



# Our Better Nature: Environment and the Making of San Francisco

*Philip J. Dreyfus*

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Few cities are so dramatically identified with their environment as San Francisco—the landscape of hills, the expansive bay, the engulfing fog, and even the deadly fault line shifting below. Yet most residents think of the city itself as separate from the natural environment on which it depends. In *Our Better Nature*, Philip J. Dreyfus recounts the history of San Francisco from Indian village to world-class metropolis, focusing on the interactions between the city and the land and on the generations of people who have transformed them both. Dreyfus examines the ways that San Franciscans remade the landscape to fit their needs, and how their actions reflected and affected their ideas about nature, from the destruction of wetlands and forests to the creation of Golden Gate and Yosemite parks, the Sierra Club, and later, the birth of the modern environmental movement.

Today, many San Franciscans seek to strengthen the ties between cities and nature by pursuing more sustainable and ecologically responsible ways of life. Consistent with that urge, *Our Better Nature* not only explores San Francisco's past but also poses critical questions about its future. Dreyfus asks us to reassess our connection to the environment and to find ways to redefine ourselves and our cities within nature. Only with such an attitude will San Francisco retain the magic that has always charmed residents and visitors alike.

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