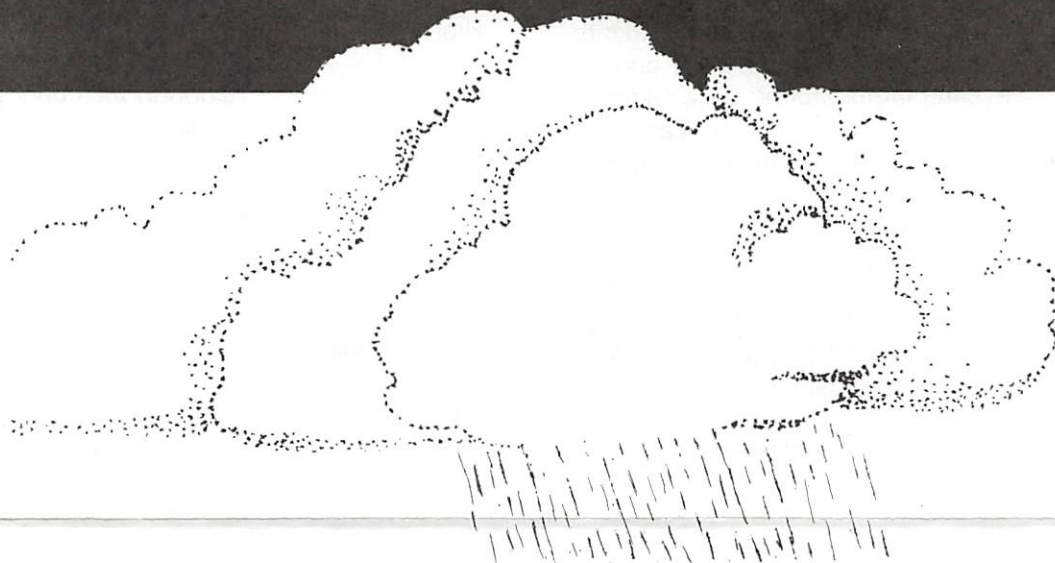
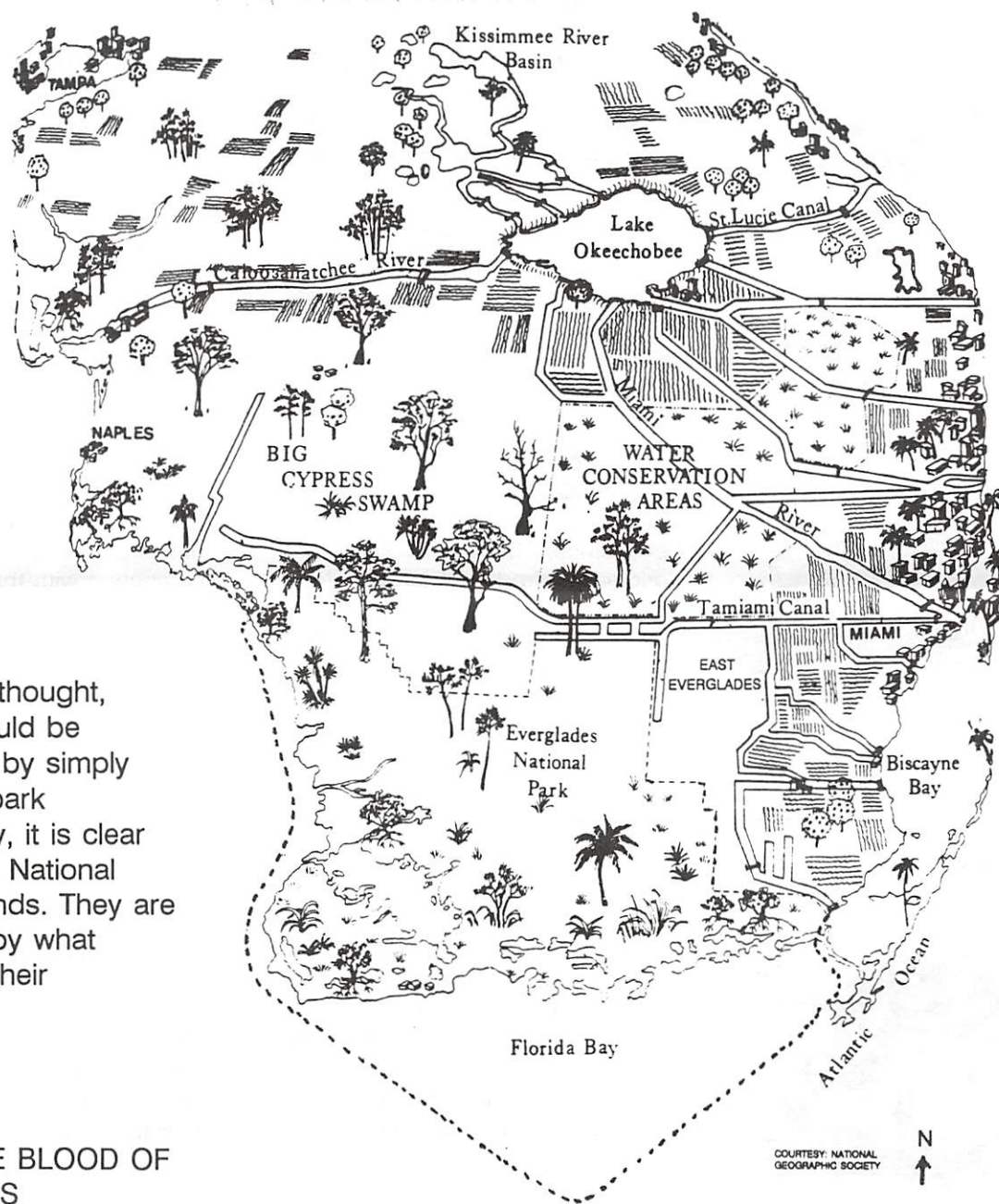


