



Farewell, Promised Land: Waking from the California Dream

Robert Dawson, Gray Brechin

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Historical accounts of California tell of flocks of birds so dense in the sky that they cast a shadow on the ground, and of thunderous rivers of geese, ducks, and swans moving down the state to the lagoons of Mexico and beyond. Today, citizens and travelers in California take for granted skies empty of almost everything but the contrails of airplanes. But far more than wildlife is missing from California today. In text and photographs, *Farewell, Promised Land* documents the stark contrast between the California landscape of this past and what it has become, as it traces the evolution of the California environment, and looks ahead to what the future holds.

When writer Gray Brechin and photographer Robert Dawson received the 1992 Dorothea Lange-Paul Taylor Prize from Duke University's Center for Documentary Studies, they began a five-year project of driving and flying around California to record the present state of its environment. This book is the result of that collaboration. In six thematic chapters dealing with Loss, Mining, Farming, Cities, Energy, and Health, the authors provide a sobering look at California's environment. A concluding chapter introduces individuals and organizations now attempting to redeem the state from its present course.

Farewell, Promised Land is a superb vehicle for communicating the causes, context, and seriousness of environmental and social disruptions in California. It is unique in that it successfully documents topics such as energy, health, and cities, and brings this information directly to bear on environmental issues. Appealing to the intellect as well as to our sense of aesthetics, Brechin and Dawson provide a timely wake-up call in this brave, honest, and straightforward assessment of California's fate.



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