



A Visitor's Guide to the NATIONAL PARKS AND PRESERVES of South Florida

Big Cypress National Preserve • Biscayne National Park
Dry Tortugas National Park • Everglades National Park

Volume 10 No. 1

1998-99

A Bridge to the 19th Century

Beginning in the winter of 1999, visitors to Everglades National Park will encounter road construction west of the main park entrance station. Over the next year and a half, we will be building two new bridges and installing a pair of large box culverts along the road, as part of a restoration effort that stretches north to Lake Okeechobee and beyond. A primary goal is to work toward restoration of the water flowing through Everglades National Park to the quantities and patterns that were present a century ago. We're building a bridge for the next century—to span the Everglades of the 19th Century.

The Everglades is subtle. Look out across the vast sea of grass as you drive through the park, and it is hard to imagine that what you are looking at is a river. The "River of Grass," as the Everglades is sometimes called, flows only six inches deep in most places, but originally spread sixty miles wide across the flat landscape. Its water drifts lazily

along under the hot sun, slowly but surely southward toward the sea.

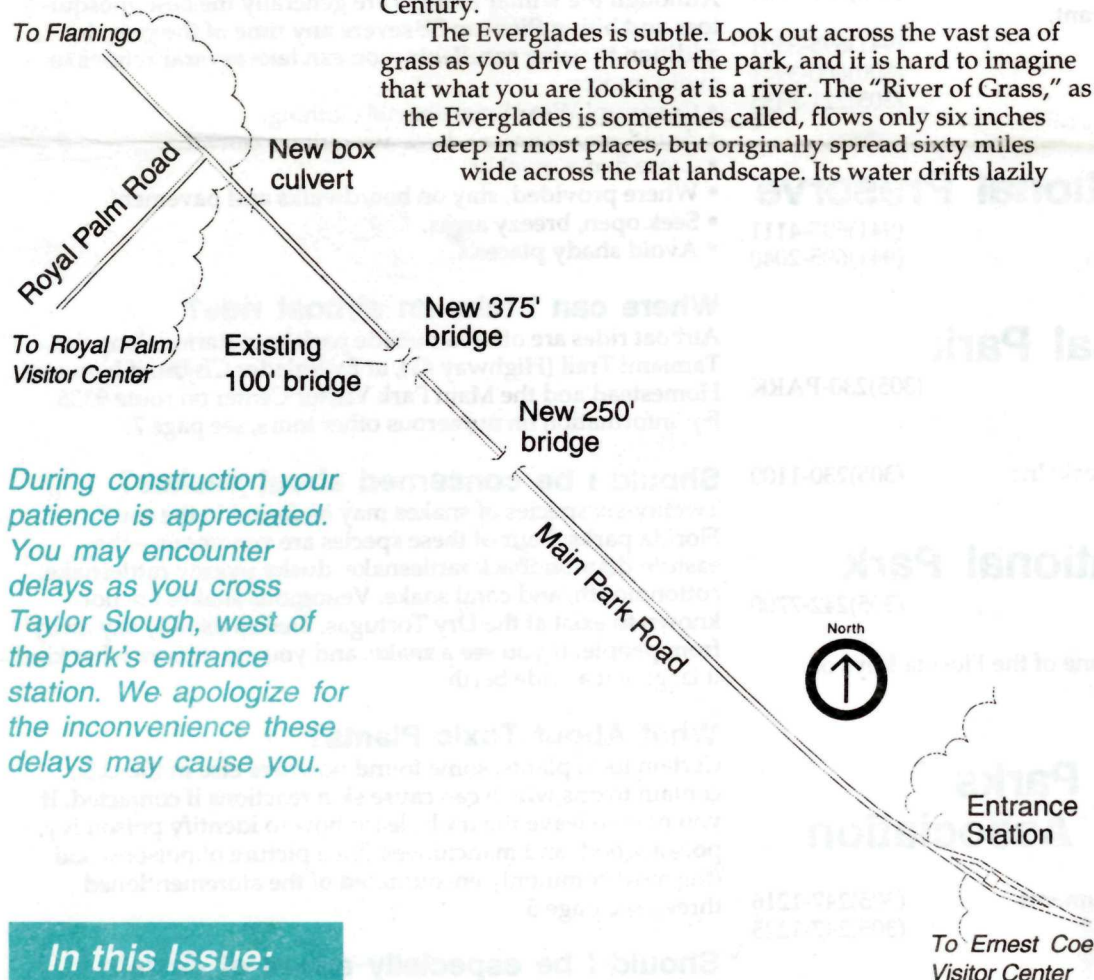
During the winter dry season, this flood of water narrows down to a trickle. A few deeper channels carry the life-giving water through the marsh, and sustain the myriad plants and animals that depend on the water for their survival.

Taylor Slough, which flows along the eastern edge of Everglades National Park, is one such channel. Its water flowed into Florida Bay, at the tip of the Florida peninsula, diluting this warm, shallow bay to a salinity only half that of the open ocean. Fish, shrimp, and lobsters thrive under these conditions among lush beds of sea grass, and in turn sustain a major commercial fishing industry in the Florida Keys. Rare and endangered manatees and sea turtles also find refuge in Florida Bay.

The first roads into this part of the Everglades paid little regard to the natural flow of water. But when the park road was built across Taylor Slough in 1958, a bridge and a series of small culverts were installed to allow water to pass under it. But for many reasons, Taylor Slough has not carried the amount of water it did historically.

Humans have altered the flow of water through the River of Grass for almost a hundred years. Dikes were built around parts of Lake Okeechobee as early as 1931, and by the middle of the century hundreds of miles of levees and canals crossed

please turn to Bridge to the 19th Century on page 8



During construction your patience is appreciated. You may encounter delays as you cross Taylor Slough, west of the park's entrance station. We apologize for the inconvenience these delays may cause you.



Early roads into the Everglades were hardly roads at all. Still, they were quite effective at altering the natural flow of water.

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Not So Quiet . . .

Natural quiet describes the natural sound conditions found in national parks. For example, the natural quiet at Everglades National Park may include the bellowing of alligators, the squawking of herons, the grunt of a pig frog, or even the incessant buzz of the mosquitoes. Such an impressive array of sounds is really anything but silent.

How important are national parks as places for people to experience natural peace and the sounds of nature? Very important—according to 72 percent of the American public that responded to a June 1998 survey on the National Park System.

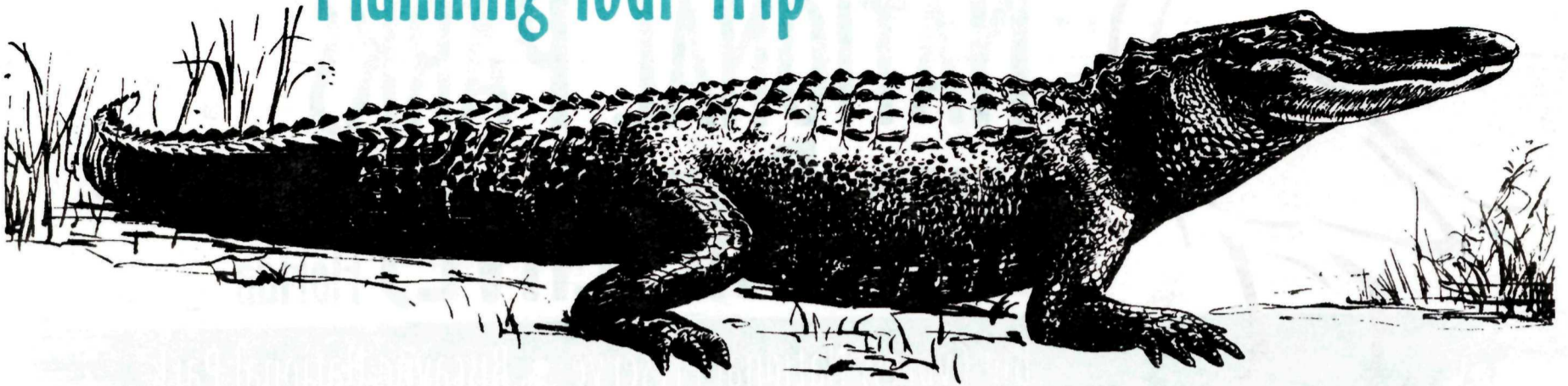
Conducted by Colorado State University, the national public opinion survey also showed that 88 percent of the people surveyed value national parks for their importance to future generations. In addition, protection of wildlife habitat ranked high (78 percent), with preservation of natural

ecosystems and protection of air and water quality joining natural sounds as very important reasons for having national parks.

