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BOOKMONGER

Science adventure books for summer travels

If you have middle-grade kids and you're heading out for a road trip around the Pacific Northwest this summer, may I recommend the books of Portland science writer Elizabeth Rusch as a way of enriching your youngsters' journey?

Maybe you'll be sleeping out under the stars some evening, or perhaps you're planning to take in the total solar eclipse next month. If these spark conversations with your children about what's out there in the great beyond, Rusch's book "The Mighty Mars Rovers" might be a good pick.

Rusch has authored several books for Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's lively Scientists in the Field series. This one focuses on Spirit and Opportunity, the "little rovers that could" — remarkable machines that were expected to work for three months, but actually ended up exploring the Red Planet for years. The book also traces the story of astronomy professor Steven Squyres, who served as the mission's lead scientist.

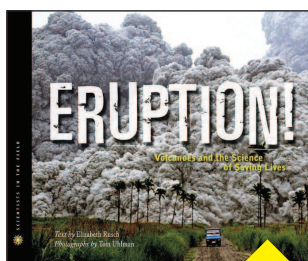
Early next year, Rusch will have a new book coming out titled "Impact!: Asteroids and the Science of Saving the World." Those prone to worry might be alarmed to know that an estimated 150 million asteroids currently hurtling through our solar system are considered large enough to wipe out an entire city. Rusch will help to allay your fears by introducing the scientists who are working on ways to identify the most dangerous

asteroids and determine what can be done to avert catastrophic contact.

The author has produced other engaging children's science books on everything from harnessing the energy of ocean waves to infant development. But her best book, in my opinion, is "Eruption! Volcanoes and the Science of Saving Lives."

We who live in the Pacific Northwest tend to affect nonchalance about living within spewing range of the volcanoes on our horizon. In ever-increasing numbers, people live and work in potential volcanic blast zones, yet there seems to be little concern about examples such as Mt. St. Helens' 1980 eruption that blew out the side of the mountain and set off catastrophic lahars. Heck, St. Helens, Rainier, Crater Lake, and other volcanic peaks in the Cascades are tourist destinations now.

Fortunately, while folks like us are snapping selfies and watching videos in the visitor center, there's a cadre of scientists that is doing plenty of worrying on our behalf. At the Cascade Volcano Observatory in Vancouver, Washington, the U.S. Geological Survey recognized that St. Helens' eruption was hardly an anomaly. More than 50 volcanoes erupt every year across the globe, many of them near densely populated areas. So the USGS has set up the Volcano Disaster Assistance Program to provide training and support for colleagues around the world. Their goal



Barnesandnoble.com

"Eruption!"
By Elizabeth Rusch
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
80 pp
\$18.99 hardcover, \$9.99 paperback or eBook

is to decipher volcanic activity and predict eruptions far enough in advance that at-risk populations can be safely evacuated.

Aside from doing a great job of detailing the hair-raising adventures of these scientists, this book is terrific because it spotlights their gender and ethnic diversity. What great role models for a fascinating and important profession.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlink.

word nerd

By RYAN HUME
FOR COAST WEEKEND

Skamokawa

[skä•mäk•ə•wā]

noun

1. Just across the river from Brownsmead lies the quaint, unincorporated community of Skamokawa, Wash., in Wahkiakum County.

Placed on the National Register as a National Historic District in 1976, Skamokawa was once known as "Little Venice" because of the construction of the town, which is built facing the Columbia River and incorporates a system of sloughs and creeks to utilize boardwalks, docks and boat traffic.

origin

From the Chinook, meaning "smoke on the water." Skamokawa was also the name of the last Wahkiakum Indian chief, who made his home in the area and sold the land to the federal government in 1851.

Unlike the 1972 Deep

Purple song, which documents an all-consuming fire at a Swiss casino on Lake Geneva while the British rock band played in 1971 with Frank Zappa and his band the Mothers of Invention, who lost all of their equipment in the infamous blaze, the Chinook word refers to the fog that would drift down from the three valleys surrounding the riverfront community to the banks of the Columbia.

"An oil tanker ran aground near Skamokawa, Washington, Thursday morning ... The Columbia near Skamokawa has been the site of several recent groundings ... Petty Officer 3rd Class Levi Read said the Columbia shipping channel is narrow

at the river bend near Skamokawa. Not much can go wrong and you can run aground there," he said." —"Oil tanker runs aground near Skamokawa," The Daily Astorian, July 6, 2017

"The whole Skamokawa valley yesterday resembled a great lake as a result of the recent storms. Damage to the roads and bridges is expected. Sunday about 7:30 P.M. a fire raft containing more than 400,000 feet of logs belonging to the Alger Logging Company broke up and drifted down the Skamokawa creek." —"Raft Carries Off Boats: Skamokawa Valley Flooded By Storm With Heavy Damage," The Morning Oregonian, Dec. 14, 1921

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