

# Manchac Swamp: Louisiana's Undiscovered Wilderness

John Kemp

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For Julia Sims, photography originally served as an excuse to spend time in the Manchac Swamp. She had turned to the swamp for solace after a family tragedy and visited the swamp frequently. As her concern for the vanishing wetlands grew, she was inspired to document the swamp and share her love of nature with the world. Veiled behind dense drapes of Spanish moss and walls of wondrous cypress trees, Manchac Swamp is a wilderness jewel accessible only by boat. Drawn to the swamp's mystery and eventually captivated by its peace, Sims spent 15 years patiently penetrating its secrets. The result, trapped on film, is the many moods, flora, and fauna of this hidden world. Now, in this stunning album of her photographs, a glimpse of that quintessential Louisiana place in its seasonal variations is offered to all. In an evocative introduction to the book, John Kemp draws upon his interviews with several residents. They are a rare group who are known as "guardians of the swamp" and consider their existence a study in life as they learn to coexist with the majesty that surrounds them. An enigmatic group, they make their living off of the land. As deteriorating environmental conditions reduce or eliminate wildlife, there is, in turn, a diminished harvest for them as trappers, hunters, and fishermen-and a diminished heritage for all of us.

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