Just what makes national parks some of the best places to find tranquility and enjoy the whisper of the wind moving gently across the landscape? National Park Service policy identifies qualities such as natural quiet, solitude, scenery, and the sounds of nature as resources and values to be protected now and in the years to come. Planning and management for preservation of natural sound environments is now required, much like preservation of wildlife, watersheds, and other natural resources.

please turn to Not So Quiet on page 3

Planning Your Trip



Important Phone Numbers

Below is a list of phone numbers you may need to help plan your trip to the south Florida national parks and preserves. This list only includes those services located within the national parks and preserves; many other services can be found in the local communities.

Everglades National Park

Everglades National Park Information	(305)242-7700
Everglades 24 Hour Emergency	(305)242-7740
Flamingo Visitor Center	(941)695-2945
Gulf Coast Visitor Center	(941)695-3311
Shark Valley Visitor Center	(305)221-8776
Key Largo Ranger Station	(305)852-0304
Campground Reservations	(800)365-CAMP

Concessions

Everglades Nat'l Park Boat Tours and Canoe Rentals (located in Everglades City) Florida Only	(941)695-2591 (800)445-7724
Flamingo Lodge (marina, restaurant, boat tours and rentals)	(941)695-3101
Flamingo Lodge Reservations	(800)600-3941
Shark Valley Tram Tours	(305)221-8455

Big Cypress National Preserve

Oasis Visitor Center	(941)695-4111
Big Cypress Hunting Information	(941)695-2040

Biscayne National Park

Biscayne National Park	(305)230-PARK
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Concessions

Biscayne National Underwater Park, Inc	(305)230-1100
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Dry Tortugas National Park

Dry Tortugas National Park	(305)242-7700
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For Boat and Seaplane info, call one of the Florida Keys or Naples Chambers of Commerce:

Florida National Parks and Monuments Association

Florida National Parks and Monuments FAX	(305)247-1216 (305)247-1225
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Local Tourist Information

Key Largo Tourist Information Center	(305)453-0066
Key West Welcome Center	(305)296-4444
Miami Visitor's Information Bureau	(305)539-8070
Naples Area Chamber of Commerce	(941)262-6141
Tropical Everglades Visitor's Association	(800)388-9669
We Love Florida Keys Visitor Center	(800)SEE-KEYS

Are There Any Questions?

Are there entrance fees?

For cars, vans, & motorhomes, Everglades National Park charges a \$10.00 fee at the main entrance station and an \$8.00 fee at Shark Valley and Chekika. Fees vary for buses (call 305-242-7700 for details). Bicyclists & people on foot pay \$5.00/person (\$4.00 at Shark Valley). Entrance fees are valid for 7 days. Golden Eagle, Age & Access Passes are honored at entrance stations. Golden Age Passes are good for life and cost \$10.00. No entrance fees are charged at Gulf Coast, Big Cypress, Biscayne, or Dry Tortugas.

What are the hours of operation?

In Everglades National Park, the road from the Coe Visitor Center to Flamingo is open 24 hours; the Shark Valley entrance station is open from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Big Cypress is open 24 hours. Biscayne (Convoy Point) is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For visitor center hours, see pages 4, 5 and 6.

What should I do about insects?

Although the winter months are generally the best, mosquitoes and biting flies can be severe any time of the year. In addition to using repellents, you can take several actions to avoid insects:

- Cover up! Wear long-sleeved clothing.
- Avoid grassy areas where mosquitoes can hide.
- Close doors quickly.
- Where provided, stay on boardwalks and pavement.
- Seek open, breezy areas.
- Avoid shady places.

Where can I take an airboat ride?

Airboat rides are offered outside park boundaries along the Tamiami Trail (Highway 41), at Everglades City, and between Homestead and the Main Park Visitor Center on route 9336. For information on numerous other tours, see page 7.

Should I be concerned about snakes?

Twenty-six species of snakes may be found in the south Florida parks. Four of these species are venomous—the eastern diamondback rattlesnake, dusky pygmy rattlesnake, cottonmouth, and coral snake. Venomous snakes are not known to exist at the Dry Tortugas. Snakes usually shy away from people. If you see a snake, and you are unsure what kind it is, give it a wide berth.

What About Toxic Plants?

Certain local plants, some found nowhere else in the U.S., contain toxins which can cause skin reactions if contacted. If you plan to leave the trails, learn how to identify poison ivy, poisonwood, and manchineel. For a picture of poisonwood (the most commonly encountered of the aforementioned three), see page 5.

Should I be especially aware of certain regulations?

- When observing animals, pull completely off the road.
- Rangers monitor speed by radar. Obey speed limits.
- It is dangerous and illegal to feed or harass any wildlife.
- Weapons are not permitted in Everglades, Biscayne, and Dry Tortugas National Parks. In Big Cypress National Preserve, special hunting regulations apply.
- Skateboards, rollerskates, and personal watercraft, such as "Jet skis, Wave Runners, Sea Doos" are prohibited in Everglades National Park.
- Pets are allowed on leash in some areas, but not on trails.
- Spearfishing is not allowed.
- Each South Florida park is unique, and regulations are tailored to fit the particular park area. Check at visitor centers, entrance stations, or ask a ranger for more information.



Florida National Parks & Monuments Association, Inc.

Parks and Preserves is published as a service to park visitors by the **Florida National Parks and Monuments Association (FNPMA)**. FNPMA provides book/video sales outlets at main visitor centers in all four South Florida parks. A catalog is available on the world wide web at: <http://www.nps.gov/ever/fnpma.htm> by calling (305) 247-1216, or by writing: 10 Parachute Key 351, Homestead, FL 33034-6735.

Parks and Preserves Editor:
Roy Wood

This newspaper was printed on recycled paper.



How to Have a Safe and Enjoyable Visit

WARNING: WILD Wildlife!

Alligators, birds, turtles, bobcats... The south Florida parks are spectacular places to experience wildlife. In these natural environments, animals are protected and free to move and live as they wish. They remain wild, untamed, and relatively unafraid of humans. It is your responsibility to keep a safe distance from all wild animals; they can be quite dangerous if approached too closely.

Alligator Viewing

An adult alligator has powerful jaws, strong teeth, and a brain the size of a walnut. This reptile acts primarily on instinct, assessing other creatures as potential threat or prey. *Avoid approaching an alligator closer than 15 feet; they can easily outrun you.*

Wading or swimming in park waters has potential risks. Take special care with your small children; they are closer in size to an alligator's natural foods. Do not feed alligators or any other wild animal; it is bad for the animal, risky for you, and illegal in a national park. If you see someone feeding or harassing wildlife, **please report this to a ranger** — call (305) 242-7740.

Elevated boardwalks, like Anhinga Trail, the Shark Valley Tram Road and Observation Tower, The Eco Pond viewing platform in Everglades, and the Turner River Road in Big Cypress offer good opportunities to safely view these remarkable creatures.

More on Mosquitoes

Summer is the time for mosquitoes, but they can be a problem any time of the year. The most abundant mosquito species in south Florida is *Aedes taeniorhynchus*, the salt marsh mosquito. These insects lay their eggs (up to 10,000 per square foot!) on exposed moist soil, especially in black mangrove swamp and in nearby coastal prairie. Heavy summer rains trigger egg hatching. Soon, rain-filled puddles will be black with squirming mosquito larvae. About a week later, adult mosquitoes emerge to form giant buzzing clouds. Take heed! Humans only provide about 1% of the blood these mosquitoes use to manufacture their eggs. Marsh rabbits, birds, and other animals supply the rest.

Some animals benefit from high mosquito populations. Mosquitofish feast on this readily available food and are then eaten by other fish and birds. Dragonflies appear like helicopter squadrons, positioning their long legs like nets to scoop mosquitoes from the air. In dazzling aerial pursuit, gray kingbirds snatch dragonflies in mid-flight. These birds migrate from the tropics in summer to nest in south Florida.



Not So Quiet (continued from page 1)

Accordingly, the NPS is taking action to preserve natural quiet in parks. Sound monitoring studies and identification of noise sources assists the agency in protecting natural sound environments in designated areas of national parks where the opportunity for visitors to experience natural sounds is a management objective.

