



JOHN
McPHEE
The
Pine
Barrens

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By John McPhee

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Most people think of New Jersey as a suburban-industrial corridor that runs between New York and Philadelphia. Yet in the low center of the state is a near wilderness, larger than most national parks, which has been known since the seventeenth century as the Pine Barrens.

The term refers to the predominant trees in the vast forests that cover the area and to the quality of the soils below, which are too sandy and acid to be good for farming. On all sides, however, developments of one kind or another have gradually moved in, so that now the central and integral forest is reduced to about a thousand square miles. Although New Jersey has the heaviest population density of any state, huge segments of the Pine Barrens remain uninhabited. The few people who dwell in the region, the "Pineys," are little known and often misunderstood. Here McPhee uses his uncanny skills as a journalist to explore the history of the region and describe the people?and their distinctive folklore?who call it home.

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The Pine Barrens By John McPhee Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #102296 in Books
- Brand: Farrar Straus Giroux
- Published on: 1978-05-01
- Released on: 1978-05-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.20" h x .47" w x 5.51" l, .40 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 176 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Contrary to popular opinion, the whole of New Jersey is not a continuous Superfund site enlivened solely by poorly labeled Turnpike exits and skanky diners. In fact, the largest essentially untouched wilderness east of the Mississippi comprises nearly half the state: the New Jersey Pine Barrens. This more than 1,000-square-mile region has only a few thousand inhabitants--the Pineys, whose way of life has remained essentially unchanged since the 17th century. McPhee--one of the finest American essayists of the 20th century--has written an extraordinarily compelling, informative, and insightful book about the botanical, cultural, hydrological, and historical peculiarities of this region. He also details the efforts to save it from the creeping urbanization of nearby Philadelphia and New York City. Very Highly Recommended.

Review

“An outstanding reading experience.” *Natural History*

“Using his fine eye, great ear and good heart” (Newsday), McPhee “tells how this geographic anomaly has come to be, describes its people and their distinctive folklore, and captures something of the dreamlike quality of this incredibly quiet land in the midst of the noisy clutter of mechanical civilization.” *Kansas City Star*

“It will be a long time before another book appears to equal the literary quality and human compassion of this one.” *The New York Times Book Review*

About the Author

John McPhee was born in Princeton, New Jersey, and was educated at Princeton University and Cambridge University. His writing career began at *Time* magazine and led to his long association with *The New Yorker*, where he has been a staff writer since 1965. Also in 1965, he published his first book, *A Sense of Where You Are*, with Farrar, Straus and Giroux, and in the years since, he has written nearly 30 books, including *Oranges* (1967), *Coming into the Country* (1977), *The Control of Nature* (1989), *The Founding Fish* (2002), *Uncommon Carriers* (2007), and *Silk Parachute* (2011). *Encounters with the Archdruid* (1972) and *The Curve of Binding Energy* (1974) were nominated for National Book Awards in the category of science. McPhee received the Award in Literature from the Academy of Arts and Letters in 1977. In 1999, he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *Annals of the Former World*. He lives in Princeton, New Jersey.

Users Review

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