



## BOOK REVIEW

### *Deep Creek*



Pam Houston  
Photo by Mike Blakeman

### *Pam Houston Takes Us into The Wild*

By Wolf Schneider

Pam Houston has been called “the rodeo queen of American letters” and with good cause. Her memoir, *Deep Creek: Finding Hope in the High Country*, about living on her 120-acre homestead in Creede, Colorado, four hours north of Santa Fe, is a deeply felt exploration of her commitment to mountain ranch life. “If you can’t fall in love with the San Juan Mountains during the third week of September, you can’t fall in love,” writes Houston. “The sky is a headstrong break-your-heart blue, the air is so clear you can see a hundred miles on a straight horizon, and the river is cold and crisp and possibly even clearer than the air.”

Houston appreciates all the good in her 9,000-foot-high ranch that she’s owned for 25 years—elk bugling in the misty dawn,

her cozy decades-old log cabin, the farmer who stacks high-quality hay in her barn, Milky Way sightings that are “truly milky,” neighbors who check on her in blizzards, mule deer amid aspen groves, and her faithful wolfhounds, mischievous donkeys, unruly sheep, and steadfast horses. She cops to the challenges too—the outside water spigots that must be turned off by mid-September, the four cords of wood and two hundred bales of hay needed by October 1st, the thermostat that can’t be set above 60, barn swallows that can carry bedbugs, forest fires, beyond-freezing 35-below nights, muck and ice.

With wit, insight, and personal revelation, Houston gives it to us straight: the sustaining soulfulness of a life given to a piece of land, the lure of wild things, and the fortitude demanded to tough it out, often alone (albeit with fancy ginger ale from Denver). It’s a captivating chronicle from a modern-day Artemis of the literary West. ■