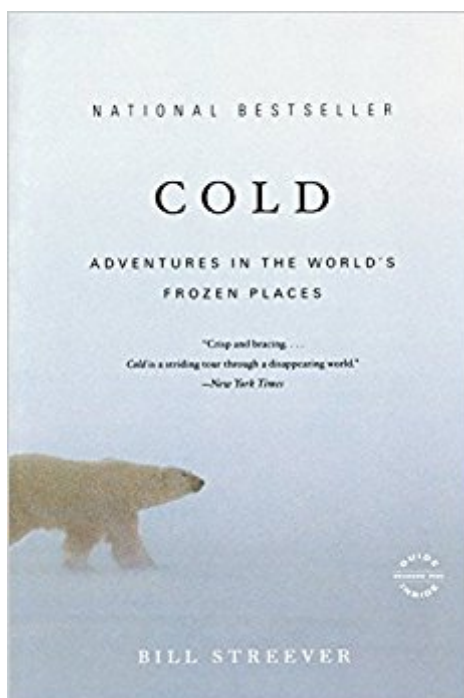


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Cold: Adventures In The World's Frozen Places



Synopsis

From avalanches to glaciers, from seals to snowflakes, and from Shackleton's expedition to "The Year Without Summer," Bill Streever journeys through history, myth, geography, and ecology in a year-long search for cold--real, icy, 40-below cold. In July he finds it while taking a dip in a 35-degree Arctic swimming hole; in September while excavating our planet's ancient and not so ancient ice ages; and in October while exploring hibernation habits in animals, from humans to wood frogs to bears. A scientist whose passion for cold runs red hot, Streever is a wondrous guide: he conjures woolly mammoth carcasses and the ice-age Clovis tribe from melting glaciers, and he evokes blizzards so wild readers may freeze--limb by vicarious limb.

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Customer Reviews

Cold weather systems the earth needs to thrive is the subject of Streever's well-documented book, using all of the author's expertise from his field trips to the world's most frigid environments. Streever, who chairs the North Slope Science Initiative's Science Technical Advisory Panel, writes of the frostiest experience: We fail to see cold for what it is: the absence of heat, the slowing of molecular motion, a sensation, a perception, a driving force. Rather than giving the reader a dry, academic lecture on snow, glaciers, wind-chill factors and icebergs, he delivers a poetic, anecdotal narrative complete with polar expeditions, Ice Age mysteries, igloos, permafrost and hailstorms. Two of the most fascinating segments are the arduous task of scientific reconstruction of past climates and the magical navigation of migratory birds to warmer lands. This is a wonderful collection of one man's first-rate observations and commentary about the history and importance of

cold to the earth and its occupants. (July) 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.

Cold, filled with obscure facts and fascinating anecdotes, is both entertaining and enlightening, and Streever's crisp, articulate writing style and easy-to-understand scientific explanations yield a compulsively readable book. However, Streever's loosely organized chapters and stream-of-consciousness, bloglike narrative keep him from dwelling for long on any single topic, and the Dallas Morning News took issue with his single-minded focus on the northern hemisphere. Some critics also objected to his views on climate change, but these complaints stemmed from differences of opinion. Streever's breezy, captivating romp through the frozen North reminds readers "that cold shapes continents, wins and loses wars, fuels madmen, inspires Nobel Prize-winning work, challenges us, curses us and blesses us" (Cleveland Plain Dealer). --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Streever is a very informative writer without being bookish. I learned a lot of things about cold temperatures, hypothermia, chill blains, frost bite, frost nip, absolute zero, the Bose-Einstein condensate, hibernation, the raw power of cold temperatures, the state of Alaska, the ALCan Highway etc. etc. etc. A really amazing and awesome book that was educational without being boring! It kept my complete attention all the while I was reading it. I even made notes based on the information from the book. To my delight, all the information panned out when I cross referenced it on BING and GOOGLE. I bought Streever's book on "HEAT", which is next on my reading list. I've read his book on wind, "AND SOON I HEARD A ROARING WIND".

