
FOREWORD

By Carl Safina

There's an interesting debate to be had about what it means to live on Long Island. The question is: *which* Long Island, the natural one or the artificial one?

I mean, there's the culture-deprived urbanization, the assembly-line housing tracts where Levitt first invented the town-less commuter bedroom non-communities that quintessentially characterize "the suburbs." There's the stifling traffic. The hazardous traffic. The slow traffic. The Long Island Expressway, twice a day during the oxymoronically named "rush hour," lives up to its deriding descriptor: world's largest parking lot. Yes, you can be malled to death on lawn-guy land.

The title of this book implies all that. And yet it's a place of layers. But that's always been true, since it was first bulldozed into place by great sheets of ice. The bulldozing here hasn't quite stopped. But the book isn't just about an "other" Long Island. It's actually about the *real* Long Island, the one you get when you peel back some of those layers.

How many people know the real Island? Many people appreciate this place; we're a fairly large minority. But I'd say about one in a million residents has anything approaching a thorough knowledge of Long Island's lands, soils, plants, animals, freshwaters, groundwaters, and tidewaters. And of the small handful who do, I've long considered John Turner the expert of experts, the all-around most experienced, most knowledgeable, and most devoted person I know with regard to scientifically appreciating, lucidly explaining, and effectively helping protect this fish-shaped island that Walt Whitman—and many others—have so loved and defended.

So what does it mean to live on Long Island? The expressways and malls and summer bathing beaches are one thing. If you mean the spring woods, the bloomings and buzzings, the comings and goings of birds and fishes and turtles and sea-mammals; if you mean the spring

choruses of frogs and toads in still wetlands at sunset where there's not a straight line to be seen nor a motor to be heard, well—that's another.

John Turner has given us this book to take us to that other island, that island of sunrises and surprises, that besieged and under-appreciated place that is in many ways unusual, and in some unusual ways unique.

Few places have so many different kinds of places nuzzled so close together. You can drive through the southern states' pinewoods or Wisconsin's dairy lands for hours, or across the grain belt for days. But on Long Island a ride of less than an hour—and here's where all those roads and parkways come in handy—gets you into conifer woods, oak forests, rivers, lakes, shallow bays, brackish waters, that exceptionally big and deep estuary called Long Island Sound, the great bright ribbon of the outer beaches that run toward sunrise and the reared-up, jutting jaw of land called Montauk, and to the foaming doorstep of the great world ocean.

Try that in Montana.

And wildlife? As Turner explains so gracefully and so helpfully, Long Island again delivers more than expected. That's because the leading line of coasts conveys and concentrates migrants in the air and waters. That's why a good birder can see well over a hundred species in one great spring day, and why people from Europe come here to go fishing in the fall.

So as I say, if you're going to opt for that easy ride to this unique other island, there is no more companionable guide, no more insightful teacher, than my friend John Turner. This book—and much of the land that is now preserved on Long Island—are not just his life's work; they're a great gift John Turner has given us.

And because many of the species he describes live elsewhere too, this book is useful over a wide swath of the coastal northeast.

Dr. Carl Safina brought ocean conservation into the environmental mainstream. Consequently, *Audubon* magazine named him among the leading 100 conservationists of the twentieth century. He is founding president of Blue Ocean Institute and an adjunct professor at Stony Brook University. His award-winning books include *Song for the Blue Ocean*, *Eye of the Albatross*, and *Voyage of the Turtle*, and his writing has been featured in *National Geographic* and *The New York Times*. He's been profiled on *Nightline* and by Bill Moyers, and his numerous awards include a Pew Fellowship, Lannan Literary Award, John Burroughs Medal, and a MacArthur Prize. You can follow his work at BlueOcean.org, CarlSafina.org, and in social networking sites on the Web.