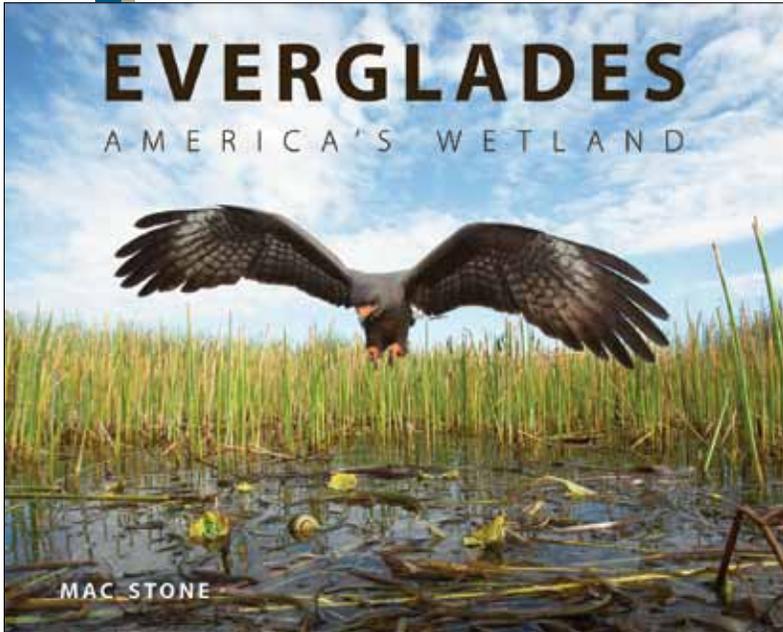


WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING



“Fervent and stirring.”—**DAVID YARNOLD**, president and CEO, National Audubon Society

“Stone’s spectacular photography captures the splendor of America’s Everglades. His remarkable book is convincing proof that our nation cannot risk losing this unique natural wonder.”
—**ERIC EIKENBERG**, CEO, Everglades Foundation

“*Everglades* takes us into the lives of elusive species living far from the boardwalks and tourist trails. With the mind of a scientist, eyes of an artist, and the heart of an adventurer, Stone bears witness to the unrivaled beauty of America’s wetland.”—**CARLTON WARD JR.**, founder, Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition

“What Mac Stone has done in pictures is akin to what Marjory Stoneman Douglas did with words, and our understanding and appreciation of the Everglades has once again been transformed.”—**JOHN MORAN**, author of *Journal of Light*

“Showcases the natural beauty of the Everglades region and touches upon the critical issues that face resource managers today. It offers a dynamic visual experience and gives a very moving account of this often misunderstood national treasure.”—**ROGER HAMMER**, author of *A Falcon Guide to Everglades National Park and the Surrounding Area*

“Mac Stone’s photographs capture the essence of the Everglades, a vast and unique natural area that continues to be threatened by commercial interests.”—**JERALD MILANICH**, coauthor of *Enchantments: Julian Dimock’s Photographs of Southwest Florida*



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EVERGLADES
America’s Wetland
MAC STONE

978-0-8130-4985-4
Hardcover \$45.00
304 pp. | 11 x 9 | 234 color photos, 4 maps
UNIVERSITY PRESS OF FLORIDA - OCTOBER 14 2014

Credit: Carlton Ward Jr.



MAC STONE is a natural history and conservation photographer from Gainesville, Florida. He picked up his first camera in high school—an indestructible 35mm Minolta SRT 101. Not long after, he was waking up at 4:00 a.m. to shoot golden light before the first period bell rang.

