

EVERGLADES

National Park Florida



Royal Palm at Paradise Key



United States Department of the Interior
Oscar L. Chapman, Secretary

National Park Service, Newton B. Drury, Director

EVERGLADES

NATIONAL PARK

THE long-time public movement to create Everglades National Park reached its fulfillment in 1947, when an area of approximately 460,000 acres of the southwestern portion of the Florida peninsula was dedicated as a national park. Three years later, lands and waters being held for future inclusion were added to the park, making it the largest of the eastern national parks. The gross area of the park is about 1,228,500 acres, of which approximately 475,000 acres are submerged lands. With the timely establishment of the park, full protection of this unique section of the country began for the first time, and it became a part of the National Park System owned by the people of the United States and administered for them by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. Services and accommodations are not yet available to the extent usually found in other national parks.

The park occupies a large, flat area, including numerous bays, rivers, and estuaries. It is probably nowhere more than 8 feet above mean low tide. The land dips very slowly towards the south and west; on the south, it gradually loses to the sea in the form of Florida Bay. To the west, the surface of the earth becomes dissected by fingers of innumerable streams which flow into a series of lakes or bays, reform as rivers, and then empty into the Gulf of Mexico. Whitewater Bay occupies a large portion of the southwestern part of the park and partly separates the mainland from the salt marshes, mangrove swamps, and beaches of Cape Sable.

The Open Everglades

A VAST, fresh water drainage way begins at Lake Okeechobee, 60 miles north of the park, and swings in a wide southwestern arc from the Tamiami Trail to Gulf Coast rivers, Whitewater Bay, and Florida Bay. Indians called this "Pa-hay-okee," meaning "grassy waters." It was "La Laguna del Espiritu Santo" to the early Spaniards; but the English used the terms "River Glades," "Ever Glades," and finally "Everglades." Dotted by tree islands, known as hammocks, the Everglades consist of waving grasses and sedges which reach from horizon to horizon in the interior of the park. During the summer wet season they are inundated, but in winter large areas may be dry. Varying depths of peat, muck, and marl overlay the porous sedimentary rocks of the 'Glades.

Piney Woods and Hammocks

SOME of the eastern sections of the park are slightly higher than the surrounding Everglades and characteristically covered with pines and saw palmetto. The pine is known as the Caribbean

pine. Periodic fires in the past have destroyed most of the forest duff, and the rock, which causes the areas to be elevated, can be readily seen. This is oölitic limestone (not coral rock as generally supposed) which has become pitted by solution holes. Although there are few virgin stands of pines left, some good examples of the piney woods can be seen near Paradise Key and along Long Pine Key.

Islands of dense, junglelike growth, called hammocks, are found in the piney woods, throughout the open Everglades, and on higher ground along the "Mangrove Coast." The name is supposed to come from an Indian word meaning "garden place," because the early inhabitants and Seminoles later on built their gardens in the rich hammock loam. One of the most accessible of these forests is on Paradise Key where Gumbo Limbo Trail permits access to its interior. Characteristic plant life of a mature hammock is mainly from West Indian derivation containing such trees as the royal palm, strangler fig, gumbo-limbo, blolly, paradise tree, and mastic. Air plants, ferns, and orchids occur in hammocks.

The "Mangrove Coast"

THE name "Mangrove Coast" is often applied to the Gulf area of the park because of the extensive mangrove forests which are found here. This distinctive type of vegetation follows the various rivers inland, becoming a thin hedgerow near their

The labyrinth at the mouth of Shark River



headwaters. It is found generally throughout sections of the park influenced by salt water. Usually low growing, the mangroves attain a height of around 80 feet in the giant mangrove forest at the mouth of the Shark and Harney Rivers. The trees often grow directly in the water and it is almost impossible for a human being to walk any distance through the innumerable arching roots of the red mangroves. Black mangrove, white mangrove, and buttonwood are commonly found growing along the "Mangrove Coast."

Florida Bay

BETWEEN the southern coast of the mainland and the Florida Keys is a broad expanse of extremely shallow water, studded with mangrove keys, that is called Florida Bay. Shoals extend like long fingers from some of the keys almost, if not entirely, enclosing areas of deeper water, locally called "lakes." Sometimes the water of the bay is cerulean blue and emerald green; but when waves stir up the marl bottom it becomes milky white. It is a favorite sports-fishing country and the habitat for some of the rarest and most colorful wildlife of the country, including the roseate spoonbill, great white heron, reddish egret, white-crowned pigeon, and American crocodile. Being generally shallow, winds often whip up a surprisingly choppy sea which can be dangerous to the inexperienced sailor in a small boat.



