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Swamp Song: A Natural History Of Florida's Swamps



Synopsis

Swamp Song is the story of a biologist's romance with the environment. In this abundantly illustrated book, naturalist and photographer Ron Larson offers to everyone interested in nature--from bird watchers and canoeists to botanists and policy makers--an introduction to Florida's forested wetlands. Â

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Customer Reviews

Larson's book is a celebration of the swamps of Florida. He briefly covers their classification and origin, their distribution throughout the state, and how to experience them firsthand. The longest part of the book is devoted to describing selected plants and animals of the swamps. As a biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Larson can and does relate many personal encounters. The numerous illustrations supplement the text well. There is an extensive bibliography and a good index. Larson's folksy style is sometimes humorous; his love for swamps is always apparent. His book is a good, nontechnical introduction to a misunderstood and badly abused habitat.

Recommended for general collections, especially in the Southeast. ?Bruce Neville, Univ. of Texas at El Paso Lib. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"An excellent natural history. . . . Expresses Larson's obvious enthusiasm for swamps and will instill the same feeling in readers."--Susan W. Vince, School of Forest Resources and Conservation, University of Florida "An excellent description of the beauty and complexity of Florida's

swamplands. . . . Thoroughly details what the different kinds of swamps are, how they were formed, the flora and fauna found in them, some of the best sites for viewing this habitat, and the overall importance of these areas to man and nature."--William Conner, Baruch Forest Science Institute, Georgetown, South Carolina

Swamp Song is the story of a biologist's romance with the environment. In this abundantly illustrated book, naturalist and photographer Ron Larson offers to everyone interested in nature--from bird watchers and canoeists to botanists and policy makers--an introduction to Florida's forested wetlands. ^ Florida has more swamps and marshes than any other state except Alaska.^ One-third of it is covered with cypress domes, wet prairies, mangrove swamps, sawgrass glades, pitcher plant savannahs, and other wetlands. Swamps in Florida are the last refuge of panthers, wood storks, black bears, and many rare plants such as the ghost orchid and hand fern. ^ This intimate account of Florida's biological richness bridges the gap between technical and popular discussions of how swamps originated; how water, fire, and nutrients affect wetlands; the types and distribution of swamps; the impact of exotic species; and how human activities affect swamps.^ It introduces the flora of swamps, from slime molds to tupelo trees, and examines the animals that live there, from apple snails to bobcats.^ In addition, it tells how to explore and photograph the swamps and offers maps that show how to find them. ^ Larson's message is that swamps are a vital part of Florida's landscape that deserve protection and appreciation.^ In personal narrative and 79 illustrations, he presents the swamp as a natural world of remarkable biotic diversity and he invites readers to understand why he finds it distinctive, enticing, and unforgettably beautiful. ^

I moved to Tampa from PaloAlto twenty years ago. For recreation, I bought USGS maps of Florida. Eliminate the beaches and its mostly swamp, especially from Tampa on down to the Everglades; but I'm an amateur naturalist so that's good. Over the years, I've found the plant and animal life, and the ecology, of Florida's interior more-and-more fascinating. Larson's little book is the book that I've often dreamed of writing, only better. If you are fortunate enough to live in Florida, get to know your nearest public-access swamps, then buy a copy of this book to begin to understand the amazing things that you have seen.

Larson presents a grand introduction to forested freshwater wetlands in Florida, where water and trees dominate. He presents a skillful blend of scientific background (including technical references) and personal experiences, particularly in Highland Hammocks State Park and Fakahatchee Strand. He starts with a description and formation of the major areas including depression marshes in

Okefenokee and Pinhook swamp basin swamps, and the nearby (to me) Shrub bogs in the prosaically named "Tate's Hell" and flooded river areas as along the Apalachicola, and Strands in South Florida. The majority of the book goes through different plant and animal classes, and the book shines by its broad coverage. There is sure to be an introduction to something new to each reader. For example, I did not know that the weight of fungi per acre is about equal to a small car or that up to 50 species of river fish may feed in an adjacent flooded swamp. For bird watchers, the tales of the Ivory Bill are most exciting, in light of current searches. Larson closes this section with tales of the enigmatic black bear and Florida panther. He closes the book with the call for education and advocacy for the wetland, and I would add basic care of oil after an oil change and safe storage of pesticides and chemicals. May you never be depressed in a depression marsh.

Ron Larson's "Swamp Song" is an intriguing trip through Florida's back-wood ecosystems. His writing style is descriptive and captivating. He illustrates - both through words and photographs - the unique plants and animals of Florida's swamps and rivers, and demystifies the often bleak outlook of these natural habitats.

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