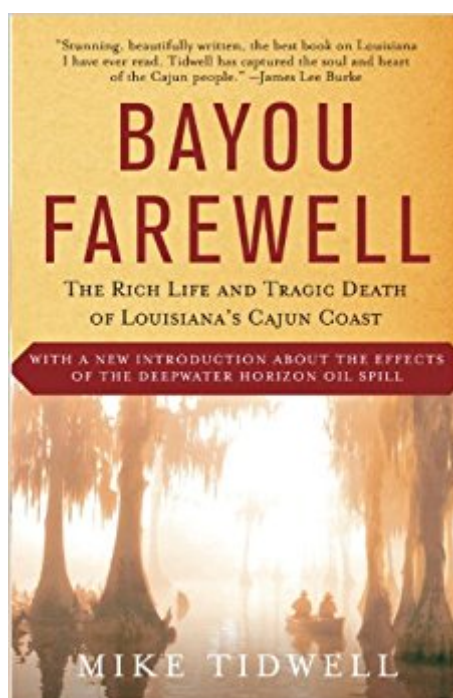


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Bayou Farewell: The Rich Life And Tragic Death Of Louisiana's Cajun Coast



Synopsis

The Cajun coast of Louisiana is home to a way of life as unique, complex, and beautiful as the terrain itself. As award-winning travel writer Mike Tidwell journeys through the bayou, he introduces us to the food and the language, the shrimp fisherman, the Houma Indians, and the rich cultural history that makes it unlike any other place in the world. But seeing the skeletons of oak trees killed by the salinity of the groundwater, and whole cemeteries sinking into swampland and out of sight, Tidwell also explains why each introduction may be a farewell—as the storied Louisiana coast steadily erodes into the Gulf of Mexico. Part travelogue, part environmental exposé, *Bayou Farewell* is the richly evocative chronicle of the author's travels through a world that is vanishing before our eyes.

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Customer Reviews

This lyrically intense travelogue will provide historians of the not too distant future with a guide to a vanishing landscape and a lost culture. Tidwell (*Mountains of Heaven*) graphically recounts catching rides on shrimp boats and crab boats through the dark water swamps of southern Louisiana into the heart of Cajun country. Here, among the great blue heron, spoonbill, gar and gator, the reader meets bayou folk—from the honest and generous fishermen, who provide the author with room, board and transport for his work as a deck hand, to the disheveled backwoods healer who intrigues and tantalizes the writer with his shamanistic spells and incantations. It is these portraits of people on the edge of survival, living in a world where the land is sinking into the sea at a rate of 25 acres a day, that truly engage the reader. A variety of ecological factors have contributed to the subsidence

of the Mississippi Delta. With good intentions to stop deadly floods, the Army Corps of Engineers constructed a vast network of levees and dams along the river, preventing the annual devastating floods of the past. Unfortunately, this also ended the yearly buildup of silt, necessary for the reinforcement and continued existence of the fragile marshlands in the low country. The nutrient-rich, but light, sandy soil cannot withstand the ceaseless eroding forces of ocean tide and winds. The author's descriptive powers, especially of people, provide the reader with enduring snapshots of a water-bound way of life that is sinking into history. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

An award-winning writer on travel and the environment regrets the devastation of Louisiana's Cajun coast. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The author so immerses himself into the culture and lives of residents of the bayou culture that his writing becomes a flowing tribute to Cajun and Creole people and their inherent determination to preserve their way of life. Tidwell, an award-winning journalist, "enters" the bayou world through participating in the daily lives (working with, eating with, listening to) of individuals and families. Tidwell exposes in great detail the exploitation (both past and present) by corporations and groups of this magical landscape that is named the Atchafalaya Basin—that holds the largest river swamp in North America. He also reveals the ineptness of the federal government in attempting to deal with flooding issues that plague this region. WJ

Though this was written pre-BP Oil Spill much is still the same and the message resonates. Little to no progress has been made on the Coastal Land Loss Issues in Louisiana. The book itself is a combination of well worded romantic notions on making a living off the land and the loss of rich history and culture. It is both captivating and education and a very easy read. It can be handily read in a day or two. I've met the author a couple times as he has made his way to Louisiana. I do wish he would return and do a follow-up, though like I said in the beginning of my review, not all that much has changed, other than a rapidly increased and continued loss of land and culture. In fact I would imagine he could not write this book now if he tried, just that much has changed for the worse.

