



Superstorm: Nine Days Inside Hurricane Sandy

Kathryn Miles

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The first complete moment-by-moment account of the largest Atlantic storm system ever recorded—a hurricane like no other

The sky was lit by a full moon on October 29, 2012, but nobody on the eastern seaboard of the United States could see it. Everything had been consumed by cloud. The storm's immensity caught the attention of scientists on the International Space Station. Even from there, it seemed almost limitless: 1.8 million square feet of tightly coiled bands so huge they filled the windows of the Station. It was the largest storm anyone had ever seen.

Initially a tropical storm, Sandy had grown into a hybrid monster. It charged across open ocean, picking up strength with every step, baffling meteorologists and scientists, officials and emergency managers, even the traditional maritime wisdom of sailors and seamen: What exactly was this thing? By the time anyone decided, it was too late.

And then the storm made landfall.

Sandy was not just enormous, it was also unprecedented. As a result, the entire nation was left flat-footed. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration couldn't issue reliable warnings; the Coast Guard didn't know what to do. In *Superstorm*, journalist Kathryn Miles takes readers inside the maelstrom, detailing the stories of dedicated professionals at the National Hurricane Center and National Weather Service. The characters include a forecaster who risked his job to sound the alarm in New Jersey, the crew of the ill-fated tall ship *Bounty*, Mayor Bloomberg, Governor Christie, and countless coastal residents whose homes—and lives—were torn apart and then left to wonder . . . When is the next superstorm coming?

Superstorm: Nine Days Inside Hurricane Sandy Details

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Kathy says

Extraordinary book that was packed with so much information, it could have been four separate books. Superstorm follows the National Weather Service, National Hurricane Service and Hurricane Hunters and many others involved in the science and unpredictability of storms. The author also covers the politics and communication issues of trying to inform the public. Superstorm Sandy was an exceptional and unusual storm. Throughout the book, the author returns to the fate of the tall ship Bounty from days before the storm to its ultimate end and heroic rescue by the Coast Guard. The book was never boring and at times I felt I was reading a fictional tale. This is not a beach read, it took me a little longer to get through it due to some technical jargon but nothing that would stop me from highly recommending. I am now going to read Miles new book, Quakeland. Living in Southern California, I'm sure that will be intense as well.

Cathryn Conroy says

This is nonfiction (obviously). You know how this story ends (obviously). But you probably don't know how this story begins. Author Kathryn Miles has combined the right amount of meteorological science with gripping human stories to present a riveting account of Hurricane Sandy--from its inception far away in the Atlantic Ocean to its horrific destructive power as it morphed into what many called a Frankenstorm.

Find out what happened to ordinary families, a ship and its crew caught in the middle of the ocean and the brave Hurricane Hunters who purposely fly into the raging storm to better tell us what will happen. Find out the true dedication, honor and pride of the federal employees who staff the National Hurricane Center and the National Weather Service.

Parts of this book are truly gruesome. Miles doesn't shy away from what some people suffered. And that's a good thing. Perhaps her accounting of this superstorm will help us all take the next one more seriously--and save lives in the process. This a must-read!

Cynthia Fischer says

This book was fascinating (after I skimmed over the technical stuff -- that was way too dry). What is interesting about this book are three things: The Bounty, the cruise ships, and the obstacles NOAA deals with. It's as if government agencies are all playing against each other, and essentially the public, who need to be warned. This is what's wrong with Bureaucracy. It bogs down the process with over-regulation and competing big wigs. I really didn't know all that went on.

This is a non-fiction book that weaves in real-life human stories and the "science" of weather forecasting. Something that may never be solved. I do recommend it.

Ellen Palmer says

Great read...

The author did a superlative job of presenting a massive amount of information and history in a thoroughly enjoyable and riveting style. She gave an exciting look into how forecasters work and the massive responsibilities that they face...and also the things that hamper them as they try to predict an unpredictable Mother Nature. The book reads like a good fiction novel...the best praise I can give to nonfiction.

Timothy Liu says

A heart wrenching book that's hard to put down. The author goes through a few characters and follows their experience. Instead of all big names, she chooses ship captains, families, and hurricane hunters. The afterword feels underdeveloped and the book ends suddenly, but otherwise was an enjoyable read.

Naomi Williams says

I was interested in this book primarily for its coverage of the tragic final voyage of the *Bounty*, and Miles does, indeed, devote quite a few pages to that disaster. Embedded within the larger story of the superstorm, the story of this one tall ship & its crew unfolds in an almost leisurely fashion until the end, when the catastrophe comes upon the reader with something like the shocking swiftness with which it takes over the ship.

Miles deftly weaves together numerous storylines. I was particularly drawn into the lives & mindsets of the hard-working scientists at the National Hurricane Center and with the National Weather Service who watched with growing concern & alarm as a tropical depression in the Caribbean grows to monstrous & deadly size. And I was awed by the accounts of the dangerous & important work of the "Hurricane Hunters," who fly repeatedly into the storm to take the measurements that enable the meteorologists to improve their predictions.

I had numerous "Wow, I did not know that" moments while reading. I hadn't ever realized the epic proportions of the storm itself. I did not know of the damage it wreaked upon Haiti. I did not know how difficult hurricane-tracking is. Or that with better federal funding and access to better technology, it could be better. I really appreciated all the things I learned from the book.

