

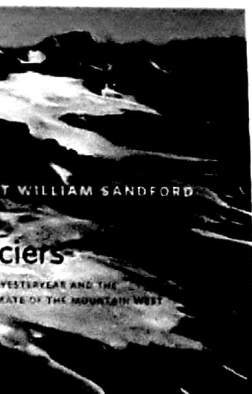
g Glaciers

William Sandford, Rocky Mountain Books (2017)

I HAVE HAD FOR MANY A decade an interest in the slowly vanishing Illecillewaet Glacier in Rogers Pass (as recorded by the Vaux family) and the history of Great Glacier Lodge (as the first centre of alpinism in North America). My treks to the Wheeler and Asulkan huts (and beyond) and Nakimu Caves have revealed much about the disappearing glaciers of which Illecillewaet was a reigning elder at once auspicious moment. So, I was more than delighted to be sent *Our Vanishing Glaciers* to review—so much packed into this clarion call of a well-crafted book.

Glaciers are, in many significant ways, the proverbial canary in the mineshaft. The state of the receding glaciers in our world tells us much about substantive shifts in the climate and augers much warning for the future. The sheer momentum of *Our Vanishing Glaciers* is the succinct and compact manner that Robert William Sandford highlights how the slow-moving glaciers of the past (and the contributions they make via fresh water) are in jeopardy (as are we if we do not awaken to our perilous plight).

In an incisive, textual and visual way, *Our Vanishing Glaciers* unfolds the tale we must all be attentive to in a most convincing manner. It begins with a general overview of the issues of the wonder of water, the impact of winter on water, ecology and winter water, and how icefields and glaciers form. Needless to say, the shifting state of the warming earth is one of the main actors in such a drama. But the beauty and genius of the book is the way the main themes are applied to the glaciers and icefields of the Canadian Rockies. The specificity of such a turning to the Rockies illustrates in ample detail the reality and dire implications of the future climate on the Canadian mountain west.



It is this concentration, again and again, on the Canadian Rockies' glaciers and icefields that make *Our Vanishing Glaciers* a canary test textbook. There are those who are convinced by arguments of a logical and empirical manner, science being very much the guide and tutor. There are others who need photographs or actual encounters with the issue being pondered and discussed. The scientific approach, appropriately so, does outweigh the visual in *Our Vanishing Glaciers*, but, wisely, the visual affirms and confirms the larger thesis. There is a fine glossary at book's end, and there is there an excellent bibliography of sorts (for those, hopefully, wishing to be more informed on the topic).

I have, since the mid-1970s—after spending a couple of years in Norway with the mountain Sami and in the high alpine in Switzerland in the early 1970s—done many a trip to the glaciers and icefields of the Rockies. One of my first trips was on Peyto Glacier in 1975 and now it is so tragic to witness its slow death. I have certainly seen the impact of climate change and the tensions, as Sandford notes in his final chapter, between water, climate and the national park's ideals.

There can be no doubt on this the 150th anniversary of Canada that we face challenges not faced in 1867. One of the most obvious and not to be ignored challenges is both climate change and the impact on icefields; and, in time, the consequences for us. *Our Vanishing Glaciers* is an informed and compelling siren, framed in an aesthetic yet judicious manner, and should be standard reading for Canadians concerned with the future of the mountain climate and the place of humanity in such a delicate yet real changing world.

—Ron Dart