

News from the Sloughs

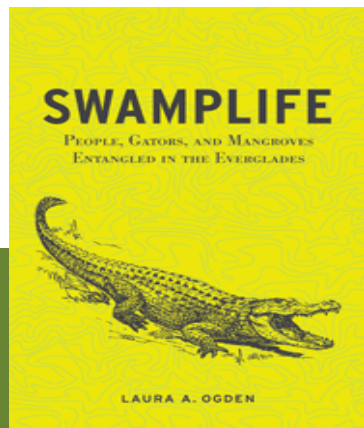
News from the
researchers,
students, and
educators of FCE
LTER

Volume 1, Number 1



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FCE Rising: Stories High Priority

Hurricane season, and what is typically the wet season in South Florida is finally almost over. With that end comes a new beginning- our first official Florida Coastal Everglades Long Term Ecological Research newsletter. We are inviting everyone FCE to get involved and make this an exciting read. Please send your comments and suggestions for the newsletter, stories, photos, video material, and announcements to fceslter@fiu.edu so we can put them in the winter edition of the newsletter. Since this is our first edition you may notice a preponderance of words from the same author/ co-author/editor. This will surely be your incentive to write your own stories in your own words.

Note from the editor

Have you checked out Laura Ogden's new book?

Ten years of research and went into her new book and she tells us some of the background to her studies in this exclusive interview.

Urgent: FCE III Proposal Materials Deadline November 11, 2011 send to ruggem@fiu.edu





What did YOUR teacher do last summer?

FCE researcher turned educator Lisa Giles spent last summer in Shark Bay Australia-Tiger Shark territory- swimming with poisonous

sea snakes, dolphins, and all of the creatures that Tiger Sharks love to eat. Lisa Giles, pictured upper left, teaches 8th grade science to middle school students at Key Largo School and has had a lot to share with her students since her research adventure. She applied online to a standing request from Dr. Mike Heithaus' website for middle school teachers to participate in research experience with their Shark Bay Ecosystem Research Project Program. Lisa called the opportunity a "unique

experience" and has been able to "make lessons super powerful" for her students. Her time in Shark Bay was spent assisting in field studies primarily with Cindy Bessey and Derek Burkholder who were working on their graduate studies. Daily they would trap fish, lay diving transects, and wrangle the fish for blood collection and isotopic readings. The researchers are studying the species that Tiger Sharks prey upon, conducting population assessments and trophic dynamic studies. The

Tiger sharks themselves were not around and had moved out of the Australian winter waters, although there were plenty of wildlife encounters with the other sea-life though- namely sea snakes, sea turtles and dolphins. Lisa recalled one day while she was collecting traps from sea grass beds that four or five snakes got very curious and investigated her actions but that mostly they surveyed the sea snakes from the boat.

What Tiger Sharks LOVE to eat.....

Giles' experiences in Florida Bay as an FCE researcher allowed her a different perspective to compare the two ecosystems. She noted that the seagrass beds were much more dense and not impacted in Shark Bay the way that they are in Florida Bay. She also reflected that in Shark Bay she had many more dolphin encounters than in her years in Florida Bay.

"They (dolphins) were very curious and joined the bowline for each field outing. They were so abundant and quite curious- almost as if they were showing that humans were a novelty in their habitat." The dugong sightings were quite the opposite though and they maintained distance from their research boat. Lisa is now working to incorporate the research



experience into the curriculum for her 120 students. She has met with other teachers at Key Largo School and shared her stories of her summertime down under. Article by Susan Dailey and Lisa Giles

Sounds Like A Revolution....for Data

FCE Data Manager Linda Powell and FCE Collaborator Dr. Colby Leider are leading field data collection technology with a new tool- revolutionizing data collection. These two researchers are in perfect harmony with the idea of FCE

data being interfaced with a data logger in- the music department at University of Miami. Yes you read that correctly- music. Colby Leider is no stranger to finding unique ways of harvesting and processing acoustic data and Linda Powell is in vernacular terms a “datasmith”. Brainstorming between Colby, Dr. Evelyn Gaiser and Dr. Laura Ogden led to Linda deciding to submit a proposal to the Information Management Supplement call for proposals and this year was awarded with the supplement for a sensor network out in the Everglades that will allow for remote collection of data.

Conversations that led to this point were born from Colby’s development of gladesBox- an audio data system that operates off of wi-fi, collects Everglades sounds in the field and sends the information back to U.M. His plan is to pipe these nature sounds to Lincoln Road by early 2012.

