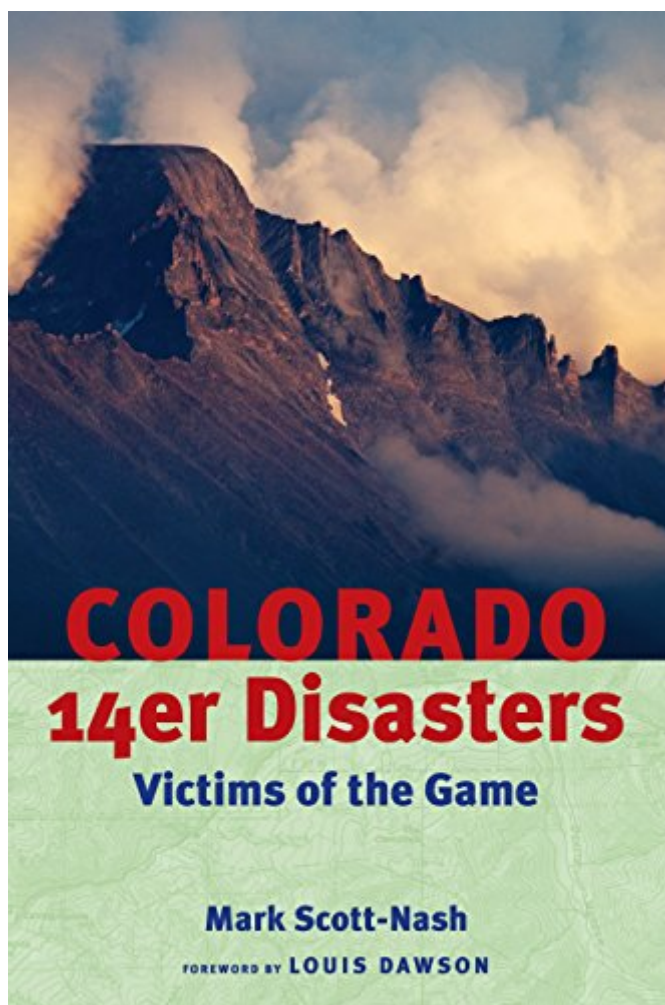


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Colorado 14er Disasters:: Victims Of The Game



Synopsis

Fourteener mania, the phenomena characterized by a seemingly obsessive drive to summit the list of all fifty-four of Colorado's 14,000-foot peaks, is an older tradition than many may realize. Along with intensely positive experiences in climbing is the possibility of the opposite extreme to become stranded, severely injured, or even killed, in disturbingly easy ways. This book explores this dark side of climbing. When an accident happens on a 14er, the victim is far from help and in an environment where rescue is difficult at best. The book is full of hair-raising stories of these disasters and rescue attempts and also aids in avoiding such disasters.

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Customer Reviews

Excellent book. I read it first on Kindle then sent my older brother a copy for his birthday. My brother and his wife had the 14er fever and had reached the summit on all but three of the mountains. They had come close on the other 3 but each time weather kept them from making the top. They are older now and haven't climbed for about ten years. They were planning to get in shape in order to try the last 3 again when they retired. After he read this book, I asked him if he was ready to try them again. He said no, that when they climbed before they had been so lucky, that they had always climbed

alone and apparently while reading the book realized they had done a lot of things wrong and he was glad they stopped when they did before they had a disaster of their own making. So thanks to this book I still have my older brother and his wife.

I would have been well served to read this book before finishing all of the 14ers, but I could not muster up the courage to do so. The book is about some of the disasters on the mountains. The stories range from talking about some of the famous deaths in the mountains, like the Talus Monkey, to some of the tourists on Longs Peak. The book is deeper than a chronicling of disasters, rather it is about how to avoid some of the costly mistakes that people make. Sometimes in the mountains, freak accidents happen, and other times, it is through errors of the hikers. What is interesting is that often mistakes compound that lead to a death. This is probably a book you would not enjoy unless you enjoy the great outdoors. Also, you will enjoy the book much more if you are engaged in some type of dangerous mountain activity. Throughout the years, I have been fortunate to not have a serious incident, but I have witnessed some highly close calls. Knowing your limits, and knowing the rules of engagement are helpful in staying alive. Another lesson is to never become overconfident. The day you believe you have it all figured out, will probably be the start of the countdown to your end. This was a good read, though sad, but one that I could relate to, and one that I put off reading for many years, but it was less anxiety producing knowing that all of the dangerous mountains have been climbed.

This is a must read not only for people who climb or want to climb 14ers, but for people who hike and spend time on Colorado mountains. My wife and I were surprised at how easily the victims in this book succumbed to the elements. These are eye-opening stories and force readers to reconsider pushing forward when weather has worsened or when the trail is too icy, snowy, muddy, etc. A surprising number of these stories turn tragic due to one partner convincing the other partner to push on despite fear or concern over conditions. Always follow your instinct and not your partner's tunnel vision for reaching the top.

I read this in a day, mostly due to the excellent writing though it is less than 200 pages. Rather than try to cover every 14er disaster, the author picks a sampling based on cause, mostly recent but some older accidents as well which he links to more recent events. The author pulls no punches when faulting some of the participants but it isn't done in a "blame the victim" manner. Rather it's simply an explanation of why misfortune fell to some. I appreciate his lack of judgementalness while

still providing awareness to the reader how quickly mother nature can turn on us, and serving as a wakeup that much of the west is still very much remote and wild. And rescue may be days away, not just a few hours, and sometimes one can still disappear never to be found (the final tale).

This is an informative series of tragedies that the author has used to educate the reader on what to avoid when mountaineering in CO. By relating to mistakes that were made and the accidents that occurred it helps show how potentially dangerous mountaineering can be. This book helps demonstrate how an assumed easy day of hiking can become fatal if the right preparation, equipment, and knowledge isn't used and put into place.

I pretty much concur with the other reviewers: Scott-Nash writes well, although most of these true stories of tragedy mostly tell themselves. For anyone who has hiked and climbed in the mountains, especially in Colorado, these are grim cautionary tales. If we cannot save these victims, at least maybe we can avoid becoming one of them. Many times while hiking with my companions, we have had discussions about how to avoid making bad decisions, and what we would do if such a disaster befell us (it's easy to think we'd all be calm and heroic, but panic and pain can bring the strongest man to a bad conclusion). We have often said, "You know, just one careless slip on this cliff or trail, and this outing would change from carefree to nightmare!" We try to always carry emergency and survival gear, because nobody goes out planning to get lost or injured, do they? But when climbing 14ers, it often goes beyond being careless. It involves being poorly informed, or poorly prepared, or a poor judge of your own abilities, or worse, a poor judge of your companion's abilities or character (hence the wife who let her husband lead her deeper and deeper into the worst possible route up Holy Cross...). Even if you have never climbed a 14er, this book will hold your attention.

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