A typical view of the open Everglades

Cape Sable

THE southernmost tip of the mainland of the United States is at East Cape Sable where the grave of Guy M. Bradley is located. He was an Audubon Society warden who was killed during the days when conservation organizations were trying to stop the destruction of egrets and other plume birds for the millinery trade. Cape Sable is almost an island, where evidences of the 1935 hurricane, which killed many trees, is still everywhere apparent. The wilderness beaches on the Gulf side can be reached only by boat. Behind the beaches is a hurricane-killed mangrove forest, an open lake, and a broad, salt marsh. The marsh is a favorite early winter feeding grounds for thousands of wading birds, shorebirds, and waterfowl.

History

EARLY Spanish explorers found south Florida inhabited by Indian tribes—the Tequestas and Caloosas. Evidences of these early inhabitants are found in numerous places throughout the park in the form of shell mounds, kitchen middens, and ancient canals. Later, the Seminoles arrived and displaced the earlier Indians. Although there are no Seminoles living in the park today, their camps are found along the Tamiami Trail.

White men settled along the Florida Keys quite early, but it was not until relatively recent times that towns and cities began to flourish on the southern mainland. However, few people ever lived in what is now Everglades National Park. The park area was the scene of one of the major conservation fights of the early part of the present century. At that time, egrets and other plume birds were killed and their plumes, or "aigrettes," were sold to the millinery trade for decorating women's hats. Laws were passed in Florida and in New York (center of the millinery trade) which finally outlawed this practice and probably saved the egrets from extinction.

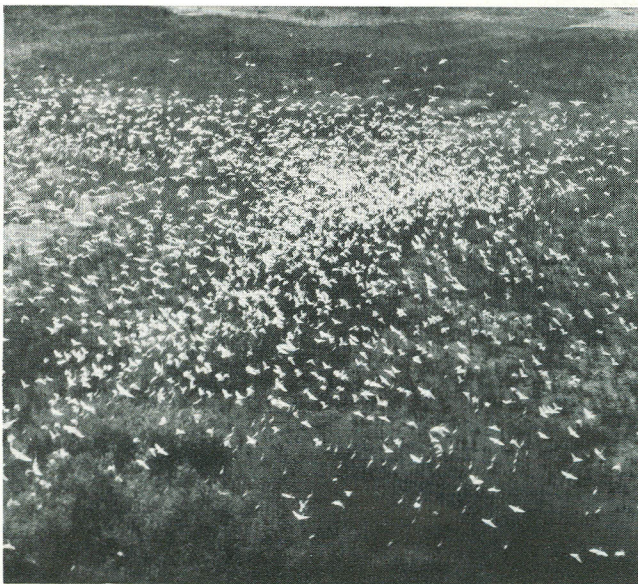
Bird Life

THE most conspicuous forms of life in the park are the birds, and of these the most striking are the herons, egrets, ibises, pelicans, and spoonbills. Unlike the birds in northern areas, the nesting season for many of these birds begins in early winter and lasts until late spring. At Cuthbert Lake and East River, large rookeries form in December and remain active until all the young birds are at flying stage around April or May. During summer months, smaller rookeries are found in Florida Bay.

The spectacular roseate spoonbills nest only on keys in Florida Bay during the winter. These beautiful pink birds with crimson shoulders had become rare in Florida. While still uncommon, they may now be frequently seen in the bay area. Associated with them are the great white herons which were also almost gone after the 1935 hurricane, but have since come back. Great white herons are distinguished from the somewhat similar American egrets by the light-colored legs and larger size compared with the black legs and feet of the American egret.

In winter, waterfowl and shorebirds from the north come into the park and may be seen on many of the lakes and mud flats. White pelicans are interesting winter visitors and somewhat resemble the wood ibis in flight, except that the latter has a black head and neck. Both have jet black along the trailing edges of their wings and are very large birds. The smaller white ibis is often seen over the Everglades. It is a white bird with black wingtips and an orange, decurved bill. During summer months almost 50,000 of these attractive birds roost on a little key, known as Duck Rock, a few miles north of the present boundary along the Gulf of Mexico. Birds from the tropics come into the park during the summer. They include the gray kingbird, swallow-tailed kite, and white-crowned pigeon.

