



# The Everglades: river of grass; (Rivers of America)

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas*

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Originally published in 1947, *The Everglades* was one of those rare books, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Silent Spring*, to have an immediate political effect: it helped draw public attention to a vast and little-known area that South Florida developers had deemed a worthless swamp and were busily draining, damming, and remaking, and it mustered needed public support for President Harry Truman's controversial order, later that year, to protect more than 2 million acres as Everglades National Park.

Remote and seldom visited, the Everglades nonetheless had a rich human history: several Native American peoples, Spanish explorers, French and English pirates, runaway slaves, and Anglo trappers and fishermen all came to this limestone basin and made their lives among its slowly moving water and fast-growing sawgrass. It is this human history, more than the life histories of the Everglades' deer, panthers, scorpions, serpents, and alligators, that occupies most of Marjorie Stoneman Douglas's pages; even so, her lyrical if sometimes sentimental account of the area's flora and fauna makes for fine reading.

Douglas died in 1998 at the age of 107, having done more than any other one person to protect this magnificent portion of wild America. Anyone wishing to continue her good work--and to understand the Everglades' importance in the shape of things--will find great riches in her book. --*Gregory McNamee*

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