Education also plays an important role in agency preservation efforts. Noise from NPS sources such as park maintenance operations, vehicles, and aviation use can be minimized by noise prevention and mitigation practices implemented by park staff. Other distracting noise from vehicles such as personal watercraft, snowmobiles, buses, and aircraft can be lessened as well. For example, public awareness

Raccoons

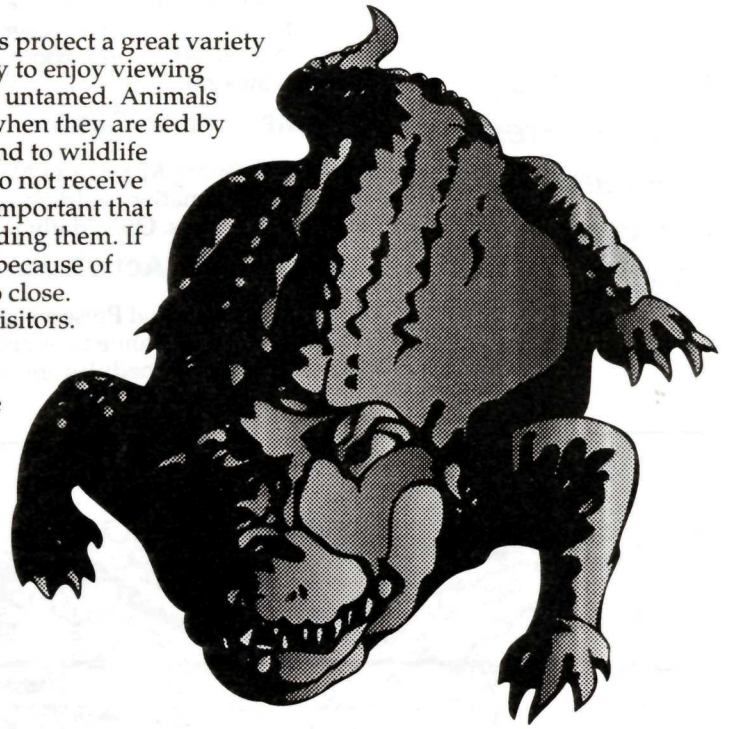
Raccoons are abundant in many areas of the south Florida parks. Store food in your vehicle or a hard-sided container when camping; raccoons are very attracted to our food and garbage. They can be aggressive if confronted, and may carry rabies.

Snakes

Twenty-six species of snakes are found in the south Florida parks. Four are venomous: the diamondback and pygmy rattlesnakes, the coral snake, and the cottonmouth. Rangers at visitor centers can help you learn to identify these animals.

Animal Homes

The south Florida national parks protect a great variety of magnificent wildlife. It is easy to enjoy viewing these creatures, yet they remain untamed. Animals become more dangerous to us when they are fed by people; it is vital to our safety and to wildlife survival that animals in parks do not receive food from people. It is equally important that we respect wildlife by not crowding them. If an animal changes its behavior because of your approach, then you are too close. This is their home, and we are visitors. For their health, as well as your safety, enter their world with caution, and treat them with the respect they deserve.



Parents use caution! — Your hand and voice may be too far away if your child leaves your side. Children are often attracted to the very areas that alligators and snakes prefer.

Alligators and other animals are wild and dangerous — Keep your distance!

and voluntary noise reduction efforts can directly reduce vehicle noise in the parks.

How will this affect park visits for most people? In general, greater opportunities for natural park experiences should result. Ideally, people will realize how their own presence in and around national parks affects the natural sound environments and they will act accordingly to protect them.

Experiencing Big Cypress and Biscayne

Big Cypress National Preserve

Established in 1974
728,000 acres

HCR 61, Box 110
Ochopee, FL 34141
(941) 695-4111

<http://www.nps.gov/bicy>

Big Cypress National Preserve celebrates its 25th Anniversary in 1999!

In Big Cypress Swamp, "big" refers not to the size of the trees, but to the vastness of the swamp, more than 1,100 square miles within the preserve alone! In addition to cypress swamp, the preserve contains marsh, wet and dry prairie, mixed hardwood hammocks, sandy islands of slash pine, and estuarine mangrove forests.

This large tract of land is an important link in the hydrological system of south Florida. The cycle begins as most of the preserve's 60 inches of annual precipitation fall (between May and October), flooding cypress strands and prairies with a shallow sheet of life-giving fresh water. Plants and animals in Big Cypress and the Everglades depend on this water for survival. Humans drink this same water in several Florida cities.

Big Cypress National Preserve differs from many other National Park Service areas. Hunting, trapping, off-road vehicle use, oil and gas exploration, and other preexisting uses are allowed to continue. These activities require licenses and/or permits, and are regulated by the National Park Service and other agencies to insure minimal impact on the environment.

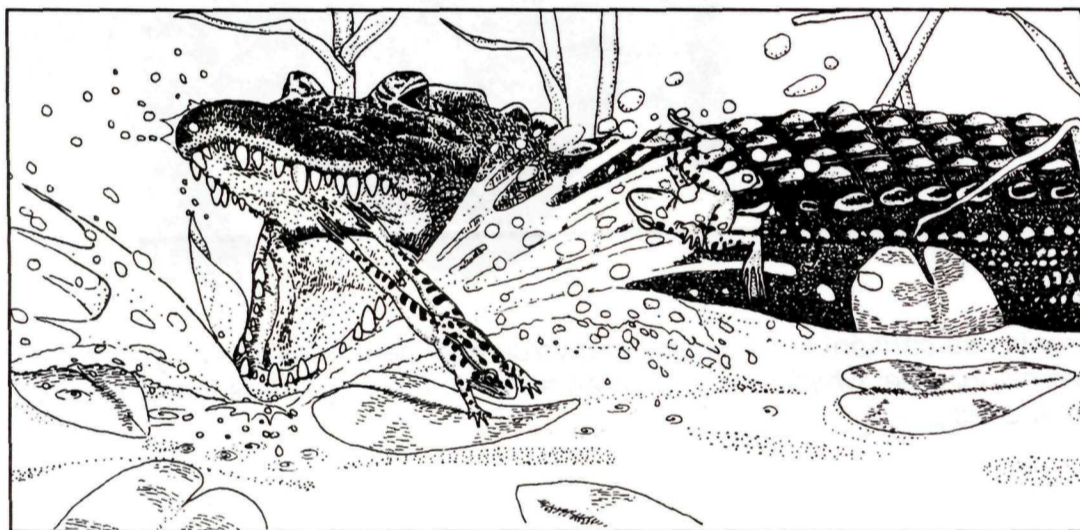
Big Cypress National Preserve was authorized in 1974 and comprises 728,000 acres—about 45% of the total acreage of Big Cypress Swamp.

Oasis Visitor Center

Midway between Miami and Naples on the Tamiami Trail (U.S. 41). Information, wildlife exhibits, and a 15-minute film. Publications sales. Open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Ranger-led Activities

Big Cypress National Preserve offers evening programs, bird walks, wet walks, canoe trips and bicycle tours. Check at the visitor center for schedules and details.



Biscayne National Park

Established in 1968
180,000 acres

P.O. Box 1369
Homestead, FL 33090-1369
(305) 230-PARK

<http://www.nps.gov/bisc>

Known locally as a fantastic place for recreation, the park protects and preserves a nationally significant marine ecosystem with mangrove shorelines, a shallow bay, undeveloped islands, and living coral reefs. Biscayne National Park has protected these unique resources for over 30 years.

The shoreline of Biscayne Bay is lined with a deep green forest of mangroves. These trees, with their complex system of prop roots, help stabilize the shoreline and provide shelter for animals, birds, and marine life. Their leaves become a vital part of the food chain when they fall into the waters.

Another major part of the food chain is the lush seagrass beds found throughout Biscayne Bay. The Florida spiny lobster depends on this rich food chain and the bay has been designated a sanctuary where the lobsters are protected year-round. Shrimp, fish, sea turtles, and manatees also utilize these productive underwater pastures.

On the eastern edge of Biscayne Bay are the northernmost Florida Keys. These stunning emerald islands fringed with mangroves contain tropical hardwood forests in their interiors. The establishment of the park protected these islands from planned development, allowing them to remain a reminder of the area's past.

On the Atlantic side of the islands lie the most diverse and beautiful of the underwater communities: the coral reefs. The reefs support a kaleidoscope of life. Fish, plants, and other animals abound in all the colors of the rainbow.

The resources protected within Biscayne National Park are beautiful, diverse, and very productive; they are also fragile. Fish and animals can be injured and killed by trash in the water. Sea grasses can be torn up by boats run aground. Touching coral may open the way for disease. Some of our actions can cause great damage—forethought and care can preserve and protect.

Wildlife Viewing

Motorists and bicyclists can explore the Turner River Road and the Loop Road for wildlife, including alligators, birds, and deer. Check at the Visitor Center for the condition of the Loop Road.

Hiking

The preserve includes 31 miles of the Florida Trail, a national scenic trail. Hikers should be prepared for wet areas from ankle to knee deep but great birding abounds! A short nature trail, Tree Snail Hammock, is located across from the education center on the Loop road. Other opportunities exist for adventurous souls with orienteering skills. Check at the visitor center for suggestions.

Camping

There are six free primitive campgrounds located along the Tamiami Trail and Loop Road and one at Bear Island. Campgrounds on Loop Road are not suitable for large R.V.'s. There is a privately owned full-service campground in Ochopee. Contact the preserve for details on backcountry camping.

