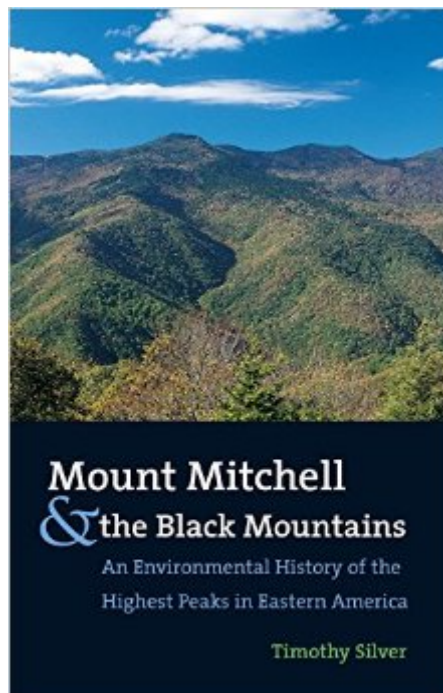


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Mount Mitchell And The Black Mountains: An Environmental History Of The Highest Peaks In Eastern America



Synopsis

Each year, thousands of tourists visit Mount Mitchell, the most prominent feature of North Carolina's Black Mountain range and the highest peak in the eastern United States. From Native Americans and early explorers to land speculators and conservationists, people have long been drawn to this rugged region. Timothy Silver explores the long and complicated history of the Black Mountains, drawing on both the historical record and his experience as a backpacker and fly fisherman. He chronicles the geological and environmental forces that created this intriguing landscape, then traces its history of environmental change and human intervention from the days of Indian-European contact to today. Among the many tales Silver recounts is that of Elisha Mitchell, the renowned geologist and University of North Carolina professor for whom Mount Mitchell is named, who fell to his death there in 1857. But nature's stories--of forest fires, chestnut blight, competition among plants and animals, insect invasions, and, most recently, airborne toxins and acid rain--are also part of Silver's narrative, making it the first history of the Appalachians in which the natural world gets equal time with human history. It is only by understanding the dynamic between these two forces, Silver says, that we can begin to protect the Black Mountains for future generations.

Book Information

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: The University of North Carolina Press; 1st New edition edition (March 3, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0807854239

ISBN-13: 978-0807854235

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 0.8 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (7 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #516,703 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #89 inÂ Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Mountains #155 inÂ Books > Travel > Specialty Travel > Travel with Pets #267 inÂ Books > Sports & Outdoors > Nature Travel > Ecotourism

Customer Reviews

In *Mount Mitchell & the Black Mountains: An Environmental History of the Highest Peaks in Eastern America*, Timothy Silver presents the story of the Black Mountain region of North Carolina from the time of its origins a billion years ago to the present. Mostly, *Mount Mitchell* documents the history of the Black Mountains since the arrival of Europeans and Anglo-Americans in the sixteenth century.

Silver's history of this single mountain range is unique in that it blends a few historical approaches (regional studies, community studies) into one tour de force. It is also different from many histories in that it emphasizes equally the role played by people and nature in shaping events in a specific region. Silver is adamant that "neither people nor mountain ranges exist in isolation" (xv). Additionally, in his view, human behavior within the mountain region was largely dictated by people's views of the natural world and their own place within it. The Black Mountains, as the highest peaks situated within the oldest mountain range in North America, makes for a worthy topic of study. Silver's choice of the region is also based on more personal reasons: it is the location of his genealogy and some of his earliest childhood memories. Ultimately, he hopes to use environmental history to reveal something new about Appalachian studies; he believes the study of one region reveals truths about a larger world. Mount Mitchell is a chronological tale, beginning with the mountains' geological beginnings and dating back billions of years. Silver uses the first part of the book to establish the mountains, or rather, nature as a powerful, dynamic, ever-changing force.

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