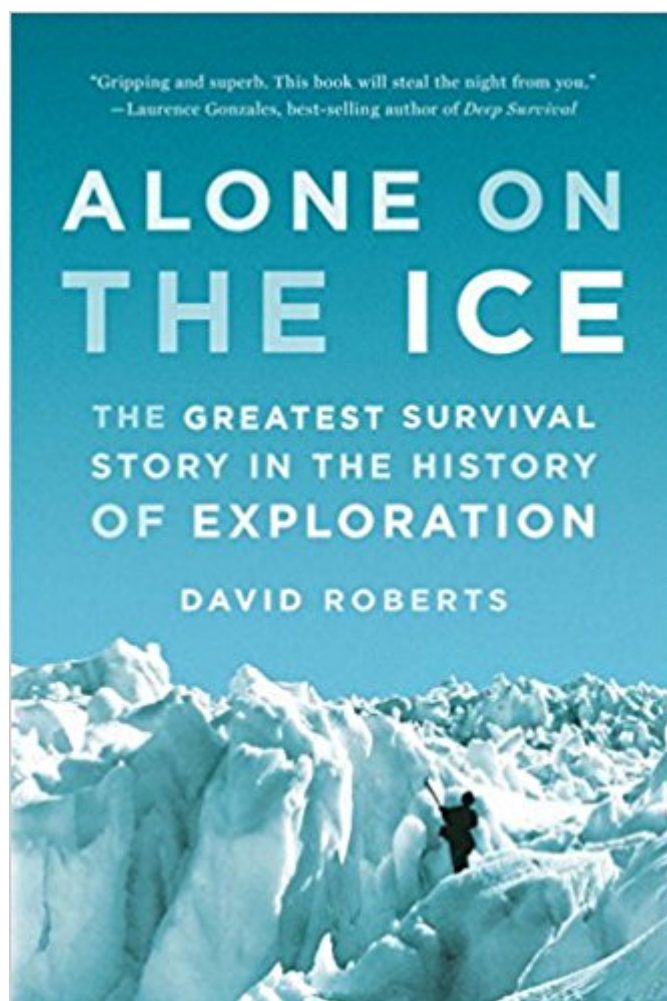




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# Alone On The Ice: The Greatest Survival Story In The History Of Exploration



## Synopsis

“An important missing story from the heroic age of Antarctic exploration.”—*Laurence Gonzales*, author of *Deep Survival* On January 17, 1913, alone and near starvation, Douglas Mawson, leader of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition, was hauling a sledge to get back to base camp. The dogs were gone. Now Mawson himself plunged through a snow bridge, dangling over an abyss by the sledge harness. A line of poetry gave him the will to haul himself back to the surface. Mawson was sometimes reduced to crawling, and one night he discovered that the soles of his feet had completely detached from the flesh beneath. On February 8, when he staggered back to base, his features unrecognizably skeletal, the first teammate to reach him blurted out, “Which one are you?” This thrilling and almost unbelievable account establishes Mawson in his rightful place as one of the greatest polar explorers and expedition leaders. It is illustrated by a trove of Frank Hurley’s famous Antarctic photographs, many never before published in the United States. 24 pages of illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Douglas Mawson is not as well known as Amundsen, Scott, or Shackleton, but as this intense and thrilling epic shows, he deserves a place on the pedestal next to these other great explorers of the Antarctic. Trained as a geologist, the Australian-born Mawson launched an expedition to a largely unexplored region of Antarctica in 1912. The effort soon turned into a grim struggle of endurance and survival against an unforgiving environment. Mawson and his team had to cope with the unpredictability of severe weather, hidden crevices in ice that could easily swallow a man, the loss

of their food and other supplies, and their slow physical deterioration. Roberts attributes their survival in no small measure to the guts and determination of Mawson. He is portrayed here as a fascinating combination of reticence and aggressiveness, with an ability to both command and inspire his men. This fast-moving account earns for Mawson and his team a well-deserved place of honor in the so-called heroic age of Antarctic exploration. --Jay Freeman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If you like frostbite-inducing weather and death-defying adventure stories, then award-winning author David Roberts gives you what you want: a wonderfully told, impressively researched tale of brave explorers confronting Antarctic blizzards, a deadly landscape pockmarked with deep crevasses and intrepid men trying to come back alive. --Chuck Leddy"Impressively seamless and straightforward. A tale of action . . . strongly founded on the words of the expeditionary members themselves. --Christina Thompson"Mawson, the unsung hero of Antarctica, gets his due at last. --Paul Harris"Admirably succeeds in restoring the luster that the [expedition] and its leader deserve. --Dennis Drabelle"A fresh and thoroughly researched account of Douglas Mawson's epic journey of self-rescue across one of the most inhospitable regions known to man. Roberts takes the reader alongside the men of the 1912 Australasian Antarctic Expedition, and the desperation of Mawson's sledge journey can be well imagined step by frigid step. --Ed Viesturs, author of K2: Life and Death on the World's Most Dangerous Mountain"This is Roberts at his best, telling a little-known tale of adventure, tragedy, and endurance. Mawson may be the most famous Australian explorer, and *Alone on the Ice* is an admirable introduction of him to American readers. --Greg Child, author of *Over the Edge*"Others have written the loose outlines of Douglas Mawson's astonishing survival against the worst conditions that Antarctica can deliver a lesser-known but equally compelling epic as that of Ernest Shackleton but Roberts's telling trumps them all. --Gordon Wiltsie, author of *To the Ends of*"An accurate and enthralling account of the greatest story of polar exploration and survival. Roberts takes the reader back to a time of hardship, collective friendship, and a level of determination unknown in today's culture. This book will make you cherish every meal and the joys of a warm bed. --Conrad Anker, coauthor of *The Lost Explorer*"

