



# Manatee Insanity: Inside the War over Florida's Most Famous Endangered Species

*Craig Pittman*

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Why is the manatee just as imperiled today as it was 40 years ago?

"The best available, most factual account of the decades-long struggle to protect the Florida manatee, skillfully told by a veteran journalist who has followed the story closely. I've been involved in this controversy for over 30 years, and I learned countless things about it that I never knew!"--Daryl Domning, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution

"The Florida legislature gave the manatee its own license plate, and Jimmy Buffet sang poetic lyrics about the iconic creature, but Craig Pittman offers a whole new perspective--the manatee as battleground. With a cast of characters including environmentalists and biologists, developers and boaters, lawyers and lobbyists, politicians and shady citizens, *Manatee Insanity* is a colorful work of non-fiction."--Keith Rizzardi, South Florida Water Management District

Loveable or loathed? Poster child for conservation efforts or impediment to development? Nuisance or in need of protection? For the past two decades, the quiet manatee has been a flash point of frequent environmental debates.

Included on the very first endangered species list issued in 1967, the docile creatures have stirred curiosity and passions for more than a hundred years. They are Florida's most famous endangered species, as well as its most controversial. Manatees appear on hundreds of license plates, attract hordes of tourists, and expose the uneasy relationships between science and the law and between freedom and responsibility like no other animal.

As passions have flared and resentments have grown, the battle over manatee protection has evolved into a war, and no reporter has followed the story more closely than Craig Pittman. He's flown with scientists trying to count manatees from overhead. He's been on the water with the leader of the biggest pro-boater group. He's observed biologists dissecting the animals and politicians discussing their fate.

*Manatee Insanity* provides the first in-depth history of the attempts to provide legal protection for the manatee. Along the way, Pittman takes a close look at the major and minor players in the dispute, from Jacques-Yves Cousteau to Jeb Bush, from Jimmy Buffett to O. J. Simpson, from a popular children's book author to a federal lawyer who dressed in a gorilla suit for the ultimate undercover assignment.

A volume in the Florida History and Culture Series, edited by Raymond Arsenault and Gary R. Mormino

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