Above the Surface—sunlight sparkling and dancing on blue waters. Biscayne is home to small islands, long and narrow, floating offshore. Our green forests wave along the shoreline, and water lapping gently against small fishing boats and pleasure yachts. Diversity is everywhere. Sunlight sparkling on the blue waters; islands, long and narrow, floating offshore; sunbirds are common to the area, and Arsenicker Keys are nesting sites for many of these birds. The keys are home to such land mammals as the raccoon, white-tailed deer, and the exotic Mexican red-bellied squirrel. Woody vegetation covers them almost completely. Man—fishing for a living and the many different natural resources here—has responsibility for fishing in balance with nature. The people who live in the Florida Keys are proud of their heritage. They share this special place with visitors from far and wide. Florida Bay Side and Ocean Side

In the waters off the southern coast of Florida, low islands or reefs are called "keys." The park has about 25 such reefs, located in the southern Florida Keys. The keys are made up of various material, and water no deeper than 60 meters (200 feet). The Biscayne reefs, which continue southward into John Pennekamp State Park and the southern Florida Keys, lie in water generally no deeper than 2 meters (6 feet). In a very real sense, many of the plants and animals exist here because the coral reefs provide them with food, protection, and places to rear their young. Indeed, the great variety of life in the coral reefs furnishes sustenance for all—those that prey and those preyed upon.

Among the colorful fishes here are grunts, porkfish, wrasse, queen angelfish, and neon gobies. Sponges, sea "grasses," hard corals—and their plantlike relatives the sea feathers, tropical fish, or shells is prohibited. Bird watching is another activity that can be enjoyed at the park. The Florida Keys are home to many species of birds, including the snowy egret, the royal tern, and the brown pelican. These wading birds can often be seen feeding on fish along the shore or in the shallow waters of the Sound. If you're lucky, you might even catch a glimpse of the osprey, a bird that nests in the area and feeds on small fish and other aquatic animals.

Snorkelers and scuba divers also are popular. Many of these activities are available at one of the many reefs in the area, such as the Dry Tortugas National Park. However, it is important to note that not all areas are suitable for these activities. The park has a number of designated snorkeling and scuba diving areas, and it is recommended that you check with park personnel before heading out. Some areas may have water currents or other conditions that make them unsuitable for these activities. Park personnel can provide information about the best areas and times to go.

Biscayne National Monument

The monument was established in 1980 to protect and preserve the unique natural and cultural resources of the Florida Keys. The monument includes over 800,000 acres of land and water, including the Florida Keys, the Dry Tortugas, and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. The monument is managed by the National Park Service and is open to the public for recreation and education. The monument offers a wide range of activities, including hiking, fishing, boating, and bird watching. It is a great place to explore the unique natural and cultural resources of the Florida Keys.