

The Southern Swamp Explorer

Irene Brady

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From the bayous of Louisiana to subtropical Florida, the Deep South is vitally alive and full of surprises for the unprepared, some of them potentially deadly. Irene Brady, the writer and illustrator behind *The Southern Swamp Explorer* (Nature Works Press, 978-0-915965-05-2) builds more interest than a simple cataloging of common species could by focusing on forty-six of them in a linked narrative of predation and interaction. Along the way she comments on both general marshland conditions and curiosity-stoking details.

The author stresses the interdependency of swamp species, pointing out aspects of symbiosis that aren't obvious. For example, alligators save more lives than they end. Their habit of digging deeper pools is a key to survival during the peak of the dry season, as those places end up being the sources of drinking water for many other species, only a few of whom are picked off for food. Brady points out that swamps aren't static, they're places in long-term transition: "...all habitats are changing from one type to another depending on fire, rain, drought, flood, and wildlife or human activities."

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