

Everglades

National Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Everglades National Park

Nine Mile Pond Canoe Trail

DESCRIPTION

A meeting ground of marsh and mangrove environments. You may see alligators, wading birds, turtles, and fish.

LENGTH

A five mile loop, marked with 116 numbered white PVC pipes. You can take a short cut at marker #44, which will shorten the trip by 1½ miles.

TIME

Allow 4 to 5 hours to leisurely paddle this loop.

SEASONS

Low water levels in late February through May can make the trail difficult or impassable. Check with a ranger.

SAFETY & COMFORT

Use care when crossing the deep, open water of the pond. Insects are generally not a problem in the open marsh through which the trail weaves. Avoid tree islands in the summer and fall months as they harbor mosquitoes in and around them.

WHAT TO BRING

Recommended supplies include water, sun-screen, sunglasses, bug spray, rain gear, snacks, PFD for each canoeist, an extra paddle, and a waterproof bag for gear.



Crossing Nine Mile Pond can be the most rigorous part of the five mile trail. Strong winds frequently ripple the pond's surface. Head directly across the pond from the parking area (eastward) toward a single white marker, #1. Scan the water and edges of the pond for anhingas, cormorants, herons, great egrets, and other feathered feeders. Look for floating "logs" with eyes; often, shy alligators are spotted amongst the cattails.

Marker #1 The portal

The water is fresh to slightly brackish, depending on the time of year and abundance of rainfall. The narrow channel you navigate is the portal to Nine Mile Pond Trail. The red mangrove is predominant throughout the marsh. It grows as a shrub, with arching roots and long, waxy leaves, with central roots rotting. The round stemmed "grass" in the open areas is spike rush.

Marker #3 Tree islands

The rounded leaves of the cocoplum are directly behind this marker. To the right is the buttonwood tree, home for a miniature forest of air plants. High, relatively dry ground in the island's interior permits these and other trees to flourish.

Markers #11 & #12 Bedrock

The mosaic of light and dark on the bottom of the pool indicates the limestone bedrock of south Florida. Red mangroves grow as stunted shrubs here rather than as the taller trees found along the shoreline of Florida Bay.

Marker #39 Worlds within worlds

Air plants, or bromeliads, perch regally upon mangrove branches all along the trail. Rain-water is captured and stored by the plant's

vase-like base. Mosquitoes and other insects deposit eggs and reside in the bromeliads, attracting tree frogs, lizards, and birds. Decaying leaves, animal droppings and other ingredients mix with captured water to form a nutrient base for the plant. These plants are nonparasitic squatters using the host tree only as a perch from which to gather sunlight and nutrients.

Marker #44 Optional shortcut

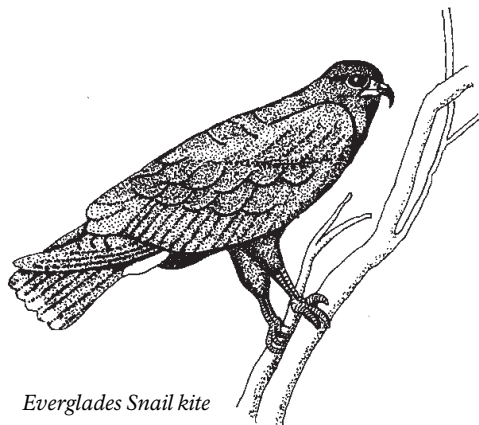
You can shorten your trip by following the trail to marker 44A. At this point bear to your left where two markers say "SHORTCUT" and cross the open marsh to marker #82. Paddle to the deeper water near marker #82 before heading to marker #83.

Markers #46 & #47 Sea of "breadsticks"

A beige colored algae mat, periphyton, surrounds many of the rushes, creating a rich supply of food for apple snails, small fish, and tadpoles. During droughts, the "breadstick" algae can store water and provide refuge to the eggs and larvae of a new generation of Everglades dwellers.

Marker #49 String of living pearls

Bear left passing marker #49. Scan the mangrove roots and spike rush for splotches of



