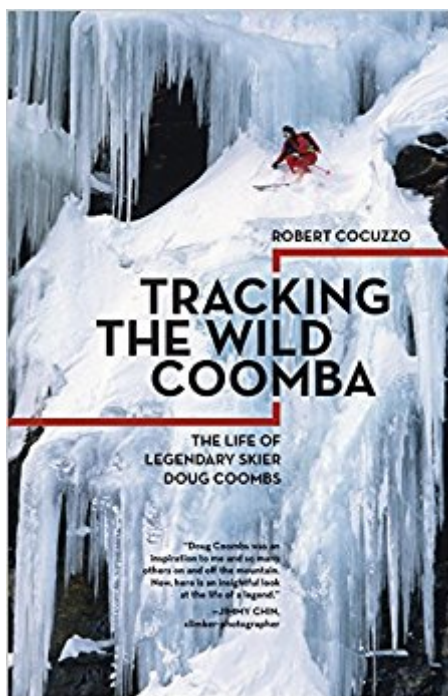


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# Tracking The Wild Coomba: The Life Of Legendary Skier Doug Coombs



## Synopsis

"Doug Coombs had a huge impact on my life; much of my overall approach to mountains comes from his example. I am so grateful that, thanks to author Rob Cocuzzo, I now have the complete story of what influenced one of my biggest heroes." — Jeremy Jones, snowboarding legend

In the 1980s, I was lucky enough to be part of the Bozeman gang of ex-ski racers in one of the crucibles of the American steep skiing scene. Robert Cocuzzo accurately captures the amazing Doug and Emily Coombs that I knew then and the myriad of Coombs ski stories.

— Bruce Tremper, avalanche expert and author of *Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain*

"Doug Coombs was an inspiration to me and so many others on and off the mountain. Now, here is an insightful look at the life of a legend." Jimmy Chin, climber-photographer

A thrilling biography of renowned extreme skiing pioneer Doug Coombs. Arguably the greatest extreme skier to ever live, Doug Coombs pioneered hundreds of first descents down the biggest, steepest, most dangerous mountains in the world — from the Grand Teton to Otter Body in Jackson Hole, to Mount Vinson, the highest point in Antarctica, to far-flung drops such as Wyatt Peak in Kyrgyzstan. He graced magazine covers, wowed moviegoers, became the face of top ski companies, and ascended as the king of big mountain extreme skiing. His place at the top was confirmed in 1991 when he won the very first World Extreme Ski Competition in Valdez, Alaska. Now, his story is told for the first time in Robert Cocuzzo's *Tracking the Wild Coomba*. From the slopes of his childhood in New England; to the steep chutes of his early career in Montana and Wyoming; to the deep, avalanche-prone powder of his guiding years in Alaska; and, ultimately, to the terrifying terrain of the French Alps, Coombs's greatness was in how he skied. What most people didn't know was that Coombs skied so perfectly in part because he had no other choice — at the age of 16 he crashed off a jump in New Hampshire and broke his neck. Doctors said it was a miracle he wasn't paralyzed, and that another bad fall could kill him. Many believe it was this second chance that inspired the extraordinary life he led until his tragic death in 2006, the result of an attempted rescue of a fellow skier.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"You don't have to be a skier to fall under the spell of this masterfully told tale of adventure, tragedy, and redemption." Rob Cocuzzo's *Tracking the Wild Coomba* is a thrilling, unputdownable read." -- Nathaniel Philbrick, author of *In the Heart of the Sea* "In *Tracking the Wild Coomba*, author Robert Cocuzzo doesn't just profile the great Doug Coombs in remarkable detail, he takes us on a journey through one of the most pivotal and influential time periods in big mountain skiing. From Jackson Hole to Alaska, and Montana to the Alps, Cocuzzo digs deep to introduce us to the characters who, with Coombs as their fearless leader, left an indelible imprint on skiing today." - Matt Hansen, Powder magazine Editor-at-Large "A rich slice of ski history and culture as well as an intimate glimpse into the life of a man who changed the sport forever. As inspiring as it is tragic, *Tracking the Wild Coomba* is not only a tribute to Coombs but also a guide to living well. As Coombs often said, 'You don't know if you don't go.'" -- Kelley McMillan, Skiing Magazine "I am so pleased that *Tracking the Wild Coomba* exists to honor a wonderful human being, Doug Coombs. I'm thrilled and moved by every word of it. I only knew Doug briefly but what an indelible impression he left." --Mark Obenhaus, director of STEEP "Tracking the Wild Coomba affected me profoundly. I laughed, and I cried. I was transported back to a special time--a time and a person I will never forget. In my own career, I only want to create imagery that evokes emotion. So I really appreciated Rob's effort, and for all the emotion that *Tracking the Wild Coomba* evoked in me."- Ace Kvale, photographer "Doug Coombs was an inspiration to me and so many others on and off the mountain. Now, here is an insightful look at the life of a legend." -- Jimmy Chin, National Geographic "Doug Coombs had a huge impact on my life; much of my overall approach to mountains comes from his example. I am so grateful that, thanks to author Rob Cocuzzo, I now have the complete story of what influenced one of my biggest heroes." -Jeremy Jones, snowboarding pioneer "The book is part biography, part first-person journey and follows in the footsteps of Doug Coombs, the extraordinary skier who called Jackson Hole home. If you've never heard the name it's an insightful

