

Dry Tortugas: Stronghold of Nature

Ian Wilson-Navarro

University Press of Florida (Oct 8, 2024)

Hardcover \$34.95 (234pp)

978-0-8130-7912-7

Featuring two hundred magnificent photographs, Ian Wilson-Navarro's *Dry Tortugas* reveals a marine sanctuary at the edge of the Florida Keys.

Wilson-Navarro has a lifelong attachment to the seven remote islands and coral reefs of the Dry Tortugas. With photographs as his primary medium, he aims to promote awareness of it for its protection: "It is my mission to document the changing landscape, the struggles faced by our reefs and fisheries, and the urgent need for conservation." Four short essays by naturalists and other experts complement this work with their compelling perspectives on the region's biodiversity, including its rare birds, fish, and luminous algae; its "enchanted" history, including early visits by Indigenous people and Ponce de Leon; its role as a military outpost; its protection as a national park; and its vulnerability to climate change.

Still, the stunning photographs are the book's centerpiece. They include intimate views of strange, underwater creatures: a sea fan reflecting the golden light of sunset; a watchful hogfish lingering by a coral; the peering eyes of a queen conch under a grand pink shell; a lively blue crab poised for a fight; and the etched, labyrinthine surface of a brain coral. There are also scenes of the sublime, as with a thicket of sea lilies illuminated under a breathtaking view of the Milky Way. And intermingled with expansive scenes of aqua water are images of human interference and destruction. Piles of decades-old trash, an aging boat house slipping into the sea, bleached and dying coral, and the worn fortress walls of Fort Jefferson, abandoned by the Army in 1874, are jarring reminders of humanity's impact on such ecosystems.

Dry Tortugas is an immersive text that celebrates the astonishing beauty and mystery of a remote marine outpost that faces the encroaching threats of development and climate change.

KRISTEN RABE (September / October 2024)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.