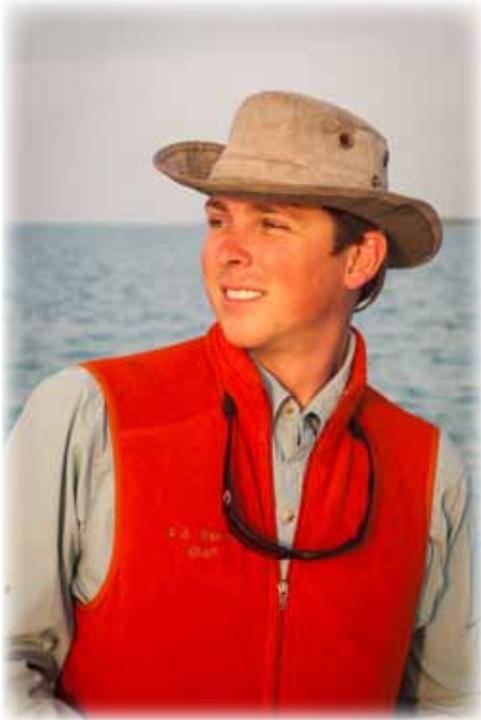
Over the years his camera has carried him to some of the most wonderfully remote and imperiled areas of the world. From presidential overthrows and the Amazon Rainforest in Ecuador, to the Cangrejal River Basin in Honduras, up to the sagebrush country of Wyoming, and into the deepest regions of the Everglades, he strives to expose the dynamic relationship between people and the natural world.

Currently, his work focuses on America’s swamps in an attempt to change public opinion toward the country’s wetlands. He has spent nearly four years living and working in the Everglades watershed.

MAC STONE
is available for interviews and appearances.



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Credit: Eric Zamora

Q & A with

MAC STONE

author of

Everglades

America's Wetlands

How did you first become interested in photography?

I was always captivated by imagery, hoarding stacks of *National Geographic* magazines in my room as a child. It wasn't until high school when I found my dad's old Minolta film body in his closet that I began to tell my own stories with images. I took it everywhere, lugging the heavy metal body to the wildernesses around my home in Gainesville, Florida. It became my proof of life, providing hard evidence and tangible memories that I was seeing and experiencing incredible things. Not long after my first rolls of film, the roles reversed, and it was the camera that was lugging my heavy frame around, becoming the very reason to explore, pushing me to create images that truly captured the moments I was living in the backwoods of Florida.

Tell us about the first time you visited the Everglades and what has kept drawing you back.

My dad and I always spent spring break together when I was in school. We'd put our finger on the map and choose an adventure that would last a week. When I was 15 years old, we picked the Ten Thousand Islands in Everglades National Park. I had never seen anything like it; dolphins, ospreys, wading birds by the hundreds, and thunderstorms that ripped across the wilderness as far as the eye could see. My next visit to the Everglades was ten years later, and with a camera in tow, I was jumping out of a helicopter into the most remote area of the park. Although

I didn't know it at the time, that first day back, *Everglades: America's Wetland* was born. What captivated me in high school is the same subtropical energy that today still lures me deeper and deeper into the heart of this majestic part of the country. The Everglades rebukes familiarity even to the most seasoned explorer. It is true unyielding wilderness that despite mankind's best efforts refuses to be tamed, conquered, or completely understood.

The shots in *Everglades* are exquisite. What was one of the most difficult shots you took for this book?

Many of the images found in the book required months of planning; some were even the result of years of trial and error. One of the most difficult photographs to take was the Everglades Snail Kite on the cover of the book. I spent months coordinating with Fish and Wildlife Commission biologists to obtain permission to photograph the federally endangered bird in a style that hadn't been attempted before. I strategized a way to get within inches of the iconic raptor swooping down to pick up its sole source of food, the apple snail, using a remote-triggered camera. I spent ten days in 12-hour intervals waist deep in an area known for its massive alligators beneath the South Florida sun for that one magic moment when all the elements aligned.

You must have so many shots to choose from after a trip out to the Everglades. How did you decide which photos to include in this book?

I have tens of thousands of images from the Everglades. As photographers often say, making the photographs is the easy part; the hard part is editing them into a small, concise collection. When I started laying out the book, I wanted it to flow just like the River of Grass flows from Lake Okeechobee to Florida Bay. I knew I had to include certain keystone species as well as the iconic views that define the landscape. When compiling the images, I focused on the vignettes that would make the viewer stay a little longer on the page, images that would illicit—if even for a brief moment—a visceral response with the reader. At 304 pages it was a difficult task. I really could have used another 300.

