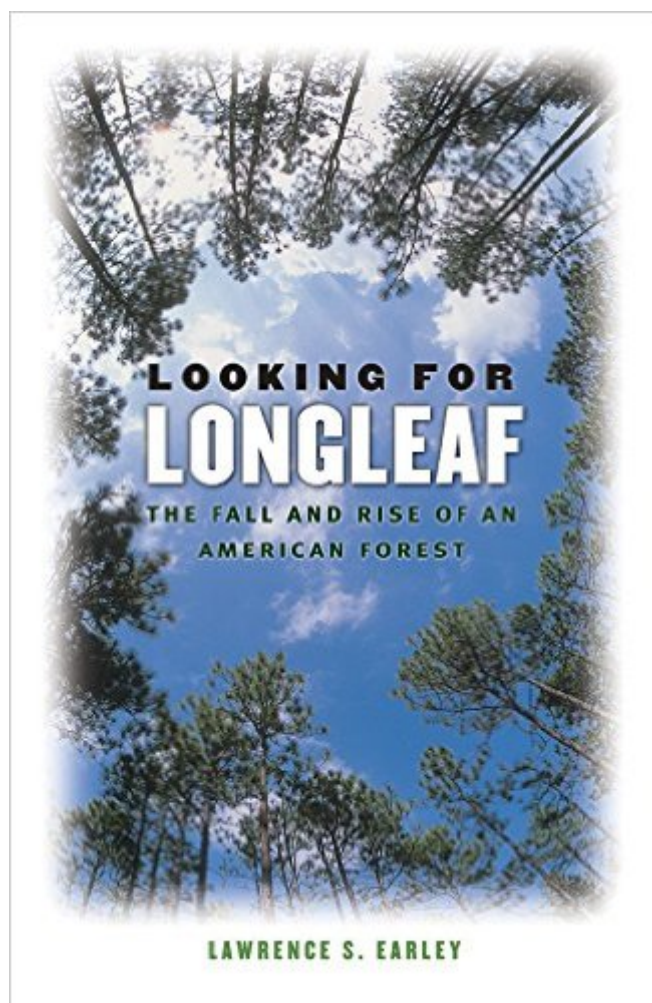


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# Looking For Longleaf: The Fall And Rise Of An American Forest



## Synopsis

Covering 92 million acres from Virginia to Texas, the longleaf pine ecosystem was, in its prime, one of the most extensive and biologically diverse ecosystems in North America. Today these magnificent forests have declined to a fraction of their original extent, threatening such species as the gopher tortoise, the red-cockaded woodpecker, and the Venus fly-trap. Conservationists have proclaimed longleaf restoration a major goal, but has it come too late? In *Looking for Longleaf*, Lawrence S. Earley explores the history of these forests and the astonishing biodiversity of the longleaf ecosystem, drawing on extensive research and telling the story through first-person travel accounts and interviews with foresters, ecologists, biologists, botanists, and landowners. For centuries, these vast grass-covered forests provided pasture for large cattle herds, in addition to serving as the world's greatest source of naval stores. They sustained the exploitative turpentine and lumber industries until nearly all of the virgin longleaf had vanished. *Looking for Longleaf* demonstrates how, in the twentieth century, forest managers and ecologists struggled to understand the special demands of longleaf and to halt its overall decline. The compelling story Earley tells here offers hope that with continued human commitment, the longleaf pine might not just survive, but once again thrive.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

For years I have been concerned about the disappearance of the South American Rain Forest. What was shocking from Earley's book is how we had our own expansive Forest with it's own ecosystem and let it disappear before our very eyes without anyone noticing. It is not only a

wonderfully told story of the Longleaf pine but it is a genuine history of how the South's economic development between the time of the settlers and up until today nearly destroyed it's most valuable resource and the ecology that was a part of it. The only problem with this book was not being able to put it down after I started reading it.

Earley was trying to write a history of turpentine. What he ended up with was a spectacular essay on the natural history of longleaf pine forests, the human history of the forested south, an essay on conflicting views in forestry, and....oh yes...turpentine! Reading this as an ecologist, I found everything I wanted with just enough of the human element to flesh it out without boring me. Oddly enough, I suspect those reading this from an anthropological view have the same opinion about the natural history aspect of the book. Earley is that good in weaving his tale. It flows well, is well organized, and the research and references are stunning. Twenty-three pages of references make me wonder how he ever finished the book. (In his acknowledgements he seems to wonder the same thing himself!) This book belongs on the shelf of every forester, ecologist, and southern historian. I'm just thankful I stumbled across it on a rainy day in Congaree National Park.

This book is as accurate and detailed as any scholarly paper but is written so well that it is certain to be a classic of literature like Archie Carr's "The Windward Road."

I'm in graduate school working a county flora in Mississippi that includes a lot of longleaf pine dominated areas. This book is a wonderful read and, I think, vital for understanding the history of the coastal plain.

Larry Early has composed a classic. If one tree species was selected as having the greatest impact on the history and development of the United States, it would be the longleaf pine. Most of the early European (English, Spanish, & French) settlements occurred in the native longleaf pine range which runs from Southeast Virginia to eastern Texas, covering an estimated 90-92 million acres. Before the first Europeans arrived, it is almost certain that millions of Native Americans lived and prospered among the longleaf pines, before foreign diseases decimated their ranks. For centuries, the naval stores production and export was one of the largest industries in North America. My mother's house in Marceline, Missouri was built of longleaf in the 1800's, brought in by rail. The Sears & Roebuck Warehouse in Chicago was once the largest wooden building in North America, and it was built of longleaf. The longleaf pine ecosystem is one of the most diverse ecosystems in the entire

world. Many of our North America's Threatened and Endangered species are endemic to the fire-maintained longleaf pine forests of the Southeast. But by and large, few adults, and even fewer of the children in America even know what a longleaf pine is. Larry Early tells the story of the longleaf pine forests of North America, and he tells it well. I have spent much of my time as student, and my entire career (14 years) working to restore the longleaf pine forests of the Southeast. After centuries of declining acreage, longleaf has finally turned the corner, and today (2009), approximately 75 million longleaf pine are planted annually. Larry Early tells the story of the decline, and the renaissance of longleaf pine. If I could recommend one book for adults who are interested in learning more about longleaf pine, it would be "Looking for Longleaf" by Larry Early. And, as soon as you finish "Looking for Longleaf," get Janisse Ray's "Ecology of a Cracker Childhood." And if you know a young adult or middle school aged student, buy them "Longleaf" by Roger Reid. And if you ever find a copy of the 1946 monograph "Longleaf pine: Its use, ecology, regeneration, protection, growth, and management," by Wahlenberg, buy it and send it to me at the Solon Dixon Center in Andalusia, Alabama, because it is a tough book to find.

Excellent book covering the biology, ecology and sad history of the fate of this majestic tree. Excellent review of the biology, ecology and history of this majestic tree of our southern forests.

I just got this book and I am totally fascinated by it. It's like reading a fairy tale about the southeast with magnificent forests and wild life all around. This book has tons of references, science facts, and historical facts. I really love long-leaf pine trees! Lawrence S. Earley writes very well and puts all the words together very well. So this book is easy reading and page turning. This book is must read from anyone from the Southeast. I, as an Alabamian love it.

I've given copies of "Looking for Longleaf" to many friends since it was published, particularly those interested in southern history, natural history, conservation and forestry. Just found out I need two more copies for Christmas presents. Hope the author writes Looking for Longleaf II soon.

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