



## Book Review: *The View from Lazy Point* by Carl Safina

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*The View from Lazy Point: A Natural Year in an Unnatural World* is Carl Safina's latest book which I recently received in the mail. While I've known of Dr. Safina for some time (he is the President and Co-Founder of the Blue Ocean Institute) and had the privilege of listening to some of his guest lectures while I was a student at SUNY Stony Brook University, *The View from Lazy Point* made me feel like I have met him many times before. Dr. Safina's inviting prose and carefree candor lets the reader experience the far flung trips and lazy local fishing jaunts with ease. This book is an in-depth, year long journal, following the author as he struggles to grasp the perils of this unnatural world and balance them with the familiarities of his aptly named home.

In today's scientific and ecological world, it's easy to be overwhelmed by the bad - the scary end-of-the-world scenarios that Al Gore and others brought into our living rooms. How does one escape the ill effects of the never ending CO2 smokestack, the bleached white coral reefs of the Caribbean or the melted glaciers of our polar regions? Even the most optimistic scientist struggles with this task, but Dr. Safina makes it a point to see and appreciate the natural good left in the world. He may not stop to smell the roses - but he does pause to pursue the finned friends that remain abundant in his backyard. "More herring come into our bucket. It's fun to catch these little fish. They're easy and--for now at least--they're abundant." While each new month in this book brings with it a reminder of what has been lost, it also brings reminders of what remains, or in those rare instances, what has come back. For every seemingly unavoidable bleak fate we face - there appears to be a remarkable recovery just beneath the surface.



Thanks to the dedication of a former US Fish and Wildlife biologist (Rachel Carlson and her 1962 book *Silent Spring*), the non-profit environmental advocacy group The Environmental Defense Fund (founded on Long Island by several

environmental professionals including former Brookhaven National Lab Scientist and lifelong birder Dennis Puleston) and the eventual national ban on DDT, birds like the Osprey and Peregrine Falcon got a second lease on life and are now common visitors to Lazy Point and the rest of Long Island. The author writes, "These decades later, the Ospreys' recovery is a big change for the better. They're a lesson in healing and in the power of acting over cursing". Even after a long and cold trip to Antarctica, where Dr. Safina sees first hand the raw, chain reaction effects of climate change, he can return home and witness the abundance nature continues to offer, like harbor seals loafing yards from his bedroom window. The Ruddy Turnstone - that small and unmistakable multi-colored shorebird - is a metaphor throughout the book and Dr. Safina describes them as, ". . . Birds I seem to see wherever I go". It's a reminder that not all is lost. There is hope. Things can change. Beauty and natural wonder, they surround us.



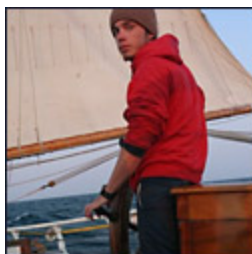
Dr. Safina sees the plights that Mother Earth faces - all of which can be tied to humans. He is not only an observer and a scientist of these black cloud predictions that hang so heavy above us - he is directly affected by them. The small beach cottage at Lazy Point which is just big enough for his needs faces the threat rising sea levels pose. The winters are filled with dinners the sea has provided during summer and fall months - but Dr. Safina finds it's not as easy to fill the freezer with filets of flounder as it once was. Though he has intimate knowledge of the world's problems and their causes, *The View* makes it clear that no one is immune.

*The View from Lazy Point* is an eye opening adventure and scientific endeavor. By book's end, the title takes on a literal meaning. *The View* is not simply the picture that mother nature paints outside Dr. Safina's beachfront cottage. The entire world can be seen from Lazy Point - every link in the food chain - every side effect of man kind's gluttonous and wanton ways. The author analyzes the ravenous desires of man and points out the political and economic hurdles that pit us against a natural world in harmony. This book is not to be rushed through in order to discover the ending - for there is no "ending" to the problems that face us. It is a blink in time, a mere comma in Planet Earth's long, long story that shows us where we are and how we got here. Now that we've arrived, we must collectively wonder what we will do next. "Will we be pirates or captains, slumlords or godparents of time? Will we burn the furniture for heat or be good tenants?"



Dr. Safina does not have every answer for every problem facing us (and how could he when events like the Japanese Earthquake and Tsunami are unforeseen boulders in the road) - but he gives us guidelines to right the ship before we discard our miraculous gifts like we have so many times before. He reminds us that we must understand why we are on this planet - what it means to be part of that living fabric and how our actions ripple through the oceans like a sand smoothed stone skipping across a glassy pond. If we stop being selfish, stop justifying our wasteful ways because we are the "Have's" and therefore can exploit the shares of the "Have Not's" - then we can get back on the proper heading. The industrialized world is used to throwing our twenty-first century waste in the garbage - but there is no landfill to toss nature into - only a cold and dark grave. Writes Dr. Safina, "To advance compassion and yet survive in a world of appetites - that is our challenge".

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**Luke Ormand** is a freelance wildlife and nature photographer based on the East End of Long Island, New York. His day job as an environmental analyst for local government helps fulfill his desires to protect what's left and work on habitat preservation and restoration. Though he only purchased his first DSLR in 2008 he has had works published locally and nationally and was All About Birds featured photographer for February 2011. Luke runs a photoblog which can be viewed at [www.birdsoflongisland.blogspot.com](http://www.birdsoflongisland.blogspot.com).

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