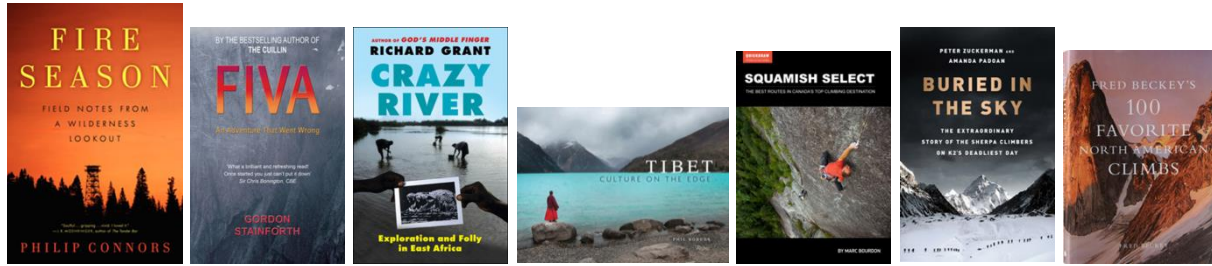


## 2012 BANFF MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL BOOK COMPETITION WINNERS



### GRAND PRIZE

Phyllis and Don Munday Award \$2,000 Sponsored by the Alpine Club of Canada

#### **FIRE SEASON: FIELD NOTES FROM A WILDERNESS LOOKOUT**

Philip Connors, HarperCollins Publishers (USA 2011)

For nearly a decade the acclaimed young writer Philip Connors has spent half of each year in a 7'x7' fire lookout tower, 10,000-feet up in a remote part of New Mexico. Connors captures the wonder and grandeur of this most unusual job and place: the eerie pleasure of solitude; the strange dance of communion and mistrust with animals; and the majesty and might of wildfires at their wildest. Through it all are Connors' heartfelt reflections on our place in the wild, on celebrated writers (Jack Kerouac, Edward Abbey, Norman Maclean, Gary Snyder) who have worked as lookouts, and on the ongoing arguments between those who believe wildfires should always be suppressed to preserve lives and property and those who believe the fires should be left to burn as nature intended.

"The winner of the Grand Jury Prize was for all three of us judges the outstanding book of the 2012 Banff Mountain Book Competition. Nothing else came close in terms of literary quality, human oddity, and that indefinable element of surprise present in all the very best writing. We loved this book. The persona, the character as it comes through in his book of the author, his humour and odd sagacity, his sharp and lucid gift of natural observation, the fascinating perspective he gives on the ecology of wildfire, charmed and informed us. Also, since he went to school in Missoula, he can almost be claimed as Canadian, Montana being more like here than down there. Of all this year's authors, here's the one with whom we felt we'd most like to share a beer. His book will surely be accepted into the outdoor and environmental literary canon as one to be ranked with Aldo Leopold's Sand County Almanac and ornery old Ed Abbey's Desert Solitaire. It's the account of a former Wall Street Journal writer's sojourns through several summers at a fire-lookout post in the Gila Wilderness Area of south-west New Mexico: "If there's a better job anywhere on the planet, I'd like to know what it is."

So it's an essay on solitude and the wild, and it works resonantly at that level. But it's also a very human meditation on the suicide of his brother; on the building of a loving and unusual marriage with his wife; on the company and character of his dog Alice. There's a wise simplicity in all of this that touches you at the deepest human level. And there's more. In one extraordinary sequence from his time in New York, he takes us through the deserted subway to emerge beneath the Twin Towers on 9/11. It's as eerie a scene as you'll ever read, and its relevance resonates out into the book in a manner which is the hallmark of fine literature. This year's Grand Prize goes to Philip Connors for his quiet and heartfelt little masterpiece, Fire Season."

2012 Jury Member Jim Perrin

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## **BEST BOOK – MOUNTAIN AND WILDERNESS LITERATURE**

Jon Whyte Award \$1,000 Sponsored by The Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies

### **FIVA: AN ADVENTURE THAT WENT WRONG**

Gordon Stainforth, Golden Arrow Books (UK, 2012)

An epic true account of a near-death experience on a mountain in Norway in 1969. As Apollo 11 was blasting off to the moon, two teenage twin brothers set off to climb one of the highest rock faces in Europe. Within hours things had gone badly wrong and they were looking death in the face ...

