



# Report on the Florida reefs

*Louis Agassiz*

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This historic book may have numerous typos and missing text. Purchasers can download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. Not indexed. Not illustrated. 1880 edition. Excerpt: ...the space between the keys and the main-land was a channel as deep and unobstructed as that now lying between the main range of keys and the reef. Carrying the scene still farther back to an age for the duration of which we have no measure, the present shore bluffs are then the growing reef, rising to the surface here and there so as to form keys, while the southernmost part of the Everglades is changed to an open channel between the Long Key and the shore bluffs. Another backward step, and no reef rises between Cape Sable and Cape Florida, but the ocean beats against the Long Key, then a growing reef. Here we will stop, since our knowledge of the interior is not sufficiently exact to justify us in pushing our retrograde history farther. Let us reverse the process now, and, starting from Long Key as the then southernmost point of Florida, build seaward. Twelve or twenty miles from the shore the sea has a depth of some twelve to twenty fathoms, and there a reef begins to grow. Gradually it rises, till here and there it reaches the sea level in patches. On such patches broken fragments of coral, sand, and mud accumulate, and they are gradually fashioned into keys. Between this growing reef and Long Key there flows at first a channel; but by the accumulation of coral sand, mud, and debris of all sorts, from the reef or from the main-land, this channel is gradually transformed into a tract of mud flats. These flats are gradually raised to the surface of the water, and they, as well as the shore bluffs, become dry land. Perhaps before this process comes to an end another reef begins to rise, the conditions for its formation being pushed a little farther south by the shore bluffs themselves, since the corals prosper only on a certain slope and at a...

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