

Rivers of grass (Review)

Written by Administrator

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Imagine reading a dramatization of a cancer or degenerative disease that has been slowly spreading through your body, one you were not fully aware of. You read of the wonderful nature of each organ, their function and interplay, and cringe as you follow their demise. The whole is breaking down. And you realize it is probably too late to reverse the process.

This is pretty much what reading this beautiful, painful book is all about. ***Rivers of Grass*** follows the history of the Florida Everglades, from its geological makeup, its biological processes, its discovery and settling by nomadic Indian tribes, then the coming of the Spanish. And here's where the book begins its long and painful spiral.

The many Indian wars (which is a polite way of saying *Make deals with the savages you are in the process of screwing* are documented. There are pages of slavery, greed, murder, deal-breaking and religious buffoonery. It's like the seven deadly sins set against a pristine environment.

But not pristine for long. Soon there are passages about the canal proposals, the detonating of the limestone ridges that kept the water in and the salt out. And the bird hunts for plumage (for women's hats) in which men with shotguns strolled through the vast nesting fields, blasting swaths through the unsuspecting ranks. There are the efforts at cultivation, at big sugar, at the injection of fertilizers and poisons into the teetering biosphere. And then there is the ravenous thirst of the Miami megaplex, gallons and gallons of water spread across ever-parched lawns.

Rivers came out in 1947, and already its fate was grim. There is an additional section included on the revenges of the last fifty years. While this book is wonderful, to paraphrase, it's a difficult book to pick up. Every page brings more heartache.

What truly amazes me is that Orange County Libraries does not have this on their shelves. I tried to get it from them and failed. You can get any number of Harry Potter books but not this classic of Florida natural history, which explains why the glades are dying in the first place.

Of course, it is with a sense of *deja vu* that I hear our tea-bagger governor Rick Scott is gutting environmental regulations across the everglades. He only represents the most recent

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white wave of invasion, the self-centered retirees.

So, on your next trip to Disneyland and Universal, maybe you should swing south to see the rivers of grass. Look fast. They won't be here much longer.