"In his preface, Gordon Stainforth declares: "After several false starts, I decided to tell [Fiva] in the first-person present tense... to put myself back into the mountaineering boots of a 19-year-old with a very limited perspective on life." It is a monumental challenge for a 60-year-old author, and one that raises doubts. But the breathless teenage voice that leaps off the first page never waivers. Not once. Rather, it becomes an unrelenting force, sweeping the reader ever higher on Norway's Store Trollind as events spiral out of control for two young, bold, and grossly inexperienced twins.

An evocative period piece, Fiva is human, innocent, and unflinchingly believable. This little, unassuming book stands among the classic tales of climbing 'epics.' "

2012 Jury Member Bruce Kirkby

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## **BEST BOOK – ADVENTURE TRAVEL**

\$1,000 Sponsored by The Juniper Hotel & The Wild Flour Bakery & Café

### **CRAZY RIVER: EXPLORATION AND FOLLY IN EAST AFRICA**

Richard Grant, Free Press/Simon & Schuster (USA, 2011)

No one travels quite like Richard Grant and, really, no one should. Grant has plunged with his trademark recklessness, wit, and curiosity into East Africa. Setting out to make the first descent of an unexplored river in Tanzania. Crazy River is a brilliantly rendered account of a modern-day exploration of Africa.

"Richard Grant sets out for east Africa, intent on exploring an unknown river. His journey is nothing as he imagined – you might even say it fell apart – but the story he returns with is a glorious, chaotic, funny, poignant, topsy-turvy ride across contemporary Africa. Grant possesses the most rare and treasured attributes of travel writers: an exceptional eye for relevant detail. With deft strokes, he paints those he meets, the land he passes, and the inexorable collision of modern with ancient. The book includes plenty of historical references, but it is Grant's willingness to tackle uncomfortable and serious themes - slavery, bush meat, and genocide among others - without ever taking himself or his journey too seriously. This deeper commentary, which avoids all clichés and rings uncannily true, vaults Crazy River from merely good to great. By the time you put the book down, you may not want to hit the road with Grant, but you'd certainly like to share a few drinks; the highest praise possible for an adventure travel author. "

2012 Jury Member Bruce Kirkby

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## **BEST BOOK – MOUNTAIN IMAGE**

\$1,000 Sponsored by RAB

### **TIBET: CULTURE ON THE EDGE**

Phil Borges, Rizzoli (USA, 2012)

The Tibetan Plateau is heating up twice as fast as the global average. These rapidly melting glaciers, along with recent unprecedented development on the plateau, are quickly changing the lives of the deeply devotional nomads, monks, and farmers who have lived in this area for centuries. Through stories and portraits, Borges illustrates how the Tibetan culture is being transformed.

"Phil Borges's deeply moving visual portrait of the Tibetan people reveals the clash and commingling of ancient culture and 21st century growth through his sensitive images that take us into the lives of children, parents, single women and men, nomads and construction workers. Juxtaposing the chaos of

climate change and development against the strength of Tibetan tradition, he leads us on a unique odyssey to meet: the 90-year-old nun who has lived in a cave since the age of 12, while a million-dollar, Disney-like monastery is being built; the illiterate construction worker who cannot live without a cell phone; the elegant, beautifully dressed nomadic woman who seeks work on a road crew because the pay is good. Breathtaking two-page spreads capture a startling reality: the world of the motorcycle and duplex against the stunning big-sky, big-mountain world that most know as Tibet. Borges's work is exquisite and important: the book's carefully crafted design accompanies passionate imagery and minimal narrative. He allows the photographs to speak. His story is rich, detailing the beauty and courage of a people, especially the women; the integrity of their ways; the disappearance of their world and their spirited adaptation to change; their beliefs and sense of joy that set a standard for every culture in the Western world. The compelling foreword by anthropologist Wade Davis adds yet more depth and insight to this winning work. For his important portrait of a people, we award Tibet: Culture on the Edge the Mountain Image Award."

2012 Jury Member Barbara Brownell-Grogan

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## **BEST GUIDE BOOK**

\$1,000 Sponsored by Sole

### **SQUAMISH SELECT**

Marc Bourdon, Quickdraw Publications (Canada, 2012)

"Squamish Select" is a guidebook to over 1,500 of the best rock climbs in the Sea to Sky corridor. Although it documents many popular areas, the centrepiece of the book is the area's landmark, the Stawamus Chief. Climbers come from all over the world to scale the Chief's sheer granite walls, and "Squamish Select" details all the best routes.