Flock of egrets rising from the Everglades



The Everglades National Park area has long been a mecca for ornithologists, both professional and amateur, starting with John James Audubon. It offers excellent opportunities from January through April for observing and photographing bird life. As bird concentrations move seasonally and with changes in water and feeding conditions, bird students would do well to find out from park rangers where they may best see certain species at a given time.

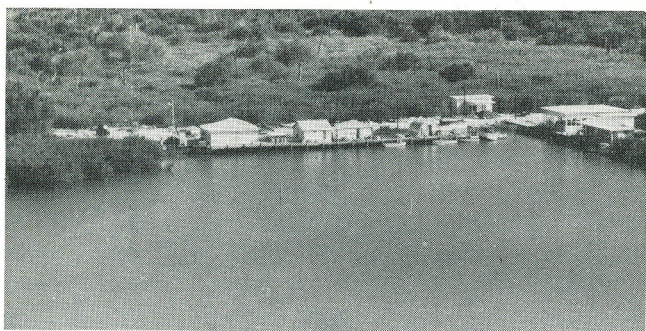
Mammals

TO many it is surprising to find deer and other mammals in the Everglades, because the habitat is so different from that where mammals are seen in the north. Although in the past poaching, hunting, and fires have had a bad effect upon the mammal population, many species are now increasing and becoming less wary. White-tailed deer are found in pinelands and along hammock borders. Black bears are still very rare in the park, although slightly more common in the cypress country to the north. The panther, or cougar, is found on occasion and has been observed from the park road in spite of its usual timidity and fear of man. Bobcats are fairly common and much less wary of man than in other parts of the United States. Otters are often observed in fresh-water areas. Raccoons are almost abundant at times, often feeding in broad daylight.

Unfortunately, the most interesting mammal of the park is the hardest one to see. This is the sea cow, or manatee—a rare and unusual creature somewhat resembling a large seal. It has no hind flippers, but propels itself through the water by a flat, spatula-shaped tail. On occasion one or more manatees are flushed by a boat from where they might be resting on the bottom of some turbid river or bay. They swim away rapidly throwing up a series of “boils” made by the up-and-down motion of the tail. The sea cow is still a rare mammal and relatively little is known about it.

Reptiles

WITH protection, alligators are becoming a more frequent sight along fresh-water streams, sloughs, and canals in the park. During the winter season when water is low, alligators tend to concentrate in such places as the headwaters of Gulf Coast rivers, Seven Mile Fire Tower moat, Taylor Slough (Anhinga Trail), and the canal bordering the Ingraham Highway. It takes a little time for the visitor to learn to spot a 'gator, but once his eye becomes educated he can quickly see the saurians. American crocodiles also inhabit the park, but prefer salt-water habitats, such as the shores and streams in the Florida Bay country. Crocodiles are still very rare and seldom seen. They may be distinguished from the alligator by their lighter color and long, slender snout. Neither the alligator nor the crocodile is dangerous unless molested or harmed. They should never be approached closely.



Coot Bay ranger station

During the summer months, giant loggerhead turtles, and perhaps other species of sea turtles, come out of the water to nest on the beaches of the park. Until the park was established, hunters frequented the beaches to "turn" the turtles on their backs and thus capture them for the meat. The nests also were robbed for their eggs. With protection during their vulnerable nesting season, these reptiles will undoubtedly increase in numbers.

Several species of snakes are native to the park. Unfortunately, visitors have been led to believe that there is a great deal of danger from them. The danger has been overemphasized, but there are three types of venomous snakes present in the park: rattlesnake, cottonmouth moccasin, and coral snake—the last being very rare. Naturally, care must be exercised when walking through heavy grass and brush or fishing along canal banks. "Look where you step" is a good rule to follow, not only in the Everglades but in many other parts of the country. Although snakes of various species may often be seen, they are usually common harmless ones such as the giant indigo snake, chicken snake, rat snake, and various water snakes.

