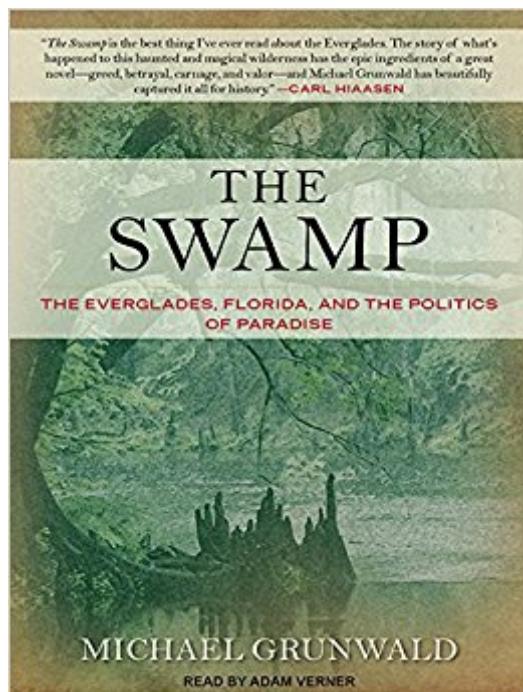


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The Swamp: The Everglades, Florida, And The Politics Of Paradise



Synopsis

The Everglades was America's last frontier, a wild country long after the West was won. In this book, Michael 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 *The Swamp* 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

Starred Review. Washington Post reporter Grunwald brings the zeal of his profession—and the skill that won him a Society of Environmental Journalists Award in 2003—to this enthralling story of "the river of grass" that starry-eyed social engineers and greedy developers have diverted, drained and exploited for more than a century. In 1838, fewer than 50 white people lived in south Florida, and the Everglades was seen as a vast and useless bog. By the turn of this century,

more than seven million people lived there (and 40 million tourists visited annually). Escalating demands of new residents after WWII were sapping the Everglades of its water and decimating the shrinking swamp's wildlife. But in a remarkable political and environmental turnaround, chronicled here with a Washington insider's savvy, Republicans and Democrats came together in 2000 to launch the largest ecosystem restoration project in America's history. This detailed account doesn't shortchange the environmental story— including an account of the senseless fowl hunts that provoked abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1877 broadside "Protect the Birds." But Grunwald's emphasis on the role politics played in first despoiling and now reclaiming the Everglades gives this important book remarkable heft. 18 pages of b&w photos; 7 maps. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

The Swamp emerged from a four-part series that Grunwald wrote for the Washington Post in 2002, which focused on the \$8 billion plan to restore the Everglades. From there, Grunwald fleshed out the Everglades's contested history. Critics laud The Swamp as an informative, beautifully researched and written tale that links social, political, and environmental history to current events. Many commented on Grunwald's finesse in describing the dreamers and schemers who sold Florida swampland, the engineers who tried to buck nature's forces. A few thought that Grunwald paid too little attention to current controversies, did not adequately explain today's Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, and assumed a condition of ecological purity to pre-European contact Florida. These are minor complaints; Grunwald's unbiased story will provoke outrage over our squandered "river of grass."Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

I'm really not sure how to rate this book. If your goal is to learn about the Everglades I would give this book a 4-star rating. Maybe even a 5-star rating. If your goal is to read a good book then this is at best a 3-star book. The information is simply overwhelming. Grunwald tells us everything. Unfortunately he does is without separating the important from the interesting. This book would have benefited from more maps and images. I live in the Everglades but even I had trouble at times.

Hard to believe that a history of the Everglades and it's manmade canals could keep your attention, but this book does. I learned so much about the Everglades and how man has completely messed it up and how politics are continuing to kill it. I live in south Florida and I look at every canal in a

different light now. Very well researched and well written.

Hard to believe a book, with the title "The Swamp" could be so exciting and chock full of history, politics, scandal, you name it, it's all in here. In describing with great accuracy and detail the history of the Everglades in central Florida, Grunwald weaves a complex story about its significance to not only the State of Florida, but about the US as well. Grunwald obviously did a prodigious amount of research for this book. His writing style is totally compelling. An excellent read.

This is an outstanding piece of history/journalism as the author traces the Everglades and surrounding south Florida from the earliest Indians to the very latest politicians. Anyone who lives in or visits S. Florida should read this towering book as the author describes the villains and heroes who had a role in impacting the Everglades. Surprisingly, we find that the environmentalists (who were called conservationists in earlier times) were often just as wrong and opportunistic as were the politicians and the fat cats. There's blame for everybody who had a hand in despoiling this unique environmental treasure and then, with dubious motives and bureaucratic bumbling, sought to restore it. A Washington Post journalist, Grunwald brings to the book a generally leftist perspective --he keeps, for instance, harping on the alleged predations of "the white man." But you can see that he at least makes an effort to restrain himself -- not always successfully. He even occasionally takes a shot at a Democrat or an environmentalist, but in general, his opinions are predictable and often cliched. This mild criticism, however, should not take away from the success and importance of this comprehensive, well-done, easy-to-read saga about the Everglades, wherein lies an instructive tale of how big things get done (or not done) in America.

This book provides a history of south Florida since European settlement, with the emphasis on the problems of swamp drainage in the former Everglades and the struggle to preserve a small part of the ecosystem in national parks and wildlife refuges. Grunwald has done a good job of research, and unlike many journalists he reads extensively in addition to interviewing people. The book is both informative and a lively read despite its length. Grunwald's story revolves around draining lands for agriculture and for (sub)urban development in South Florida. The history of Everglades National Park, which occupies only a small part of the Everglades ecosystem, provides a secondary theme. Grunwald starts, and ends, with the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan of 2000, an \$8 billion project that ostensibly would save the Everglades. The CERP is ultimately supposed to increase water flows to the national park, but this comes at significant ecological cost. To obtain

passage, supporters of CERP had to front-load the economic benefits while postponing the environmental benefits for five decades. The economic benefits include enough new water for six million new residents, continued sugar subsidies, and support for continued urban development. Grunwald doesn't take a position on the CERP but makes clear why it was politically feasible while more serious plans would not have been. Whether half (or a fourth) of a loaf is better than none in this case is an open question. Ironically, CERP was signed during the Florida recount in the 2000 presidential election. As it turns out, Al Gore was a major supporter of the bill though many environmentalists opposed it as inadequate. Those environmentalists voted for Nader instead, which swung Florida to George W. Bush. Thus, the story in this book is not just important for Florida and the Everglades but for the next eight years of American politics as well. Grunwald tells the whole story well. Highly recommended.

I read and enjoyed this book - every page of it! Just don't get in a hurry to consume it as you would a work of fiction. It was recommended to me by residents of the area and their enthusiasm for it compelled me to order it. I hope some day to meet this author and congratulate him on the excellence of his unbiased and comprehensive coverage of the subject of the everglades.

If you are interested in Florida politics, the Florida everglades, the environmental effects of man on the everglades, etc., this is a book you definitely need to read. Mr. Grunwald covers the history and politics of the Florida everglades thoroughly and in a manner that anyone can understand. Reading this book before a trip to the everglades will increase your understanding of the area and how it functions, as well as giving you a greater appreciation of what is truly one of the great wonders of the world.

An incredibly engaging look at what you might think is a dry (pardon the pun) topic. The book takes an in-depth look at the history of the Everglades from its geologic beginnings to early colonial days and efforts over hundreds of years to drain the wetlands for farming and subdivisions and ultimately ending with recent efforts to reclaim the wetlands. I know it doesn't sound engrossing, but it is a fairly incredible story about mankind's stubbornness and the (hopefully) resilience of nature. Well worth a read.

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