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## Baikal: Sacred Sea of Siberia

*Peter Matthiessen*

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**Peter Matthiessen : Baikal: Sacred Sea of Siberia** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Baikal: Sacred Sea of Siberia:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. BaikalBy Clare O'BearaWhile this is an account of Matthiessen's trip to Lake Baikal, it is no adventure story but shows how he came to admire and appreciate the nature and beauty of the surroundings. Here for instance we find the only freshwater seal. Wood pulp production is threatening to pollute the massive lake, which has so far managed to absorb all that was thrown at it, just because of its size. This is the largest and oldest lake in the world, with localised species, and is used by birds of passage. The local weathered-looking people also fish and live by the lake.The photographs were taken by a specialist photographer who travelled with Matthiessen. I find that they all look rugged and curiously devoid of movement. Even the ones of people, who are staring into the lens. Maybe it's just that not a lot happens here, and it doesn't happen fast. About half the book is occupied by the handsome photos. This makes it hard to define as a cross between a natural world study, a travelogue and a coffee table book.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Surprise in the middle of RussiaBy Nancy M. BrowerWe had visitors from this area of the world. Friendship Force Club got a grant to sponsor 5 Oncologists from this region to visit our hospitals in St. Louis. I had never heard of this lake before even though it is so famous in Russia. That country is so big that the people have to travel a long way just to get to the airport to leave Russia. The lake is very interesting and the book had beautiful photos. I am happy I could find a used copy.18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. the spirit of SiberiaBy A CustomerThe hardcover book is a jewel: the pictures are

absolutely beautiful, and the texts which accompany them is interesting. The excerpts from Valentin Rasputin's books on Lake Baikal are well chosen. It is extremely interesting to "meet" this controversial Russian author in the way we do through this book. He deserves praise for his environmental work, especially in such a country as Russia. The book definitely makes you wish to visit the place. It sounds like a spiritual enriching experience, the lake seems alive...

Baikal, the largest and deepest freshwater lake in the world, contains more than 1,200 rare species of plants and animals, including the world's only freshwater seals. Now it has become the centerpiece of the emerging Russian environmental movement, as nearby factories threaten its vitality. Here Matthiessen details its fate. A portion of the royalties go to Baikal Watch to save the lake. 50 color photographs; 1 map.

From Publishers Weekly Until recently Siberia's Lake Baikal, the world's oldest and deepest lake, remained nearly pristine because of its great depth. The construction of a cellulose plant on its southern shore and the advent of other sources of industrial and agricultural pollution, however, seriously threaten the ecological balance of the lake, which contains about one-fifth of all the fresh water on the earth. In the summer of 1990, National Book Award winner Matthiessen ( *The Snow Leopard* ), composer Paul Winter and a group of Russian environmentalists traveled around Baikal, which had previously been off limits to foreigners as well as to most citizens of the former Soviet Union. During the journey, Matthiessen kept a journal describing the lake, its flora and fauna and the people who live on its shores. Together, the brief text and 50 of Norton's spectacular color photographs make an eloquent plea for the preservation of one of the earth's great natural treasures; the foreword by poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko, who was born in Siberia, is especially moving. The Sierra Club will donate a share of the book's proceeds to Baikal Watch, a nonprofit group dedicated to the preservation of Lake Baikal. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal The largest, deepest, and oldest freshwater lake in the world is also unique in much of its ecosystem. Long a spiritual center for the natives of Siberia and Mongolia, Baikal has recently become a focus for an emerging Soviet conservation movement. Noted author and traveler Matthiessen ( *Far Tortuga* , LJ 4/15/75) visited Baikal in August 1990 and kept a journal from which this work evolved. Enriched by color photos on nearly half the pages, plus numerous historical sidebars, this short work calls for the environmental defense of a treasure already damaged by industrial pollution. Baikal's condition is generating attention in the world's popular as well as scientific periodical literature, but this is the first English-language book to consider its plight. Recommended for public and academic libraries with an interest in international environmental issues.- Roland Person, Southern Illinois Univ. Lib., Carbondale Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. "During a long night spent thinly clad on rocks on a steep mountainside, I have time to consider why I find myself in such hard circumstances after scarcely a fortnight in the Soviet Union. The reason lies below, in great Baikal, which has drawn me since the day, long years ago, that I first learned of a primordial deep lake of diamantine clarity that lay off to the north of the Gobi Desert. Even today, despite serious damage, Baikal remains the cleanest large lake in the world, not because care has been taken but because its enormous depth and volume have absorbed -- so far -- man's efforts to despoil it. Only recently has it been known how swiftly the lake's ancient ecology could unravel, and how close man has come to losing it forever."-- From The Text By Peter Matthiessen --