Weather

THE climate of the park can be described as subtropical and moderately humid. Annual mean temperature is about 75°, ranging from a mean of about 68° in February to 82° in August. Rainfall usually comes in brief, torrential downpours during the summer and autumn months. During winter and spring, it seldom rains and periods of from 30 to 40 days without any rain are not infrequent. Average annual rainfall is about 52 inches, being more in the northern and eastern sections of the park. In winter, temperatures are often described as "about like June up North" and people dress accordingly. There are cold snaps at times, usually accompanied by northern winds. These periods last only a few days, but have been known to drive the temperature down below freezing. Prevailing winds are from the southeast.

Hurricanes strike at irregular intervals, the 1935 storm at Cape Sable being the worst in recent years. They occur usually in late summer and autumn, not during the winter tourist season.

How To Reach the Park

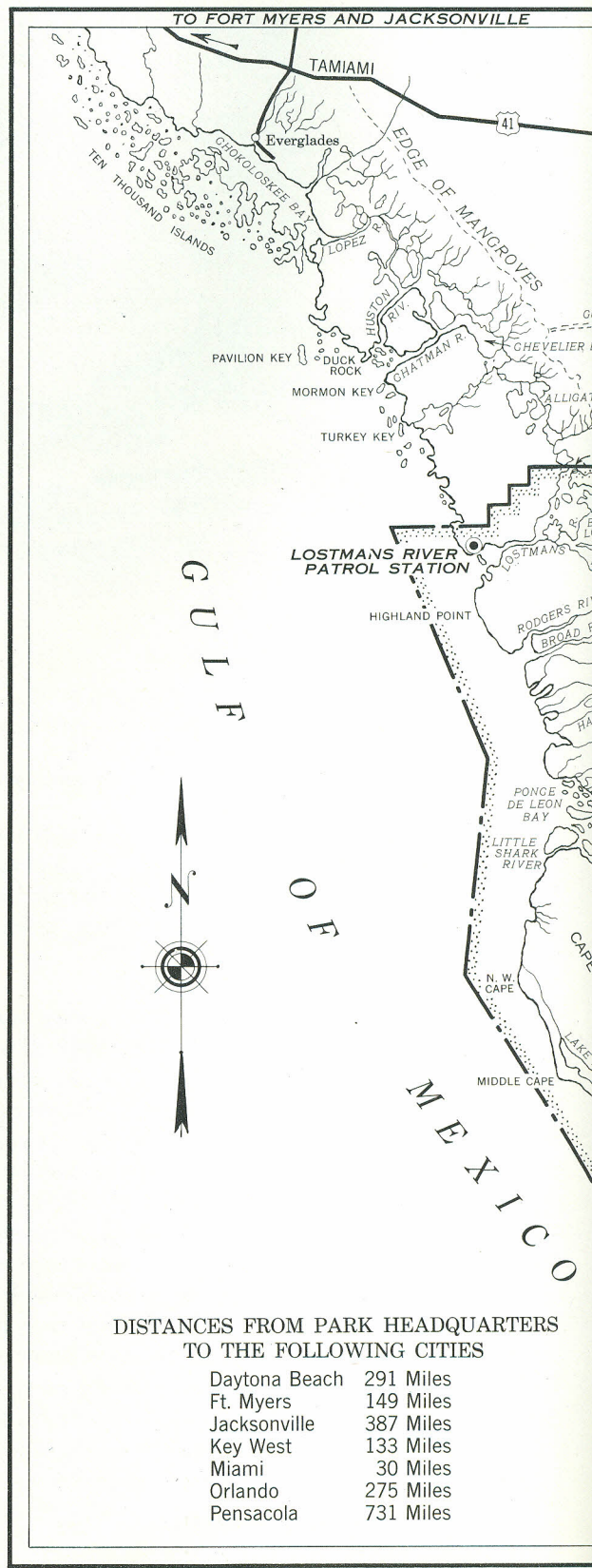
THE present park entrance is at Royal Palm Ranger Station, 13 miles from park headquarters at Homestead. The entrance is reached by following United States Highway No. 1 south from Miami to Florida City, then turning right on State Highway No. 27. Follow State Highway No. 27 and Everglades National Park signs in. Homestead and Florida City may also be reached from Gulf Coast areas by way of the Tamiami Trail (U S 41) by turning south on State 27 at Krome Road, about 20 miles west of Miami. From central Florida, follow U S 27 to Miami, turn sharp right over bridge on Thirty-sixth Street to the airport. Turn left at airport and follow Forty-second Avenue to U S 1, then follow this route south to Homestead and Florida City.