Fishing/Canoeing

Anglers can pursue freshwater fish in the canals along the Tamiami Trail, the Turner River Road, and throughout the preserve. Licenses and regulations are available in Everglades City. Turner River and Halfway Creek, located near Hwy. 41, can be canoed southward to Chokoloskee Bay. Check at the Visitor Center for details about this and other canoe and kayak trips.

Off Road Vehicles (O.R.V.'s)

Big Cypress is the only south Florida national park area where O.R.V.'s, including airboats, are allowed. Contact the preserve at (941) 695-4111 for regulations and permitting information.

Bicycling

Trails suitable for mountain bicycles can be found in the northern portion of the preserve. Check at the Visitor Center for details.

Ranger-conducted activities

Check the Visitor Center announcement board for dates and times of ranger-guided programs.

Convoy Point Visitor Center

From the north: 7 miles east of Florida Turnpike Exit #2 (Campbell Dr.). From north or south: 9 miles east of U.S. 1 on S.W. 328th St. (North Canal Drive). See the park's new visitor center with exhibits, videos, and information. Publications sales. Open daily.

Fishing/Boating/Canoeing/Kayaking

Anglers and boaters can launch their own boats at the Homestead Bayfront Park boat ramp next to the Visitor Center to venture into Biscayne Bay and to explore offshore coral reef. Stop at the Visitor Center for regulations and to purchase nautical charts. A \$15 overnight docking fee is charged at Boca Chita and Elliot Key harbors. Canoeists can explore the mangrove shoreline along the mainland. Canoes are rented by the park concessioner.

Boat Excursions

The park concessioner provides snorkeling, SCUBA, and glass bottom boat tours of the park. Reservations required. Call (305) 230-1100 for schedule and reservations. Also see page 7.

Camping

Primitive campgrounds, accessible only by boat, are located on Boca Chita and Elliott Keys. All supplies must be brought in and all trash must be packed out. Prepare for insects! The park's concessioner provides occasional transportation to the islands for campers—call (305) 230-1100.

Experiencing Dry Tortugas National Park

First established as Fort Jefferson National Monument in 1935, it was rededicated and renamed Dry Tortugas National Park on October 25, 1992. Designation as a national park increased the protection of the marine resources of this one hundred square mile area.

Lying at the extreme western end of the Florida Keys, 68 miles west of Key West, are seven sand isles called the Dry Tortugas, dominated by the massive brick fortress of Fort Jefferson.

The Tortugas were first discovered by Ponce de Leon in 1513. Abundant sea turtles or "tortugas" provisioned his ships with fresh meat, but there was no fresh water—the Tortugas were dry.

U.S. military attention was drawn to the keys in the early 1800's due to their strategic location. Plans were made for a massive fortress and construction began in 1846, but the fort was never completed. The invention of the rifled cannon made it obsolete.

As the military value of Fort Jefferson waned, its pristine reefs, abundant sea life, and impressive numbers of birds grew in value. In 1935 President Franklin Roosevelt set aside Fort Jefferson and the surrounding waters as a national monument.

Accessible only by boat or seaplane—contact the park for a list of private carriers. No water, food, fuel, supplies, or accommodations are available at the park.

Visitor Center

Information, exhibits, an orientation video, and publications sales available. The Visitor Center is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Touring Fort Jefferson

Take a self-guiding walking tour of America's largest 19th century coastal fort. Follow the signs with a civil war soldier on them.

Ranger-conducted activities

Check the VC for dates and times of ranger-guided programs.

Camping

Camping is available for \$3 per person; all supplies, including fresh water, must be brought in. Parties of more than ten must make reservations by writing to the park.

Fishing

Sport fishing is permitted. Lobstering and spear fishing are prohibited in the park. Florida state fishing laws and regulations also apply. Florida fishing license required. Fishing licenses are available in Key West.

Boating

Private boaters can visit the park. Nautical charts are sold at the park's Visitor Center and in Key West. Information is obtainable from the Key West U.S. Coast Guard Station, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Charter Boat Association. Boaters should be aware of the possibility of extremely rough seas. Check with a ranger for rules on docking and mooring.

Snorkeling

Patches of healthy coral reef, some easily accessible from shore and in shallow water, are snorkeling havens. Do not disturb coral or shells; all coral, living and dead, is protected from collection. Shipwrecks and all historic artifacts in the park are protected by law.

Bird Watching

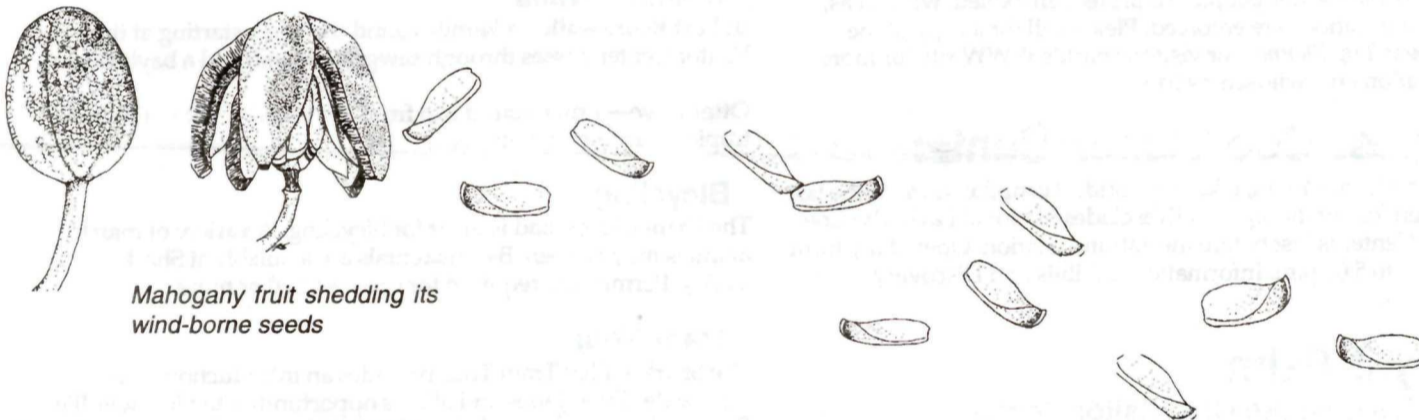
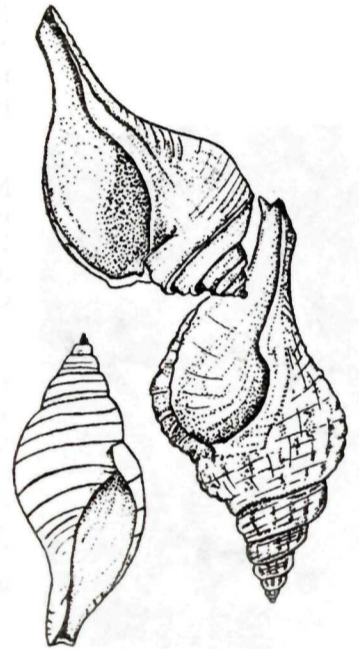
The Dry Tortugas are renowned for spring bird migrations and tropical bird species. Contact the park for a bird checklist and information.

Dry Tortugas National Park

Established in 1935 as Fort Jefferson National Monument
Rededicated in 1992 as Dry Tortugas National Park
64,700 acres

P.O. Box 6208
Key West, FL 33041
(305) 242-7700

<http://www.nps.gov/drto>



Mahogany fruit shedding its wind-borne seeds

Subtropical Trees



Photo by Darryl Maleika

Much of south Florida's vegetation is fruiting during the summer. Poisonwood trees, related to poison ivy and containing the same toxin (see photo at left), are heavy with ripe orange fruit by late summer. White-crowned Pigeons, unique in the U.S. to south Florida, appear in large flocks to gulp the fruit. As with many local tropical trees, poisonwood depends on birds to distribute its seeds via their digestive systems.

Summer is also hurricane season. While June through November is the official hurricane season, most hurricanes strike from late August through October. Many plants time their reproductive cycle around this period. Red Mangrove seedlings, resembling green cigars, remain attached to their parent trees until August and September, when most fall off and into the water. Some wash onto muddy shallows where they take root. Hurricane winds and sea currents can carry mangrove seedlings well beyond this tree's south Florida range, as far away as Maryland and beyond.

Another tree dependent upon wind to distribute its seeds is the West Indies Mahogany. Many of the trees growing in parking areas around south Florida National Park visitor centers are mahoganies. Through winter, they are easily recognized by their baseball-sized, gray-brown, rock-hard fruit. During spring and summer, the fruit split open and dozens of winged seeds are released. Powerful winds can carry them for miles.

