



# Indian River Lagoon: An Environmental History

*Nathaniel Osborn*

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“Lively and nuanced.”—David McCally, author of *The Everglades: An Environmental History*

“As we work to repair the damage we have done to fragile ecosystems, this book tells us how much we have lost and how little time we have left before it is completely destroyed. Important reading for all interested in saving what is left of vanishing natural Florida.”—Steven Noll, coauthor of *Ditch of Dreams: The Cross Florida Barge Canal and the Struggle for Florida’s Future*

“Osborn has finally gifted the long misunderstood Indian River Lagoon with the discerning scientific insights and cultural perspective it deserves.”—Bill Belleville, author of *The Peace of Blue: Water Journeys*

“Unwinds the natural and human histories that have made the region both popular and fragile.”—Evan P. Bennett, author of *When Tobacco Was King: Families, Farm Labor, and Federal Policy in the Piedmont*

Stretching along 156 miles of Florida’s East Coast, the Indian River Lagoon contains the St. Lucie estuary, the Mosquito Lagoon, Banana River Lagoon, and the Indian River. It is a delicate ecosystem of shifting barrier islands and varying salinity levels due to its many inlets that open and close onto the ocean. The long, ribbon-like lagoon spans both temperate and subtropical climates, resulting in the most biologically diverse estuarine system in the United States.

Nineteen canals and five man-made inlets have dramatically reshaped the region in the past two centuries, intensifying its natural instability and challenging its diversity. *Indian River Lagoon* traces the winding story of the waterway, showing how humans have altered the area to fit their needs and also how the lagoon has influenced the cultures along its shores. Now stuck in transition between a place of labor and a place of recreation, the lagoon has become a chief focus of public concern. This book provides a much-needed bigger picture as debates continue over how best to restore this natural resource.

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