Today is October 20, and it was 60 degrees in SW Wisconsin..... Well, that's MY story. In Bill Streever's book, he opens each chapter with a certain location, usually where he is at the time, and tells what the current temperature is at that location. I really loved this book! I like to read fiction, histories, and non-fiction. I like a healthy mixture of those genres, and with "Cold" I got a great dose of reality and also some hilarity. Streever not only tells us about the world's coldest places; he also delves into geology, biology, history, and anthropology, showing us how each of these sciences relates to cold temperatures. His writing style is informative, fluid, sometimes lyrical and sometimes tongue-in-cheek. For example, when discussing the damselfish and the effects of temperatures on enzymes he says, "..... It is not so much an issue of cold taking a single enzyme out of

commission as one of cold disturbing the synchronous behavior of an orchestra of enzymes, leaving one playing too slowly, another too fast, and another barely playing at all, and in the end reducing the symphony of metabolism to the cacophony of malaise and death."When discussing Joseph Fourier, a learned Frenchman during the early 1800s, who knew a great deal about the chemistry and behavior of cold, he said, "Fourier harbored a strong aversion to cold. He believed that wrapping up in blankets would improve his health. In 1830, wrapped in blankets, he tripped down a flight of steps. The fall killed him." There were many other "deadpan" observations such as this. When discussing different ways in which people learned how to keep warm, he discussed angora rabbits, sheep's wool, and cotton. But he not only tells us how and when people started using these fibers, he also adds wonderful tidbits about when the people in India first started using the spinning wheel, how wool is actually turned into a thread of yarn, and WHY certain fabrics are better insulators than others. Between the covers of this book we learn about permafrost, woolly mammoths, polar expeditions, inventors, the Ice Man found in the Alps in 1991, the terrible US blizzard in the 1800's, often called the School Children's Blizzard because of the many young children killed by it, how certain creatures withstand the cold and how others succumb, plus much, much more. The scope of this book is amazing! I could not even begin to list the varied and interesting topics he covered on a world-wide basis. While reading it, I often wondered how this author's mind worked. Including so many different subjects on so many different continents! Surely, he must keep notes or reminders to himself every time he hears of or learns something interesting, then researches it and adds it to his book notes. I am not a scientist. I am a retired history and Spanish teacher, so I really have no technical training in sciences, but I found this book very appealing and interesting. It was not written in a way that only scientists would understand. It was written in a way to appeal to the masses, although it was backed by solid science. My only irritation, and it was minor, was bringing Al Gore and man-made global warming into the story, albeit briefly. I keep reading conflicting reports about the polar ice caps. They are shrinking or they are expanding. It all depends on which report or satellite photograph you see, I suppose. As far as man causing global warming, or the fact that the earth constantly goes through climate change, is, I imagine, going to be contested for years to come. The author is entitled to his opinion and if he worships at the altar of Al Gore and I don't, I can get over it. As I said, Al Gore was only very briefly mentioned, and the book was so good that I was able to easily get over my grumpiness about it. Such an interesting and well-written book! I will be reading his next one, "Heat: Adventures in the World's Fiery Places" very soon!

This book is a refreshing blast of cold air. For someone who is familiar with much of both Arctic and Antarctic issues, I was impressed with obtaining more information on both supra and subnivean topics. Weather, climate, animal migration and winter habits, permafrost and various other sundry topics polar and non-polar are touched upon. Global warming was also addressed in a non-threatening circuitous way as well as exploration past and present with some references to the giants of polar history and their work within the deep, cold, interiors. Particularly interesting was the discussion of the conquest of cold which is the title of another wonderful book by the same name written by Tom Shachtman back in 1999 which I read and is referred to by Mr. Streever several times and should be read after this one if your interest grows deeper. Cold is well written by a scientist over the course of a year's time with globe-trotting observations but always returning to his home state of Alaska in what appears to be a sort of grounding for him. The book itself imparts lots of facts and factoids that can only help not hinder one who studies the frigidly wonderful topic of cold. For those in the know this ground may have already been covered by you and some may find it lacking or just National Geographicalish in its approach. But sometimes old dogs can learn new tricks and books like this can generate new areas of inquiry and reference as it did for me. It helps keep it fresh to read new things even at the risk of going over old material. It is recommended as a good primer for the novice to further one's appreciation of the ice and its expansive history as well as the problems it can cause and may give you a better admiration of your refrigerator or air conditioner for without those people who did the work, those individuals in history who said, "Gee whiz, it's hot in here, my food is rotting and I'm sweating like a pig, what can I do about that"? Now you can erect an altar to the men who fixed that for you right in your own freezer. Be that as it may, I found it very enjoyable and breezed through it quite fast. It is written as if you were talking to a real lonely, arctic scientist who doesn't get out much and is both extremely happy and excited to find a willing, captive, listener as topics tend to pop up and drift into another rather fast but you'll be able to follow his bent. So button up with confidence with some useful information on insulating fabrics, ours and the Eskimo's. The mechanisms of frostbite or how the Bose-Einstein condensate, atoms that form at absolute zero, about 460 degrees F. may someday change the world. Read and learn about this fascinating corner of science and warm up to the concept of cold. A cup of hot cocoa may be in order. Enjoy the summer while you can, an ice age may be coming soon and just think, if it does, you'll be ready for it.

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