



A Shadow and a Song: The Struggle to Save Endangered Species (Chelsea Green Classics)

Mark Jerome Walters

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The sparrow, like the spotted owl of the Pacific Northwest, was the victim—the innocent bystander—of an intense human struggle between those who advocate growth and jobs at any cost and those who insist that each life form that is endangered be protected.

This is the story of how the Endangered Species Act failed a small songbird, the dusky seaside sparrow. The sparrow's only habitat lay in the path of the Kennedy Space Center, not far from Disney World.

Mark Walters' moving narrative describes how the social and political forces of an era forced irrevocable and profound changes in the environment of Brevard County, Florida, and brought about the extinction of a small bird.

Walters begins his story in the late 1950s, before Cape Canaveral was renamed the Kennedy Space Center. Against the backdrop of Merritt Island and the marshlands along the Indian, Banana, and St. Johns rivers—the only places on the planet where the sparrow thrived—he chronicles the struggles of many different personalities, strong-minded individuals whose lives and personal fates become inextricably entwined with those of the dusky. The cast of characters includes the head of Brevard County Mosquito Control, bureaucrats and rangers with U.S. Fish & Wildlife, NASA administrators, real estate developers, ranchers, highway engineers, egg collectors, conservationists, and finally, Disney World itself, home of the last dusksies and their hybrid offspring.

The sparrow, like the spotted owl of the Pacific Northwest, was the victim—the innocent bystander—of an intense human struggle between those who advocate growth and jobs at any cost and those who insist that each life form that is endangered be protected at any cost, and few, if any, winners in the end.

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