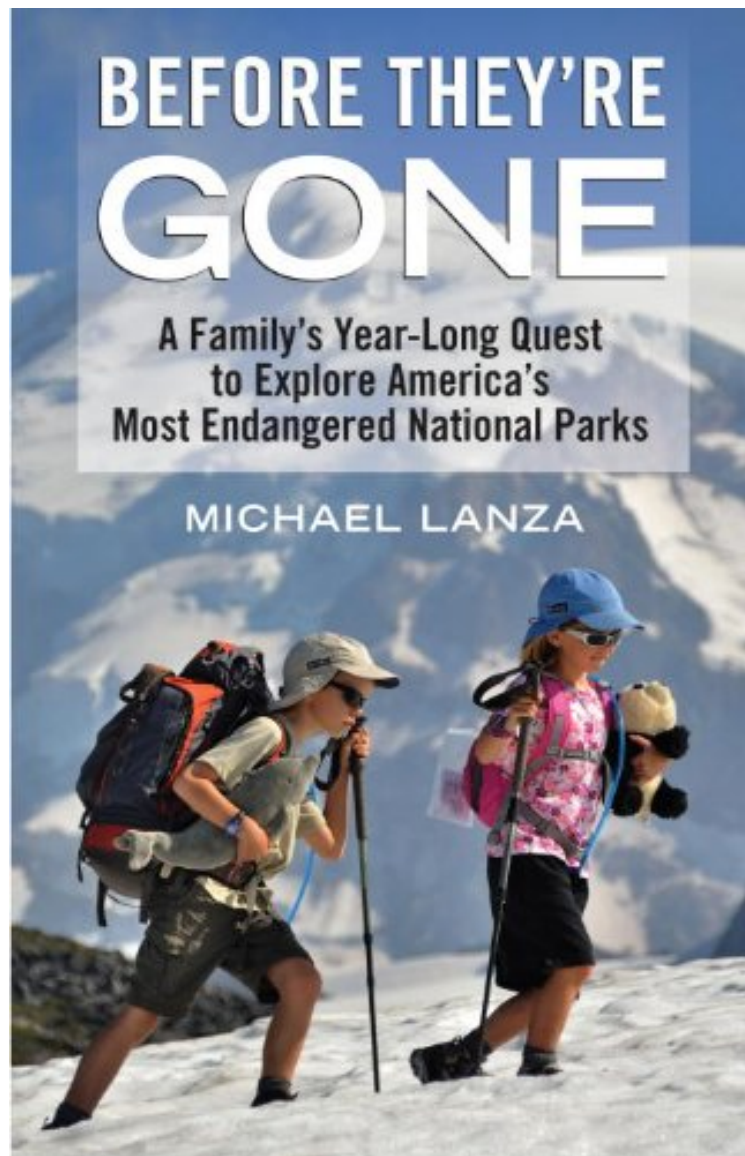


[Download pdf ebook] Before They're Gone: A Family's Year-Long Quest to Explore America's Most Endangered National Parks

Before They're Gone: A Family's Year-Long Quest to Explore America's Most Endangered National Parks

Michael Lanza

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Michael Lanza : Before They're Gone: A Family's Year-Long Quest to Explore America's Most Endangered National Parks before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Before They're Gone: A Family's Year-Long Quest to Explore America's Most Endangered National Parks:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Inspiring me to explore our parks with my family, and an important call to action
By Sarah OI just finished reading just your book, and wanted to say thanks for writing something so important. I was a ranger in North Cascades National Park in the early 90s, but in subsequent trips I've definitely witnessed change, particularly with the recession of glaciers. Looking at some of the major fires in the west - particularly the massive fire in Yosemite last year and this year's fire in Washington state - it's hard not to think about the connections you so clearly illustrate. Global warming, pine beetles, dying forests, and so on. But I think your book espouses a great deal of hope as well in getting your kids out there. My kids are 10 and 7, and I too try to get them out as often as possible. Over the last year, my oldest has asked how climate change is impacting national parks we visit. This winter we went to Death Valley and she asked the ranger about such change when we were in Badwater. He said to look at the "lowest point" sign, and of course the elevation below sea level is changing. There are many other changes too, but I think people just say Badwater has a fixed elevation, or even Everest, but it's not. Maybe that doesn't sound hopeful, but I think by taking my kids to national parks that they see beautiful things, learn of the pending threats, and determine to preserve them. Hopefully they believe they can stem the tide, and maybe it's going to just take another generation to get there. Thanks again for writing such a great book, I really enjoyed it!
2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. very well written
By CustomerI usually avoid memoirs because the writing is often sub par. But this book was extremely well-written (the author is a professional writer) and the subject matter was spot on. I was expecting a book about the hopelessness of global warming and the inevitability of environmental collapse, but instead this was a joyful memoir about one man's attempts to show his children some of our country's most endangered areas. I thought the author was successful in conveying the urgency of our need for change without the gloom and doom of a disaster prophecy. It was also nice to see how the author taught his children the importance of environmental issues and the value of our national parks. He never "beat the issues over their heads" but waited for the teachable moments in which his kids were interested. I thought he did a good job in keeping his kids motivated while helping them enjoy their various backpacking and camping trips. Aside from the environmental issues for which this book was written, it's a great how-to manual for young parents who think backpacking should be put aside until the kids are all grown up. Yes you CAN take young children backpacking!
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Amazingly troubling and wonderful!
By CustomerI read this straight through. The personal accounts and memories of the kids made me laugh out loud. The paperback will become the read for my next backpacking trip. The research and journaling are blended tremendously.

