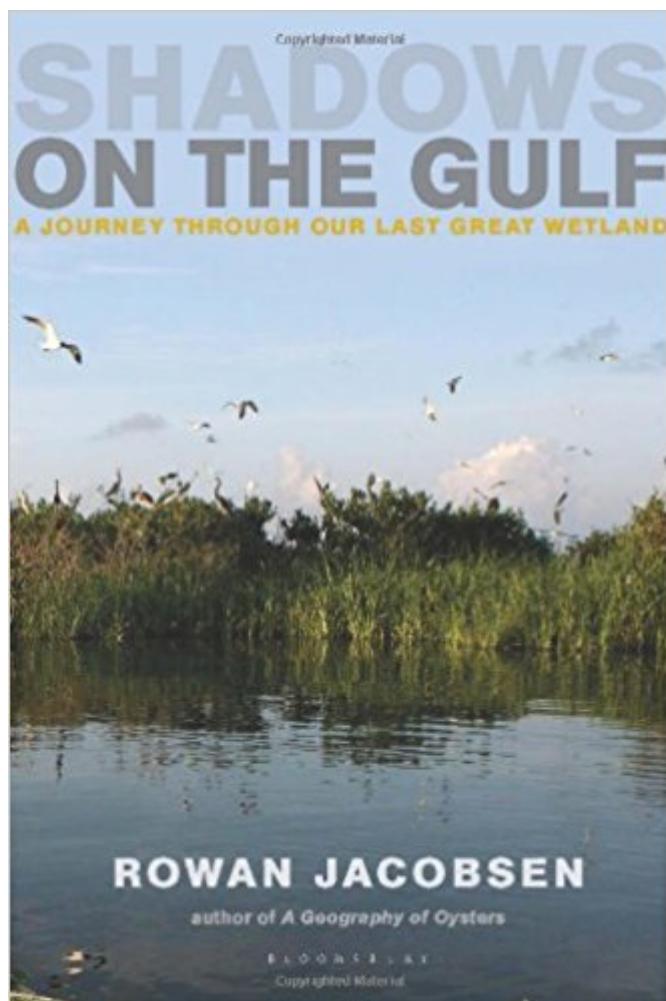


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Shadows On The Gulf: A Journey Through Our Last Great Wetland



Synopsis

"A sensitive and elegant amble through both a tragedy and an ecosystem. Required reading for anyone trying to understand the Gulf in its entirety." --Paul Greenberg, author of *Four Fish* "Brimming with engaging information about a little-known region and leavened with moments of grace...Rowan Jacobsen succeeds in painting the 'sort of cubist portrait of a beautiful and sometimes contradictory region' he envisioned. And this fragmented portrait turns out to be all the more beautiful and melancholy for being accompanied by the persistent, doleful sounds of a pipe organ." --Wall Street Journal In the spring of 2010, as we watched oil gushing unstoppably into the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, many Americans turned their focus to the region for the first time, wondering how this could happen and demanding corporate and government accountability. Yet Rowan Jacobsen brings a surprising perspective to the tragedy: as bad as the spill was, it is only the latest chapter in a century-long story of destruction. At the height of BP's dispersant madness, the amount sprayed each day merely equaled the amount of dispersant that washes down the Mississippi from the Heartland's dishwashers and washing machines. Coastal drilling has damaged the region's ecology far more than offshore drilling. And the acres of marshland ruined by oil slicks can't compare to the amount that disappears in every hurricane, due to the work of the Army Corps of Engineers. Southern Louisiana is subsiding. Even if we succeed in restoring every mile of beach and wetland from the oil spill, the entire Mississippi Delta could be lost this century, and New Orleans will sink beneath the waves, an American Atlantis. Surveying the Gulf Coast by sailboat, skiff, car, and kayak, Jacobsen journeys from the bayous of Terrebonne Parish, where he goes on oil patrol with a Native American man whose tribe is being displaced as their island disintegrates; to the last shucking house in New Orleans's French Quarter, whose oyster supply has vanished; to the pristine barrier islands of Mississippi, where a Kafkaesque cleanup effort is underway. He discovers a little-appreciated ecological wonder of breathtaking natural beauty and rich culture struggling to hold on to the things that have always sustained it. *Shadows on the Gulf* details the catastrophe creeping across the region and reveals why the damage to the Gulf will affect us all. Not only are the Gulf's wetlands the best oyster reefs and fish nurseries in the world, they also provide critical habitat to most of America's migratory songbirds and waterfowl. If the Gulf is allowed to fail, the effects will ripple across America. And fail it will, unless BP's blunder can somehow galvanize a national effort to save it.

