



# The Blue Bear: A True Story of Friendship and Discovery in the Alaskan Wild

*Lynn Schooler*

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With a body twisted by adolescent scoliosis and memories of the brutal death of a woman he loved, Lynn Schooler kept the world at arm's length, drifting through the wilds of Alaska as a commercial fisherman, outdoorsman, and wilderness guide. In 1990, Schooler met Japanese photographer Michio Hoshino, and began a profound friendship cemented by a shared love of adventure and a passionate quest to find the elusive glacier bear, an exceedingly rare creature, seldom seen and shrouded in legend. But only after Hoshino's tragic death from a bear attack does Schooler succeed in photographing the animal -- completing a remarkable journey that ultimately brings new meaning to his life.

*The Blue Bear* is an unforgettable book. Set amid the wild archipelagoes, deep glittering fjords, and dense primordial forests of Alaska's Glacier Coast, it is rich with the lyric sensibility and stunning prose of such nature classics as Barry Lopez's *Arctic Dreams* and Peter Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard*.

## The Blue Bear: A True Story of Friendship and Discovery in the Alaskan Wild Details

Date : Published May 6th 2003 by Ecco (first published May 1st 2002)

ISBN : 9780060935733

Author : Lynn Schooler

Format : Paperback 288 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Adventure, Environment, Nature, Animals

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## From Reader Review The Blue Bear: A True Story of Friendship and Discovery in the Alaskan Wild for online ebook

### Brandon Clark says

The Blue Bear by Lynn Schooler is an excellent book. I have previously read a book by this author and was eager to read another. Schooler travels to multiple locations throughout his home state, Alaska, telling the story of his adventures along the way. The purpose of this book is to entertain the reader. Throughout the book, Schooler uses comical scenes and phrases to enhance his writing to make it more engaging for the reader.

Throughout the book, the author and his god friend are in search of a "blue bear," a type of bear rarely spotted in the Alaskan wild. Luckily, they never give up their search and one day, they are able to photograph one. Based on this information, I believe that the overall theme for this book is to not give up on your dreams.

I would say that this book has a descriptive style of writing. The author uses excellent descriptions to depict for the reader a sense of amazement at the natural beauty in Alaska. Real color photographs are also placed in the center of the book for the readers to be able to look at. These photographs help to visualize the story and helped me to understand what the author was talking about.

Overall, this book was pretty good. It was kind of slow in the middle, unfortunately, but the excellent descriptions made up for that. I would recommend this book to any teenager or adult interested in reading an engaging book. I also highly recommend his other books, as they too offer excellent storylines and superb descriptions of his adventures in the Alaskan wild.

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### Heidi says

I loved how he gracefully interwove the natural and cultural history of Alaska with the story of his friendship throughout the book.

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### Pam says

Not a book I would have normally been drawn to. Skimmed some bits, but he did go on about scenery and boating. And bears are scary.

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### Andrea Conarro says

What did I think? It was my weekend indulgence, pressed because I had borrowed my parents' copy, pressed because I wanted to get it read quick.

I thought author Lynn Schooler was a bit self involved at times, but who among us isn't? When he spoke of

his twisting scoliosis spine causing him to distrust and become a hermit, I felt like giving him the Cher treatment in Moonstruck--slapping him across the face and saying, "Snap out of it!" But I also did not ultimately mind his wound-licking moments. Seems like time in the wide open wild would lend itself to feeling both insignificant but also feeling like the most significant (and only) being in existence.

I thought the writing laced with taxonomical(?) musings was very well done. I appreciate lichen all the more for understanding its inability to fit into any category. I plan to try to discern whether the next killer whale I see is a "resident" or a "transient" (the transients being the more mysterious, silent, and sinister, of course). The footnotes lent the book an authoritative air that suited the author, and I could imagine him leading a crew into the fjords of southeast Alaska, speaking on all manner of topics in a know-it-all-ish but vulnerable-under-it-all-ish manner.

I also came to love Michio, just as the author did. "Everything gets what it needs" reminded me of "Water always finds its level"--who can argue with nature, with the master plan afoot in all life? I was angry at him for sleeping in a tent when he had been warned, because of the fate that befell him, but it was hard to stay angry when I read his final written words of the "Nanook" ("Bear"), in a children's story reproduced here, stating that Bear and Man have no real line between them, that one life matters not more than the other... Left me kind of lolling back on the sofa for a few minutes, absorbing.

It's been several hours since I read the last pages and I am still absorbing. Kind of like a particularly heavy dream from which you awake but remain in that cloud of dream-feeling all day long.

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## Maryanne says

Books Read: The Blue Bear 04072014 By Lynn Schooler

Really enjoyed. Would like to see Michio Hoshino's photos.