A longtime backpacker, climber, and skier, Michael Lanza knows our national parks like the back of his hand. As a father, he hopes to share these special places with his two young children. But he has seen firsthand the changes wrought by the warming climate and understands what lies ahead: Alaskas tidewater glaciers are rapidly retreating, and the abundant sea life in their shadow departs with them. Encroaching tides threaten beloved wilderness coasts like Washingtons Olympic and Floridas Everglades. Less snowfall and hotter summers will diminish Yosemites world-famous waterfalls. And it is predicted that Glacier National Parks 7,000-year-old glaciers will be gone in a decade. To Lanza, it feels like the house he grew up in is being looted. Painfully aware of the ecological and spiritual calamity that global warming will bring to our nations parks, Lanza sets out to show his children these wonders before they have changed forever. He takes his nine-year-old son, Nate, and seven-year-old daughter, Alex, on an ambitious journey to see as many climate-threatened wild places as he can fit into a year: backpacking in the Grand Canyon, Glacier, the North Cascades, Mount Rainier, Rocky Mountain, and along the wild Olympic coast; sea kayaking in Alaskas Glacier Bay; hiking to Yosemites waterfalls; rock climbing in Joshua Tree National Park; cross-country skiing in Yellowstone; and canoeing in the Everglades. Through these poignant and humorous adventures, Lanza shares the beauty of each place and shows how his children connect with nature when given unscripted time. Ultimately, he writes, this is more their story than his, for whatever comes of our changing world, they are the ones who will live in it.
From the Hardcover edition.

A beautifully written, moving meditation.
Richard Louv, author of *The Nature Principle* Encounters with bears and alligators as well as tender parent-child moments . . . make *[Before Theyre Gone]* an informative, heartwarming and, at times, heart-stopping read. Colleen McBrinn, *The Today Shows* travel blog
The seasons must-read new memoir about bringing up adventure kids in the age of climate change. Outside Magazines *Raising Rippers* blog
"This is a terrific blend of adventure...and ecological forecasting (and forewarning) that aptly conveys the passion of a devoted outdoorsman, and serves as a wake-up call to the state of our planet."
Publishers Weekly
Intriguing premise; decent execution certainly of interest to environmentalists and other eco-minded readers.
Kirkus
Michael Lanza braids a story of family, wilderness, and climate that's at once heartwarming and terrifying. I envy his kids for the incredible year they spent exploring America's finest wild places. And I mourn that they and my own daughter will have to endure the devastating consequences of our heating planet. Lanza makes abundantly clear that our children deserve better than the legacy were leaving them.
John Harlin, author of *The Eiger Obsession: Facing the Mountain that Killed My Father*
I grew up in a national park, worked in twelve others and have visited well over two hundred of them. Their values, for

