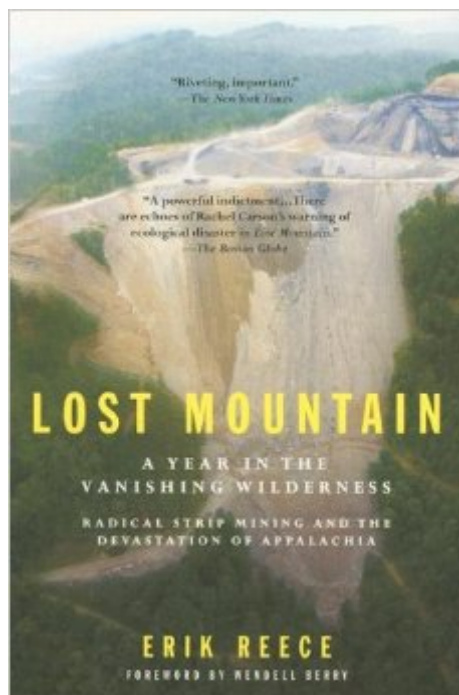


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Lost Mountain: A Year In The Vanishing Wilderness Radical Strip Mining And The Devastation Of Appalachia



Synopsis

A new form of strip mining has caused a state of emergency for the Appalachian wilderness and the communities that depend on it—a crisis compounded by issues of government neglect, corporate hubris, and class conflict. In this powerful call to arms, Erik Reece chronicles the year he spent witnessing the systematic decimation of a single mountain and offers a landmark defense of a national treasure threatened with extinction.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Appalachians have long been abused by the rest of America as a veritable internal colony, as coal and other resources are extracted ruthlessly and the money ends up elsewhere, leaving the resource-rich people mired in every other possible type of poverty. In a business that has been brutal for generations, the extractive industries have now introduced their most insidious practice yet — mountaintop removal mining. Instead of utilizing mineshafts, or even terribly destructive strip mining, the companies are now forcibly removing entire mountaintops to get at relatively scant quantities of coal. Forested peaks become flat rocky mesas, while rivers and valleys are buried under the resulting slagheaps. In addition to the obvious environmental devastation, this cataclysmic new process continues to inflict terrible human costs on local residents. In this book, Erik Reece reports on his multi-year observations at the tragically named Lost Mountain in Eastern Kentucky, which suffered the ugly fate of mountaintop removal mining. Reece made monthly visits to Lost Mountain, and offers a melancholy journal of the death of this once vibrant forested hill, as coal

operators transformed a lush environment into a literal rubble heap. Reece also investigated the travails of the region's people. Coal companies are still harassing citizens who complain about their operations, while pocketed politicians turn a blind eye and give perennial false arguments about job creation and economic development. Meanwhile, the companies cut and run after their destruction is complete, taking their profits elsewhere while the locals suffer from toxic illnesses, flooding, mudslides, contaminated water, and the deepest poverty in America.

Point Google Earth™ to the area around Harlan, KY and you will see a landscape of verdant slopes dotted with scab-like wounds that were mountains once stood. Strip mining is alive and well and is savagely destroying the mountains of eastern Kentucky. In *Lost Mountain*, first-time author Erik Reece has penned an account of this ecological savagery that goes on under reported and therefore unnoticed by most people who don't live in the immediate area. This fact is brought home by Reece's report of a toxic spill 30 times the size of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. This spill occurred near Coldwater Creek, KY only six years ago. While Exxon Valdez has become household word, few have heard of Coldwater Creek. Eric Reece chronicles the demise of one peak, Lost Mountain, so-called because of the lush vegetation that clung to its slopes, causing visitors to become disoriented, often losing their way. Those slopes are gone now, replaced with a tableland of gravel and dust, as the mountaintop was blown apart and shoved into the adjacent hollow for the sake of the coal that lay below. He uses this episode as a jumping-off point to explore the larger question of how much ecological and economic destruction are we willing to endure for the sake of cheap energy. Cataloging the endangered wildlife; the human suffering; and the damage to the mountain ecosystem by aggressive strip mining, he paints a grim picture of the "extraction economy" of the Appalachian coal fields. The mining companies, in what must be the most Orwellian statement of the young century, claim that by destroying the mountain, they are actually improving the terrain, prompting one resident to contemplate putting a sign in his yard saying, "God was wrong. Support mountaintop removal."

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