The proposed FCE work plan of the sensor data collection is still being developed but essentially, sensors will be set up in the FCE sampling sites such that they will interface with a web-browser based platform interface based out of U.M. then get processed in Matlab and -voila! -results. After downloading the results, FCE researchers’ data will be sent to Linda’s big-dog computer data server for QA/QC and then out for analysis to the data set originator to address critical Everglades ecosystem questions. Expansion of the FCE computer base would allow for a more direct passage of data.

In late September Linda hosted the first conference call with FCE researchers to announce the technology and discuss practical applications of the sensor network. The response was electric and immediately there was recognition of the vast array of uses of this technology. For one, the possibility of remotely collecting data vs. frequently and painstakingly visiting and downloading data from

distant instruments in the field-weather permitting? Are you drooling thinking about the possibility of gigantic, live, continuous datasets already? Are you dreaming about the ability to change the intervals of collection of those data sets to record pulse events such as storms or flooding events? Receipt of your data from satellites which ultimately return info back to the comfort of your office without a field trip is the essence of this technology and is particularly interesting to Everglades National Park researchers and FCE collaborators who have been working with large datasets from weather stations for decades. FCE Hydrology Workgroup leader Dr. Renee Price also saw the opportunities for using these technologies to collect hydrological data from remote sites.

Another exciting use of the technology is being developed too and Colby has met with ENP’s Kevin Kotun who can provide antennae space to set up a streaming online radio station of Everglades sounds. Tune in to the newsletter for an update soon.

Linda will be attending an exploratory Northeast Environmental Sensor Workshop at Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest in late October where the attendees will discuss issues of new sensor technology and novel uses of the technology and streaming QA/QC data. We will look forward to hearing more from Linda and Colby collaborative research soon- music to our ears at FCE!

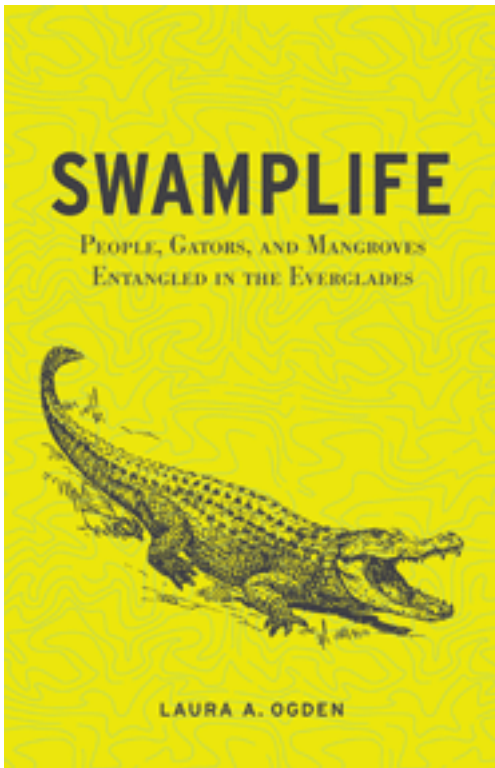
[Article by Susan Dailey and Linda Powell](#)

FCE Researchers you can learn more about Colby http://www.miami.edu/frost/index.php/frost/frost_profiles/mue-0-leider_colby_n_bio/

and gladesBox from the FCE intranet or contact Linda Powell: powell@fiu.edu

FCE researcher Dr. Laura Ogden publishes *Swamplife*

Florida Coastal Everglades Long Term Ecological Research (FCE LTER) collaborator Laura Ogden has created a book, *Swamplife* that is not for the faint of heart.



This ethnography is for adventurers and it takes you on a trip that expands your mind through a wide variety of interviews with gladesmen, well-researched historical accounts, the authors reflections of the abiotic and biotic world of the Everglades, and powerful references from the natural world to anthropology. In the first few chapters Laura's writing molds your mindset to one that can accept the metaphysical transformation to understand landscapes as memories and to think of the Everglades as a rhizomous web of a people and how they have interacted with the Everglades throughout time. As the audience you feel what it must have been like to live the life of a gladesman and can imagine yourself crouching for hours, hunting, in a wet slough with nature's beauty enveloping you as you wait for your prize, the alligator to

surface. Having worked in the wilderness of Everglades' Shark River Slough for 5 years myself I found the book took me to a few familiar places but after finishing the book I know that when I revisit the heart of the glades it will be with wiser eyes of who has tread before me. The book was so powerful I had to get Laura's own words for an interview about the experiences she had in writing the book.

