

Island of the Blue Foxes: Disaster and Triumph on the World's Greatest Scientific Expedition (A Merloyd Lawrence Book)

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The story of the world's largest, longest, and best financed scientific expedition of all time, triumphantly successful, gruesomely tragic, and never before fully told

The immense 18th-century scientific journey, variously known as the Second Kamchatka Expedition or the Great Northern Expedition, from St. Petersburg across Siberia to the coast of North America, involved over 3,000 people and cost Peter the Great over one-sixth of his empire's annual revenue. Until now recorded only in academic works, this 10-year venture, led by the legendary Danish captain Vitus Bering and including scientists, artists, mariners, soldiers, and laborers, discovered Alaska, opened the Pacific fur trade, and led to fame, shipwreck, and "one of the most tragic and ghastly trials of suffering in the annals of maritime and arctic history."

Stephen R. Bown is author of *The Last Viking: The Life of Roald Amundsen* and *White Eskimo: Knud Rasmussen's Fearless Journey into the Heart of the Arctic*, which won the Williams Mills Award for the best book on the Arctic in 2016. His award-winning books, including *Scurvy and Madness, Betrayal, and the Lash*, have led to a reputation as "Canada's Simon Winchester."

"A gripping account of 'the most extensive scientific expedition in history,' whose impressive results were certainly matched by its duration and miseries. A rapidly paced story of adventure 'to be appreciated as a reminder of the power of nature and of the struggle and triumph over disaster...and of the powerful urge to persevere and return home.'"

-Kirkus Reviews

"[An] excellent work of historical reconstruction that will enamor fans of the Age of Exploration."-Booklist

"Island of the Blue Foxes is a rip-roaring tale of adventures, hardship, sacrifice, human hubris and--dare I say--madness...set in inhospitable landscapes and told with breezy energy. Wonderful."-Andrea Wulf, author of *The Invention of Nature: Alexander Humboldt's New World*

"One of the most significant and harrowing expeditions in the annals of European and American exploration, the Bering voyages remain largely unknown to modern readers. Inspired by the European Enlightenment, Peter the Great and his successor Empress Anna sent Danish navigator Vitus Bering 5,000 miles eastward across Siberia, then another 3,000 miles across the Pacific to the unknown coasts of North America, decades before Captain Cook's well-known voyages. Bering left his name on a sea and a strait, and his naturalist Steller identified dozens of unknown plants and animals in the New World, but perhaps the most inspiring legacy is the remarkable forbearance and human ingenuity employed by the expedition's survivors in the face of scurvy, starvation, and shipwreck. A gifted chronicler of Northern exploration, Stephen Bown tells this incredible tale with grace, authority, and a deep grasp of its significance."

-Peter Stark, author of *Astoria: John Jacob Astor and Thomas Jefferson's Lost Pacific Empire*

"Bown's readable history should elevate Bering into the top tier of explorers. For fans of

adventure, exploration, and discovery."-Library Journal

"[A] little-known, white-knuckle tale of ambition, ingenuity and the raw fight for survival. Bown has a stellar track record of chronicling the larger-than-life tales of explorers...An amazing story, both in its intimate details of day-to-day adventure and survival and its large-scale political and scientific implications."-Calgary Herald

"Brings North American readers into a part of history seldom written about anywhere."-CBC News

"A worthwhile read and perhaps one of [Bown's] best. In sharing what is a remarkable story of Arctic exploration, Bown has added a welcome addition to what is already a rich catalogue of books about the Arctic and maritime exploration."-Rocky Mountain Outlook

"[Bown] has weaved a story which details the highs and lows of one of the greatest expeditions in world history and one which has been largely forgotten by mainstream humanity. Consequently, this book is an opportunity for all to learn about Bering and his contributions to the geographic and scientific knowledge gained as a result of his efforts."-New York Journal of Books

"Well-written, fast-paced."-Portland Book Review

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