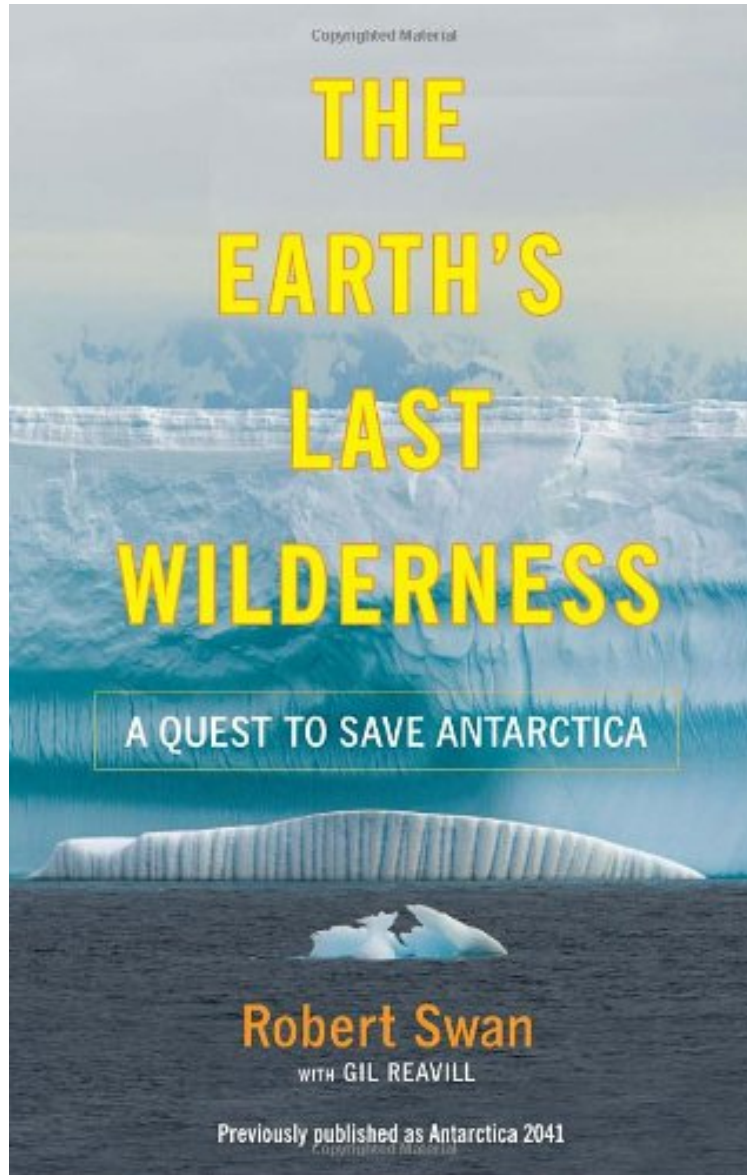


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The Earth's Last Wilderness: A Quest to Save Antarctica

Robert Swan, Gil Reavill

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Robert Swan, Gil Reavill : The Earth's Last Wilderness: A Quest to Save Antarctica before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Earth's Last Wilderness: A Quest to Save Antarctica:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Adventure, leadership, and inspirationBy Eric A. GhostIn an age where the media showers us with stories of ill-behaved politicians, athletes, and entertainers, it's refreshing to be able

