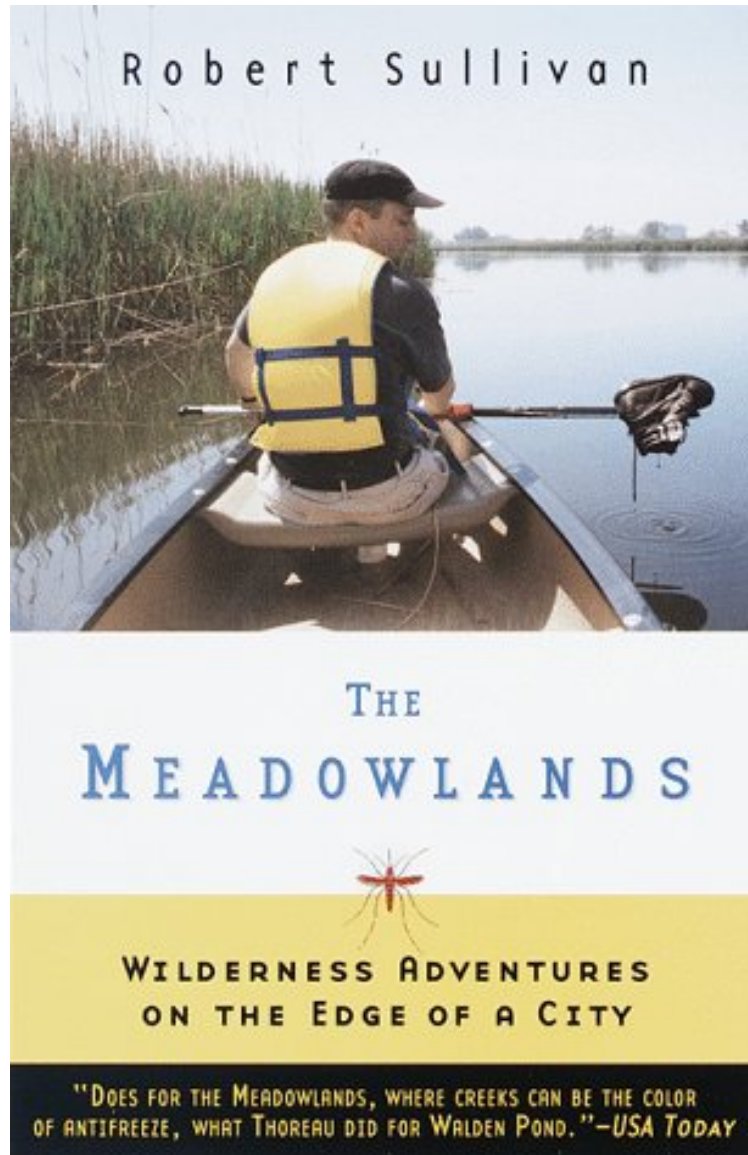


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# THE MEADOWLANDS: WILDERNESS ADVENTURES AT THE EDGE OF A CITY

Robert Sullivan

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**Robert Sullivan : THE MEADOWLANDS: WILDERNESS ADVENTURES AT THE EDGE OF A CITY** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised THE MEADOWLANDS: WILDERNESS ADVENTURES AT THE EDGE OF A CITY:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Entertaining but Over-HypedBy A CustomerPerhaps it was the

aggressive marketing, but I found myself disappointed with the book. There is much of interest and entertainment to be found here, but a number of vignettes (including the search for the ruins of Penn Station) came off oddly anti-climactic (perhaps because so little of the station still remains to be found) and the technique of the book (intro of a Meadowlands feature/area and a quirky personality to go with it) grows repetitive, so that by the end of the book one starts to know what to expect. There are a number of gaps in coverage, including construction of the Meadowlands complex, and there is nary a word about the extensive network of rail lines criss-crossing the marshes. The book would benefit enormously from some maps and photographs. Nice read if somebody lends you the book, but The Meadowlands may not be worth the price of a new hardcover. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Engaging and informative By William Hilger I enjoyed this light set of anecdotes about urban North Jersey's backyard. As a child I'd often make similar explorations in the 'meadows', so Sullivan's stories remind me of wonderful times. (Of course, his explorations are like that of Sir Hillary's compared to my own forays.) The writing is easily digestible, with each anecdote standing alone - if you prefer to read in smaller sessions. I was quite happy to read all his adventures at once. Anyone with an interest in the outdoors, and even an urban local like myself can learn a lot from this book - including an interesting mystery or two. I may dig out my waders and start my explorations again, just to find some of the treasures he writes about. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. If you enjoy Bryson, The Meadowlands is for you. By Clev Landers Excellent story about a wilderness most pass, disregard, or curse. Absolutely a fascinating tale of the Meadowlands and I am not a NY or NJ'er. So glad I picked this up, from the history of the area to the natural flora and fauna information. Well done Robert, I enjoy picking up your other titles after this. If you enjoy Bryson, The Meadowlands is for you.

Travel just five miles outside of New York City, venture off the crowded New Jersey Turnpike. and you will be surrounded by the Meadowlands, a much vilified but still untamed thirty-two-square-mile swamp that is home to rare birds and missing bodies, shiny corporate headquarters and the remnants of ancient cedar forests, tranquil marshes and burning garbage dumps. Robert Sullivan is this weird and wild place's unofficial naturalist, archeologist, and explorer, and here he reports back from the field. Revealing what he has found while traversing one of America's first -- and most fascinating -- frontiers. A 1978 Federal Report described the Meadowlands as "a swampy mosquito-infested jungle...where rusting auto bodies, demolition rubble, industrial oil sticks and cattails merge in unholy, stinking union." But one man's trash is another man's treasure, and with incomparable wit and enthusiasm, Robert Sullivan reinterprets the reputation and legacy of an area considered by many to be one of the most disgusting in the country. He travels by canoe, bus, car, and foot to tour cities and swamplands and interview mayors, dump owners, and renegade mosquito-control officers. He describes the hideous pollution and the hidden natural wonders, the seedy motels and labyrinth highways, the local population and the indigenous, ubiquitous mosquitoes. The Meadowlands, he explains, is "a place that the forces of progress have perennially targeted but have never managed to completely control, a place that people rush past on their way to the rest of America." But Sullivan learns that, in fact, many things have been left behind here -- from garbage and treasure to the remains of crazy development schemes of generations past. Armed with pickax, shovel, and metal detector, he bravely sets out to find the two things believed to be dumped in the Meadowlands that particularly obsess him -- the elusive corpse of famed labor leader Jimmy Hoffa and Manhattan's once-glorious original Penn Station. In the tradition of John McPhee and Ian Frazier, Robert Sullivan transforms the seemingly ordinary into the extraordinary with his sparkling literary style and superb sense of irony. Filled with eccentric characters and unforgettable stories, The Meadowlands is an ode to an overlooked American borderland -- a delightfully incongruous battleground marking the ongoing struggle between the forces of progress and nature.

.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. From Library Journal Amazingly, life still survives in the New Jersey Meadowlands, a lowland rendered foul by years of abuse. Almost an antinatural history, Sullivan's book suggests that we can learn to respect nature more by getting closer to some of the places that we have sullied the most. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.