"Writing a 'guidebook' must rank amongst the most thankless of literary tasks. What could require more research for less reward? And expose authors to an inevitable barrage of criticism when the location of a single bolt (amid thousands) is mis-represented, or a route accidentally 'sandbagged.' Yet guidebooks are essential. They inspire, and spark ideas, and ultimately provide a fragile thread connecting an ever-more urban society to wild places. And for this, the jury sincerely acknowledges the skill, effort and superb content displayed by every entry in this year's competition. Amongst the finalists, Squamish Select stood out for its clarity, clean layout, and superb photographic rendering of complex routes. The book invites outsiders in, offering a synopsis of natural history, and sharing a 'Top 100' list, along with recommendations for rainy days, first multi-pitch and other common situations. In a genre where content often eclipses form, Squamish Select raises the bar in both for those that follow."

2012 Jury Member Bruce Kirkby

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## **BEST BOOK – MOUNTAINEERING HISTORY**

The James Monroe Thorington Award \$750 Sponsored by the UIAA

### **BURIED IN THE SKY: THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF SHERPA CLIMBERS ON K2'S DEADLIEST DAY**

Peter Zuckerman, Amanda Padoan, W.W. Norton & Company (USA, 2012)

"Buried in the Sky" explores the intersecting lives of Chhiring Dorje and Pasang Lama, following them from their villages in the Himalaya across the glaciers of Pakistan to K2. When disaster strikes in the Death Zone, Chhiring finds Pasang stranded on an ice wall, without an axe, waiting to die. This rescue has become the stuff of mountaineering legend.

"Maybe the tendency's to groan – "Not another mountain disaster story!" If so, be patient. This next book may have a few small faults here and there: the title of Part Two, "Conquest", should cause all bona fide climbers to grit their teeth; some passages are avowedly in the "creative writing" idiom, and the authors' background in mountaineering is both recent and slight. "Nonetheless", they state, in the Authors' Note, "[We] have tried to get at the truth and be straightforward about our reporting". In this they succeed magnificently, telling an intensely sad story with clarity, narrative skill, economy and drive, and from a very

fresh viewpoint. What separates BURIED IN THE SKY's narrative of the harrowing events on K2 in August 2008 from a host of similar tales of mountain tragedies is not merely the rigorously-researched external view it provides. It is also its determination to pass the credit back to those with whom it truly belongs, and who are far too often overlooked in climbing books – the Sherpas and high-altitude porters on whom the whole project of western mountaineering is dependent. Zuckerman's and Padoan's emphasis on the heroic role of the Sherpas is as proper as it is rare in climbing literature. The decency and right-thinking here far transcends any minor irritations the book might arouse. It will surely stand as one of the most distinguished works within a genre that includes Jon Krakauer's Into Thin Air and Ralph Barker's The Last Blue Mountain. That it was written by two newcomers to our activity makes it all the more impressive. This is reportage of the highest quality. We had no hesitation in awarding BURIED IN THE SKY the 2012 Mountaineering History Award. ”

2012 Jury Member Jim Perrin

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## **SPECIAL JURY MENTION**

### **FRED BECKEY'S 100 FAVORITE NORTH AMERICAN CLIMBS**

Fred Beckey, Patagonia Books (USA, 2012)

Fred Beckey is an audacious living legend who is responsible for more first ascents (over a 70-year span) than any other climber in North America. He is also the leading chronicler of the mountains of the Pacific Northwest; his guidebooks for the Cascades remain the standard. Expert in the geology, natural and social history of the mountain places he loves, Beckey is one of the great travel writers of any age. Now in his eighties – and still climbing – he is revered throughout the North American climbing community as the "original dirtbag."

“In this elegant and visually sumptuous book, climbing master Fred Beckey showcases the beauty and lore of the mountains he reveres, and reveals the practical challenges of making the 100 favorite climbs of his 70-year career. This book is an essential complement to every climbing guide to North America—a travel planner and dreamer's book for climbers to create their own top-100 list, and an enticing guide for armchair travelers to vicariously live the challenge of reaching the summits. Beckey's dimensional treatment of each peak—the geological makeup; the history; the climbing gear; the key information on routes, access, season, and challenges; as well as the hand-crafted maps and insightful sidebars—are the book's authority. But Beckey's personal commitment to climbing, his depth of experience, and his reverence for the mountains form the linchpin that make this book unique and timeless. The climbing community is privileged to have his singular vision and passion. One hopes that, inspired by Beckey's example, a young climber is now planning her own 100 assaults on the mountains of North America and will, in 50 years' time, bring a new 100 Favorite North American Climbs to a new generation. For the tremendous contribution to the climbing community showcased in this book, we award Fred Beckey's 100 Favorite North American Climbs the Special Jury Mention.”

2012 Jury Member Barbara Brownell-Grogan

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