Some trees emerge from dormancy during summer. Most south Florida trees are tropical and possess leaves nearly year-round, but a few temperate species are deciduous. Cypress, leafless and appearing dead in winter, radiate with green, feathery foliage through the wet season.

Contact with poisonwood can lead to a persistent rash that many consider worse than poison ivy. Learn to recognize this poison ivy relative before venturing off-trail!

Experiencing Everglades National Park

Everglades National Park

Established in 1947
1,507,850 acres.

Everglades National Park
40001 State Road 9336
Homestead, FL 33034-6733
(305) 242-7700

<http://www.nps.gov/ever>



South Florida's national park areas protect over a dozen threatened and endangered species as well as hundreds of subtropical plants and animals found nowhere in the United States but south Florida.

Everglades National Park is in many ways defined by water. A freshwater river a few inches to a few feet deep and 50 miles wide creeps seaward through the park on a riverbed that slopes ever so gradually. Along its long course, the river drops 15 feet, finally emptying into Florida Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. Where fresh and salt water mix in coastal areas, mangrove forest dominates.

In General

Ranger-conducted activities

Programs offered on a regular basis. Check at any visitor center for a list of current activities.

Fishing/Boating

The mangrove estuary, Gulf of Mexico, and Florida Bay provide opportunities to explore by boat and to fish. Obtain fishing/boating regulations at the Flamingo Visitor Center, Flamingo Marina, and Gulf Coast Visitor Center. Boat ramps are located at Flamingo, the Florida Keys, and Everglades City/Chokoloskee. A boat launch fee (good for 7 days) is charged when entering the park: \$5 for motorboats, \$3 for non-motorized craft. An annual pass (\$60) is also available.

Camping

National Park Service campgrounds (fees charged, first come, first served or reserve by calling (800) 365-CAMP) are located at Long Pine Key, Flamingo, and Chekika. For information about private campgrounds in Everglades City contact their Welcome Center at (941) 695-3941. Be prepared for insects at any time!

Wilderness Camping

Most sites in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness are accessible only by boat or canoe. Wilderness permits are required for overnight camping. From mid-November to mid-April a fee is charged for wilderness permits: \$10 for parties of 1 to 6, \$20 for 7-12, and \$30 for 13+ people. To protect unspoiled, wild areas, special regulations are enforced. Please call for a copy of the *Wilderness Trip Planner*, or visit the park's WWW site for more information on a wilderness trip.

Ernest Coe Visitor Center

If coming from Miami, take the Florida Turnpike south to the last exit, then follow the signs to Everglades National Park. The Coe Visitor Center is just before the entrance station. Open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Information, exhibits and Discovery Bookstore.

Royal Palm

4 miles past the Coe Visitor Center

Royal Palm Visitor Center

Open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Information and Bookstore. The well-known Charles Harper gator hole exhibit is next door.

Anhinga Trail

This ½-mile loop trail offers one of the best opportunities to view wildlife, including alligators and birds, up close.

Gumbo Limbo Trail

½-mile loop. The trail winds through a once-dense tropical hardwood hammock reshaped by Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

Along the Main Park Road

A 38 mile drive between the Coe Visitor Center and Flamingo

Walking Trails

Experience a diversity of Everglades environments by walking several short, wheelchair accessible trails leaving from parking areas along the Main Park Road.

Pinelands Trail—½-mile loop. Explore a subtropical pine forest maintained by fire. The pine rocklands are the most diverse habitat in south Florida.

Pa-hay-okee Overlook—a ¼-mile boardwalk leads to an observation tower offering a view of the vast Everglades from horizon to horizon.

Mahogany Hammock—½-mile loop. A boardwalk crosses the 'glades and enters a beautiful subtropical tree island with massive mahogany trees.

West Lake Trail—½-mile loop. This boardwalk takes you deep into mangrove forest. These salt-tolerant trees rise from the shallow water on prop roots.

Flamingo

38 miles past the Coe Visitor Center

Flamingo Visitor Center

Exhibits and information are located in the lobby. Florida Bay Museum open daily from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Wildlife Viewing

During a falling tide, birds congregate on the Florida Bay mudflats visible from the Visitor Center Breezeway. Alligators and even endangered crocodiles bask around the Flamingo Marina boat basins. The viewing platform at nearby Eco Pond provides good sightings of the pond's wild residents.

Canoeing and Kayaking

Information and a map of local canoe trails are posted in the Flamingo Visitor Center lobby. Rentals are available at the Flamingo Marina.

Boat Tours

Narrated boat excursions into the mangrove swamp and Florida Bay depart daily from the Flamingo Marina. Schedules, tickets, and additional information are available at the Flamingo Marina or by calling (941) 695-3101.

Shark Valley

25 miles west of the Florida Turnpike exit for S.W. 8th Street.

Shark Valley Visitor Center

The Shark Valley Visitor Center is open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. Information, Bookstore.

Walking Trails

Bobcat Boardwalk—a ¼-mile round trip walk starting at the Visitor Center passes through sawgrass marsh and a bayhead.

Otter Cave—1 mile round trip from the Visitor Center. Enters a tropical hardwood hammock.

Bicycling

The 15 mile loop road is great for bicycling. A variety of marsh animals may be seen. Bicycle rentals are available at Shark Valley. Permits are required for groups of 10 or more.

Tram Tour

The Shark Valley Tram Tour provides an introduction to the freshwater Everglades and allows opportunities to view wildlife. Reservations can be made by calling (305) 221-8455.

Gulf Coast

5 miles south of the Tamiami Trail on Highway 29, just south of Everglades City

Gulf Coast Visitor Center

The Visitor Center is open daily from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Boat Tours

Daily boat tours into the mangrove estuary of the Ten Thousand Islands offer views of a unique environment and its wildlife. Schedules, tickets, and information available in boat tour gift shop or by calling (941) 695-2591 or (800)445-7724 (Florida only).

Canoeing and Kayaking

From the Visitor Center, paddlers can venture into the beautiful Ten Thousand Islands and view birds, dolphins, manatees, and other wildlife. Canoes can be rented from the boat tour gift shop and several locations in Everglades City.

Chekika

6 miles west of Krome Ave./SW 177th Ave. (Route 997) on SW 168th St. (Richmond Dr.)

Open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In addition to the campground, there are nature trails and a picnic area.

Accessibility

Most major trails in the park are accessible, and assistance is provided for access to boat and tram tours. Visitor centers have additional information.

Concession Services in the Parks



Everglades Flamingo

38 Miles southwest of Main Park Entrance.

Authorized concessioner: AMFAC Parks & Resorts, Flamingo, FL 33034. Phone: 1-800-600-3941 or (941) 695-3101.

Lodging/Dining

The Flamingo Lodge rents motel rooms and housekeeping cottages. Call (800) 600-3813 for reservations. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner served in the Flamingo Restaurant. Drinks and light fare available in the ground level lounge.

Fuel, Groceries, Supplies, and Gifts

Gasoline, propane, a limited selection of groceries, camping and marine supplies, and a limited selection of gifts available at the marina store.

Boat Tours, Boat/Canoe/Bicycle Rentals

Daily tours into Florida Bay and the mangrove estuary. Call ahead for reservations. Houseboats, skiffs, canoes, and bicycles rented, charter fishing and sight-seeing boat trips available at the Marina. Reservations recommended.

Gulf Coast

40 miles southeast of Naples, south of Everglades City.

Authorized concessioner: Everglades National Park Boat Tours, P.O. Box 119, Everglades City, FL 34139. Phone: 1-800-445-7724 (Florida only) and (941) 695-2591.

Boat Tours/Canoe Rentals

Daily boat tours to the Ten Thousand Islands region. Canoe rentals available on the lower level of the Visitor Center.

Food and Gifts

Gifts and snacks on the lower level of the Visitor Center.

Shark Valley

35 miles west of downtown Miami.

Authorized concessioner: Shark Valley Tram Tours, P.O. Box 1729, Tamiami Station, Miami, FL 33144-1729. Phone: (305) 221-8455.

Tram Tours and Bicycle Rentals

Two-hour guided tram tours run throughout the day. Call (305) 221-8455 for information and reservations. Bicycle rentals also available at the tram tour ticket booth.

Biscayne Convoy Point

Nine miles east of Homestead.

Authorized concessioner: Biscayne National Underwater Park, Inc. P.O. Box 1270, Homestead, FL 33030. Phone: (305) 230-1100.

Glass Bottom Boat Tours

Three hour glass bottom boat tours of the park depart at 10 a.m. Call (305) 230-1100 for information and reservations.

Snorkeling/SCUBA Trips

Four hour snorkel trips depart daily at 1:30 p.m. SCUBA trips are scheduled every morning (reservations required). Call (305) 230-1100 for information, reservations and to confirm schedules.

