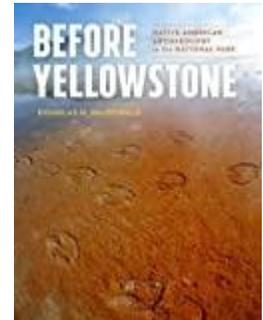


Douglas H. MacDonald. *Before Yellowstone: Native American Archaeology in the National Park.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018. x + 230 pp. \$29.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-295-74220-5.



Reviewed by Natale Zappia (California State University, Northridge)

Published on H-Environment (May, 2022)

Commissioned by Daniella McCahey (Texas Tech University)

Since 1872, Yellowstone National Park has beckoned nature enthusiasts around the country and the world to experience “nature” and glimpse the “prehistory” of another age before humans inhabited every corner of the planet. As Douglas H. MacDonald argues in the beautifully illustrated *Before Yellowstone*, though, Yellowstone has been inhabited and shaped by human hands for at least eleven thousand years. Indeed, Yellowstone’s unique flora, fauna, and geology have been intimately used by a kaleidoscope of Indigenous cultures, some traveling as many as one thousand miles to mine for obsidian.

MacDonald’s book is a synthetic work and primer on recent debates, methods, and discoveries—all framed within an accessible travel-guide writing style that invites nonexperts into the overlooked Indigenous history of Yellowstone. MacDonald reflects on the application of state violence to erase all traces of Native culture in order to design a “primordial” natural space—as with other national parks, particularly those created during the most violent period of Indian removal dur-

ing the late nineteenth century. He highlights the rich and well-developed historiography around the relationship between Native Americans and national parks. This process occurred in almost all of the iconic national treasures, such as Yosemite, Olympic, and Sequoia.

Fortunately, national park officials have revisited these past injustices and now incorporate this history into the fabric of the visitor experience, while also partnering with tribal experts and officials in a respectful and equitable manner to protect Native resources and access to the park. Works like MacDonald’s are thus becoming more of a common feature in the ubiquitous National Park Service gift shops frequented by millions of tourists each year. This interface offers a unique opportunity to encourage visitors from around the world to rethink the history of national parks but also reimagine a future that includes its original Indigenous caretakers. MacDonald’s book, then, is a welcome corrective and a model for other national park guidebooks and histories.

Written in a concise yet comprehensive style, the book systemically surveys each corner of Yellowstone, highlighting the unique ecological features region by region. Each of MacDonald's eight chapters highlights resources tied to sections of the park (for example, "Obsidian Cliff," "Yellowstone Lake," "Rivers," and "Mountains"). For each resource and region, MacDonald details Native historical patterns of migration, production, trade, and settlement. Each chapter carefully dismantles the once prevalent view that Yellowstone served as a "no man's land" without sustained, multi-tribal occupation. In fact, MacDonald shows, every corner of the park met the physical, cultural, and spiritual needs of numerous Native societies over thousands of years.

As MacDonald takes the reader on this journey, he situates himself into the narrative. Numerous anecdotes related to digs, explorations, and other personal stories pepper the text, adding a refreshing layer to what might be a somewhat formulaic study. As a reader, I was hoping to similarly see more of these personal narratives and oral histories from Native communities, as well as a comparative approach exploring how other national parks in the US and around the world display their histories and engage Indigenous communities. Despite these misgivings, this study is worthy of being emulated by other scholars interested in the intersection of national parks, public history, and local knowledge.

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Citation: Natale Zappia. Review of MacDonald, Douglas H. *Before Yellowstone: Native American Archaeology in the National Park*. H-Environment, H-Net Reviews. May, 2022.

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