



Swamplife: People, Gators, and Mangroves Entangled in the Everglades (Quadrant Books)

Laura A. Ogden

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Little in North America is wilder than the Florida Everglades—a landscape of frightening reptiles, exotic plants in profusion, swarms of mosquitoes, and unforgiving heat. And yet, even from the early days of taming the wilderness with clearing and drainage, the Everglades has been considered fragile, unique, and in need of restorative interventions. Drawing on a decade of fieldwork with hunters in the Everglades, Laura A. Ogden explores the lives and labors of people, animals, and plants in this most delicate and tenacious ecosystem.

Today, the many visions of the Everglades—protectionist, ecological, commercial, historical—have become a tangled web of contradictory practices and politics for conservation and for development. Yet within this entanglement, the place of people remains highly ambivalent. It is the role of people in the Everglades that interests Ogden, as she seeks to reclaim the landscape's long history as a place of human activity and, in doing so, discover what it means to be human through changing relations with other animals and plant life.

Ogden tells this story through the lives of poor rural whites, gladesmen, epitomized in tales of the Everglades' most famous outlaws, the Ashley Gang. With such legends and lore on one side, and outsized efforts at drainage and development on the other, *Swamplife* strikes a rare balance, offering a unique insight into the hidden life of the Everglades—and into how an appreciation of oppositional culture and social class operates in our understanding of wilderness in the United States.

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