people like me, often are taken for granted. In this wonderful book, Michael Lanza's children learn and experience what is most important about our national parks: the necessity to leave them unimpaired for future generations and why. Bill Wade, Chair, Executive Council, Coalition of National Park Service Retirees and former superintendent of Shenandoah National Park, offers a fresh and engaging way to tell the climate change story. Laura Helmuth, senior science editor, Smithsonian Wilderness, and adventurers like Lanza are the advance scouts of global warming, bringing back firsthand testimony from pristine landscapes that powerfully corroborates what climate scientists are telling us about our changing planet. But this eyewitness report is much more than an impassioned polemic: it's also an entertaining collection of backcountry anecdotes, surprise encounters with grizzlies, anxious moments on glaciers and wild coastlines, jaw-dropping views from remote summits that bring climate change to life in a way that's more palpable and persuasive than any data chart. Above all, *Before They're Gone* is a fetching love letter to Mike's wife, children, and friends and to the wild places he treasures as only a hiker, climber, and explorer can. Jonathan Dorn, editor in chief, *Backpacker*. About the Author: Michael Lanza is a veteran freelance outdoors writer and photographer. He is the northwest editor of *Backpacker* magazine, where his articles about the impacts of climate change on Montana's Glacier National Park and other wild lands helped *Backpacker* win a National Magazine Award. He runs the website *TheBigOutside*. From the Hardcover edition. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Chapter 6: The Backbone of the World August 2010 We hear the menacing snarls and let our eyes trace the sound to its source. Just a few hundred feet below where we stand at 7,050-foot Lincoln Pass in Montana's Glacier National Park, two grizzly bear cubs tussle playfully where this open, rocky mountainside meets a sparse conifer forest. Vigilantly close by, their mom vacuums her nose over the ground, searching for tidbits. A plus-size lady, she has a weight lifter's physique atop hips and legs that might cause a self-conscious bear to frown at her reflection in a lake. But she moves like a four-hundred-pound ballet dancer, hinting at speed and power that we cannot fathom. Seeing her arouses a feeling so primal that few words even form in our minds or emerge from our mouths. Our skin prickles, our throats turn to sandpaper. If we possessed ears that normally drooped down, at this moment they would stand straight up. If we had the option, we would dive without further contemplation into a claustrophobic burrow and cower for a long time. But we have no burrow. And the bears are just four or five steps off the trail we have to descend. As any backpacker or armchair adventurer understands, this represents the worst possible circumstance. A grizzly bear alone might normally flee from the sounds and odors of humans, probably before the people even realized a bear lurked nearby. But other than a polar bear, a griz sow with cubs is arguably the most fearsome, ferocious terrestrial beast in the Americas. She may perceive any sizable creature in her vicinity as a threat to her babies. Every two or three years in the western U.S. or Canada, a sow horribly mauls or kills some hapless person guilty of no more than stumbling upon the same patch of earth at exactly the same moment as her cubs. In July 2011, a sow with cubs killed a 57-year-old man hiking with his wife in Yellowstone. So we wait, hoping the bears will move on. There is no wind; they may not smell us. They disappear into the woods, but we periodically hear their growls, too close to the trail for us to consider venturing down there. An hour drips by like candle wax. Three other hikers, two men and a woman, come along, heading in our direction. After a brief, lively huddle, we agree on a plan: we will walk in close formation down the trail, making abundant noise. Bears, according to conventional thinking, will not engage this large a group of people. But apparently, these grizzlies did not read the rulebook. As we buckle on backpacks, the woman says, gravely, There are the bears. When we look downhill, she clarifies, No, behind you. We spin around. The sow, not thirty feet away, saunters noiselessly across the grassy meadow where we were standing in, her cubs in tow. While we were strategizing how to outwit them with our superior intellects, they had pulled off a perfect flanking maneuver. From this close, we see her shoulder muscles rippling, the fur backlit by sunlight, and razor teeth designed for tearing through flesh as her mouth gapes open. Then she sniffs the air and swings her head to stare directly at us. If there is a national park that seems created to fulfill the grandest dreams of backpackers, it is Glacier. Straddling the Continental Divide hard against the Canadian border, the northernmost U.S. Rockies resemble a collection of mountain-scale kitchen implements: meat-cleaver wedges of billion-year-old rock and stone knives lined up in rows that stretch for miles, everything standing with blades pointed upward. More than a hundred of them rise above eight thousand feet, the highest exceeding ten thousand feet. Streams collect the runoff from fields of melting snow and ice, pouring down mountainsides, shouting loudest when crashing over innumerable cascades and waterfalls. Late-afternoon sunlight glints off pebbly creeks spilling from lakes, the water's surface sparkling like diamonds slowly twisting. Geological strata stripe mountainsides in parallel bands. Wildflowers in a palette of colors dapple vast, treeless tundra plateaus. The Blackfoot called these mountains the backbone of the world. The description fits a place where the land vaults up so dramatically from the very edge of the Plains and where Triple Divide Peak is one of only two North American mountains that funnel waters to three oceans: the Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic. Swiss-born paleontologist Louis Agassiz, hailed as one of the greatest scientists of his time, comprehended the origins of places like the future Glacier National Park. In the 1840s, he theorized that an ice age had once locked up much of the planet. His ideas explained the signs of glaciers in Europe and North America where they did not exist: groundscraped down to striated bedrock, and massive glacial-erratic boulders deposited in meadows and forests by some mysterious but powerful force. Today, a glacier in the north of this park is named for him. The renowned writer George Bird Grinnell, who began lobbying to designate the area a national park after visiting in the

