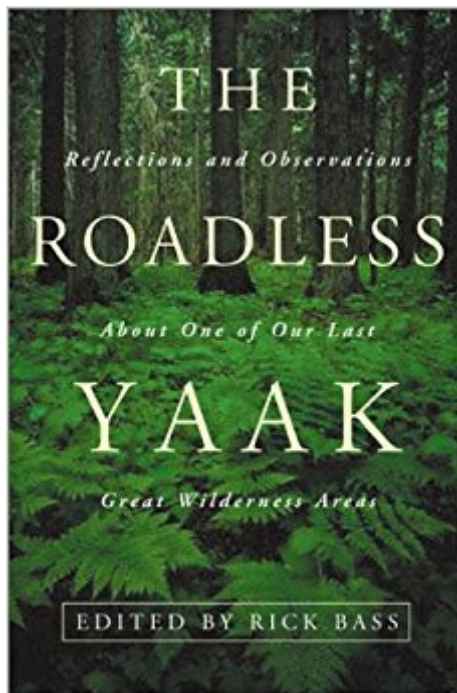




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# The Roadless Yaak: Reflections And Observations About One Of Our Last Great Wilderness Areas



## Synopsis

An important book about the rich, yet fragile ecosystem in the Yaak Valley of northwestern Montana

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"For anyone interested in protecting wild places."--Big Sky Journal "One of the more important books of the year." --The Montana Standard

This collection of essays about the Yaak Valley of northwestern Montana brings to life the wilderness and isolation, exhilaration and trepidation that visitors (and residents) encounter here. The million-acre Yaak Valley is home to only 150 people but untold numbers of elk, deer, grizzly bears, cougars, and other critters, big and small. An astonishing 175,000 acres remain roadless in this remote area near the Canadian border. Read about a mother who spends Thanksgiving weekend in the Yaak with her children. "...the Yaak is where my children and I together, have fallen headlong into the glory of the unfamiliar, into the last of the planet's wilderness, the unpredictability of the natural landscape, the authentic hush possible only away from the clamor" ("Traveling Close to Home," Debra Gwartney). You will learn about a teacher who is torn between the world beyond the Yaak and the life he has come to know: mountains, thick forests, snow, and bears. And you will learn why we as a people must protect wilderness like this for future generations. Contributors include: Todd Tanner, William McKibben, Gregory McNamee, Jeff Ferderer, Amy Edmonds, Scott Daily, Laurie Lane-Zucker, Sue Halpern, Tim Linehan, Debra Gwartney, Bob Shacochis, Doug Peacock, Annick Smith, Bill Kittredge, Jim Fergus. (6 1/4 x 9 1/4, 256 pages) Rick Bass is the author

of seventeen books of fiction and nonfiction, including a novel, *Where The Sea Used To Be*, and a short story collection, *The Hermit's Story*, as well as *The Book of Yaak and Winter*. He is a board member of the Yaak Valley Forest Council, Montana Wilderness Association, Round River Conservation Studies, and Cabinet Resource Group.

An interesting read of a remote part of N America. If you like adventures and remote areas you will love this one.

One of my experiences as a biologist for the U.S. Forest Service was a brief stint in Libby, Montana where I was a weekend visitor to the remote Yaak Valley championed by resident conservationist Rick Bass. My first pass through the valley was a shock. The sea of clearcuts from past timber sales were clearly alarming, and I vowed to return for further investigation. In 1994 I studied fish populations in the Libby area now, and then, a superfund site at the plywood mill where we installed a fish weir in an attempt locate the last remaining Bull trout, now an endangered species in the Pacific Northwest. The previous year there were two. In 1994 none returned to the Libby trap. Similar conditions exist on the Yaak River, a major tributary to the Kootenai. Though superficially "wild" in outward appearance this is devastated landscape due to economic activity that has ruined the landscape and the citizenry from asbestosis at the other superfund site, a vermiculite mine once operated by W.R. Grace Corporation of "A Civil Action" fame. They are gone now, but so is everything else the area once offered. "We don't mind looking at the clearcuts," my boss a dour wildlife biologist told me. It is a legacy that Mr. Bass will be hard pressed to reverse with the current forest management leadership. But we must try. I stand with him in that battle. The chapter in my book "Against a Strong Current," is called "Three Bull Trout."

