



# You Need To Know This

This is key to your knowledge toolkit.

Old or new, these are MUST READ (or must watch) pieces of media. Books, video, radio and other media featured here are items we consider essential to your knowledge about our forests, our environment, and the humans who influence each of them. Stay informed about the environment. And tell us about "Must Knows" you find.

## ***Living on Wilderness Time: 200 Days Alone in America's Wild Places***

by Melissa Walker  
University of Virginia Press, 2002, 304 pages

*Review by Peg Griffith: Board Member*

At age 51, with an established career as a university English professor, Melissa Walker was ready for a new challenge. She had published a textbook. She had written a book about Black female authors of the Civil Rights era. Yet increasingly she found herself drawn to the topic of wilderness. She edited a book of essays for the Wilderness Society ("*Reading the Environment*") and served on the National Board of Directors of the Wilderness Society. She was the President of the Southeast chapter of the Wilderness Society. Now she wanted to experience the wilderness for herself, by herself. *Living on Wilderness Time* is the story of what she discovered on three extended trips over a fifteen month period. She traveled to Yosemite, Rocky Mountain National Park, Yellowstone, Grand Teton National Parks, the Grand Canyon, the Smoky Mountains, Glacier National Park, Bryce Canyon, Zion National Park, Mount Hood, Mount Baker, Cloud Peak, Gila Wilderness, throughout Alaska and parts of Canada, Florida, Georgia and others.

In Wilderness her life slowed down to match the pace of nature, and natural silence made room for introspection. Walker begins to interweave her reflection on the natural world with reflections of her life as a woman who is also a wife, mother, and career woman. She reflects: "*It was in the wilderness that I began to understand that efforts to influence the behavior of people I know were as futile as trying to change the habits of animals in the wild...as day after day I confronted the hidden structures that bind life to life. Each part of nature is directly or indirectly connected to every other part of the natural world. Humans are no exception.*" One does not "manage" a spouse or children any more than one manages nature. Who knew? Who knows indeed, unless one slows down enough to get quiet, create some space, and listen. Two hundred days in the wilderness gave her the time to reflect on these things. When she returned home, she gave away most of her clothes, stopped waiting for her husband to come home from his work at the hospital, and began living her life her way, on her terms.

There are other glimpses into the author's life. One gets the feeling that Walker has a visceral respect for bears. The book includes numerous amusing anecdotes regarding bears, and when in Alaska and invited to go Grizzly watching, she reflects: "*Humans should not intrude on bears. We should leave wild-life alone.*" She laughs at herself, just a little, at times like this.

*Living on Wilderness Time* is a tribute to the last wild places in North America. Walker makes the case for preserving them, not just because they are beautiful; not just because they are home to the wild creatures she encountered (bear, elk, alligator, hawks, eagles, snakes and more.) She praises the silence, the blue skies, the rushing streams, the cold mornings. These things, she tells us, are worth saving, because we need them: as human animals, we need to feel connected to the Earth and the other animals. *Living on Wilderness Time* is a beautiful, thoughtful book, written with an abiding love for the wild outdoors and with the intention that others might make the time to experience what these places have to impart.

Sound interesting? Get the book from Amazon.com with [this link](#).

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