

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Issue: December 1, 2009

★ **Whaling Season: A Year in the Life of an Arctic Whale Scientist.**

Lourie, Peter (Author)

Oct 2009. 80 p. Houghton, hardcover, \$18.00. (9780618777099). 599.5.

In yet another stand-out title in the Scientists in the Field series, author and photographer Lourie transports young readers to Barrow, Alaska, the northernmost town in the U.S., where scientist John Craighead George has studied bowhead whales for more than 30 years. Combining exemplary color photos and simple, vivid language, the chapters detail not only George's day-to-day methodology, but also his motivation: to explore "the mystery of the whales—all the things that remain unknown about the animal." George conducts his research in tandem with local Iñupiaq whale hunters, and some of the book's most engrossing passages show how crucial (and accurate) the hunters' knowledge, passed down through thousands of years, is to George's modern scientific inquiry. A chapter about George's childhood in a nature-loving family (his mother is the children's book author Jean Craighead George) and pictures of him playing electric guitar at an open-mike night in Barrow add personal dimensions, but what will draw young readers most are the rich descriptions of the Iñupiaq community, in which George has so thoroughly rooted himself, and the riveting images of the Arctic whale scientist at work on the ice, holding a giant bowhead eyeball or reaching into the immense, bloody cavern of a whale's stomach. Maps, glossaries, and suggestions for further research round out this fascinating portrait of science and daily life at the "top of the world."

— *Gillian Engberg*