

Yellowstone's rebirth by fire

THROUGH INTERPRETIVE PROSE AND LAVISH PHOTOGRAPHS, *Yellowstone's rebirth by fire: Rising from the ashes of the 1988 wildfires* revisits the “awesome and bewildering summer that compelled people to look at the element of fire in a new way” (Reinhart 2008, p. 12). The book reveals the “burning legacy” of Yellowstone through chapters on the history of fire in the park, the meteorological and political climate of summer 1988, a timeline of the “biggest days” of that year’s fire season, personal stories of people who experienced the fires, and an inspirational conclusion that rekindles old memories and inspires new confidence in a changing landscape. In the book, Research Ecologist Don Despain says, “the amount and breadth of . . . research was the most important outcome of the 1988 Yellowstone fires” (p. 88). Although the author certainly recognizes the significance of the opportunity for research, the book, unfortunately, does not live up to the expectations touted in the promotional materials—“exploring the science behind the burning questions of 1988.” Scientists flocked to Yellowstone National Park to study fire during this rare opportunity of such large proportions; they conducted more than 250 scientific investigations of fire and its effects. Although the scientific counterpoints made in the “Myths and Science: Toward a New Yellowstone” chapter demystify many 1988 predictions and assumptions, perhaps Reinhart’s next book will truly explore and probe the science of “rebirth by fire” by also relating these scientific and scientists’ stories.

Reference

Reinhart, K. W. 2008. *Yellowstone's rebirth by fire: Rising from the ashes of the 1988 wildfires*. Farcountry Press, Helena, Montana, USA.

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