With a body twisted by adolescent scoliosis and memories of the brutal death of a woman he loved, Lynn Schooler kept the world at arm's length, drifting through the wilds of Alaska as a commercial fisherman, outdoorsman, and wilderness guide. In 1990, Schooler met Japanese photographer Michio Hoshino, and began a profound friendship cemented by a shared love of adventure and a passionate quest to find the elusive glacier bear, an exceedingly rare creature, seldom seen and shrouded in legend. But only after Hoshino's tragic death from a bear attack does Schooler succeed in photographing the animal -- completing a remarkable journey that ultimately brings new meaning to his life.

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## Teresa Dicentra says

The Blue Bear by Lynn Schooler

I have not enjoyed a book this much in a very long time! Excellent read.

This nature adventure story takes place mostly in South East Alaska, but it is not like any other book I have

ever read about Alaska.

Non-fiction, and somewhat autobiographical, it tells the story of personal tragedy, natural history and friendship between the author and his photographer friend, Michio Hosino. In a way, it is a wonderful tribute to Hoshino and his work.

The book starts very slowly with Schooler's solitary and lonely life, first with his battle with scoliosis as a child, then as a whale watching tour guide. This is where he first meets Hoshino.

In addition to being an amazing photographer, Hosino was also a wonderful cook and apparently a risk taker. Some of the choices he makes are not the best ones. Often he would be so engrossed in his photography that he ends up in potentially dangerous situations. This is true for the author as well. In one scene, they get WAY too close to a pod of humpback whales that are bubble net feeding, putting the boat and everyone on it at risk.

Throughout the book, the author sometimes goes off on tangents about natural history or Native American folk lore. Not only is this interesting, he always comes back to make his point.

Being from the Pacific Northwest, a lot of the place names are familiar to me. Vancouver for example, is vanCouverden in Dutch. The cycle and connection of the old growth forests to the sea was especially interesting. As was the Tlingit history of the Kake wars. It was completely tangential to the real story, but interesting nonetheless.

The writing itself is poetic, but not sappy or cliché-filled. It is not pretentious, but uses a wide variety of vocabulary to make his points and illustrate Alaska to us. To give you an example, chapter 2 opens with this:

The slate-colored bird crouched flat to the ground and spread its wings in a threatening pose. One of the crows gathered in a circle around the disabled kingfisher darted forward, stabbed at its head with the bill, then retreated as the injured bird spun to meet the threat. Mouth agape, the kingfisher reared back and lunged, only to be mobbed by more crows rushing in from the side.

Schooler has a talent for describing what he is witnessing in nature. Along with this, he often includes the why of what he is describing. It adds to the story because, without that, we would not understand why Schooler and Hosino became such good friends, and later became obsessed with finding the blue bear.

We do not hear any mention of the blue bear until more than half way through the book. In the meantime, the story is laced with botany, geology, and natural history. Schooler is obviously well educated in the natural world of Alaska. It is apparent in his writing that this knowledge did not just come from research while writing the book, but a working knowledge of living an outdoor lifestyle.

Hoshino becomes enchanted with the bear first, then draws Schooler into his obsession. They spend several seasons, between photography and boat trips, searching the glaciers and old growth for the bear, without luck.

I knew from reading other reviews of this book what was coming, but it still came as a shock to me as I neared the end of the book... I don't want to say more and spoil the story for anyone.

At the end, I cannot imagine how the author felt upon finally seeing the blue bear. He describes it well. Everything for him, it seems, is cyclic and that is a running theme throughout the book; both in his nature observations and in his own life.

## **Ann says**

Like a photo excursion along the Alaska coast. A tribute to a relationship built between a guide and a client and the wild creatures and places that lured them. But not a Disney cruise. The dangers of the wilderness play as big a role as times of calm reflection.

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## **Karen says**

This book is a complete package of excellent writing, accurate descriptions of nature and Alaskan culture, and a thoughtful story of a beautiful friendship. The author describes his meeting of Michio, a professional photographer from Japan who books a charter of the author's boat in SE Alaska. Over time, despite the temporary nature of relationships of guide and client, an unlikely relationship develops. The author teaches the client about the nature of SE AK and slowly the client teaches the author about love and life.

I loved the writing for its spare use of language and how it weaves natural and cultural history into the narrative.

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## **Steve says**

My son bought this book for me, otherwise I most likely wouldn't have picked it up. I'm glad he did. The author lives on a boat in Juneau, home is the 'Wilderness Swift' at the harbor. He is a guide for wildlife photographers, and takes bookings for trips around Southeast Alaska. The story focuses on the author's growing friendship with a Japanese photographer, Michio Hoshino, and his search for the elusive and seldom seen Glacier bear, so called blue because of the hue of its fur. Their adventures kept me turning page after page, it is a book that is hard to put down.

For Fathers' Day this year, my son bought me a book by Michio, titled Hoshino's Alaska. It is full of his photography, accompanied by writings about the various pictures. Having read the Blue Bear first, then seeing the pictures, made it all that more special.

Whenever I'm in Juneau, I become a wharf rat and try to find the 'Wilderness Swift.' So far, I haven't, but that isn't surprising, as the author's skill as a wildlife guide are in high demand. Get a cup of hot cocoa, sit by the fire and enjoy this adventure of friendship, the natural world and our efforts to understand it.