Is there a photo you wish you could have taken for this book but you weren't able to get?

The creative mind is never satisfied. I can think of at least twenty images that I would have liked to include in the book, and that number grows every time I flip through the pages. However, this is why I fell in love with the Everglades. The more you know and the more you see, the more you realize you're only scratching the surface of what's to be discovered there. I have spent an obsessive amount of time

photographing the various landscapes underwater, on foot, in boats, in planes, in helicopters, at dusk, at dawn, and in lightning storms, and yet there are still moments that I'm dying to see through my camera.

In all the time you've spent in the Everglades, what is the most remarkable thing you've seen?

One of the most remarkable things I've seen in the Everglades, and there are several competing for this spot, was when I hiked out to a remote area in Big Cypress National Preserve during the dry season. I was looking for what's known as gator holes, depressed areas where alligators congregate to stay wet when water is limited. What I found was incredible. In the middle of a cypress slough, hundreds of alligators gathered in less than a foot of water. The water danced from millions of fish tonguing the oxygen at the surface. They were locked in a deathtrap. Before I could gather my thoughts, alligators started leaping out of the water and crashing down with their jaws agape. Emerging victoriously in muddy and scaly mire, they threw their heads back and chomped down on catfish. This is a behavior rarely seen or photographed, and I had front row seats for over an hour.

What are some of your other favorite ecosystems or landscapes to photograph?

There are two ecosystems that I continually return to photograph. Cypress domes are one of the most spectacular surprises of the Everglades system. Imagine a cathedral of furrowed bark where air plants and hundreds of colorful orchids cling to every inch of organic real estate. Under your feet lemon bacopa plants crunch and release a zesty fragrance in the air while a chorus of tree frogs chirps, signaling an afternoon storm. There is nothing quite like it anywhere. The other ecosystem is underwater, snorkeling around submerged mangrove prop roots. Sponges and soft corals with neon colors cover the roots while snappers, tarpon, sharks, and snook swim freely. What's so striking is the seemingly homogenous landscape of greenery above the water, but when you put your mask underwater, it's an entirely different world exploding with life.

What are you working on next?

I'm always working on several different projects at once. In the long term I'm compiling stories and images from America's swamps, in an effort to change public opinion about our country's bottomlands. It's time that we start regarding these habitats not as second class ecosystems, but as national treasures that purify our drinking water, provide refuge to an incredible array of wildlife, and

form the foundation of our natural and southern heritage. In the shorter term, I've been selected out of an international pool of photographers to represent the United States as a recipient of the coveted Marine Conservation Photography Grant with the Save Our Seas Foundation. I'll be working with *National Geographic* and SOSF to shoot on assignment for three weeks regarding a major conservation initiative.

Do you have one sentence of advice for beginner photographers?

Get outside in your hometown and create local adventures with the highest anecdotal return; great images will blossom from experiences in the place that's closest to your heart.

EVERGLADES

A M E R I C A ' S W E T L A N D

Mac Stone

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Foreword

Michael Grunwald

For the first 5,000 years the Everglades existed, people mostly avoided it. And the Americans who started exploring it in the nineteenth century mostly hated it.

They described it as an impenetrable, abominable, God-forsaken morass, “suitable only for the haunt of noxious vermin or the resort of pestilential reptiles.” They dreamed of “improving” it, “reclaiming” it, converting it from soggy wasteland into productive farmland, developing it from useless wilderness into subtropical paradise, draining its uninhabitable swamps to create an Empire of the Everglades. And eventually, their dreams came true. They transformed America’s last frontier.

It took more than a century, but after all the visionary schemes and Florida swampland jokes, the ecosystem stretching from Walt Disney World down to the Keys now supports 7 million residents, 60 million annual tourists and 400,000 acres of sugar farms. The eager beavers of the Army Corps of Engineers and South Florida Water Management District now control just about every drop of water that falls on the region. In the rainy season, they whisk excess floodwaters into the Everglades and its estuaries, ravaging the ecosystem; in the dry season, they essentially sink 7 million straws into the Everglades and Lake Okeechobee, creating structural droughts that also ravage the ecosystem. But even more than air conditioning, bug spray or Social Security, it was their water management that made South Florida safe for one of the most spectacular development booms in human history.