Everglades

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



YOUR PARK IN DANGER



Previously, it was thought, islands of land could be preserved forever by simply drawing national park boundaries. Today, it is clear that this is untrue. National parks are not islands. They are greatly impacted by what happens outside their boundaries.

WATER, THE LIFE BLOOD OF THE EVERGLADES

Water management (the quality, quantity, distribution, and timing of delivery) is one of the most critical environmental issues facing Everglades National Park.

The everglades watershed originates in the central Florida Kissimmee River basin north of Lake Okeechobee. Summer thunderstorms would flood this region, the big lake, and extensive areas of everglades marsh. This created a shallow, wide river which flowed slowly south through the everglades to the

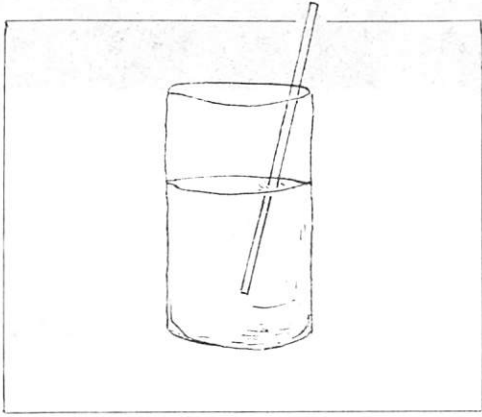
mangrove estuaries of the Gulf of Mexico. The summer rains would then give way to a six month dry season. Everglades' plants and animals adapted to this seasonal wet/dry cycle.

During the past 100 years this river has been altered by people. There now exists an elaborate system of dikes, canals, levees, floodgates, and pumps which moves the water to agricultural lands, urban areas, and, finally, to Everglades National Park.

WATER QUALITY

Water runoff, containing nutrients and pesticides from dairy and sugar cane farms around Lake Okeechobee, drains into the canals and wetlands which empty into the park. High levels of nitrates and phosphates destroy beneficial algae and oxygen producing aquatic plants and allow plants which consume oxygen to flourish. If this continues, Everglades National Park could be irreparably damaged.

