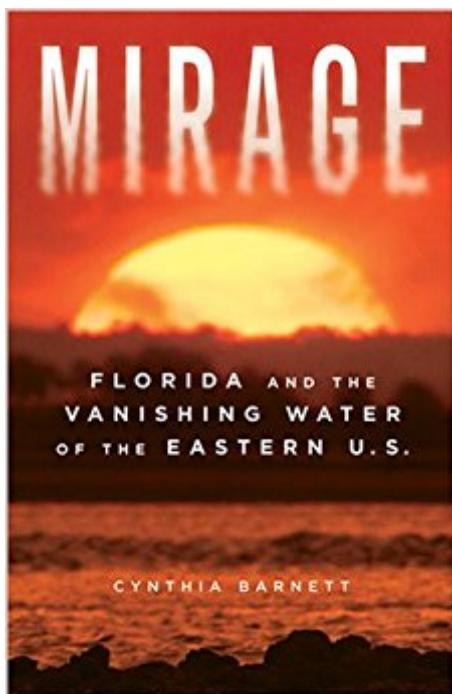


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# Mirage: Florida And The Vanishing Water Of The Eastern U.S.



## Synopsis

"In the days before the Internet, books like Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and Marjorie Stoneman Douglas' *River of Grass* were groundbreaking calls to action that made citizens and politicians take notice. *Mirage* is such a book."<sup>1</sup> St. Petersburg Times<sup>2</sup> Never before has the case been more compellingly made that America's dependence on a free and abundant water supply has become an illusion. Cynthia Barnett does it by telling us the stories of the amazing personalities behind our water wars, the stunning contradictions that allow the wettest state to have the most watered lawns, and the thorough research that makes her conclusions inescapable. Barnett has established herself as one of Florida's best journalists and *Mirage* is a must-read for anyone who cares about the future of the state.<sup>3</sup> Mary Ellen Klas, Capital Bureau Chief, Miami Herald<sup>4</sup> *Mirage* is the finest general study to date of the freshwater-supply crisis in Florida. Well-meaning villains abound in Cynthia Barnett's story, but so too do heroes, such as Arthur R. Marshall Jr., Nathaniel Reed, and Marjorie Harris Carr. The author's research is as thorough as her prose is graceful. Drinking water is the new oil. Get used to it.<sup>5</sup> Michael Gannon, Distinguished Professor of history, University of Florida, and author of *Florida: A Short History*<sup>6</sup> With lively prose and a journalist's eye for a good story, Cynthia Barnett offers a sobering account of water scarcity problems facing Florida<sup>7</sup>; one of our wettest states<sup>8</sup>; and the rest of the East Coast. Drawing on lessons learned from the American West, *Mirage* uses the lens of cultural attitudes about water use and misuse to plead for reform. Sure to engage and fascinate as it informs.<sup>9</sup> Robert Glennon, Morris K. Udall Professor of Law and Public Policy, University of Arizona, and author of *Water Follies: Groundwater Pumping and the Fate of America's Fresh Waters*<sup>10</sup> Part investigative journalism, part environmental history, *Mirage* reveals how the eastern half of the nation<sup>11</sup>; historically so wet that early settlers predicted it would never even need irrigation<sup>12</sup>; has squandered so much of its abundant freshwater that it now faces shortages and conflicts once unique to the arid West.<sup>13</sup> Florida's parched swamps and supersized residential developments set the stage in the first book to call attention to the steady disappearance of freshwater in the American East, from water-diversion threats in the Great Lakes to tapped-out freshwater aquifers along the Atlantic seaboard.<sup>14</sup> Told through a colorful cast of characters including Walt Disney, Jeb Bush and Texas oilman Boone Pickens, *Mirage* ferries the reader through the key water-supply issues facing America and the globe: water wars, the politics of development, inequities in the price of water, the bottled-water industry, privatization, and new-water-supply schemes.<sup>15</sup> From its calamitous opening scene of a sinkhole swallowing a

house in Florida to its concluding meditation on the relationship between water and the American character, *Mirage* is a compelling and timely portrait of the use and abuse of freshwater in an era of rapidly vanishing natural resources.Â  Â