look into his life, and for those who did know him it's a walk down memory lane." -- Erik Dahlby, Jackson Hole News & Guide "Cocuzzo accurately captures the amazing Doug and Emily Coombs that I knew [in the 1980s] and the myriad of Coombs ski stories." --Bruce Tremper, author of *Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain* "By traveling to the places that made Doug famous, Cocuzzo is able to paint a remarkable portrait of the man. This beautiful narrative achieves the original goal he set out to accomplish. I was instantly engrossed by the story." -Jonathan Desabris, Teton Gravity Research "Tracking the Wild Coomba is a thrilling read -- a re-tracing of the sometimes terrifying tracks of a legendary skier. It's also a joy to read, thanks to the beautiful writing of Rob Cocuzzo. His admiration for Doug Coombs comes across in every page, as does his enviable sense of adventure." --Jeremy Hobson, host of NPR's "Here and Now" "The title of Rob Cocuzzo's exhilarating book on the extreme skier Doug Coombs says it all: Like Peter Matthiessen's classic *The Snow Leopard*, it's a personal tale of an inspired search for an exotic creature. Despite the danger, thrill-seeking skiers were in very good hands on guided tours with Coombs. You might say the same about Cocuzzo's meticulous descent into the life of the 'Wild Coomba.'" - James Sullivan, author of *Island Cup: Two Teams, Twelve Miles of Ocean, and Fifty Years of Football Rivalry*. "Few people have impacted skiing as profoundly as Doug Coombs. Whether it was pioneering hundreds of first descents, pushing the boundaries of the backcountry, or influencing innovative ski technology, he completely revolutionized what was thought possible in the mountains," said Robert Cocuzzo, author of the forthcoming Coombs biography *Tracking the Wild Coomba: The Life of Legendary Skier Doug Coombs* Kelley McMillan --The New York Times "Coombs lived for the euphoric feeling of making a 'first descent,' as Cocuzzo explains in the book: being the first person to ski a remote mountain face." James Sullivan --Boston Globe

Robert Cocuzzo is a writer and editor. After studying English and history at the College of the Holy Cross and the University of St. Andrews, Cocuzzo became a US Coast Guard-certified charter boat captain and guided clients on the open Atlantic. He began his writing career during a winter-long backpacking trip in Patagonia. Shortly after returning, Cocuzzo became the editor of *N Magazine*, a lifestyle publication based on Nantucket Island. He now writes for a number of other publications and splits his time between Nantucket, Boston, and the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

I lived in Teton Village Wyoming in the late 90's and Wilson for ten years. Doug Coombs was an event within himself. Big mountain skiing is filled huge egos, and even bigger personalities. Doug

would have them all eating out of his hands with his amazing vision of the possibilities in the mountains. He was able to envision the boundless potentials, but also inspire other adventurers that they were a part of his world. This book was able to evoke some serious emotions from me. The skiing community is a pretty tight as well as sensitive to outsiders. Rob has done a fantastic job of being respectful to this underpinning of the ski culture. This book is more than an account of a tragic accident, but a celebration of an inspiring individual. Doug was my hero. The day he died truly broke my heart. This book made me smile with the energy of the community, the love of his wife, and the respectful tribute to his son "David". You really have covered all the bases with this book. It's pretty funny how in his absence Doug Coombs was able to inspire from the great unknown and take someone else on a life changing adventure.

