



A History of the Arctic: Nature, Exploration and Exploitation

John McCannon

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Bitter cold and constant snow. Polar bears, seals, and killer whales. Victor Frankenstein chasing his monstrous creation across icy terrain in a dogsled. The arctic calls to mind a myriad different images. Consisting of the Arctic Ocean and parts of Canada, the United States, Russia, Greenland, Finland, Norway and Sweden, the arctic possesses a unique ecosystem—temperatures average negative 29 degrees Fahrenheit in winter and rarely rise above freezing in summer—and the indigenous peoples and cultures that live in the region have had to adapt to the harsh weather conditions. As global temperatures rise, the arctic is facing an environmental crisis, with melting glaciers causing grave concern around the world. But for all the renown of this frozen region, the arctic remains far from perfectly understood.

In *A History of the Arctic*, award-winning polar historian John McCannon provides an engaging overview of the region that spans from the Stone Age to the present. McCannon discusses polar exploration and science, nation-building, diplomacy, environmental issues, and climate change, and the role indigenous populations have played in the arctic's story. Chronicling the history of each arctic nation, he details the many failed searches for a Northwest Passage and the territorial claims that hamper use of these waterways. He also explores the resources found in the arctic—oil, natural gas, minerals, fresh water, and fish—and describes the importance they hold as these resources are depleted elsewhere, as well as the challenges we face in extracting them.

A timely assessment of current diplomatic and environmental realities, as well as the dire risks the region now faces, *A History of the Arctic* is a thoroughly engrossing book on the past—and future—of the top of the world.

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