WATER QUALITY



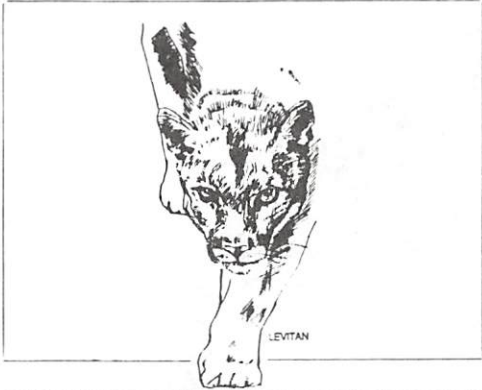
NUTRIENTS

Water runoff, containing nutrients and pesticides from dairy and sugar cane farms around Lake Okeechobee, drains into the canals and wetlands which empty into the park. High levels of nitrates and phosphates destroy beneficial algae and oxygen producing aquatic plants and allow plants which consume oxygen to flourish. If this continues, Everglades National Park could be irreparably damaged.

MERCURY

High levels of mercury were first detected in Everglades freshwater fish in early 1989. Although mercury occurs naturally in the environment, it is also a dangerous pollutant. Tests show that the park's raccoons and alligators also have high levels of this toxic metal in their systems. A Florida panther found dead in December 1989 had levels of mercury that would be lethal to humans. No cause for the high concentration of mercury is known.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

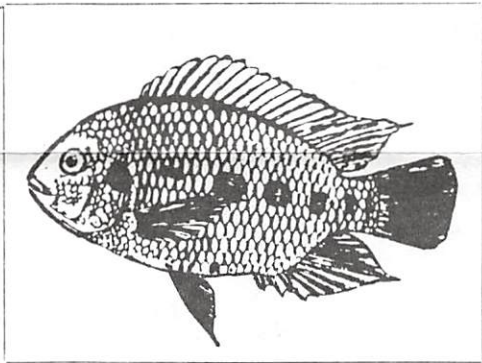


Wildlife know no boundaries. When people and animals live closely together it is usually the wildlife that suffers. For example, the sixteen federally endangered species in Everglades National Park, including

the wood stork, American crocodile, and West Indian manatee, are threatened by loss of habitat and alteration of water flow. The survival of these species has been a major focus of the park's research effort.



EXOTIC SPECIES



The introduction of exotic animals and plants into south Florida began in the late 1800's and has escalated ever since. These newcomers were originally introduced as pets, food sources, ornamentals, or as biological controls. Because these species have few limiting factors

here in their new home, their numbers often become unmanageable. Exotic species displace native plants and animals by competing with them for space and food. Exotics are extremely difficult to eradicate.

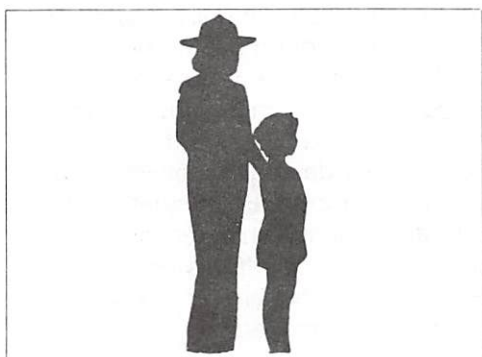
WADING BIRDS



The number of wading birds nesting in colonies (rookeries) in the southern Everglades region has declined from approximately 265,000 birds to 18,500 birds, a 93 percent reduction, since the 1930's. For example, the endangered wood stork has declined from 6,000 nesting

birds in the 1960's to 500 today. Of the remaining wading species, 70% have moved outside park boundaries to nest. These declines have been largely caused by changes in the water flow to Everglades National Park which has reduced habitat and available food.

SOLUTIONS



Although the problems facing Everglades National Park are severe, all is not yet lost. The support of citizens, legislators, and public officials is needed to assure that public policy is enacted to save this great park. The quality of life and the survival of a national heritage are at stake. Just as we share the

enjoyment of this natural resource, we share the responsibility for finding solutions to these problems.

For more information, write:
Superintendent, Everglades National Park,
P.O. Box 279, Homestead, FL 33030.