Loved this book! An adventure seekers perfect read, the author brings you along with him as he travels to all the incredible mountains that skiing pioneer legend Doug Coombs descended on a regular basis. Unbelievable, and you can go along from the safety of your couch. I highly recommend this book for all skiers, hikers and outdoor enthusiasts.

Reading Tracking the Wild Coomba is like eavesdropping on the cool kids. Cocuzzo takes you to the heart of Doug Coombs' life, where you can unabashedly marvel at what made this man (and his inner circle) so extraordinary. To read this book is to know the pleasures and perils of a life lived at the top, and on the edge.

So glad Doug Coombs story got told. I've skied Mt. Hood and the Cascades for 66 yrs. and challenge the deep and the steep. Coombs had that quintessential character of the mountain people we all love to be with. If you love the mountains in winter, knowing Doug Coombs and his skiing cannot be missed. "Extreme skiing = If you fall you die." When I put my ancient legs on a steep, I think of his fluid life, his fluid ski turns on these impossible steeps, his love of ski, and his David. Cocuzzo did good!

A very well crafted book. Author, Rob Cocuzzo takes you on a page turner adventure exploring the life and death journey of extreme mountaineer skier Doug Coombs. Cocuzzo uses beautiful language and metaphor to describe his own experiences as he navigates the places and mind-set of this superb athlete. The book left me questioning why some seek these out-of-bounds life styles, while others are content staying within the markers that society sets up for us as acceptable. Highly

recommend this book.

Unwittingly, I stitched together a course in choosing my skiing destinations over the years that mimicked those of Dough Coombs through his career. Somewhat ignorant to his legacy, I skied in Chamonix with Miles and Liz Smart for their Steep Skiing Camp in 2010 and then followed Miles to La Grave in 2011 as if captured by certain force field. Reading Rob Cocuzzo's wonderful chronicle of the life of Doug Coombs, I feel like the choices in my skiing endeavors had been validated. Having (much less effortlessly and certainly more cautiously) followed in Doug's footsteps, I felt personally attached to this story as it brought back some of my happiest memories and most cherished accomplishments. The people and places described by Rob in "Tracking the Wild Coomba" are so vivid and true that, while sitting on the beach in Asbury Park, I found myself smirking under my sunglasses thinking about riding the telepherique in La Grave or traversing the ridgeline at Bridger Bowl. Anybody who has been inspired by Doug Coomb's legacy, or may be inspired by it, would greatly enjoy this read, either heading into or deep within a ski season!

I am not going to say the same things that everyone has said so far, which is a masterpiece. The book is awesome describing who Doug truly is. I am a skier who spent my first seven winters skiing everyday at Alta/Snowbird until 2009, I knew of Doug, but never met him. Then I moved up to Jackson Hole in the 09-10 ski season (still ski here eight winters later getting 125+ days every winter) for new mountains. There in my new home, I met Robbie Cocuzzo & he soon was my ski buddy who I also worked with at a restaurant at night. The chapters where he is following Doug's tales are awesome because I personally know his mindset. Those to me are as good as Doug's stories. This is one of the best biographies I have read in quite some time & Robbie never even met Doug. However, the diligent guy that he is, he found out the adventures of Coombs that only few people know. This comes from someone that recently got a patch & pin for just having fun in the mountains day after day. The journey is as thrilling as the destination. This book is never leaving my personal book collection.

Rob's accounts in Tracking the Wild Coomba are legit. Having been one of Doug's first paying clients up in Valdez in the mid 90's with Doug, Jerry Hance, Dave Miller, Theo RoboGuide Miners, Rick Armstrong, and Jeff Zell, the book portrays the early AK ski scene accurately. From Uzi toting crack dealing kids in the Heli pad lot on Thompson Pass to watching Doug and Dave and Rick reviewing hand held videos in the Motel Six in Valdez to determine which routes we would ski the

next day ...it was Wild. On our runs, we would alight with tree shrubs in our backpacks to lay on the LZs at the various peaks as they were almost always first landings and descents. Cherry, The Books, Viper, Happy Face - crazy early runs that bring back surges of adrenaline and smiles. Congrats Rob on a great read!

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