Canoe Rentals

Canoes rented for trips to explore the mangrove shoreline.

Dry Tortugas

68 miles west of Key West

Charter Boat/Air Taxi

The National Park Service authorizes charter boats and air taxis to serve the park from Miami, Ft. Myers, Marco, Naples, and Key West. A list of authorized carriers is available upon request; call (305) 242-7700 or Visit the park's site on the world wide web at: <http://www.nps.gov/drto> for more information.



Try the South Florida sampler with these books and videos offered by Florida National Parks and Monuments Association

Florida National Parks and Monuments Association (FNPMA) is a National Park Service Cooperating Association dedicated to increasing public understanding of the natural and historic values of south Florida's National Parks. A wide variety of educational books, videos, and related park theme items may be purchased at park visitor center bookstores or by mail. Proceeds from sales support educational programs in south Florida National Parks. Visit FNPMA's **Natural History Mail Order Bookshelf** website at: <http://www.nps.gov/ever/fnpma.htm> Phone and Fax orders accepted with Visa, MasterCard, or Discover.

Books

Biscayne—The Story Behind the Scenery by L. W. Landrum... Explore the mainland, shoreline, and underwater worlds of the national park containing the northernmost coral reefs in the continental U.S. Full-color, 64 pp., paper. \$7.95

Everglades National Park & the Nearby Florida Keys by H. Zim. . . Comprehensive pocket guide to identify plant & animal life most commonly seen. Paper. \$4.95

Everglades—River of Grass by Marjory Stoneman Douglas. . . A Florida classic! Comprehensive study of the unique Florida Everglades. Full of human history and commentary on the present and threatened future of the Everglades. Paper \$6.95; Hardbound \$18.95

Everglades—The Park Story by William B. Robertson. . . Let an Everglades wildlife biologist introduce you to the flora, fauna, and history of the park in this marvelous, reader-friendly narrative. Full-color, paper. 50th Anniversary Commemorative Issue: \$6.95

Everglades - The Story Behind the Scenery by J. de Golia... An interesting review of the Everglades. Over 100 photographs of Everglades scenes and wildlife. Full-color, 64 pp., paper. \$7.95

Everglades Wildguide by J. C. George... Official National Park Service handbook detailing the plants and animals of the Everglades subtropical kingdom. Includes checklists and glossaries. 103 pp., paper. \$7.95

Big Cypress Swamp and the Ten Thousand Islands by J. Ripple... Celebrates one of North America's unsung wild places and also conveys urgent preservation message. Full-color, 131 pp., hardbound. \$16.95

Videos

Fort Jefferson—Gibraltar of the Gulf... NPS film. . . Discover the military history of Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas Islands. 11 min., VHS. \$11.95

Rich Kern Nature Series

Alligators 30 Min., NTSC, English PAL, German PAL \$24.95
Birds of the Everglades 30 Min., NTSC, English PAL. \$24.95
Everglades 40 min., NTSC, English PAL, German PAL. \$24.95
Hidden Worlds of Big Cypress Swamp 45 min., VHS, English PAL & German PAL. \$24.95
Wonders of Biscayne National Park and Florida Keys 45 min., NTSC, English PAL, German PAL \$24.95

Florida National Parks and Monuments Association

10 Parachute Key #51
 Homestead, FL 33034-6735
 (305) 247-1216
 (305) 247-1225 FAX

<http://www.nps.gov/ever/fnpma.htm>

Planning for South Florida's Future

The Central and Southern Florida Project

South Florida's existing water-management system — the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project — was designed to serve 2 million people, but more than 6 million people now live in south Florida. The population is expected to reach 12 to 15 million by 2050. This explosive growth has strained the system's ability to perform its intended functions. The future will stretch it past its limits — unless something is done.

The C&SF Project, while providing flood protection and water supply, has significantly altered the Everglades and the rest of south Florida's ecosystem. One result of this alteration is that billions of gallons of water that flow through the project's canal system are wasted.

Historically, the rain that fell on south Florida was stored in the system — on and above the ground. Today, the C&SF project quickly drains rainfall off the land. Similarly, during dry periods water is diverted to meet other water supply needs. The resulting ecological problems are complex. In simple terms, however, the Everglades is not receiving the proper quantity or quality of water at the right place or the right time. Too much or too little water is often sent to Everglades marshes, coastal estuaries, and Biscayne and Florida bays.

Without the Restudy, the future of south Florida is in

doubt. It is anticipated that the health of the Everglades, the coastal estuaries and bays, and Lake Okeechobee will continue to decline, an increasing number of south Florida's plant and animal species would face extinction, the quality of inland and coastal waters would further deteriorate, severe water shortages for urban and agricultural users would occur more frequently, the current level of flood protection could be jeopardized, and the natural system will increasingly be impaired by artificial high or low water.

The Restudy's recommended plan is intended to be a comprehensive plan that covers the entire region and the range of water problems. The plan is intended to focus on

recovering the major characteristics that defined the historic Everglades, the "River of Grass." It contains projects that would increase the amount of fresh water available not just for the natural system but for *all* water users. The final plan may result in a more livable south Florida for both people and wildlife, including the recovery of a healthy, sustainable Everglades.

Implementing the final comprehensive plan will take many years. In the interim, it is important to remember these key points about the Restudy:

- The Everglades and south Florida have water problems — right now.
- These problems will only worsen over time.
- Consideration must be given to all future competing users of water: the Everglades and other natural areas, cities, and agricultural users.
- Because of the large size of the study area, the comprehensive plan is "conceptual" in nature; further technical studies and designs come next. Many opportunities exist for future public input.
- The plan is key to the restoration of the whole Everglades ecosystem and continued economic prosperity throughout Florida, both of which are part of our children's legacy.

As concerned citizens we need to take this opportunity to get involved, learn the facts, and form our own opinions about this issue. South Florida is home to the largest ecosystem restoration project ever attempted. The Restudy provides an opportunity to take a broad, even-handed look at the big picture, which includes humans as an integral part of natural systems.

If you would like to know more about the Restudy, please visit the Restudy web site at www.restudy.org or call toll free: (877)-RESTUDY.

—Nanciann Regalado, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

On October 13, 1998, the Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District released a draft comprehensive plan for improving Florida's economic and environmental health. This plan, developed as a result of an effort known as the Restudy, is an unprecedented beginning in defining a 20-year roadmap for improving the Everglades ecosystem and ensuring that south Florida's urban and agricultural water users have adequate supplies of fresh water in the future. It will be revised through public comment and subject to state and congressional approval, as well as significant funding requirements.

A Bridge to the 19th Century (continued from page 1)

the south Florida peninsula. The water of the Everglades was captured to serve the human needs of flood control, irrigation, and drinking water.

In Taylor Slough, most of the water flow comes from local rain. Historically, summer storms raised the water table in the "Rocky Glades" southwest of Miami, beginning a broad shallow river that flowed southward to Florida Bay. But this, too, has been blocked and diverted at its source. In the 1960s, new dikes and canals were built along the border of Everglades National Park to provide flood control for local homes and farms. The water table in the Rocky Glades dropped, and its grasslands were flooded for much shorter periods during the year. Wetland fish and birds lost the seasonal pools they needed to survive. Exotic trees like Brazilian Pepper spread across the drier ground. Too little fresh water flowed into Florida Bay, and its plants and animals began to die.

Bit by bit, over the last half century, Taylor Slough has dried up under the hot Florida sun.