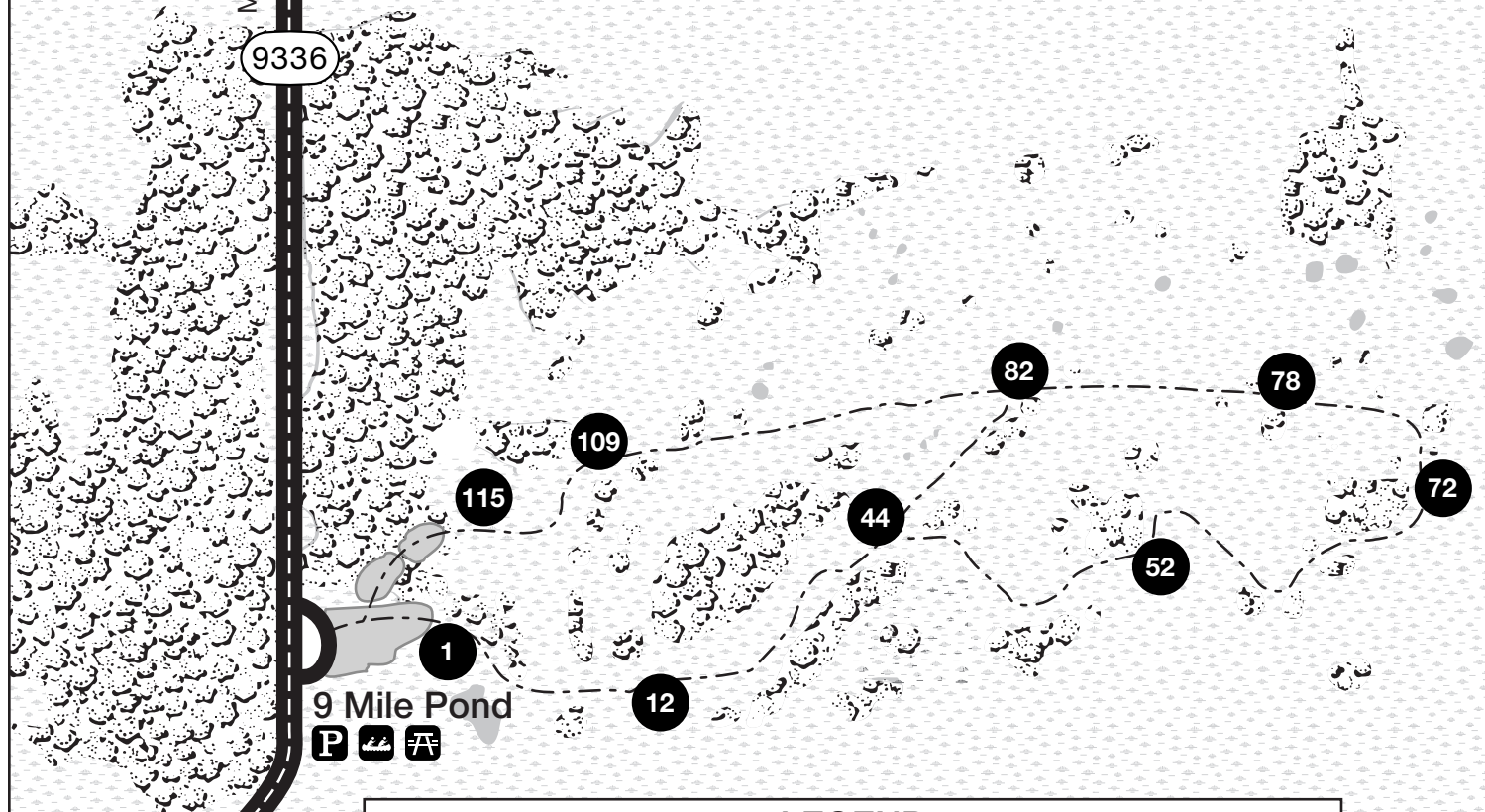
Everglades Snail kite

Nine Mile Pond Canoe Trail

Homestead, FL
38 miles, 60.8 km

Main Park Road

9336



9 Mile Pond
P [parking icon] [wheelchair icon] [ATV icon]

LEGEND



Numerous small red mangroves and tree islands (hammocks)



Primarily shallow marsh/marl prairie, dominated by spike rush



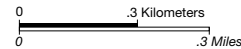
Deep, human-made water ponds, or borrow pits



Main park road



Canoe trail with trail markers



white or pink just above the water line. What looks like a mass of pearls are actually the fragile eggs of the apple snail, the largest fresh water snail in the Everglades. As with all life, the apple snail is a vital part of its marsh habitat. The survival of the endangered Snail kite, a hawk-like bird of prey, is dependent upon this shelled animal as its only source of food. Apple snails are also a favorite of the alligator!

Marker #67 to #68 The meat-eater
Bladderwort, a free-floating, fern-like plant, grows in these waters. This aquatic plant produces a small yellow bloom just above the water's surface. Using its tiny, submerged bladders, it feeds on minute aquatic life, including mosquito larvae.

Marker #72 Wilderness
This is as far as the loop trail takes you. Close your eyes for a moment, and allow your ears to

absorb the symphonies of the wild, and breathe deeply of the sultry, fresh air. You have found a world of gentle order.

Marker #76 Paurotis palm
Fans of greens rays, a shock of orange fruit, and numerous slender trunks grouped together clearly identify the beautiful and rare paurotis palm which grows on high ground.

Markers #92-#100 A slow recovery
Here your route follows an old airboat trail. The bottom vegetation is sparse compared with most of the trail. Because of their impact on plants, animals, and solitude, airboats are not used within Everglades National Park other than for limited research and emergency functions.

Markers #115 & #116 The best for last
The two smaller ponds you travel through

toward your journey's end can provide some of the best opportunities for wildlife viewing in this area of the park. Watch the birds and take some time to enjoy the breeze. The sun reflecting on the water is a reminder of the original meanings of the word "glades": 1) an open, sunny, grassy area in the forest; and 2) an open place of shining light. How peaceful and subtle is this wilderness of shining light and how "forever" this glade!