to read about someone who truly qualifies as a role model for people young and old. Robert Swan is a real modern-day hero. I found this book to be a fascinating account of his accomplishments and his vision for how each of us can contribute to shaping a better world for the future. It presents Robert's story, so far, but "biography" is too restrictive a word for a man who lets us know he's planning so much more. Swan is a man of integrity who follows-through with what he takes on. The book provides insight into his approach to leadership and furnishes wisdom as well as practical advice. There is no arrogance here as Swan documents what he considers to be his failures as well as his accomplishments. His book leaves us with a call to action. Through his power to demonstrate what one determined individual can do, and by his ability to inspire others, Robert Swan makes it clear that this book is not just a great story. It is yet another vehicle for him to continue his work to shape a better future. The book ends with a beginning, a beginning for those of us who will do our part to protect Antarctica and ultimately the rest of our planet for our future generations. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. From Adventure to Planet Saving Mission By Steven Schaefer A great adventure. As Sir Robert Swan sees for himself the effects of climate change and expands his goals from walking across Antarctica to saving this pristine wilderness--and the entire planet. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great story of a polar explorer By David Chew A personal and frank story of Robert Swan on his quest from exploring Antarctica to saving Antarctica as the world's last wilderness. Definitely a good read.

Adventurer turned environmentalist Robert Swan illuminates the perils facing the planet come 2041 the year when the international treaty protecting Antarctica is up for review and the many steps that can be taken to avoid environmental calamity. In 1985, when Robert Swan walked across Antarctica, the fragile polar environment was not high in his mind. But upon his return, the earth's perilous state became personal: Robert's ice-blue eyes were singed a pale gray, a result of being exposed to the sun's rays passing unfiltered through the depleted ozone layer. At this moment, his commitment to preserving the environment was born, and in Antarctica 2041 Swan details his journey to awareness, and his firm belief that humans can reverse the harm done to the planet thus far, and secure its future for generations to come. Despite the dire warnings Swan raises in Antarctica 2041 exponentially high greenhouse-gas levels; rising seas; massive species extinction he says there is much we can do to avert looming disaster. Ultimately an upbeat call to action, his book provides the information people need to understand the world's crisis, and the tools they need to combat it, ultimately showing us all that saving Antarctica amounts to saving ourselves. From the Hardcover edition.

From Publishers Weekly British explorer and conservationist Swan accounts for the inspiration, execution and purpose of his expeditions to visit the South and North Poles. In 1967, at the age of 11, Swan saw the 1948 film Scott of the Antarctic, and became obsessed with the doomed expedition of its iconic hero, Captain Robert F. Scott. Naming his 1985 expedition "In the Footsteps of Scott," Swan successfully retraced the captain's 900 mile trek to the South Pole. In a subsequent hike to the North Pole (another 500 mile trip), Swan became the first person to have walked to both poles. He recounts big adventures, and setbacks almost as big (his first ship was crushed by polar ice, leaving him with a \$1.2 million debt), on his journey to becoming a committed conservationist, dedicated to curbing climate change and preventing the exploitation of the Arctic and Antarctic (2041 is the year that the international treaty protecting Antarctica comes up for review). Though he describes his Antarctic expedition as a "ridiculous undertaking—a twenty-something nobody raising five million dollars to embark on a useless quest," Swan's valuable lessons and thrilling narrative make it clear his efforts were far from fruitless. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author ROBERT SWAN is the first person to have walked to both the North and South Poles. An active lecturer, he regularly leads Antarctic expeditions. He divides time between London, New York, and Antarctica. GIL REAVILL has coauthored many books including Tiki by Tiki Barber and Steve and Me by Terri Irwin. From the Hardcover edition. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. 9780767931755 | excerpt Swan: Antarctica 2041 The Beard more In the Antarctic summer of 1985 I found myself standing at the inland margin of the Ross Ice Shelf, a crevasse-riven, glacier-fed formation about the size of France. A France without baguettes and cathedrals. A totally Paris-less France. The ice beneath me ran down a thousand feet. Underneath that, the Bible-black darkness of a cold, unexplored sea. There were reasons why the Ross Sea remained unexplored. A New Zealand fishing boat once pulled from its waters a colossal squid (*Mesonychoteuthis hamiltoni*, to distinguish the species from its smaller cousin, the merely giant squid) more than thirty feet long and weighing over a thousand pounds. That's what they had down there, that and God knows what other creatures. Perhaps only Captain Nemo could have handled it. To report my location on the Ross Ice Shelf above the Ross Sea, in other words, is another way of saying that I was in the middle of frozen nowhere, perched on the brink of an enormous nothingness. "A silence deep with a breath like sleep" is how one man who died there put it. Early Antarctic explorers called the ice shelf "the Great Ice Barrier," in honor of the hundred-foot-high vertical wall where it meets the sea. But for those early explorers, and for me, the barrier acted more as a road, an immense, human-dwarfing, windswept road, but nevertheless a well-recognized path into the interior of the continent. We followed "In the Footsteps of Scott," as our expedition was called, tracing the trek to the South Pole of the great British explorer Captain Robert F. Scott. As I stood at the edge of the barrier, the question I pondered was pretty basic. Why in heaven's name would anyone want to