1880s, called these mountains the Crown of the Continent. The Great Northern Railway, hoping to bring in paying tourists, dubbed the area Little Switzerland. But in one important aspect, it differed from the Swiss Alps as much as Central Park from the Serengeti: unlike the settled Alpine valleys and mountainside meadows, the Northern Rockies were an intact, pristine wilderness. Today, some 90 percent of the parks million acres remain inaccessible except to those willing to explore on foot. Glacier is among just a few U.S. wild lands outside of Alaska that host a nearly complete array of the continent's native megafauna. Only two are missing: the bison and woodland caribou. Sixty-two mammal species live here, and 260 kinds of birds are seen. Glacier and neighboring Waterton Lakes National Park in Canada have been designated an international peace park, an international biosphere reserve, and a World Heritage Site. A backpacker on any of the parks more than seven hundred miles of trails may lose count of how many times she sees cliff-scaling, bearded mountain goats. Many backpackers go home with breathless tales of walking past that most regal of creatures, the bighorn sheep. Some like my friend Geoff Sears when we took a trip here together tell of leaving a sweaty T-shirt hanging outside to dry overnight, only to discover it even more soaked in the morning because deer have gummed it for the salt from perspiration. Hikers in early fall might hear bull elk bugle or see two bull moose clashing massive antlers. Encounters with black or grizzly bears both number in the hundreds here occur rarely, for one simple reason: a bear will usually detect the humans first and avoid them. This dynamic undoubtedly serves the interests of both parties. A bear attacking people ultimately loses, as park officials will destroy it. And no one with a healthy attitude toward life wants to cross paths with a grizzly. When Lewis and Clark explored the American West, the grizzly numbered an estimated 50,000 and ranged over two-thirds of the contiguous United States, from the Canadian border to Mexico to Ohio. While more numerous in Canada and Alaska, about 1,400 remain in the Lower 48, and they live only where humans tolerate them. More than seven hundred bears dwell in Glacier and the surrounding national forests, and another six hundred in Greater Yellowstone. Small, at-risk populations hang on in remote mountains in Washington, northern Idaho, and northwestern Montana. No other species in North America shapes our perception of wilderness as definitively as the grizzly. There are wild lands with grizzlies, and there are those without, and they are as far apart in our minds as terror is from thrill. Where they live, we enter the woods with a heightened alertness. Every dense copse of spruce trees or tall bushes potentially harbors menace. Come upon a steaming pile of scat the size of a soccer ball, and you will wonder which direction the bear went and which you should go. We are not so far evolved from our hunter-gatherer ancestors to have lost our innate aversion to being eaten. Encounter a great bear close up and, regardless of how you had planned to react, you may find yourself overwhelmed by one instinctive thought: flee. You backpedal, maybe stumble. You might reach for the pepper spray on your belt or forget it there. You know in your bones that you possess little control over what happens next. Terror hits hard right in the gut and takes the wind out of you. I know, because I've felt it. When that sow grizzly and her cubs crept up so stealthily behind my friend Jerry Hapgood and me at Lincoln Pass on that late-summer morning, she not only Tasered us with one of the biggest, voice-seizing frights of our lives; she also clarified an unsettling truth: when you walk through country inhabited by grizzly bears, you see and hear them everywhere except the ones that are actually right on top of you. To our good fortune and vast relief, that sow and her cubs merely continued on their way, giving us no more than a glance. Now, eleven months later, I'm backpacking that same trail in Glacier with my wife and children, on another perfect summer day in mountains carved from glaciers but designed in dreams. And I am thinking about bears.