

Good morning! This is Marylou Burton. You're listening to "Reading Between the Lines," brought to you by the Friends of the Homer Public Library.

Many Alaskans – including me and most everyone I know – have had more than their share of adventures and close encounters with the great outdoors. They climb mountains, paddle down rivers, trek to remote places, head out in small boats on big oceans – and sometimes in the process they get caught in avalanches, wrap their kayaks around rocks, lose toes and fingers to frost bite, not to mention boats and even their lives to storms.

Great material for a book, huh? Well, not necessarily. The list of Alaskans that write about their adventures and/or love affair with our environment is pretty long, but the list that write WELL is very short. Juneau-based guide and photographer Lynn Schooler belongs on the short list.

Schooler's first book, *The Blue Bear*, published in 2002, is part nature essay, part survival guide, and part quest story. Schooler, who until recently lived on his boat and has probably spent way too much time alone, was hired by famed photographer Michio Hoshino to guide him in his search for the rare and elusive blue glacier bear. Over the course of several trips, the two men become close friends and Schooler learns to open himself to another human being. Hoshino, tragically, is killed by a bear while in Russia on another photography trip. Schooler continues his own quest for the bear, and eventually captures the animal on film.

Schooler writes about all this with the eye of a photographer as he details the wildlife and wilderness of what he calls "Alaska's Glacier Coast," and with the pen of a poet as he reflects on his own place in that landscape. He brings these same sensibilities to "Walking Home," which was published in 2010. By now, Schooler is in his early 50's, married, and is exhausted from having spent the last two years hand-crafting a home for a marriage that seems to be on the verge of

collapse. Seeking solace and escape, he sets out on a solitary journey into the wilderness, first by boat to Lituya Bay in the Gulf of Alaska, then 120 miles by foot along the coast to Dry Bay and back. Along the way, he is pursued by an injured and dangerous brown bear – the only real “adventure,” by the way, that you’ll find in either of Schooler’s books – but most of all he encounters his own doubts and demons. Interwoven throughout are tales of earlier visitors to the area – trappers, explorers, marooned sailors and the indigenous Tlingits – as well as Schooler’s keen observations and clear love of the wildlife and landscape. This is nature writing at its best. No – strike that. This is just good writing.

*The Blue Bear* and *Walking Home* are both available at the Homer Public Library. Library hours are Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m, and Tuesday and Thursday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

One last note before I close: Congratulations to friend and fellow contributor to this radio spot, Cecilia Worth, whose short story “The Etiquette of Children” was the Grand Prize Winner in this year’s UAA/Anchorage Daily News writers’ contest. This is quite an honor. Good work, Cecilia.

Tune in next Sunday morning at this same time for “Reading Between the Lines,” right here on KBBI 890, Homer!