enter the interior of Antarctica? Why would anyone freely choose to experience the most inhuman landscape available to us? It's a boogeyman of a place, good for scaring the wits out of homebodies. "The highest, driest, windiest, coldest place on earth" that's a formulation that seems by law to appear in every single piece of writing about Antarctica (the most memorable example: a book coauthored by Leonardo DiCaprio and Mikhail Gorbachev). No one had even laid eyes on the place until 1820. No one wintered over for a full year until 1898. Why was I there? With my thoughts jangled and my inner clock going haywire since the midnight sun rendered night into day, I realized I had no answer to that basic question. No answer at all. I was twenty-nine years old. With two other team members, Roger Mear and Gareth Wood, I had just spent four weeks walking trudging, struggling, sledging all our supplies ourselves across the Ross Ice Shelf. We were ants on an ice cube the size of France. Our ultimate goal, that of reaching the South Pole, now appeared a vain hope. By our calculations we were fifty-eight days away from 90 degrees south. Our food supply biscuits, sausage, soup dosed with vegetable oil for added calories was good for another fifty-five days. We were already starving. Since we hauled our own provisions for the journey, we had calculated our supply down to the gram: 5,200 calories per day per man. It was not enough. As we labored over the ice cube, our bodies were eating themselves. My weight plummeted: the "South Polar diet," we called it. Controlled lab research has demonstrated not only physiological but also psychological effects of semi-starvation: a tendency on the part of the hungry toward the so-called "neurotic triad" hypochondria, depression, and hysteria. The triad hit me hard. I imagined symptoms, felt listless and low, and experienced periodic spikes of panic over our situation. We gave off the characteristic ketone odor of the starving vertebrate. I could smell it on myself as I wandered a short distance from the camp, late on that bright-as-day evening on the barrier. South of us, barring our way to the pole, towered the twelve-thousand-foot peaks of the Queen Alexandra mountains. The range braced the mighty Beardmore Glacier, over a hundred miles long, the second-largest glacier in the world. To get to the pole, we would have to climb the Beardmore's immense "ladders of smashed glass," as it was described by Ernest Shackleton, the man who discovered it. In the gross emptiness of the ice shelf, our camp appeared puny and insignificant, a tent with three ice sledges dumped over next to it. Robert F. Scott called this place, where he was nailed by a ten-day blizzard, "the Slough of Despond." "Miserable, utterly miserable," he wrote in his journal. "Slough" refers to an allegorical place of despair in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The name joins other colorful waypoints on the path to the pole, such as Shambles Camp, Devil's Ballroom, and Butcher's Shop. Our expedition had broken down. Harsh conditions, personality clashes, and, in my case, devastating self-doubt left us marooned in the most inhospitable environment on the planet. I knew by now that Roger Mear and Gareth Wood, my expedition mates, were hardly speaking to each other. The only thing they seemed to agree on was that they didn't much like me. A half decade of planning, raising funds, and untangling problems of supply and transport had come down to this three squabbling humans just a couple of arguments away from freezing to death. There was no hope of rescue. We had no radios. We were unaware of any human presence within four hundred miles of us. At that moment I was absolutely, positively convinced that my life had ended. More distressing still if that's possible my dream had ended. I had scratched and clawed my way to this point. I had buttonholed famous mentors and explorer-scions such as Sir Peter Scott, Lord Edward Shackleton, Sir Vivian Fuchs, Lord Hunt, the Royal Geographic Society, and Jacques Cousteau. I had borrowed enormous sums on the