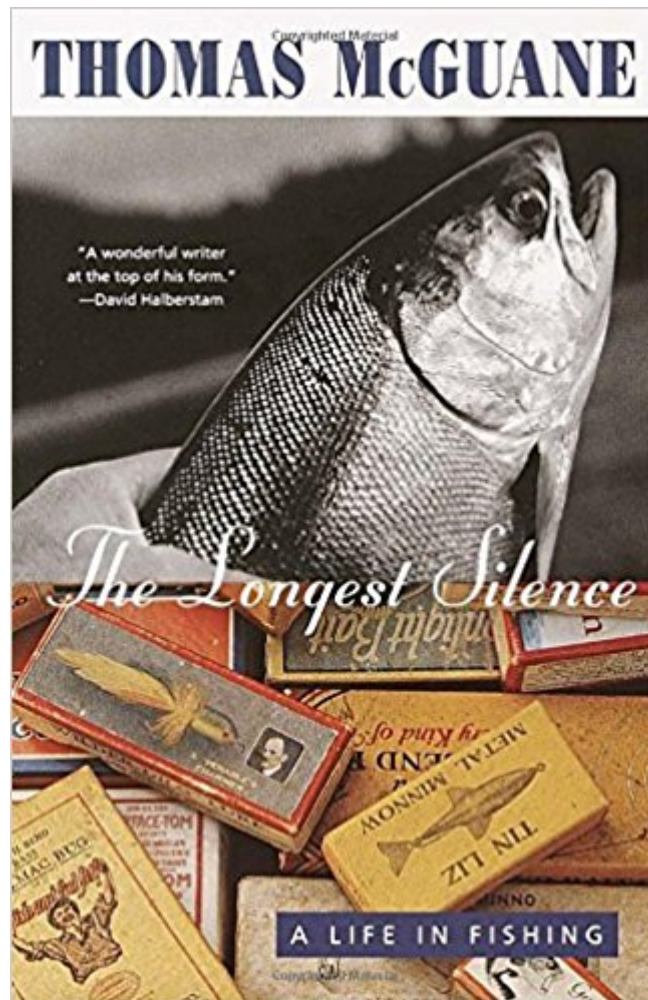


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# The Longest Silence: A Life In Fishing



## Synopsis

From the highly acclaimed author of *Ninety-Two in the Shade* and *Nothing but Blue Skies* comes this collection of breathtakingly exquisite essays borne of a lifetime spent fishing. The thirty-three essays in *The Longest Silence* take us from the tarpon of Florida to the salmon of Iceland, from the bonefish of Mexico to the trout of Montana. They bring us characters as varied as a highly literate Canadian frontiersman and a devoutly Mormon river guide and address issues ranging from the esoteric art of tying flies to the enduring philosophy of a seventeenth-century angler. Infused with a deep experience of wildlife and the outdoors, both reverent and hilarious by turns, *The Longest Silence* sets the heart pounding for a glimpse of moving water and demonstrates what dedication to sport reveals about life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As adept as Thomas McGuane has been through the years with a rod in his hand, he's even more skillful with his pen. Join the two like tippet to leader, and the result's as irresistible as a Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear in the middle of a Hendrickson hatch. For *The Longest Silence*, McGuane has trolled his inventory and assembled 33 essays written over three decades. Passionate, meditative, personal, and often very funny, they are filled with fellowship and connected by his love of angling. The title piece, a certified classic in the sporting genre, chronicles his quest for the elusive permit. Since permit is about the hardest fish to catch on a fly, the expected futility of not catching one hooks McGuane's introspection, and he weighs in with trophy prose: "What is emphatic in angling is made so by the long silences--the unproductive periods. For the ardent fisherman, progress is towards the

kinds of fishing that are never productive in the sense of the blood riots of the hunting-and-fishing periodicals. Their illusions of continuous action evoke for him, finally, a condition of utter, mortuary boredom." That's McGuane on angling in a nutshell; he knows the real action is internal. Whether he's casting for salmon in Russia ("Fly-Fishing the Evil Empire"), bonefish in the Florida Keys ("Close to the Bone"), or trout in Ireland ("Back in Ireland"), the catch is secondary to the pursuit, and the pursuit has as much to do with making sense of self and the universe as it does with anything aswim in a river. "When you get to the water you will be renewed," he assures. "Leave as much behind as possible. Those motives to screw your boss or employees, cheat on your spouse, rob the state, or humiliate your companions will not serve you well if you expect to be restored in the eyes of God, fish, and the river, which will reward you with hollow waste if you don't behave. You may be cursed. You may be shriven. You may be drowned. At the very least, you may snap off your fly in the bushes." McGuane clearly wades in with honest intentions; in *The Longest Silence* he casts cleanly to his target again and again. --Jeff Silverman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Novelist McGuane (*Nothing but Blue Skies*, etc.) celebrates everything about angling in this collection of 33 essays, which is certain to entertain fellow enthusiasts and fans of his writing. Any notion that fishing is humdrum is dispelled when McGuane describes eloquently his lifelong love affair with the sport, from the joys of tying flies and testing different rods, to sharing ghost stories and observational gems with fellow anglers, to absorbing quietly life's mysteries. He puts into historical and literary context the classic fishing writings of Izaak Walton and Roderick Haig-Brown. Throughout, McGuane's awe at nature's splendor shines in his prose. Releasing a trout after catching it becomes a moment of reverence: "Suddenly the fish was there, its spotted back breaking the surface, then up showering streamers of silver from the mesh of the net.... I stood in the river for a long while, holding him into the current and feeling the increasing strength in a kicking tail I could barely encompass with my grip. To the north, the Aurora Austral raised a curtain of fire in the cold sky. My trout kicked free and continued his journey to the Andes." Such moments emphasize McGuane's call for preserving the world's rivers from overdevelopment. Whether he's fishing for trout in a beaver pond in Michigan, salmon in Iceland or tarpon in Key West, McGuane casts not only his fishing line, but also his magic at turning a precise phrase and evoking a delightful image. (Nov.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Rather than give you a "macro" review, I cover my favorite chapters of this book in sort of a micro-review fashion:

**Back in Ireland** - is as pointed and sharp as a tack. The story is as much about a time as it is about a place. McGuane reminds us that the intersection of time and space is unique as a snowflake hitting the warm ground.

**Twilight in the Buffalo Paddock** - McGuane takes us into a seemingly sterile (e.g., there's no fish in those casting ponds) and off-beat, urban setting in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. He points out the art as well as the pointlessness of false casting to plastic-ringed targets at a time when fly fishing is being passed up by faster, more extreme sports like skateboarding and BMX. But even in this setting, McGuane finds his perfect moment. It's a moment that draws many fly anglers back to their sport: "The ponds have gone silver. The emptiness around the few members who remain seems to make their casting more singular, more eloquent."

**Henry's Fork** - The author fishes the Henry's Fork of the Snake River with guide Mike Lawson. The essay turns into a bit of a rant with McGuane calling Idaho's Department of Fish and Game to the carpet. And like metaphoric bad-dog, rubbing their nose in a big pile of silt they left in the river.

**World-Record Dinner** - reads like a minor treatise on fly fishing the flats for mutton snapper. The mutton snapper as McGuane describes it - "not at all handsome, with its large and vacant-looking head" - earns more than respect - "difficult to deceive and very spooky" as an angler's quarry.

**The Sea-Run Fish** - is the most sharply pointed satire of the book, with a laser-like focus on an entire ontology of misdirected fly anglers. McGuane breaks them down into: The Rich, Old and New, Corporate Groups, Time Sharers, Spongers (which he claims membership to), and The Poacher. With some amount of after thought, he includes Steelheaders ("The first group, distinctly, are the original California steelheaders emanating from the Bay Area."), lodge denizens, and the roaming sponge.

I loved his take on fishing lodges: "The lodge has the unenviable job of maintaining living facilities, waterborne transport, and guides, as well as some level of communications and emergency medical capability in remote places. The logistics underlying this can resemble what in military parlance is called a task force, but it enables one to arrive with clothes and tackle only, and depart with no responsibilities for maintenance and other ordeals of the off-season, a real luxury. The downside is that it's not cheap and you never know who you'll be bunking with.... and if you travel long enough to so-called destination angling, you will meet some unparalleled Twinkies and monsters." I could go on citing stories and pulling quotes from this book. But, instead I'll finish with 3 words of advice - get his book.

McGuane has a gift for language, and a deep love for fishing, and these conspire to produce one of the finest collections of fishing essays produced to date. I was hooked, no pun intended, from the

opening Authors notes, in which McGuane writes of the modern weekend fisherman in less than flatterring terms as "lip rippers" and the mindless, and careless way in which fisherman wish to "drain the pool" with no concern or thought for the conservation of, or care for this fish itself; an opinion I share with the author, but have never been able to express quite as elegantly. From there the book is a series of beautifully written accounts of fishing trips, fisherman, rivers, creeks and the fish themselves. McGuane is clearly a conservationist at heart, as much in love with protecting his catch as much as fishing for it, as it should be. This book will, or perhaps has become a classic among anglers for it's rich prose and themes, along with McGuanes own style and flair that bring his writing to life, be it fiction or not.

...not something I've really considered before. A book of essays about ecology, history, taxonomy, human competition, what it means to take time and contemplate what it means to be being human through fishing. Enjoyed this and feel I will return to it.

And more to the point, he knows how to write so that you get it to. I read fishing books to share experiences I've not had. The sight, sound, feel, and power of the waters is wrapped within these pages.

Took me a while to read it, since every chapter I read made me sit back and think for a few days. The author is exceptional at making the reader feel as though they are right there on the river.

If you want to read quality fishing literature this is it. I have enjoyed every story. If you want 'formula' and 'how I.....' you're in luck too, because there is much of that drivel out there, but this assuredly AIN'T!

Mr. McGuane is on his own planet when it comes to writing about 'all things' that might include fishing --- Extraordinary ! Brilliant ! Bravo !

I liked the book for his stories about fishing all over the world. I loved the way the fishing related to life and all that goes on around the fisherman. I would recommend this book to all fishermen who understand there is more to fishing than fishing.

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