From Royal Palm Ranger Station, the only highway in the park leads in a southerly direction to Coot Bay Ranger Station and Flamingo.

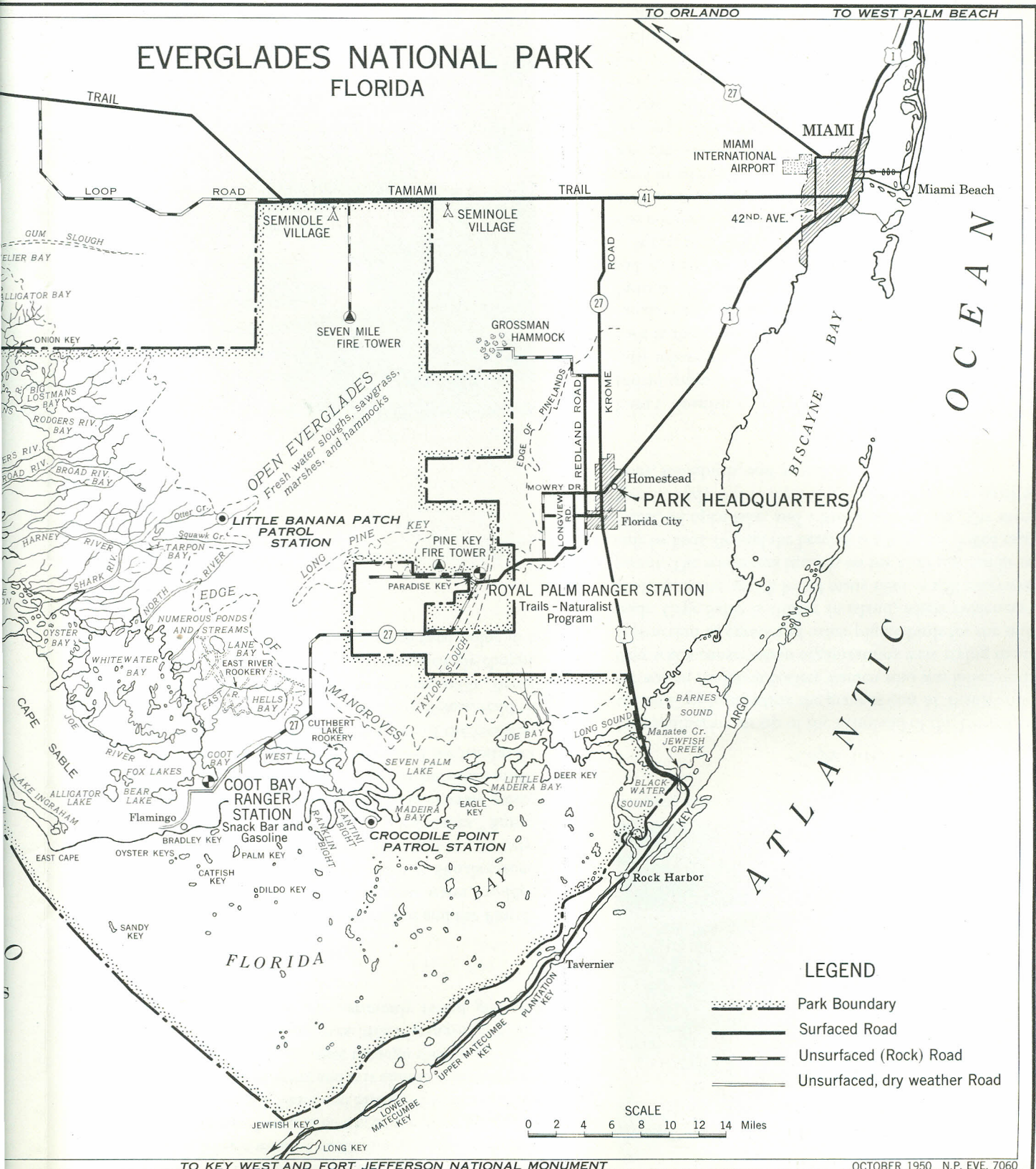
Paradise Key and Royal Palm Ranger Station

NEAR the present entrance to the park is Paradise Key, which was the site of former Royal Palm State Park, so named because it is one of the few places in Florida where royal palms are still found growing in their natural state. Just before reaching Paradise Key, there is a parking turn-out for Anhinga Trail, an elevated boardwalk that permits easy access to a typical Everglades slough. Especially during the winter months, visitors may observe at close hand garfish, alligators, American and snowy egrets, water turkeys or anhinga, wood ibis, and other interesting forms of wildlife. At Paradise Key there is a contact station, with some exhibits of the park. Naturalists conduct nature walks along the Gumbo Limbo Trail in the hammock and to Anhinga Trail every afternoon during the winter season at 2 p. m. Park information may be obtained from rangers or naturalists on duty at Paradise Key.