The thing is, now that half the Everglades is gone, and the other half is an ecological mess, we’ve realized it was pretty amazing the way it used to be. We no longer think of wetlands as wastelands. So the United States has launched the largest environmental restoration project in the history of the planet

to try to resuscitate the River of Grass. We’ve acknowledged our abusive relationship with nature in South Florida, and we’re trying to make amends. It’s a monumental task, and it will take time to complete. It’s one thing to say the water of the Everglades ought to be clean; it’s another thing to scrub it as clean as the natural Everglades, which was significantly cleaner than Evian. But today, no politician would dream of describing the Everglades as a pestilential hellhole that ought to be developed. Left-wingers, right-wingers, buffalo-wingers, you name it; everyone describes the Everglades as a national treasure that ought to be revived. It really has become America’s wetland.

Environmentalists like to say that the Everglades is a test: If we pass, we may get to keep the planet. It’s true. Everglades restoration has become the model for similarly massive plans to revive American ecosystems like the Great Lakes, the Chesapeake Bay, and Louisiana’s coastal wetlands, as well as global ecosystems like the Pantanal, the Okavango Delta and the Garden of Eden marshes of Iraq. In the twenty-first century, water will become more precious than oil, and if Miami-Dade and Broward Counties can’t figure out how to share water, while leaving enough for the gators and otters, it’s hard to imagine how Israel and Syria will manage. The Everglades is an ideal canvas for restoration, with plenty of science, plenty of rain, plenty of land in public hands and plenty of money. It’s got an amazing political commitment from federal and state governments. If we can’t save the Everglades, what can we save?

So the world wants to know if sustainability can be more than a buzzword in South Florida. But those of us who live here have even more at stake in the answer. The economic health of Florida depends on the health of the Everglades, and not just because of the millions of fishermen, birdwatchers, hunters,



Introduction

Mac Stone

As a child of North Florida, even the whisper of its name would send my imagination reeling. Conjuring fanciful lands of verdant forests teeming with orchids, aviaries, predatory cats, and prehistoric reptiles, the Everglades seemed more like a dreamscape than an actual place in my home state.