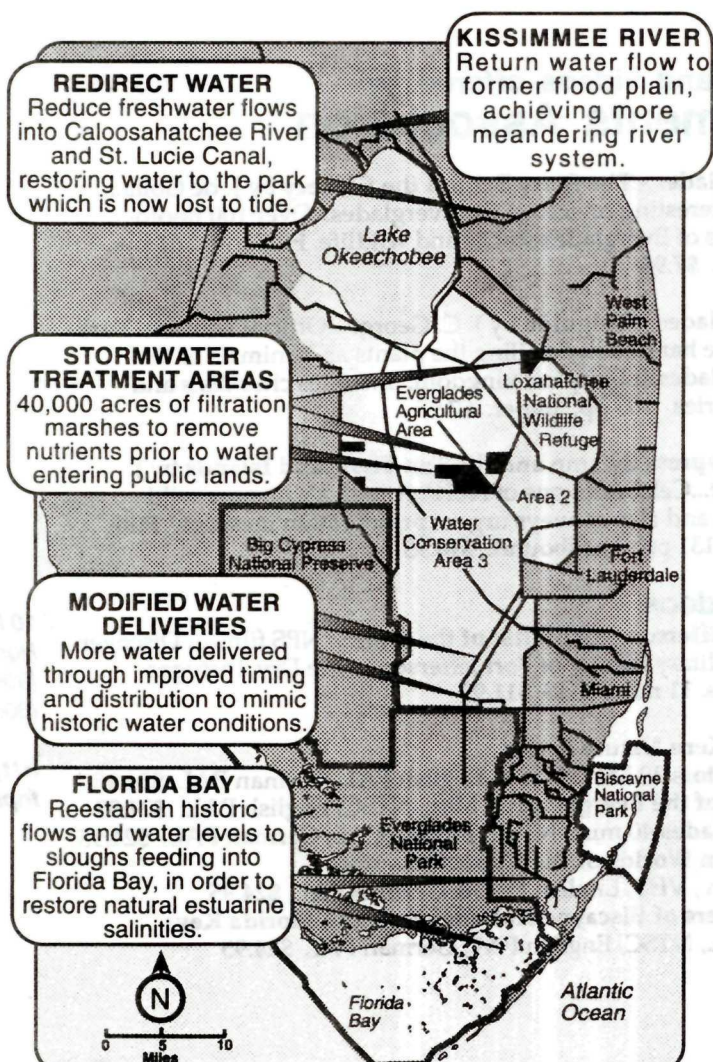
Today, an ambitious program is underway to restore the headwaters of Taylor Slough. The Army Corps of Engineers plans to build a series of pumps and levees to divert water back into the Rocky Glades. More water will flow through the River of Grass, and according to a more natural seasonal cycle. Wildlife will be more abundant. Florida Bay will receive more of the fresh water it needs, and its fragile ecosystem will be healthier.

All of this means that more water will flow under the park road through Taylor Slough. The small bridge and culverts we built in 1958 are not adequate for the restored flow of water we expect. Our new construction should fix this problem. The construction may cause some inconvenience for park visitors in the short term, but in the long term, it is part of ongoing efforts to restore the Everglades ecosystem.

The new roadway across Taylor Slough will be an example of what is known as "sustainable design." The phrase implies that we are the ones doing the sustaining. To some extent this is true. But in a larger sense, it is the Everglades that sustains all of life in south Florida. It is the essential source of our fresh water, a home for our wildlife, and the wellspring of our weather. The Taylor Slough bridge is simply a small part of our efforts to restore that original, life-giving design.

—Kevin L. Bacher

Planned projects to benefit the Everglades and South Florida



Introducing the Backcountry

While paddling into Florida Bay, the canoeists' efforts are reinforced by an east wind. They decide to put their paddles down for a while and let the wind do the work. As the boat drifts, the only sound is the lapping of water against its hull. The canoeists are lulled by this peaceful, yet strange, tropical setting.

Something appears nearby, above the surface. It is a head—with an ugly, but appealing face. The head is covered with brown scales and is large—about the size of a human's. The canoeists stare at its peculiar face momentarily; they wonder what fish would emerge to

look them straight in the eye. Its round black eyes blink. Then the head plops below the water. At that instant, the canoeists realize they were not exchanging glances with a fish at all, but with a sea turtle!

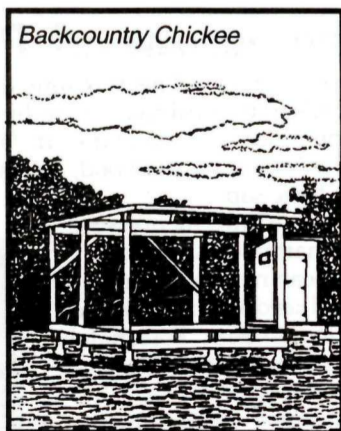
The backcountry of south Florida national parks is full of surprises. From the thrill of spotting unusual wildlife, to the mystery of paddling a mangrove-lined creek, to the pleasure of watching the sunset from a remote beach or backcountry chickee, backcountry experiences are usually rewarding.

Selected Backcountry Trails and Campsites

Selected Trails

The following is a sampler of the many trails available for backcountry exploration. Contact park visitor centers for more complete listings of backcountry opportunities.

1. Big Cypress National Preserve—The Florida National Scenic Trail runs north-south through the preserve for 31 miles. The trail passes through a variety of freshwater environments. Occasionally flooded in winter.
2. The Wilderness Waterway—a 99-mile canoe and powerboat route between Everglades City and Flamingo in Everglades National Park. The trail passes through America's most extensive mangrove forest.
3. The Turner River Canoe Trail (8 miles)—begins along the Tamiami Trail and ends in Chokoloskee Bay near Everglades City. The scenery changes from pine and freshwater cypress forests to tropical saltwater mangrove swamp.
4. Chokoloskee Bay—from the Gulf Coast Visitor Center, canoeists can paddle the Bay for an hour or all day. The miniature world of an oyster bar may be explored at low tide; dolphins and manatees may be viewed.
5. Florida Bay—a ten-mile, one-way, overnight trip by water from Flamingo to miles of pristine shell beach and stunning sunsets at Cape Sable. Day trips into Florida Bay (Snake Bight) may provide good birding opportunities.
6. Nine Mile Pond Canoe Trail—a five-mile loop to experience the freshwater marsh and to view such wildlife as alligators and wading birds.
7. Elliott Key (see map on back page)—7 miles east of the Convoy Point mainland Visitor Center in Biscayne National Park. Accessible only by boat. Camping is only allowed in the designated campground. For information regarding boat transportation to Elliott Key, contact the park concessioner at (305) 230-1100.



Backcountry Chickee

The types of backcountry campsites illustrate the diversity of natural and human history which can be experienced in the south Florida wilderness.

Chickees are elevated, covered, wooden platforms, usually constructed on open water, well away from mangrove trees. Miccosukee Indians describe a chickee as an open-air structure which allows wind to blow through for comfort on hot days and to keep insects away. Everglades backcountry chickees serve a similar purpose.

Beach sites exist along the Gulf Coast mainland and islands of Everglades National Park. Most of south Florida's natural beach is built up from the shells of multitudes of marine organisms. While some shells are fragmented, many can be discovered completely intact. Some beaches, such as Highland Beach and Cape Sable, serve as essential loggerhead sea turtle nesting sites.

Ground Sites are cleared areas in a variety of backcountry settings. Some, such as Willy Willy, Camp Lonesome, and Canepatch along the Wilderness Waterway, are old Indian mounds. Coastal Native Americans, who lived here well before the Seminoles, constructed mounds of shell or soil as dry dwelling sites amidst the mangroves. Others, such as the Lopez River campsite and the Watson Place, both south of Everglades City, were cleared by early settlers.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Wilderness permits are required for overnight backcountry camping in Everglades National Park. Permits are obtained in person at the Flamingo and Gulf Coast Visitor Centers.

A processing fee is charged for each backcountry permit issued:
 \$10 for groups of 1-6
 \$20 for groups of 7-12
 \$30 for groups >12

To protect unspoiled, wild areas, special regulations are enforced.

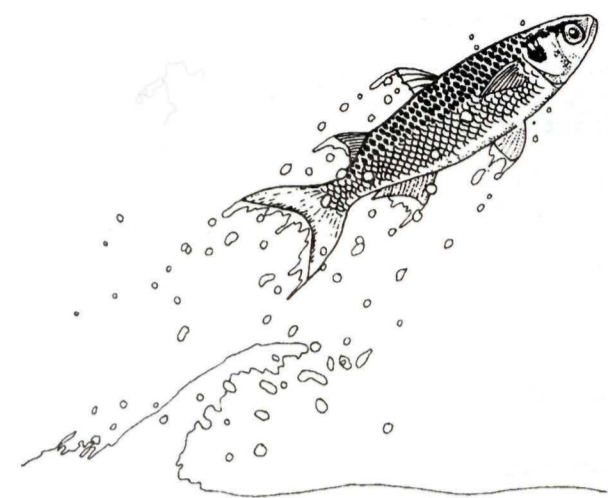
For information contact the park area you wish to visit. Phone numbers and addresses are listed on pages 2, 4-6. To obtain nautical charts and backcountry books, call FNPMA at (305) 247-1216.

