



Amazon Sweet Sea: Land, Life, and Water at the River's Mouth

Nigel J. H. Smith

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Far into the Atlantic Ocean, the outflow from the Amazon River creates a "sweet sea" of fresh water. At the river's mouth, a vast delta of river channels and marshes, floodplain and upland forests, open and scrub savannas, floating meadows, and mangrove swamps hosts an astonishingly diverse assemblage of plant and animal life. So rich is this biological treasure house that early European explorers deemed it inexhaustible.

In this highly readable book, Nigel Smith explores how human use of the Amazon estuary's natural resources has been affected by technological change, rapid urban growth, and accelerated market integration. Avoiding alarmist rhetoric, he shows how human intervention in the estuary has actually diversified agriculture and helped save floodplain forests from wanton destruction. His findings underscore the importance of understanding the history of land use and the ecological knowledge of local people when formulating development and conservation policies. The book will be of interest to everyone concerned with the fate of tropical forests, conserving biodiversity, and developing natural resources in a sustainable manner.

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