A valuable collection of diverse voices bearing witness to the last of the last: a small but ecologically rich valley in the far northwest corner of Montana. Those familiar with the prolific writings (and rantings) of Yaak resident Rick Bass know that he can come off as a monomaniac, but this anthology proves his passion is grounded and infectious. Great contributions from prominent writers, poets, conservationists, biologists, politicians, and local residents provide a mosaic of visions on the endangered magic that is the Yaak. The primary lesson: the Yaak is a biological, not a recreational wilderness. It is a place that must be saved, not for your next summer vacation, but for the itinerant wolves, the few remaining stands of ancient larch, the inland redband trout, the resident horse loggers, 15 modest-sized 'gardens' of unroaded national forest, and a tiny (perhaps

single digit)population of super-survivor grizzly bears. Once gone, they are gone forever.

Those committed to the Wild Yaak will want to closely follow S. 1470, Sen. Jon Tester's Wildlands Logging Bill. See # 7 below for details about Tester's proposal to log 30,000 acres of roadless Yaak wildlands. The following is part of "Keeping it Wild! In Defense of America's Public Wildlands," published by the Last Best Place Wildlands Campaign at: [...] .United by our common understanding that Montana's wild country is its greatest treasure;And, that once degraded or impaired, this wild country can never be restored or replaced;And, cognizant of Thoreau's belief that "In wildness is the preservation of the world;"And, schooled by Aldo Leopold who long ago warned that wilderness can only shrink and not grow;And, keenly aware of the definition of wilderness in the Wilderness Act of 1964 as being "untrammeled by man," where "man himself is a visitor who does not remain;"And, fully recognizing that the Northern Rockies ecosystem is the only functioning ecosystem in the lower 48 states where all native species still reside;And, being of one mind in our desire and determination to protect and preserve what remains of our public wildlands to the greatest extent possible;We hereby state our intention to work together to achieve the most inclusive and comprehensive protection under the law for all remaining publicly-owned de facto wilderness in Montana. In full affirmation of the above and, after having been unsuccessful in our earnest efforts to improve Sen. Tester's so-called "Forest Jobs and Recreation Act," or "S. 1470," we must now unanimously oppose this bill. The bases for our opposition are exhaustively catalogued in separate analyses and papers, but we submit this foundational document to concisely articulate our chief objections. They are as follows: THERE ARE TEN POINTS LISTED, INCLUDING: 7. The Tester bill mandates cutting at least 100,000 acres over 10 years. It dictates at least 7,000 acres be logged per year for 10 years in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. In recent years, the Forest Service has set its sustainable cut level for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest at 500 acres per year. In past years, when the Forest Service was dedicated to "getting the cut out," an average of 3,213 acres per year was logged, from 1954 to 1996, in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. On the Three Rivers Ranger District of the Kootenai National Forest, Tester's bill mandates logging of 3,000 acres per year for 10 years in fragile Yaak grizzly bear habitat, already severely damaged by decades of overcutting. While logging at least 100,000 acres would be compulsory, the Tester bill contains no accompanying mandates for restoration, leaving all post-logging reclamation and forest restoration optional. Due to these severe deficiencies, we intend to see that the Tester bill is not endorsed by Congress. Instead, we will constructively stand for a scientifically-sound, ecologically-based Wilderness Bill that preserves the greatest amount of our priceless and

rapidly-vanishing public roadless wildlands in Montana. For more information, please go to: [...]

the short stories made me feel as though I lived in the YAAK. Through the writer's eyes and words it became alive yet tempered with the flavor of humanity...excellent.

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