Q: Laura, growing up in the Everglades made alligators a part of your personal backyard wildlife. Most kids living in South Florida have birds and mosquitoes as their home turf inhabitants. How do you feel this has affected you as a writer?

Well, alligators in the backyard is a bit of a stretch, but, yes, I was incredibly lucky to have grown up with parents who worked in the Everglades – certainly their commitment to understanding the Everglades,

as well as a love of fieldwork, has rubbed off on me. I think the landscapes of our childhoods (whether urban or rural) sort of sink into us – like those sense-memories work their way into our DNA. Of course nostalgia shapes that process tremendously. The Everglades is that landscape for me. The ripe, saltiness of the mangrove swamps, that weird electric feeling in the air before a storm on Florida Bay – these are the sense-memories that have the power to knock me back to a time in my life when I was just learning to make sense of the world. As a writer, I have drawn on the power of those memories to help evoke the Everglades as a very human experience.

Q: How do you feel this has affected you as an FCE researcher? And vice versa how do you feel FCE researchers have affected your writing? Was there anyone in particular from FCE or the entire LTER network who

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influenced your writing?

FCE has been a great “home” for my interests and for the research that shaped this book. I am very interested in how social and ecological theory can inform and enrich our disciplines and the LTER, and FCE in particular, has been an amazing place to have these types of conversations. Long-term research also means a commitment to long-term relationships with colleagues. I think these commitments allow us to trust each other enough to let ask tough questions and learn from each other—this is what facilitates paradigm shifts. At a smaller scale, it is great to have so many Everglades experts around to help me get the natural science right! I once emailed Dan Childers to ask him if it was OK to say “mangroves build land,” and he graciously offered a more nuanced answer.

Q: The reoccurring theme as landscape being more of a shifting memory (which is brilliant by the way) is prominent in the first half of your book. When you visit the Everglades either with your work with FCE LTER, or in researching this book, or for leisure, do you recognize some of the places that the gladesmen you interviewed visited?

So I think that is a tricky question. Certainly there are lots of places within the Everglades that are recognizable as sites that were once

hunters (I use the term “gladesmen” to describe this community). These sites include former camps, trails, boat landings, and other spots. When I was doing my fieldwork, I spent a lot of time in the Everglades trying to locate these sites. On the other hand, the Everglades is a very dynamic landscape. Turn around and the mangroves have closed in on themselves, hiding former campsites and boat trails. Moreover, we’ve managed the Everglades in ways that have really altered the way they looked in the 1940s and 1950s, which is the time period that I really concentrate on in my book. So all kinds of socio-ecological processes keep the Everglades changing, contributing to the experience of the landscape as a shifting memory.

Q: Have you always been fascinated by alligators? What are your personal feelings about them?

Well alligators are pretty iconic in Florida, though that wasn’t always the case. In my book, I examine the ways our conservation and management practices have mirrored public attitudes about alligators. But, in general, I have always been more interested in alligator hunters than alligators. I am fascinated by the ways rural people around the world make a living from the landscapes they call home and how these types of relationships shape their understanding of the landscape.

Q: Did you also research the American crocodile and the history of their hunters?

I know a bit about crocodiles in Florida. Because crocodiles have always been scarce, my sense is that local people got more money capturing and selling live crocs to museums and zoos around the country.

Q: This is meaty reading—often metaphysical in places and packed with a lot of information. What audience did you have in mind while writing your book?

I’m glad you asked about the writing process and the intended audience. When I started *Swamplife*, I wanted to do two things: first, try and write in a way that really evoked the experience of the hunter’s Everglades (in all its bloody, buggy immediacy); second, try and write the book so that the writing style reflected the central theoretical concerns of the book. In sum, the central premise of the book is that the hunter’s Everglades is constituted (or comes into being) through the shifting power relations among animals, plants and people. As I say, fire, water, mangroves, alligators and hunters are the book’s central characters. Because some of the theory that informs the book is pretty heavy-going, I also wanted to get to it in a way that still made the book accessible to a general, academic audience. It has been great to have my

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Everglades science colleagues as well as my anthropology colleagues find different things about the book that speaks to them.

Q: The references and quotations you provide in each chapter are mind numbingly impressive and span a diverse field of literature. Did you already possess such a strong background in environmental literacy before you started the book or did it grow as you were writing?

