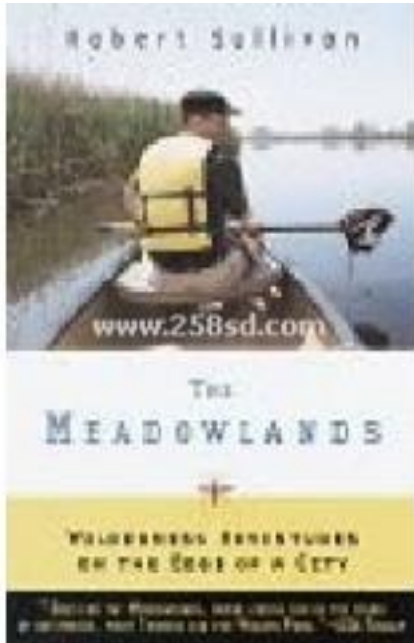


The MEADOWLANDS: WILDERNESS ADVENTURES AT THE EDGE OF A CITY



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Amazon.com "I like to think of the Meadowlands as an undesignated national park," writes Robert Sullivan in his end-of-the-millennium take on Thoreau. In *The Meadowlands*, Sullivan does his Thoreauvian bean-counting in one of America's most infamous dumping grounds, the huge tract of marshy land just outside New York City that has withstood any and all attempts to subdue it with agriculture, industry, development, and an ever-shifting deluge of flotsam and jetsam. He may just be the first person in a century to willingly explore this fascinating but abused piece of real estate, and his investigation gives new meaning to intrepid reporting. By foot he tramps through the muck, and by canoe he navigates polluted rivers and

marshes, noting the variegated species of trash and industrial cast-offs with as much zeal as he observes the surprisingly rich diversity of wildlife. Revealed in these stories is a landscape bursting with nature amid the curious man-made detritus of urban consumption. With only a touch of irony, the author refers to his stomping ground as "Big Sky Country, east," imagining he's "in a National Geographic special and visiting little tribes of people unknown to everyone else." He pursues the history of the Meadowlands with equal enthusiasm. Eccentric characters, tall tales, and scuttlebutt haunt the area, from the rumor that the land serves as the final resting place for Jimmy Hoffa (as well as a number of other Mafia hits) to the pitiable stories of the many dreamers who have sunk a fortune in the squelching mud. And throughout this smart, thoroughly researched adventure, Sullivan maintains a witty and lyrical voice that transforms his trip inside a nationally maligned place into a fun, informative romp. From Publishers Weekly Just five short, swampy miles from Manhattan, the New Jersey Meadowlands are awash in refuse of all sorts, from toxic waste and landfill to tangled heaps of abortive real-estate development?and perhaps even Jimmy Hoffa's remains. A freelance journalist and unapologetic enthusiast for his chosen tract, Sullivan in his first book marvels at the Meadowlands' history and that of the people who continue to explore it, fish it and even swim it. The author hikes, boats and drives through environs that have over the years offered refuge to pig farms, eccentrics, schemers and even pirates. He marvels at the volume of refuse and sheer toxicity of some of the land, explaining that when one notorious landfill caught fire, it burned for 15 years because the local fire department, fearing for its health in the face of toxic fumes, refused to put out the smoldering heap. Today, under the care of the EPA and other environmental groups, the area is showing signs of rebounding. But such reports, even coupled with Sullivan's zeal, cannot fully brighten this sad if intriguing tale of industrial carnage. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. See all Editorial Reviews

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