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Starred Review. In recent decades, severe droughts in New England and the Mid-Atlantic states, along with shrinking aquifers, dried-up lakes and sluggish rivers in the Southeast have induced bitter East Coast fights over what was once an exclusively Western concern: water scarcity. What happened? Barnett, the long-time environmental reporter for Florida Trend magazine, answers that question in a rigorous look at the relentless pressure of development and burgeoning human populations on natural water supplies, particularly in the wetlands of Florida. Chapter by chapter, Barnett documents the enlarging sinkholes, loss of ancient lakes, pollution of water tables and river systems, aquifer mining and negligent politics that have led to Florida's perpetual water crisis-including a disastrous shift in weather patterns. Considering such crises elsewhere in the U.S., Barnett finds that successful allocation agreements are rare, lessons learned are quickly forgotten and an ever-growing population spells more trouble to come. Though it may lack popular appeal, this comprehensive and well-referenced volume does feature appearances from well-known figures like Walt Disney, Jeb Bush and Hurricane Katrina, and should become vital reading for citizens and policymakers as global concerns over water scarcity grow. Copyright Â  Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out

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"In the days before the Internet, books like Rachel Carson's Silent Spring and Marjory Stoneman Douglas' River of Grass were groundbreaking calls to action that made citizens and politicians take notice. *Mirage* is such a book." - St. Petersburg Times Never before has the case been more compellingly made that America's dependence on a free and abundant water supply has become an illusion. Cynthia Barnett does it by telling us the stories of the amazing personalities behind our water wars, the stunning contradictions that allow the wettest state to have the most watered lawns, and the thorough research that makes her conclusions inescapable. Barnett has established herself as one of Florida's best journalists and *Mirage* is a must-read for anyone who cares about the future of the state." - Mary Ellen Klas, Capital Bureau Chief, Miami Herald "Mirage is the finest general study to date of the freshwater-supply crisis in Florida. Well-meaning villains abound in Cynthia Barnett's story, but so too do heroes, such as Arthur R. Marshall Jr., Nathaniel Reed, and Marjorie Harris Carr. The author's research is as thorough as her prose is graceful. Drinking water is the new oil. Get used to it." - Michael Gannon, Distinguished Professor of History, University of Florida, and author of *Florida: A Short History* "A rigorous look at the relentless pressure of development and burgeoning human populations on natural water supplies, particularly in the wetlands of Florida.... Barnett finds that successful allocation agreements are rare, lessons learned are quickly forgotten and an ever-growing population spells more trouble to come...." - Publishers Weekly "History, policy analysis and explanation in one, written accessibly for the interested layperson.... a great reminder that our profligate ways could lead us into (more) serious trouble." - Solares Hill (Florida)"

This book was recommended to me by Jerry Bullard, a north Floridian. I live in south Florida--not the same aquifer but overused and under restored. Cynthia Barnett has researched this subject well and presents it in a readable way. Everyone should read this and remember the resource of water is not a given--we must protect, restore and value it, as it is a necessity for life on this planet.

Cynthia Barnett is a journalist with a passion for the environment. A native Floridian, she has seen the change that those of us who have spent our lives in this state, have watched come too quickly. Once a tangle of marsh and woods, dotted with urban outcroppings, Florida has become a vast jigsaw puzzle of urban and suburban sprawl. Water, once considered too plentiful, is becoming a scarce commodity here...the focus of battles which are already beginning. To those not yet to the battlefield, *Mirage* sheds light on the problems we are creating by our lack of foresight. To those

already leading the charge, it is a guidebook filled with data to show both the damage we have already caused and that which we will continue to cause if changes aren't made. *Mirage* is also a call to action. Those who care can make a difference that will save Florida for future generations.

It will open your eyes to the water wars likely to happen in the future. And please - if nothing else - reconsider using ANY bottled water ever again. Bottling companies are taking over the country, in not-so-nice ways .

*Mirage* is a work of science and passion. The writer has focused on that most important, scarce, and necessary resource: fresh water. She explores the political decisions and the business decisions that have affected the water supply in Florida and the rest of the East Coast of the United States. Her research is extensive; her prose is crisp; and her cause is sanity in the management of growth. I recommend this book for any reader who has an interest in science, nature, or business.

A very thoughtful, well-written book that delves into the science, history and politics of water in Florida and manages to do so in an interesting and readable manner. Cynthia Barnett clearly identifies the problems and offers reasonable solutions without becoming judgemental or dogmatic. A must read for anyone living in the State of Florida or planning to do so and highly recommended for everyone else!

This is a book that everyone should read, whether they are from the SouthEastern United States or not. It tells of things we may, or may not, know have been bad for our environment, but really gives the nitty-gritty of how really bad they have been and are still are. I want to cry and curse about these things as I read. Reading *Mirage* has been an educational and emotional experience for me..

Excellent !!!

Very informative read!

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