Thank you for that kind comment. I started reading the early natural history and early Everglades explorer literature because I wanted to see what these writers had to say about the local communities and families who were living here during the late 1800s and early 20th Century. I have a chapter in my book about the complicated relationships between early scientists and locals (many who served as guides). My mother had one of the most comprehensive Everglades libraries out there, which I inherited – no doubt being surrounded by all these books has helped enormously.

Q: Can you foresee your book being used in the classroom for high school, undergraduate or graduate studies? What aspects of the book would you like to see the students focus their attention?

One of my project collaborators, the photographer Deborah Mitchell, has read selections of

this book to high school students in Miami who are involved in an environmental education program for urban girls. That was really awesome! But, for the most part, I have colleagues that are teaching the book in various environmental anthropology courses for undergraduate and graduate students. I am really looking forward to hearing how that goes.

Q: The format of your book seems to naturally fit the “rhizome “ model you describe but I say that after reading your work and of course now. How did you decide to fashion your book with the rhizome model?

That is a good question. As I said, I am interested in using social theory not only a way of explaining how the world works, but also as a way of shaping writing as a practice. The French philosophers Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze argue that the world comes into being through the diverse connections of material, symbolic, and organic entities – they use the image of the rhizome to describe these endless and multiple connections. A key species in the Everglades is the red mangrove, or rhizophora mangle. This is a crazy tree-root-mess that grows, loops and intertwines, forming a world making multi-species assemblage. Because I find the ideas of Guattari and Deleuze so helpful to my own ways of thinking about the Everglades -

using the metaphor of the rhizome to anchor this book was irresistible.

Q: The publication timing of your book coincides with a “renewed” interest in swamp life reality shows like Animal Planet’s Swamp Walkers and several others- is this the future of the new gladesmen?

I haven’t really seen those shows—though they sound terrific! On the other hand, I am interested in how the term “gladesmen” (which I used in my first book that came out in 1998) has been used by communities in the Everglades to assert a kind of authentic connection to the Everglades. It has become a way to assert rights over land and resources – particularly when access to recreational and hunting areas is perceived to be in jeopardy. We live in a society (and media culture) that tends to either romanticize or stereotype rural people. The lifestyle that I have written about in *Swamplife* is no longer feasible today for a variety of reasons – people can no longer make a living hunting alligators in the Everglades, for instance. But cultures change and so I think it is great if contemporary “gladesmen” feel that my depictions of glades life reflect their heritage and continued relationship to the Everglades.

Q: Your work for the book spans over 10 years and incorporates so many different aspects of your life as well as

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lifetime experiences from childhood on- is this a once in a lifetime novel or can look forward to reading another? You co-authored your last book with Glen Simmons in 1998 – Gladesmen: Gator Hunters, Moonshiners and Skiffers University of Florida Press, can with look at these two publications as the beginning of a trend and expect the next one in 2021?

I hope my next book doesn't take that long! I wrote a dissertation and several other things in between (thankfully!). I will continue to write about the Everglades as my research with the Florida Coastal Everglades LTER program evolves through the program's next iteration. I am starting a new research program in Tierra del Fuego this year (I'm on sabbatical) and my next book will be about the politics of conservation and invasive species (and I'm giving myself three years to write that one).

Thanks Susan. This was lots of fun. Laura

Laura's book is available from The University of Minnesota Press

Ogden, Laura A. 2011. *Swamplife: people, gators, and mangroves entangled in the Everglades.* University of Minnesota Press. pp. 185.

Article contributed by Susan Dailey and Laura Ogden



Pictured From Left to Right
Mike Waldman, Adam Rosenblatt, Rachel Decker, Rebecca Garvoille, Dave Gandy and Sylvia Lee

FCE Graduate Students Host The Most

On September 10, 2011, the FCE Student Group hosted its annual welcome-back BBQ at Key Biscayne's Crandon Park beach. It was a day of grilling out under the welcoming shade of giant sea grape trees, relaxed beach-going and good, light-hearted conversation among newly minted and senior FCE personnel. To sum it up: the company was good, the ocean was warm and the sun was shining! We had a great turnout and the event brought out several new faces to mix and mingle. My favorite moment of the day was joining in the laughter and conversation around the picnic table. Thanks to everyone who helped make it an enjoyable day!

Contributed by FCE Graduate Student President Rebecca Garvoille



Pictured from Left to Right

Seema Sah, Mike Waldman, Evelyn Gaiser, Emily Broderick, Sonja Smith, Tyler Roberts, Jay Sah

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Please note: FCE ALL

Please send your comments and contributions for the next FCE Newsletter by November 23, 2011 to fceslter@fiu.edu

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