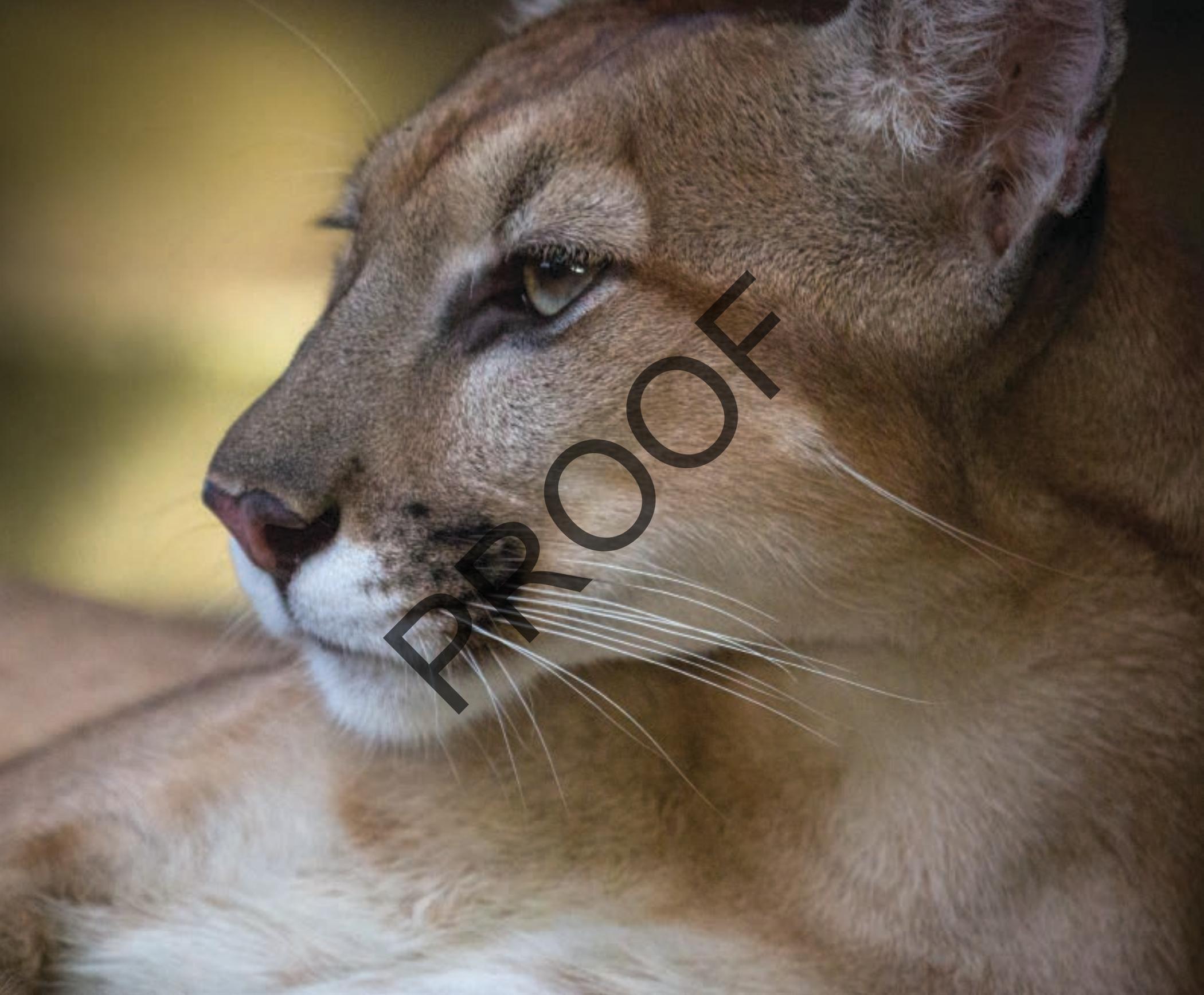
By all measures, I was already surrounded by a bounty of natural wonders. Crystal clear springs, live oak canopies, wetland prairies, and freshwater lakes were only minutes from my doorstep in Gainesville. I spent the latter part of my childhood romping through the blackwater creeks and backwoods oases developing a deep bond with Florida's bottomlands. The humid swamps, full of spirit and verve, became my photographic training grounds and the foundation for a lifelong love affair.

Many people feel uncomfortable with the idea of wading into Florida's blackwater, but this is what I loved about growing up in the Sunshine State. For many of us, we live with a latent but very palpable fear that when we put our toes into the water there might be something much more ancient, much more adapted than we are. Knowing that you're not top dog is a welcomed discomfort, I think. It's not often in our modern urban age that we get the chance to feel vulnerable or consider that the world may not have been made for just us. So I sought out the areas where concrete yields to forest, and pines turn to cypress. I found refuge in the sodden landscapes and viewed the mosquitoes, reptiles, and various discomforts as the tangible affirmations that I had found true wilderness. And I embraced them wholly. As satisfied as I could be, there was something about South Florida—something about the subtropics in particular—that I longed for.

Perhaps it was the whimsical names that piqued my interest. Places like Fakahatchee Strand, Okeechobee, Loxahatchee, Corkscrew Swamp, and Big Cypress were a few among the many that tugged at my adolescent curiosity and beckoned exploration. For years I plotted and schemed ways of getting to the Everglades, my lowcountry Mecca.

Finally, at fifteen years old, my dad and I ventured south to spend a week kayaking along the Wilderness Waterway in the Ten Thousand Islands. For five days, we paddled to remote chickees and camped on mangrove islands experiencing the coastal fringe of the western Everglades.











PROOF