Airplants on cypress tree



EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK FLORIDA



Coot Bay Ranger Station

BY driving down the Ingraham Highway from Paradise Key for 26 miles, one reaches Coot Bay Ranger Station. Temporary facilities have been erected upon the site for control of Gulf Coast waterways and to provide services for the public. Ranger patrols work out of Coot Bay Ranger Station by boat. During the winter season, one may obtain luncheons, cold drinks, ice, gas and oil (including marine gas), fishermen's supplies, essential groceries, and similar items at the station. Several charterboats are authorized to operate from the area, but it is best to make reservations ahead of time. Skiffs may be rented.

From Coot Bay Ranger Station, side trips can be made by car to the end of the road at Flamingo, on Florida Bay—and beyond in good weather—or to the Snake Bight area where large numbers of birds often congregate at low tide.

What To Bring and Wear

NORMALLY during the winter the weather is pleasant, and there is little or no rain. Informal sports clothes are well fitted for the visitor who is not planning to camp out or rough it. Insect annoyance is not great in winter, but can be a factor of considerable importance from July to November. It is a good idea, however, to have a small bottle of insect repellent at all times. Precautions should be taken against sunburn, especially if going out on the water. The rays of the sun are more penetrating than most people realize, and severe cases of sunburn often result from a few hours of exposure in either winter or summer. Sunglasses are advisable.

Persons wishing to rough it, will find that khaki or sun-tan-color clothing is well suited. On boats, tennis shoes make excellent footgear. On land, many prefer the jungle boots which can be purchased inexpensively at war surplus stores. They are not snake-proof, but are lightweight. Heavier hiking boots may be used, but they have the disadvantage of getting wet and making walking uncomfortable. The fisherman's cap with visor is very popular as it is inexpensive and provides eye shade. Binoculars aid in watching wildlife, finding markers on waterways, etc.

Photography

THE most common mistake made by photographers in the Everglades is to underestimate the light. If you have a meter, believe what it says even though it seems to record more light than you think is present. Cloud masses and sunsets offer excellent and characteristic backdrops to pictures of the country. Wildlife photography is difficult, but results, when good, are very satisfying. While a telephoto lens may be desirable, the amateur photographer with simple equipment can get good wildlife pictures if he has patience. It is often advisable to have the camera ready in one's car while driving so that it can be used at a moment's notice.

Camping, Picnicking, and Overnight Accommodations

NO overnight accommodations have yet been built in the park, but tourist courts and medium-priced hotels may be found in Homestead and Florida City. In the town of Everglades, on the Gulf Coast, are a hotel and tourist courts. A variety of courts, motels, fishing lodges, and small hotels are located along the Florida Keys on United States Highway No. 1.

Picnicking is permitted at Paradise Key, but, because of the fire danger, campfires are not allowed in this area. Although there are no designated campgrounds in the park, rangers in charge of the various stations can furnish information regarding places to camp under primitive conditions.

Boating and Fishing

MOST of the waters of the park have been charted by the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey. Persons going on extended cruises are advised to obtain charts before starting, as the waters of the park are confusing unless well known. The only marked waterways are the Intracoastal Waterway and the area from Long Key Light north to the mouth of Little Shark River. Shoal channels in Florida Bay are often marked by "fishermen's stakes," which consist of sticks or brush.

Private craft using the Gulf Coast can find emergency anchorage at Little Shark River, Harney River, Broad River, and Lostmans River. A canal just north of Middle Cape Sable can be used, but it must be approached with extreme care. Shark River is readily navigable for most coastwise craft, but Broad, Harney, and Lostmans Rivers are more shoal. The Joe River route from Little Shark River to Coot Bay is preferred to the more difficult route across Whitewater Bay. Coot Bay itself is only about 2½ feet at mean low tide.