Book Information

Hardcover: 240 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury USA; First U.S. Edition, 1st printing edition (May 3, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1608195813

ISBN-13: 978-1608195817

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 0.9 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #513,410 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 in Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Ecosystems > Wetlands #66 in Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Lakes & Ponds #77 in Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Ecosystems > Coastal

Customer Reviews

"Brimming with engaging information about a little-known region and leavened with moments of grace." --Wall Street Journal "A must-read for anyone who cares about the richest estuary on earth, or one of the most endangered land masses." --Huffington Post "Shadows is not specifically about the Deepwater Horizon blowout and its aftermath, although it plays a central role in the narrative. It's brimming with engaging information about a little-known region and leavened with moments of grace." --Wall Street Journal "Brilliant" -- The wonderfully vivid descriptions of the landscape will place readers right by Jacobsen's side as he describes the changes to the biodiversity, environment, and culture of the Gulf region. -- Library Journal

Rowan Jacobsen is the James Beard Award- winning author of *A Geography of Oysters*, *Fruitless Fall*, *The Living Shore*, and *American Terroir*. He has written about food, place, and the natural world for Harper's, Newsweek, Eating Well, and others, and his commentaries on the Gulf crisis have appeared in Outside magazine and the New York Times and on MSNBC. He was raised in Florida and attended school on the Gulf Coast.

Shadows on the Gulf: A Journey Through Our Last Great Wetland by Rowan Jacobsen is a thorough accounting of the damage done to the Gulf of

Mexico (Lousiania) Wetlands by the BP Mercondo Well blow out I have come across. The only thing that is missing is the insider perspective that is also needed in a telling of this story. I worked offshore and for this Company for the last few years of my career in the Gas Industry. Yes, I agree this is a quite important work and certainly the information given by Mr. Jacobsen concerning the proposed recovery undertaken are lacking. The distructive result of the damage to the Gulf wetlands deserve a larger long term assessment by firstly the Regulatory Offices of our Federal overseers and especially State regulatory agencies that oversee daily activities of the Oil and Gas industries, which the do so poorly and allow the monied interest of the industry do their own policing on the most part of what is done. The Industry Interests call the shots concerning the day to day watchdog activities. There have been many minor spills throughout the history of production and drilling and many have been overlooked by all but the workers out on the rusting and antiquated older production rigs, manned by untrained workers who feel their jobs are in jeopardy, with any action they perform in their daily activities which can easily result in spill if equipment and operations of the Rig are aged and not well maintained. I was encouraged by information given in the opening chapters and I do also, as others have stated, believe there is a stubborn resilience in the ecosystem to recover from the effects of these spills flowing through the salt water and eventually coming ashore to coat the marshes the animals, birds and fish estuaries of our wetlands and surely damaging the source of life of the fish and other wetland creatures that populate the Gulf waters, channels and bayous. The damages continue though, with the daily flow of the Mississippi River into the Gulf carrying Agriculture's runoff of fertilizers and pesticides from upstream users of this wonderful resource. The deregulation of our environmental protections of years past continue with conservative political posturing to all Big Business, Agriculture and Manufacturing to do evermore incrimental damages to the Ecosystem of the Gulf. If we care at all about our ecosystems we will continue to push for enforcement of our regulatory activities, testing of the waters, monitor and control all development in this area to minimize damages that would be done by those who if not regulated will knowingly and intentially cause damage.

I have now read everything Rowan has written-- in book form anyway. And will certainly buy any book of his that comes out in the future.

Hard to find book, came in excellent condition. Was a perfect father's day gift for my son, who is spending the week of "his day", canoeing the mighty Mississippi from Shreveport all the way to the Gulf. Is a must read for anyone interested in preserving and protecting our precious water ways.

I had avoided reading books on the Gulf oil spill because I frankly didn't want to read several hundred pages on the idiotic decision-making that led up to it, nor about the mind-boggling fecklessness of the clean-up efforts. I get it. I don't need to spend a week reading about it. The only reason I picked up Jacobsen's book is because it doesn't mention the oil spill on the cover - I thought I was just getting a "nature book." The book is actually a look at the spill, the technology of oil drilling, and the culture and ecology of the Gulf. Each topic is treated with just enough detail, and the portions on the Gulf and its environment are wonderful. I live halfway across the country from the Gulf, but I came away with a better appreciation of its people and its environment and a better understanding of how the oil spill happened. For example, Jacobsen points out that on deep wells, blowout preventers have only been used a few times and have failed about half of the time - so this was not an unforeseeable disaster as often portrayed in the press. Each chapter in the book reads like a long, extremely well-crafted magazine article on an aspect of the Gulf or of the spill. Jacobsen is an excellent writer, and has a great way of explaining relatively complex topics gracefully and without getting bogged down in details. One of the better books on any subject I have read this year. In terms of detail, tone, and style it is "just right."

Rowan Jacobsen approaches the subject of the Gulf and its complicated past with great depth. He is placing the Deepwater Horizon accident holistically within the context of the environment, commerce and civilization. I've learned more about the accident in ten pages of his writing than I did in the months of news coverage following the event. But more importantly, he makes clear the larger issue that many of us in the environmental field understand intuitively: this is not just man-versus-something; it's a problem of mindset, of recognizing that our connections to each other (which includes non-humans and the physical surroundings) are not limited by distance or time or culture. We must be willing to see and reach and act beyond ourselves and our local communities. Jacobsen's writing is clear and heartfelt. He obviously deeply appreciates nature but is not overly sentimental about it - this isn't tree-hugging. Jacobsen is plainly stating truth: that our personal health is tied to the health of our ecosystems, for we are a part of them. To separate ourselves from our physical surroundings is a falsity that leads only to our decline.

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