Great story but, it's told in a rather slow random manner. The story starts in media res which grabs the reader's attention but, then it reverts back to the history and setup of the expedition and starts to drag. Later in Antarctica the author wants to tie up all the stories of the different sub-expeditions but it hurts the narrative and ends up dragging. 90% of the expedition is spent waiting out the winters in

the hut so the boredom of that situation really comes through. I learned a lot but it took me forever to read because it just wasn't engaging. If you are an academic or devotee of Mawson you will appreciate all the minutiae and biographical details but, if you just want an exiting read you may be bored as I was.

This book is essentially a biography of Douglas Mawson, the Australian Antarctic explorer who in 1912 survived a 30-day, almost 300-mile trek alone back to camp after his two teammates died. One of his teammates fell down a crevasse along with the sledge that carried most of the team's important equipment and most of its food, and the other died thereafter due to exposure, so Mawson had to survive on half or fewer rations. Mawson was a geology professor at the University of Adelaide and wanted to explore as much of the continent as possible rather than reach the South Pole (he was with Shackleton in 1908 when they came within 95 miles of the pole). He formed the Australasian Expedition with 24 members who landed and wintered over in what turned out to be the windiest spot on earth; some of the members, including Mawson, spent two winters there. The book is well-organized and Roberts is a great storyteller who argues that from a scientific standpoint the expedition achieved and explored more than those of the more famous Antarctic explorers Amundsen, Scott and Shackleton. Roberts finds little fault with Mawson and reviewed many letters, diaries and other primary sources. Roberts may have gone a little overboard defending Mawson against attacks made in 2001 by the son of one of the other expedition members. At the end of the book Roberts makes a perfunctory comment that Mawson had his faults, but the book rarely delved into them. Some people doubt Mawson's story that, after his teammates died, he fell in a crevasse to a depth of 14 feet hanging only by a rope, and in his weakened and starved condition climbed hand-over-hand most of the way, fell back down, then climbed hand-over-hand a second time to escape the crevasse. The book discusses a modern attempt (which failed) to replicate this feat and others have expressed doubt about its authenticity, but makes no comment on whether Mawson fabricated or embellished the story. One hundred years later I don't think anyone can say if the story is definitely true or not, but Roberts should at least have acknowledged that others doubt Mawson was telling the truth about it. Feb. 14, 2015

This factual recounting of a scientific expedition to Antarctica is at times unbelievable, at times inspiring, at times tragic. The author never sensationalizes the facts or the telling of them, which makes the story even more incredible and a fantastic page-turner.

Well written prose, but as the author admits in the book, the multitude of concurrent events makes a coherent and linear narrative very difficult, and I'm afraid that the problem was very evident in this book. As for the explorers themselves, for my money they were nothing but egotistically driven obsessives and animal abusers (of their dogs) of the first rank. The dogs that they worked to the point of collapse and then killed and ate are the real heroes here.

I have read a majority of Roberts' books and delight in most. However, this one, along with the Geronimo book, have left me reading only 10 to 20 pages a night instead of the sometimes endless with his truly memorable ones - In Search of the Old Ones and Mount Deborah. I do not argue that this was indeed the most daring of the Antarctic explorations but, as Roberts portrays it, the most boring to read about.

I watched a short video on YouTube and was very interested in reading a more this is a fantastic book with pictures and very well-researched I couldn't put the book down

This one well deserves its consistent top classic rank. It is a story of staggering hardship and monumental determination, engagingly well written, which neither my husband and I could put down (thankfully we each had it on our e.reader so we did not have to attempt to share a single print copy). An absolute must read for any outdoor or armchair adventurer.

One of the most interesting books I have read. For two entire winters with no possibility of rescue where the world's most severe weather occurs. Winds quite often strong as 60- 100mph and temperatures common to be 30 plus below zero. Is a fantastic story of endurance and perseverance from these men especially when knowing of the much lesser quality of food, clothing and equipment used for exploring in 1913 compared to the much more advanced available today. Is difficult to imagine walking several hundred miles pulling sledges weighing 300 pounds over crevices, up ice hills and snow drifts. I seldom read a book a second time but with this is one I likely will. Only drawback is several terms used in that time period are not familiar to the average reader and the author could have done a little better with explanations of what exactly they are or mean.

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