

Reviews

Transient Landscapes: Insights on a Changing Planet

By Ellen Wohl

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Reviewed by Virginia McConnell Simmons

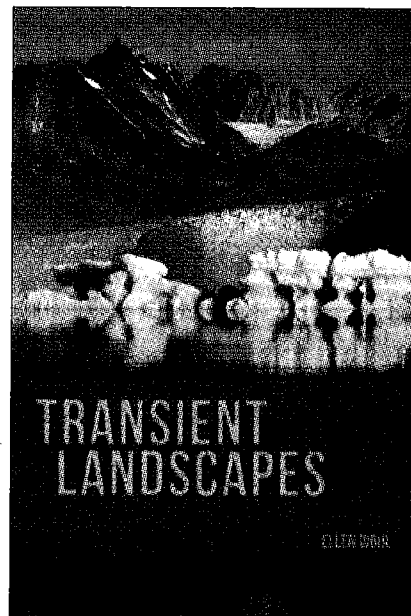
Whether you are a student just beginning to learn about geomorphology or fluvial systems, a traveler seeking destinations far from the beaten track, or a senior citizen reading in bed before turning out the light, this is a book to tell you about the geological and other natural forces that have created ancient and ongoing changes on our planet. While reading about tectonic uplift and earthquake, volcanism, water drainage and many other subjects in about 40 very short essays, you also will be on a journey around the world with the perfect guide.

Combining scientific information with an accessible writing style, Ellen Wohl, PhD, gives the readers an understanding of our planet's geologic and geographic changes, with descriptions of each representative location you will visit with her. For nonscientific readers like this reviewer, the experience will be an epiphany, and you will probably find yourself rereading individual sections to savor them more fully later.

You will come to feel that you know Dr. Wohl personally while enjoying her accounts of field work with her students, colleagues or fellow outdoor enthusiasts, from Japan and India to Australia and Italy and so on around the globe. You will suffer her affliction caused by nematodes at La Selva in Costa Rica, while she still goes on describing the profuse vegetation in a swamp with vast rainfall; and you will be blinded by mosquitoes in Arctic National Park while she continues to explain the weathering and gravity that bring down talus. A lover of uncrowded spaces, she frets because of the ubiquity of humans in England's tamed, rolling Lake Country that long ago was covered by dense forest. She is awed by the abundance and diversity of the Amazon's biology, while she discusses the hydrology of this greatest of rivers. And she takes us with her on about a half-dozen field trips here in Colorado, mostly in the Front Range.

Ellen E. Wohl, Ph.D., is a veteran professor in Colorado State University's College of Natural Sciences and a respected author and contributor to numerous books and articles focusing on subjects such as hydraulics, sediment transport, channel geometry and carbon storage, and human interaction with them. Her extensive research and intensive field work provide the framework for this book, *Transient Landscapes*, which is quite different from her other published works. Each essay in this volume is accompanied by one photograph, and graphics in appropriate sections show broad geophysical regions, although this reviewer would have appreciated additional detailed maps – probably an impossibility in view of the large number that would have been required.

This volume will delight readers discovering our changing planet – its past, its present and its future. The word *delight* that the author borrows from Shelley's "Spirit of Delight" in her introduction, is one that could aptly apply to the author herself and to this publication. ■



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