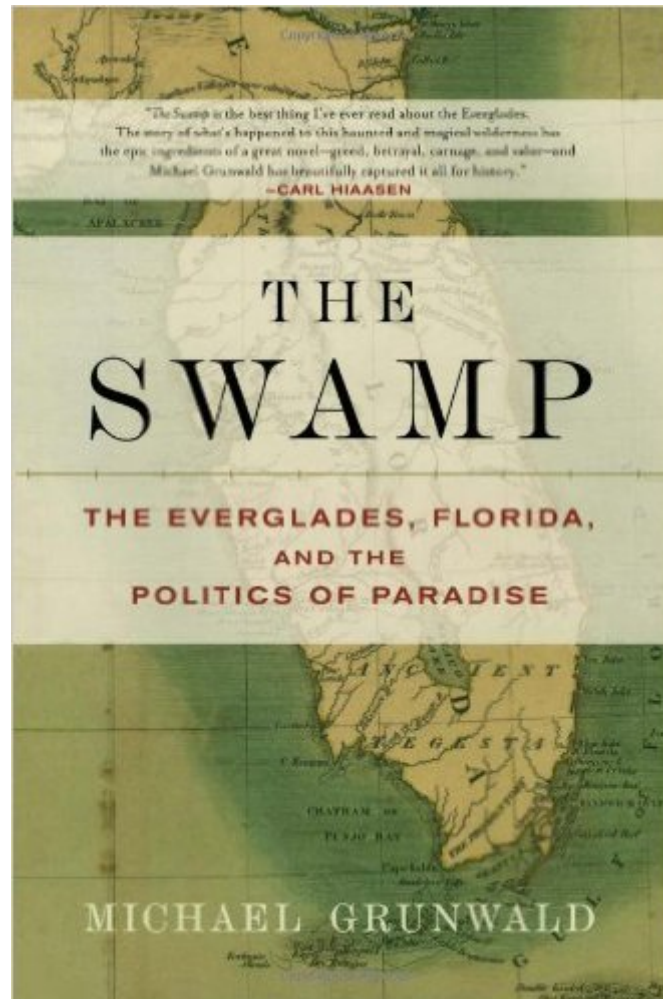


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The Swamp: The Everglades, Florida, And The Politics Of Paradise



Synopsis

The Everglades was once reviled as a liquid wasteland, and Americans dreamed of draining it. Now it is revered as a national treasure, and Americans have launched the largest environmental project in history to try to save it. *The Swamp* is the stunning story of the destruction and possible resurrection of the Everglades, the saga of man's abuse of nature in southern Florida and his unprecedented efforts to make amends. Michael Grunwald, a prize-winning national reporter for *The Washington Post*, takes readers on a riveting journey from the Ice Ages to the present, illuminating the natural, social and political history of one of America's most beguiling but least understood patches of land. The Everglades was America's last frontier, a wild country long after the West was won. Grunwald chronicles how a series of visionaries tried to drain and reclaim it, and how Mother Nature refused to bend to their will; in the most harrowing tale, a 1928 hurricane drowned 2,500 people in the Everglades. But the Army Corps of Engineers finally tamed the beast with levees and canals, converting half the Everglades into sprawling suburbs and sugar plantations. And though the southern Everglades was preserved as a national park, it soon deteriorated into an ecological mess. The River of Grass stopped flowing, and 90 percent of its wading birds vanished. Now America wants its swamp back. Grunwald shows how a new breed of visionaries transformed Everglades politics, producing the \$8 billion rescue plan. That plan is already the blueprint for a new worldwide era of ecosystem restoration. And this book is a cautionary tale for that era. Through gripping narrative and dogged reporting, Grunwald shows how the Everglades is still threatened by the same hubris, greed and well-intentioned folly that led to its decline.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My job touches not so peripherally on Everglades National Park, one of the crown jewels of the U.S. national park system, so I was eager to read this highly recommended summary of the history of the Everglades by Washington Post report Mike Grunwald. Calling this book a summary doesn't do it justice - it's comprehensive without being overly long, it's an excellent read without being too journalistic, its coverage of the issue is broad without being too shallow, and it inflames while also moderating the reasons why, in 2006, the Everglades is still dying, because of our insatiable greed and need for more, more, more - water, land, money, power. I picked up this book a couple months back, connecting with the topic on a professional level, but then as I approached the end of the book, sad news from Florida brought me unexpectedly in personal contact with one of the millions of human stories that pervade the Everglades, Florida, and the politics of paradise, the subtitle of this book - the passing of my aunt, whose husband and sons were some of those folks who greatly enjoyed being swamp rats, hunting, fishing and airboating through the river of grass. Speaking with an uncle who remembers the wilderness that used to be the Everglades 40-50 years ago, we talked about the daily rains that used to come every afternoon, like clockwork, around 4-5pm each day in southern Florida. This book talks about silting of estuaries, muddy waters and phosphorous deposits in the great Lake Okeechobee, depleted water tables, red tides killing endangered or threatened charismatic species like the manatee and dolphins and how the Army Corps of Engineers has failed to figure out 'it's the environment, stupid.

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