

BANFF^{CENTRE}
MOUNTAIN
FILM AND BOOK
FESTIVAL

**2023 Banff Mountain Book Competition
Category Winners**





Mountain Literature (non-fiction) – The Jon Whyte Award

\$3000 - Sponsored by The Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies

A Line Above the Sky: On Mountains and Motherhood

Helen Mort, Ebury Press (UK, 2022)

A Line Above the Sky draws a riveting and visceral exploration of risk and the personal choices that individuals make in pursuit of it. With poetic eloquence and reverence rarely seen in story, Helen Mort recounts the lifeline of Alison Hargreaves intertwined with her own life choices in a reflective lyrical voice that can only be described as a privilege to read.

- Jennifer Lowe-Anker, 2023 Book Competition Jury

Mountain Fiction & Poetry

\$3000 – Sponsored by the Town of Banff

We Measure the Earth with Our Bodies

Tsering Yangzom Lama, McClelland & Stewart (Canada, 2022)

Sometimes fiction can be so emotionally revealing and powerful that it gets to the heart of an experience in ways no non-fiction can match. *We Measure the Earth with Our Bodies* is such a novel. Writing of the tragedy of Tibet after the Chinese invasion, the drama of escape, the plight of exile with its inevitable losses and compromises and finally of the power of love and redemption, this extraordinary book is both a heartbreakingly intimate personal story and a sweeping, page-turning narrative of cultural threat and moral fightback which will leave no reader unmoved.

- Tony Whittome, 2023 Book Competition Jury



Environmental Literature

\$3000 – Sponsored by Canadian Mountain Network

Drawing Botany Home: A Rooted Life
Lyn Baldwin, Rocky Mountain Books (Canada, 2023)

Drawing Botany Home could not be a more perfect title for this beautiful and insightful look at the importance of our place as individuals in an ecosystem that nurtures us. With reverence for the diversity and minutia of flora, Lyn Baldwin has shared her own journey with elegant renderings to capture the essence of how nature nurtures, mentors, grounds and heals.

- Jennifer Lowe-Anker, 2023 Book Competition Jury

Adventure Travel

\$3000 – Sponsored by Rocky Mountain Books

Instead: Navigating the Adventures of a Childfree Life - A Memoir
Maria Coffey, Rocky Mountain Books (Canada, 2023)

Intimate in tone, sweeping in emotional and geographic scope, this globetrotting memoir testifies to the rich possibilities that can unfold in choosing to be childfree. Maria Coffey offers a candid and inspiring account of her decision to embrace a roving, creative life over more conventional paths. *Instead* is a testament that biological reproduction might well be the least imaginative and most limiting interpretation of what it takes to make a family. The great adventure, as Coffey attests, is putting your own spin on what a life of deep connection can look like.

- Kate Harris, 2023 Book Competition Jury



Mountain Image

\$3000 – Sponsored by Mountain Life

Mont Blanc Lines

Alex Buisse, Vertebrate Publishing (UK, 2022)

Alex Buisse struck the balance of both captivating the eye and the mind; his images of the Mont Blanc massif inspired awe, whilst the guidebook-esque lines charted a path through one's imagination. I couldn't help but think about what each route must have entailed, the mental story I was telling myself enriched by small pieces of history and anecdotes from alpinists sharing their first-hand experience.

- JoJo Das, 2023 Photo Competition Jury

Guidebooks

\$3000 – Sponsored by the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides

Walking & Wayfinding in the Westfjords of Iceland

Henry Fletcher and Jay Simpson, Wayfinding Guides (UK, 2022)

What do you look for in a guidebook? Clear maps and advice on adventurous routes of course, but also more profoundly a chance to understand the ecology, culture, and history of its subject, how it is experienced by the plants, animals and humans which live there, how it is celebrated and might be challenged. Above all, however remote the area, it must make you want to go there. And this is where Wayfinding in the Westfjords triumphantly succeeds. Practical, portable maps and routes are supported by lavishly illustrated volumes of personal stories, photos, and coloured illustrations. Together these (four in all) reveal the whole ecology of this beautiful, savage, and isolated part of Iceland.

- Tony Whittome, 2023 Book Competition Jury



Mountain Article

\$3000 – Sponsored by Rab

Securing the Shadows

David Stevenson, *The Mississippi Review* (USA, 2023)

This powerful, exact, and beautifully written article explores the relationship between photograph, subject, and observer in a series of images of climbers who have died in the mountains. Its spare prose and flattened affect at first recalls art criticism, or even the forensics of an autopsy, but this is not the whole story: it soon modulates into something questioning, passionate and deeply personal which will remain in the mind of the reader. In short compass this is an extraordinary literary achievement.

- Tony Whittome, 2023 Book Competition Jury

Climbing Literature

\$3000 – Sponsored by MEC

Royal Robbins: The American Climber

David Smart, *Mountaineers Books* (USA, 2023)

It is rare to read an account of a legend that measures up to the individual, capturing visionary character in human and place with clear insight to an era. David Smart gives us an evocative, intimate view of Royal Robbins, the man, his exceptional position in the history of American climbing and his vast resume of classic and timeless ascents.

- Jennifer Lowe-Anker, 2023 Book Competition Jury



Grand Prize **\$5000 – Sponsored by the Alpine Club of Canada**

A Line Above the Sky: On Mountains and Motherhood
Helen Mort, Ebury Press (UK, 2022)

This quiet masterpiece of a memoir offers a bold new line through very old and complex terrain—mountains, families, the joys and hazards of both. What stands out is the sheer grace of Helen Mort's sentences, her humility and questing heart, as she reckons with what climbing and having children can give or take from a life. If you've ever tied into a rope or been a parent, read this book. If you have no interest in climbing or having kids, read this stunning book. It is a work of art so much larger than the sum of its parts

- Kate Harris, 2023 Book Competition Jury

Special Jury Mention

Fire Weather: The Making of a Beast
John Vaillant, Knopf Canada (Canada, 2023)

In gripping and visceral prose, *Fire Weather* traces the origins and evolution of the blaze that devastated Alberta's Fort McMurray, a community at the core of the global oil economy. Part history, part prophecy, part biography of fire in the era of climate change, this book is ultimately a portrait of humanity: our hubris, to be sure, but also our surprising decency to each other under duress, facing circumstances that are out of control. Vaillant reveals the unnerving parallels between wildfires and late-stage capitalism: both are forces possessed of a terrifying vitality, with appetite and intent, but no soul, no ethics, and no mercy. At once urgent and eloquent, this is a book for these unsteady times.

- Kate Harris, 2023 Book Competition Jury



Special Jury Mention

Oldman's River

Sid Marty, NeWest Press (Canada, 2023)

Sid Marty's work in a variety of forms has delighted and challenged readers over several decades but he remains at heart a poet, whose lyrical voice, rooted in personal experience, evokes the mountains of Western Canada with unflinching insight and authenticity. It is now gathered in a rich, readable, and thought-provoking volume of collected poems, with a generous helping of new work. It's a feast for the reader, a wonderful testament to the creative imagination and to the world of mountains and prairies - but it's also a call to action.

-Tony Whittome, 2023 Book Competition Jury