As noted, charterboats and skiffs can be obtained at Coot Bay Ranger Station. Some charterboats and skiffs are also available near Flamingo. Another base is located on United States Highway No. 1, at Manatee Creek, approaching Key Largo. Charterboats and other craft are obtainable at the town of Everglades and all up and down the Florida Keys—both areas being outside the park. Persons using their own skiffs can launch them at Coot Bay Ranger Station, Manatee Creek, and Flamingo. **No sightseeing boats are yet available.**

Persons leaving from Coot Bay Ranger Station are urged to seek the advice of rangers on duty before departing. Weather information can be obtained at this station which is affiliated with the United States Weather Bureau Storm Warning Service.

Those who are unfamiliar with boats should not attempt to explore Everglades waters without a guide or until they have discussed the matter with one of the park rangers. Life cushions or life preservers should be carried. It is advisable to have a flashlight. **Under all circumstances carry sufficient amounts of fresh water!**

Fishing is permitted in the park in accordance with State law. No license is required for salt-water angling, but a State license is needed when fishing in fresh water. The most popular salt-water fish are snook or robalo, trout, snapper, jewfish, tarpon, bonefish, amberjack, and redfish. Most fishermen today prefer light tackle for fly or bait casting.

As in many parts of the country, fishing varies with weather conditions and the season of the year. The park is within the limits of the Metropolitan Miami Fishing Tournament, the Miami Beach Summer Tournament, and the Upper Keys Fishing Tournament (Florida Bay). Numerous record-breaking fish have been caught in the park waters for these tournaments. **Sports fishermen using the park are urged to take only such fish as they may themselves use and not attempt to retain as many fish as they can catch in a day.** Sports fishing in these excellent waters will remain topnotch only so long as each fisherman is himself a good sport. The supply is not unlimited!

Emergency Radio Facilities

THE National Park Service operates an administrative shortwave radio network throughout the park. In cases of emergency, park visitors can reach radio sending and receiving stations that are connected with park headquarters from Royal Palm Ranger Station, Coot Bay Ranger Station, Seven Mile Fire Tower, Pine Key Fire Tower, Lostmans River Patrol Station, or from park patrol cars and boats.

Guided Trips

AUDUBON Wildlife Tours are conducted from Miami to the park during the winter season. Station wagons are taken from Miami to West Lake where visitors board cabin cruisers to go to Cuthbert Lake Rookery. A second trip is taken out of Tavernier on Key Largo by boat in Florida Bay to observe the roseate spoonbill nesting area and other bird locations. Combinations of trips can be worked out by the Society. For information and reservations write to the National Audubon Society, McAllister Hotel Arcade, Miami, Fla. The Greyhound and Red Adams bus lines include a portion of the park in special tours.

Wood ibis feeding in a wayside slough



Administration

EVERGLADES National Park is under the administration and protection of the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. In immediate charge is the park superintendent, with headquarters at Homestead. The address of the park is P. O. Box 275, Homestead, Fla. The phone number is Homestead 441.

Help Us Protect This Park

THE duty of the National Park Service is to preserve the scenery, the natural and historic objects, and the wildlife of the national parks for the enjoyment of this and succeeding generations. In order to accomplish these objectives and to provide for the comfort and safety of the park visitors, it is necessary to have certain rules and regulations for the park.

Everglades National Park is a sanctuary for all wildlife, but fishing is permitted in accordance with State laws. Hunting or use of firearms is strictly prohibited.

Trees, shrubs, airplants, orchids, and other plants should not be marred or disturbed. Visitors should not throw rocks or in any way attempt to disturb birds, alligators, or other forms of wildlife. Others wish to see them too. Wildlife is just beginning to lose its fear of man after many years of persecution.

Fire hazard in the park is usually at its height during the winter dry season. Many of the grasses and woodlands are classed as "flash fuels" by the foresters and a small blaze may become a major conflagration. Park rangers and fire control aides are doing all they can to prevent disastrous fires in the Everglades. Please help them by being careful and by reporting any fires you see at once so suppressive action can start quickly.

The present road system in the park was not designed for high-speed traffic. You will see very little if you go fast. Approach turns slowly because some are very sharp. Use care!

'Glades or swamp buggies and airboats are not permitted in the park without prior written permission of the superintendent. Airplanes must not land in the area except in emergencies.

Be a sportsman when you fish!