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Book Review - The World of the Salt Marsh: Appreciating and Protecting the Tidal Marshes of the Southeastern Atlantic Coast

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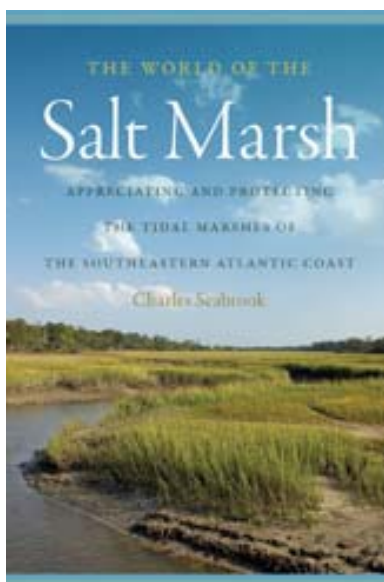
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Off the **SHELF**

The World of the Salt Marsh: Appreciating and Protecting the Tidal Marshes of the Southeastern Atlantic Coast by Charles Seabrook (The University of Georgia Press, 2014: ISBN 978-0-8203-2706-8, \$28.95; ISBN: 978-0-8203-4384-6, Ebook, \$28.95)

Charles Seabrook grew up on John's Island near Charleston, South Carolina and has been a science writer for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* for the past thirty-three years. His childhood experiences on a barrier island combined with his interest in science make *The World of the Salt Marsh* a delightful read. The book explores all aspects of salt marshes from North Carolina to Florida. There are chapters about marsh ecology that explore the important role these ecosystems play in the coastal environment. The species that inhabit this harsh environment must be extremely tolerant to a quickly changing landscape, one subject to tidal processes and variations in salinity.

Seabrook takes us through the biological zones that make up these types of marshes—from the upland edge where dry land meets wetland through the high marsh, low marsh, and the



hammocks. Spartina and its important role as food producer in the marshes are significant themes as well. Seabrook explores the recent marsh dieback, where large swaths of spartina were turning yellow, then shriveling and dying. Researches explored many theories on the reasons for this and finally concluded that

drought and its associated problems were to blame. Seabrook also explores the cultural history of these coastal communities, focusing on the Gullah and Geechee peoples. Their way of life is vanishing as beachfront property becomes more desirable and the lure of such attractive properties causes huge spikes in property taxes. These coastal communities are developing too quickly, causing pollution that is decimating oyster and fishing operations.

Seabrook's love for these areas is abundantly clear, and he joins his voice with the poet Sidney Lanier in this beautiful elegy to the important and endangered salt marshes found on our southeastern coast.

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