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## **dead letter office says**

A really good story of a place and a person and a vision that are all powerfully solitary and unique. Something about the relationship between the author and the photographer who was the subject struck me as creepy, though. Reading nonfiction where you have that unreliable narrator feel is actually viscerally unsettling when it ends in the death of one of the subjects (Two Coots in a Canoe: An Unusual Story of Friendship).

## Cat says

Great book!!!! Schooler was a great guide as his writing introduced me to the Alaskan wilderness, his lifestyle and his friendship with Michio Hoshino. I had never heard of Michio before and since I have read Scholler book, I can NOT forget him. This fact proves Schooler's book achieved a great goal.. But even beyond bringing me close to Michio, Schooler brought me close to his heart --This author reads honest and smart... I really loved the work!.

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## M.F. Soriano says

I enjoyed some of the nature-oriented passages, mostly because they engage my interests, but in the end this book felt contrived. It tries to wrap itself around a central topic--the author's friendship with a nature photographer--but the topic is too lightweight to support a whole book. The relationship in question is based on just a few shared trips, with more details of the natural events witnessed than of interpersonal bonding between the two main characters, and the author comes across more believably as a solitary man than as a man very profoundly connected to his friend. Solitary men can write good memoirs, but in this case the 'friendship' topic--typical memoir fare--feels unsuitable, and the author's effort feels fake. The memoir market is becoming a victim of its own success, with its increasing reliance on glib cliches and worn-out approaches, and this book is a memoir-formula casualty.

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## Todd Ryan says

IMPORTANT: If you choose to read this book, do NOT look at the color photos in the middle of the book until after you read it!!! The first and second photo pages are fine, but the third one container a major spoiler! I don't know who's decision that was, but it almost ruined the reading experience for me.

This book started out slowly and leisurely, and I almost abandoned it in the first 100 pages. But then, I thought of the handful of people I've met that are great sailors or hunters, and I thought of how I always felt like they weren't bound by the same laws of time as myself. Their wealth of knowledge required investing the time required for them to disclose it at their pace and with the level of detail they chose. With that mindset adjustment, I pressed on and was drawn deeper and deeper into Lynn's story.

The fact that this is his first book is almost unbelievable to me. About 75% through the book, a sense of dread began forming and I began subconsciously feeling the remaining pages to see how much was left. I rarely feel that way with a book, but I flipped to the end just to see how many blank or appendix pages were included so I wasn't caught off guard prematurely.

This book will cause cravings, or at least it did for me. It made me crave the outdoors, adventures, solitude, a deep and genuine friendship. It also caused me to consider the passage of time and how loss impacts us.

This is a fantastic book, and I highly recommend reading it as well as giving it my absolute highest rating.

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## Elizabeth says

I'd heard great things about this book -- and even so it surprised me. Schooler is earnest and genuine. His mixing of history/natural history with the story of coming to know photographer Michio Hoshino is a bit awkward. The transitions between, for example, "my" story and "here's some background about Tlingit culture" are clunky -- but still, there's something here about the influence of friendship that is moving. Something about the ways of seeing that is valuable.

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## Tom says

I really feel like I should love this book. There's so much that's right with it. *The Blue Bear* is ultimately a story of admiration and love for a good man. It's written by Lynn Schooler, a guide who makes his living taking photographers around the waters and glaciers of the fractured straits, islands, and bays near Juneau Alaska. One of his repeat customers is a Japanese nature photographer named Michio Hoshino. In the course of their working relationship Hoshino and Schooler become good friends, joined by their love of the outside world as well as their mutual sincerity and seeming lack of pretense. The title comes from the rare subspecies of black bear, called the Glacier or Blue Bear, that they search for on trip after trip. Ultimately Hoshino, now with a family, is killed by a bear in Siberia before the successful resolution of their quest.

I really feel like applauding Schooler for this work. He writes beautifully, describing the world of southeastern Alaska with obvious love and reverence. The world doesn't have enough homages to people who are loved just for being good, nor enough written about the love in a friendship rather than the love of romance. I really enjoyed hearing about Hoshino who obviously, both from Schooler's description and the words of others, was a wonderful example of someone who was a positive in so many peoples' lives. Schooler clearly was writing to honor his friend and not himself.

It took me a while to understand why I liked and admired this book rather than loving it. I wanted to love it. Ultimately I realized that Schooler didn't go quite far enough (in my opinion). He would start to write about his admiration for Hoshino and reflect on his own relationship with the world, but these thoughts didn't seem to go anywhere. It seemed like the book was supposed to be a journey of discovery about the natural world, Hoshino, and Schooler's own outlook and attitude, but only his admiration for Hoshino came through loud and clear. I even admire this in some ways, as not everything can be wrapped up in a nice, neat little package, and that shouldn't be forced. However, it felt like there were strands to Schooler's narrative that seemed to go somewhere and then just stopped. I think this is what kept *The Blue Bear* from being an absolute favorite of mine, even though I love Schooler's effort and desire to honor a wonderful man.

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