosophical revelations, and lucid explanations of the dire consequences of a warming earth. By absorbing so intensely the beauty and function of dramatic places essential to the ecosphere, Ehrlich, like Barry Lopez and Peter Matthiessen, brings into focus a crucial environmental issue and, hopefully, provides more impetus to the effort to confront global warming. Donna Seaman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Gretel Ehrlich channels the voice of the ground she stands on.... whether it be Montana clay or just frozen water. A poet, a naturalist, a linguistic shaman for all that is melting around us... she is the echo of the voice of the earth.

When I pick up a book that allows me to live vicariously through the author, I never forget it. This was the case with *Solace of Open Places* and now, years later, with *The Future of Ice*. A poet bear's witness to the conditions that make up this world; the conditions that manifest both the almost unbearable suffering of this planet and all of the living things on it--and, at the same time and never separate--the overwhelming joy of being alive. A beautifully descriptive book of the heart.

Excellent book about cold places, global warming, life and solitude. another great book for Gretel. this is another keeper for my library. I loved it.

I sought this book because I myself play in winter and around ice and love the cold as it defines seasons. I am an environmental advocate in my job and hobbies. I also am an admirer of the destinations and distances Ehrlich seems willing to travel. While I appreciate the imagery and Ehrlich's personalized - yet detached - account of her experiences throughout this book, I didn't find myself empathizing with most of her ideas and principles. The strong impression this book left on me was of a bag of personal troubles couched as a concern for climate change. I don't know if she was numbed by her feeling of helplessness, against what she perceived in the world of ice (or if she was just cold) but her stream-of-consciousness verse-prose cascade toward no solutions was alienating and disheartening. I didn't want a feel good story from this book, but I think I had hoped for a sense of stepping toward reconciliation and trouble-shooting, however philosophical.

As one of the Arctic scientists in this book readily admits, it is a bit hard to combine all the diverse facts on global warming into a coherent theory. Like Voltaire, this book seems to contain a lot of diverse information in a relatively short space: it is clearly liberal in its political focus, with a number of disparaging comments about the extent of capitalistic exploitation of the environment, but hopeful that man can change his ways. But most of all, it is eclectic in all of its numerous quotes about cold from numerous cultures including Western, Far Eastern, and numerous pagan cultures. They seem to dominate her long essay and sometimes seem to distract from it. I particularly enjoyed her references to Zen Buddhism. She also offers some anecdotal scientific comments on modern astronomy, as she did in her previous book "This Cold Heaven" about Greenland; her comments on glacial history are a bit weaker. In this book and the former one, she shows a strong familiarity with extremes of cold and snow which most of us lack. She manages to keep her focus on cold climates and the nature of ice throughout, and uses this one climate as the strongest evidence for the reality of global warming. Later I saw the movie "The Day After Tomorrow" which helped my understanding of this book. "Future Of Ice" is also a travel book: it is divided into 3 main parts and several smaller sections: the first is a backpacking trip she took with a friend to view the (shrinking) glaciers of Patagonia at South America's tip; the second is about several winters spent with friends in her adopted state of Wyoming, including a highly naturalistic canoe trip she took down a river in the middle of winter, and her reflections on cabin living; the third is a trip to the Russian Arctic or

Barents Sea she took with a variety of research comrades including artists, scientists, and filmmakers and in which she comments on polar bears, walruses, the bearded seal, and various birds nesting areas, pollution; other scientists from the Arctic also offer their own conclusions on global warming. She also reflects philosophically on the human and her own condition--on the nature of love and of being alone, for example. All of these diverse commentaries plus her unwavering focus on cold climates make this remarkable little book both loosely knit and "tight" simultaneously. Somewhat coincidentally she claims to have opposed the Iraq War. The book is not strictly speaking scientific, more meditational, though she does offer quite a bit of scientific evidence.

After all the hype on the dustjacket I found this book a slight disappointment. I enjoyed the author's many insightful observations about natural history, but I agree with a couple of other writers here that the writing style was a bit of a turn-off. It vibrates with a melancholy nostalgia for a moribund planet, something I can sympathize with, but 200 pages of it gets to be a bit too much. Some of the claims on what will happen are just speculation (such as the ice vanishing in 50 years and a million species disappearing, which someone else also commented on), and although I agree that global warming is taking place, I prefer books with more scientific underpinning and less, shall we say, rhetorical and artistic license. Sadly, this sort of science writing seems harder and harder to find nowadays, compared to past decades (the writings of the great Martin Gardner, and also David Bergamini, Arthur C. Clarke, John McPhee, Carl Sagan, Lincoln Barnett, Arthur Koestler, George Gamov, John L. Casti, William W. Warner, Arthur Beiser, Lancelot Hogben, Paul de Kruif, etc., come to mind). Still, if you can get past all the environmental angst you'll learn something, and the author does have a sharp eye for observation and detail.

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