



Everglades Patrol

Tom Shirley

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“This excellent book consists of two tales: one, the firsthand action adventure story of Florida game wardens airboating across the vast Everglades in pursuit of poachers; the other, observations on the political and flood-control engineering decisions and actions that resulted, sadly, in water quality and wildlife degradation. I highly recommend *Everglades Patrol* on both counts.”—Patricia Caulfield, author and photographer of *Everglades*

“Rare insight into the dangers, thrills, and uncertainties of resource management when people and politics collide. Tom Shirley writes with sincerity and dedication about the wildlife he pledged to protect over fifty years ago.”—Laura Ogden, coauthor of *Gladesmen: Gator Hunters, Moonshiners, and Skiffers*

“A must-read for any person truly interested in the Greater Everglades ecosystem. Tom’s book allows the reader to gain a better understanding of how important the Everglades are to sportsmen and society.”—Jack Moller, officer, Florida Wildlife Federation

“Offers some wonderful descriptions that I’ve never before read of the richness of the wildlife before the 1950s. It’s a page turner.”—Jack E. Davis, author of *An Everglades Providence*

As law enforcement officer with the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Lt. Tom Shirley was the law in one of the last true frontiers in the nation—the Florida Everglades.

During his thirty-year career (1955–85), Shirley saw the Glades go from frontier wilderness to “ruination” at the hands of the Army Corps of Engineers. He watched as levees cut off the water flow and as controlled floods submerged islands that had supported humans and animals for 3,000 years, killing much of the wildlife he had sworn to protect.

In *Everglades Patrol*, Shirley shares the stories from his beat—an ecosystem larger than the state of Rhode Island. He tells of stakeouts, catching wildlife for research, saving animals from manmade floods, of nights sleeping on the ground beside a distant campfire, and of the interrelationships of poachers and the law. In his vivid narrative, Shirley again hunts down dangerous rogue gladesmen, tangles with gators, and pursues poachers and moonshiners by airboat.

Over the years, Shirley and his officers have been beaten, stabbed, kicked, cut, burned, bitten, drowned, and even killed while trying to protect the wetlands and its wildlife. But they continue to fight for the Everglades in order to save it.

Shirley provides an entertaining, firsthand account of the Everglades wetlands and its wildlife from the 1940s to today. He pulls no punches in expressing his disdain for the disastrous effects that Flood Control and Water Management have had on the animals and the historic islands of the Everglades wetlands but leaves readers with hope that there is still time to reverse this damage. His ultimate goal is to see the Everglades restored to what it once was—a natural wonder of this world—and to keep it safe and available for generations to come.

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