As a Photojournalist I've traveled to the Louisiana wetlands every year now for five years. This year

I visited the wetlands three times and most recently with The Restore the Earth Foundation, an organization very intimately committed to and dedicated to hands-on wetlands restoration projects. This past November 2012 40-plus volunteers from around the country planted nearly 14,000 plants across four species in Pass A Loutre Wildlife Management Area. It was an amazing orchestration of effort and resources to include the Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries and over 20 partner corporations. It was an amazing experience that has motivated me to consider a photo-essay on wetlands restoration. But Mike Tidwell's, *Bayou Farewell*, is a must read for conservationists, environmentalists and general outdoor enthusiasts who wish to truly understand the challenges of conserving and restoring those wetlands. *Bayou Farewell* is a personal accounting; a book of impressions and memories, and an introduction to cultures and a way of life that very few people have a chance to experience. And it's a reminder to just how vulnerable it is. It is a National treasure we cannot lose. If you take anything away from this book, it is most important to realize that the challenges of wetlands restoration are not merely regional in nature, they are national. The stakes are high, too. Not only would the permanent loss of wetlands be a loss of Americana, but losing it and its flourishing fisheries of shrimp, crab, oyster, clam and fish would be devastating to an already ailing economy of the United States. Read it, but then do something to help. Joel Lucks

Although I had heard something of this loss of Bayou swamplands, I had not truly known how extreme this is. This book was written prior to Hurricane Katrina and its devastation and the truth of this was tragically proven when that storm surge rushed through New Orleans and so many other areas of South Louisiana. I wish environmentalists and those in power with the ability to alleviate this situation had read this book. Perhaps lives and property might have been saved if this had been addressed sooner. Bayou life and people are special, almost like a country within a country. The beauty and culture of the bayous, the history of the area, the food, the whole ambience is to be treasured and retained at any cost. I wonder what is being done today, in 2013, to rebuild this present landmass before anymore is forever lost. I would recommend this book to everyone and that those who hear its message might further inform themselves of the current state of affairs in South Louisiana and do whatever they can to save this place that is so vital to so many. I enjoyed this book and am glad that I read it though it left me alarmed by its contents. I believe that should be the purpose of such a book, to inform, alarm, and stimulate needed intervention. The hour grows late, as Hurricane Katrina demonstrated so aptly, let us turn back the clock for the bayous.

This is a beautiful tribute to the bayou land culture of south Louisiana. I grew up in Thibodaux. Bayou Lafourche runs through Thibodaux. What was once a main "highway" between the Mississippi River in Donaldsonville and the Gulf, is now stagnant large ditch until south of Raceland. The Louisiana marshes are disappearing at an alarming rate and everyone in America will pay the price for having ignored this problem. Tidwell published the book in 2003, two years before Katrina and three years after another prescient book, John M. Barry's "Rising Tide." Now Hurricane Isaac has no doubt destroyed more of the marshes that serve as the first - and most important - line of defense against the tidal surges for south Louisiana. Please read the book. Please visit the area. Drive to Grand Isle on Highway 1. It is fast disappearing and already a raised highway is needed to connect the area to the mainland. God save the Bayou Land and those who live on it and off it.

This was the required reading in an elective I took at Loyola University titled "Mississippi River Delta Ecology." The anecdotal nature of the book really weaved the more dry and quantitative teaching of the course together for me (along with field trips to Jean Lafitte and Grand Isle). I recommend it for anyone, though. It's a large reason that my smile is for American Wetlands Foundation!

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