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Living on Wilderness Time

Melissa Walker

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Melissa Walker set out on a journey that many women of her generation have mapped only in their dreams. Like many American chroniclers before her who have surrendered to the aimless pleasures of the road, Walker had no geographical destination in mind, but she did have two definite goals?one personal, one political?for her journey. She was looking for the peace and solitude of the backcountry, certainly, but she also wanted to learn the dynamics of preserving wild places and to devote herself to that cause. In the Sky Islands of southern Arizona, on the banks of the Popo Agie River and the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming, in Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Rocky Mountain, and Olympic National Park, in Gila and Glacier Peak Wilderness, she encountered the hazards of wild animals and extreme weather, and she began to reassess what parts of her life she could control.

Living on Wilderness Time is a book for those who have visited wild places and want to return, and for others whose overcommitted urban lives make them long for land where time is measured differently and human beings are scarce. Above all it is a call to join those who, like Aldo Leopold, see wilderness as vital to the human community.

Melissa Walker is vice president of National Wilderness Watch, chair of the Georgia chapter of Wilderness Watch, serves on the Southern Appalachian Council of the Wilderness Society, and is the author of Reading the Environment and Down from the Mountaintop. She has been Professor of English at the University of New Orleans and Mercer University and a fellow of Women’s Studies at Emory University. Walker lives with her husband in Atlanta, Georgia.

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