

## 'How to Cook a Tapir' by Joan Fry; 'Tide, Feather, Snow' by Miranda Weiss; 'Falconer on the Edge' by Rachel Dickinson.

By Susan Salter Reynolds  
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How to Cook a Tapir

A Memoir of Belize

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Tide, Feather, Snow

A Life in Alaska

Miranda Weiss

Collins: 278 pp., \$24.99

"Mine was a landlocked childhood," writes Miranda Weiss of her Maryland upbringing, collecting possible explanations for her move to Homer, Alaska, land of extremes. Perhaps it was the grandfather in Britain's Royal Navy. Perhaps it was the boyfriend, a capable ornithologist: "I fell for men who knew how to say nothing as the full moon rose over the piñons, knew how to recognize the butterscotch scent of Pon-derosa pines, and how to enjoy a life of hard work."

Everything about her new life is unfamiliar -- the small-town relationships, the importance of self-sufficiency. Willingness and careful observation get Weiss through four years in Alaska but not through the relationship that brought her there. She learns how to fish and dig clams and make rhubarb butter and pesto from stinging nettle. She is frustrated and enlightened by her inability to really know the place: "At one moment it felt like your own. But then the tide flipped, the high pressure broke. . . . Within hours, the impressions our boots had left on the sand would be covered by water; there would be no evidence we had been there at all."

One of the fine things about Weiss is her honesty. She does not try to make the reader like her. She is not the hero of her story.

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