basis of no more than my smile (my smile was in debt to the tune of \$1.2 million). Then I slogged on ice-numbed feet to this forlorn point in front of the Beardmore, all in an effort to honor Scott and Shackleton, my boyhood heroes, by walking to the South Pole. Why? For what purpose? To fail? To die? Roger Mear was one of the world's foremost mountaineers. Gareth Wood, also an accomplished mountaineer, was a meticulous organizer and logistics whiz. What was I? I was a novice. I wasn't a mountaineer or even an outdoorsman. And I was a foolhardy novice. I had mounted an expedition to the South Pole without ever having really been camping before. Standing out there in the frozen nowhere, we somehow had to find within ourselves the skills to sort out our difficulties and make the dream real again. We had to trek the remaining five hundred miles to our goal tantamount to walking from the east coast of America to the Mississippi River, but on fissured, hillocky, dangerous ice. We followed in the footsteps of Scott and his polar party. That meant we were following in the footsteps of death, since the whole party died on their return from the pole. On our trek we had already passed the spot where Scott himself and two of his mates perished, and the place where Captain Lawrence "Titus" Oates walked out into a blizzard in an act of self-sacrifice. Up ahead, at the foot of the Beardmore, was the death site of Taff Evans, the strongest of the group of five, and paradoxically the first to go. Antarctica itself had it in mind to murder us. Antarctica the inhuman, Antarctica the hostile, Antarctica that cares not a whit whether humans live or die but obviously prefers them dead. If we had dared to inhale an uncovered breath in some of the insane temperatures we encountered during the previous winter, our teeth could have possibly cracked and exploded like so many tiny artillery shells. In the depths of the sunless months, at a temperature of 280 degrees F, toss a pan of boiling water into the air, and it freezes with an odd crinkling sound before it hits the ground. Bitter, lethally cold in winter. The lowest temperature recorded in Antarctica (2128.6 degrees F at Vostok in 1983) was 39 degrees colder than the lowest recorded temperature on any other continent. The place had its warmer and fuzzier side, too. It's the only continent that has never hosted a shooting war. Antarctica has no verified homicides, no prisons, beyond petty theft no crime at all. In my absence that, as far as I was concerned, merely rendered it all the more strange and inhuman. It was relatively warm during our summer trek

would hit a high one day of almost 40 degrees F but still utterly alien to human life. Journeying to the continent was the closest anyone could get to leaving earth without actually resorting to space travel. Great beauty alternated with sheer terror. False suns hung in the sky, and false moons, too. I had stared at only ice and snow for so long that I hallucinated shapes in the landscape wherever I looked: a Sioux chief in full feather headdress, the profile of Queen Victoria. In Antarctica, I often got the sensation that I was gazing at the most beautiful person on earth, right at the moment when the mask was pulled off to reveal a frightening monster. I knew what kind of monster. This was the face of God. Not a kindly, patriarchal graybeard, either, but Spinoza's god, the cold, abstract, impersonal force of nature not He but It, not Who but That, an ur-god churning out magic tricks, turning midnight into day or lighting up the heavens with the multicolored streamers of the aurora. So I tried to make a deal. I begged. Isn't that one of the stages of the human experience of death? You deny, you rage, you weep, you try to bargain. "Just don't kill us," I whispered. The winds that poured off the Beardmore took my words and whipped them instantly away. It was as though I was pleading with the whole continent. "Just don't kill us," I prayed to the monster. "Just don't kill us, and I promise I will somehow do whatever I can do to protect you." From the Hardcover edition.