One of the most interesting things for me, however, was Miles's patient exploration of who gets listened to & why. The scientists' increasingly dire warnings about the storm don't seem to get the attention they should until it's too late, whereas a beloved ship captain's somewhat cavalier assurances that his aging ship is "unsinkable" leads his crew into calamity. Yet the analysis is refreshingly free of judgment. Miles reminds the reader that we're looking at all the players and their decisions with the benefit of hindsight, when it's obvious that the *Bounty* shouldn't have sailed toward the hurricane or that Mayor Bloomberg should have ordered evacuations earlier or that folks in Staten Island should have listened. She also unpacks the way seemingly small things like the nomenclature of storms or the purviews of the various agencies involved may

have hindered clear communication to the public.

If I had any complaint with the book, it was that the day-by-day structure of it meant that the lead-up to the storm felt slow at times, while the accounts of the storm's North American landfall & the rescue of the *Bounty* crew felt rushed. But I suppose that, as I suggest above, this may in fact have mimicked the development and onslaught of the storm itself. Carefully researched & written with compassion & elegance, this is a great book about a terrible event.

Dana says

This book is a gold mine for weather nerds. It might be a slow read for someone who didn't spend their formative years glued to the weather channel. Ships, politics, and even a little bit of Jim Cantore make for a great book that reads like a suspense thriller. Interesting how existing policy made it difficult for forecasters to adequately warn and prepare people for the storm. I dropped a star because I feel like there was room for more stories. And more Cantore. ;)

Signy says

[
One account tells of a Coast Guard C-130 crew who had been ordered not to fly into the center of the storm because the conditions were that dangerous but they did anyway to locate and try to help a ship caught there. The extreme turbulence kept them from drop

Tomas Bella says

Zvláštne, že sa niekomu zdalo ako dobrý nápad natlažiť do knihy o hurikáne detaily o životnom príbehu každého meteorológa v USA aj každého námorníka, ktorý bol v tom čase na mori, aj všetkých ich príbuzných a kamarátov, v snahe urobiť z toho "ľudský príbeh".
Pasáže vysvetľujúce počasie a meteorológiu sú brilantné, ale v 350 stranách irelevantných opisov postáv sa nečakajúť.

Kristin Jones says

I was initially very impressed with the pacing, however, I soon realized the author was getting so bogged down in the meteorological details that she was never going to have enough time to bring any of the human interest stories to any sort of satisfactory conclusion in the remaining number of pages. And I was right. It didn't surprise me that the schooner *Bounty*'s tragic end, as a result of Hurricane Sandy's devastation, was the initial germ for this book because that is the only timeline that didn't feel completely rushed. Also, as an aside, every single person is profiled in such a shockingly positive light that it borders on the unreal, and I thought it completely unnecessary besides. Overall this is a good effort wasted by a botched ending, and I cannot help but wonder, why the rush?

Meera says

First type of book like this that I have read and I really enjoyed it. It was very interesting and even with all of the technical stuff, the author managed to still make the book suspenseful. The true stories of people during the storm were also heartbreaking. Overall, a really good book.

Sarah - All The Book Blog Names Are Taken says

Very engaging read, though some of the technical stuff is a bit dry in places - especially all the acronyms. But a thorough look at a devastating storm. So many could've been saved with a better system.

Full review to come.

Text ends 76%

Photos 76%-77% some very small and hard to see

Notes 78%-82%

Meg says

By far the best book on Hurricane Sandy I've read. Miles does a great job crafting a story around some key characters to keep the book moving as the storm travels across the Atlantic and takes aim at the East Coast. Overall, the book was informative and compelling; I can't recommend this enough for anyone even remotely interested in the storm.

Carisa Burns says

Having experienced Superstorm Sandy myself, living on Long Island, this title popped out at me when browsing through the new releases. I really liked it even though I'm not typically into non-fiction. It gave interesting background information on how the storm was so difficult to predict, all the factors that seemed nearly impossible but that did eventually coalesce to become the perfect storm, and some stories of families, ships and other entities that got stuck braving out the storm. I cannot believe how long it took authorities to take the weather warning seriously and take evacuation protocols or that our ability to track storms is so drastically out of date and Jurassic. It's appalling and I had no idea how outdated our systems in the U.S. really are and how underfunded. It's embarrassing and the general public, such as myself, has no idea. I seriously thought that with modern technology forecasters were easily able to predict the weather in this day and age. Wrong! And the fact that they refused to classify it as a hurricane and confused the public and emergency management officials...what was that all about? The bueracracy is amazing to me. This country puts people's lives at stake because they don't want to go against "protocols" or because they don't want the economy to lose money by telling people there is an emergency. Or, even worse that the idiots in the general public are actually MAD when the government officials do the right thing and close down public transportation to save lives. But some people are so brain dead and selfish that they would rather be allowed

to travel "freely" even when they should be taking precautions and staying inside.

I do wish this book had more anecdotes about what happened to real people and their situations and experiences during Hurricane Sandy though. That's what I thought I was getting when I picked it up but it was definitely well written and a good read.

Smitha says

A pretty thorough and gripping account of what made Sandy so unprecedented. I picked this up after spotting it at the library, and I'm glad I did - I never got "the hype" about Sandy and this book changed that.

However, I knocked off a star for the consistently condescending depiction of Claudene Christian. She was depicted as flighty and irresponsible (but with a heart of gold and friends who liked her) compared to everyone else, and it really bothered me throughout.