For further reading:

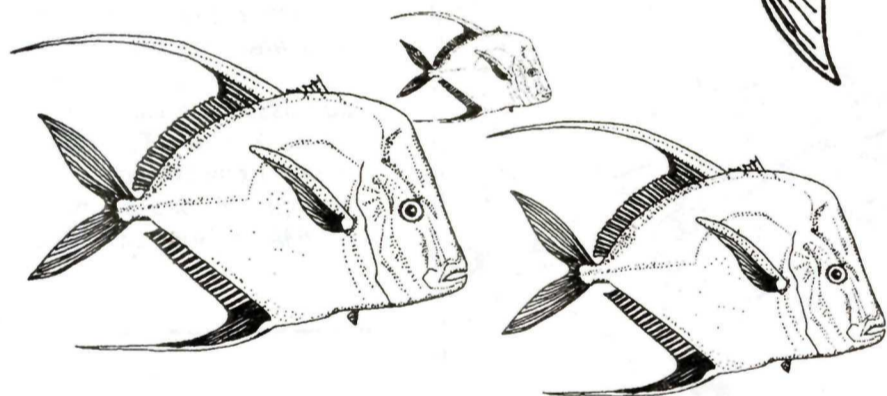
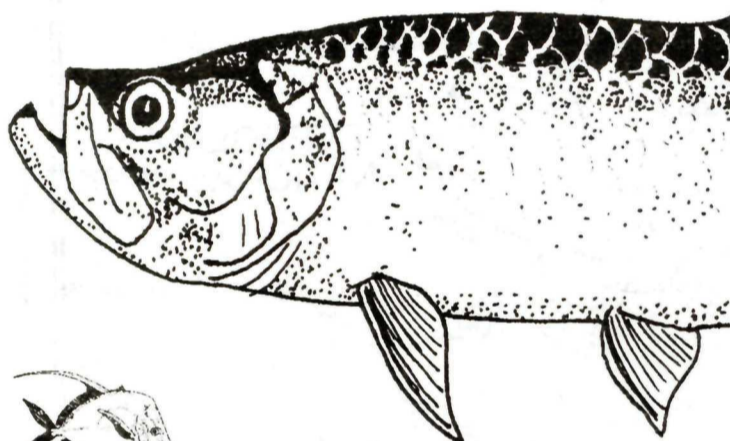
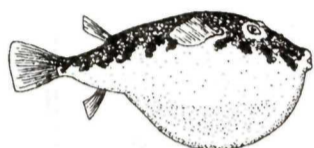
A Guide to the Wilderness Waterway of Everglades National Park, by William G. Truesdell, available from the Florida National Parks and Monuments Association



The Distinctive Natural History...



A leaping mullet provides just a glimpse of life found beneath south Florida's inshore waters. Seagrass beds serve as the foundation for an abundance of marine organisms.



Marine Meadows

A significant percentage of south Florida's national parks is underwater. Much of that area includes shallow inshore waters, such as Florida Bay, Chokoloskee Bay, Biscayne Bay, and the waters surrounding the Dry Tortugas.

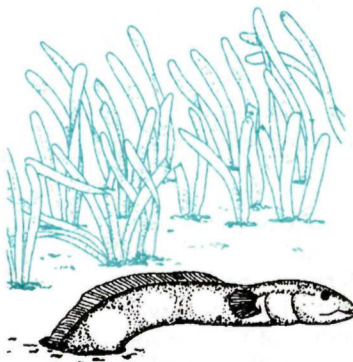
These waters support a great diversity and abundance of life. Several species of marine plants; dozens of invertebrates such as crabs, lobsters, snails, and clams; bottlenosed dolphins, sea turtles, over 200 varieties of fish, and many other creatures live in the region's warm inshore waters.

The foundation for all this life is vast meadows of marine grasses, most notably turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*), which carpet the bottom. They are not primitive algae like the seaweeds, but are more advanced flowering

plants. Turtle grass, for example, produces dainty, cream-colored, pink-spotted flowers, which develop into pea-sized fruit.

Marine meadows are important to inshore ecosystems in many ways. Some creatures, like green sea turtles, feed directly on seagrasses. Most animals, however, are more dependent on the dozens of species of algae which grow on sea grass blades. The algae are eaten by tiny marine organisms, which in turn are consumed by larger predators, which are then eaten by even larger predators. At the top of such a food chain are some truly impressive creatures, including sharks, tarpon, and crocodiles.

Pollution and human-caused salinity changes to south Florida's inshore waters can reduce the health of seagrass beds. Our efforts to preserve these waters will insure the survival of the diverse life that makes marine meadows so magnificent.



Tropical Feathers

South Florida's National Park areas serve as a birder's paradise. Year round, the parks are home to showy wading birds such as herons, egrets, storks, and spoonbills. In spring and fall, warblers, shorebirds, and other migrants pass through in droves. Additionally, several unique tropical birds make this environment their home. Some of the latter are described below:



Snail Kite

Alterations in natural deliveries of fresh water through the Everglades has reduced this bird's nesting success. It uses its specialized hooked upper mandible to extract aquatic apple snails from their shells. Look for Snail Kites in the Shark Valley area.

Sooty Tern

Thousands of Sooty Terns nest in Dry Tortugas National Park, forming the northernmost breeding colony for this bird. The presence of Sooty Terns gave protection to the Tortugas, which were initially established as a bird reservation in 1908.



Frigatebird

The Magnificent Frigatebird is to the Dry Tortugas what pigeons are to the city. These amazing birds soar over the island national park in great numbers. They chase other birds, such as gulls, to steal food from them, a behavior scientists call "kleptoparasitism".

Ani

Smooth-billed anis literally put all their eggs in one basket. Several females lay their eggs in a single large nest. Normally, egg incubation and care of the young is shared by all members of an ani group, but some mother anis will toss the eggs of other females from the nest!



White-crowned Pigeon

This attractive bird nests mainly in mangrove forests. It feeds on fruits of tropical trees, including mastic, strangler fig, pigeon plum, and sea grape. Its favorite food is the dull yellow fruit of poisonwood, a poison ivy relative with the same toxic sap.

Severe hunting pressure on Bahamian and other Caribbean nesting grounds has reduced White-crowned Pigeon numbers. Fortunately, recent conservation efforts in these areas and the establishment of National Park lands and other protected areas should insure their survival.

Look for White-crowned Pigeons in hardwood hammocks and mangrove swamps. They rarely venture to the ground and are most active at dawn and dusk.



....of South Florida's National Parks

Phenomenal Foliage

South Florida's environment—with its warm year-round temperatures and only two seasons (wet and dry)—is in many ways more like that of a Caribbean island than the rest of the United States. Because of this, hundreds of species of tropical plants and trees originating from tropical America, and found nowhere else in the U.S., thrive here. Below are a few examples:

Gumbo Limbo

Walk through a tropical hardwood hammock, such as Mahogany Hammock, and you're sure to find this tree with its red, peeling bark. In Latin American countries, Gumbo Limbo branches are planted into the ground to make attractive, hardy, fast-growing fenceposts.



Strangler Fig

White-crowned Pigeons and other birds eat this tree's small figs, and in this way disperse its seeds. A seed transported to the trunk or branch of another tree may develop into a full-grown Strangler Fig, which can eventually completely engulf its host tree.



Manchineel

The toxic sap of this tree can produce a painful, blistering reaction upon contact. Calusa Indians may have tipped their arrows with manchineel sap. Fortunately, this coastal hammock tree is uncommon; in fact it is listed by the state of Florida as a threatened species.



Black Mangrove

This coastal tree, noted for the pencil-like breathing tubes projecting from its root system, was once highly valued. Early settlers burned the wood in smudge pots placed in "losing rooms" at the entrances to their houses. The smoke served as a potent mosquito repellent.



The Florida Panther



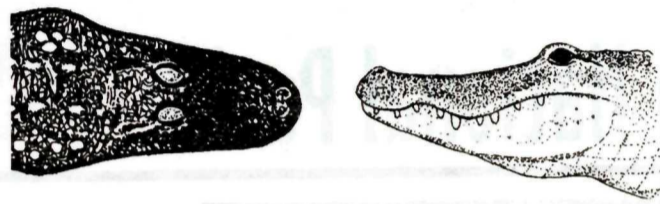
Many people who have lived in south Florida all their lives—people who have travelled its roadways, hiked its trails, and canoed its waters—have never seen Florida's official mammal, the Florida panther.

The Florida panther (*Felis concolor coryi*) is a subspecies of the cat known as cougar, puma, mountain lion, and catamount in other parts of its range, such as the western United States. Two typical characteristics seen in the majority of panthers are a whorl of hair along the center of the back and a kink at the end of the tail. The panther is tawny colored, nearly the same hue as one of its main

A L L I G A T O R

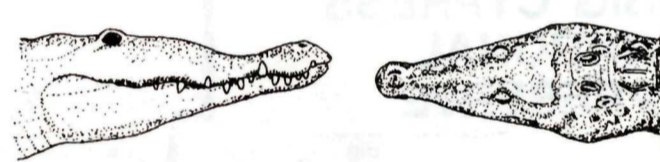
American Alligator *Alligator mississippiensis*

- Broad Snout
- Blackish coloration in adults
- Only teeth of the upper jaw visible when jaws are closed
- Range: Southeastern United States
- Nesting: Nest is a mound of vegetation, constructed by the female alligator in freshwater environments.



South Florida is the only place in the world where both alligators and crocodiles can be found together. National Park Service lands are valuable sanctuaries for these fabulous reptiles.

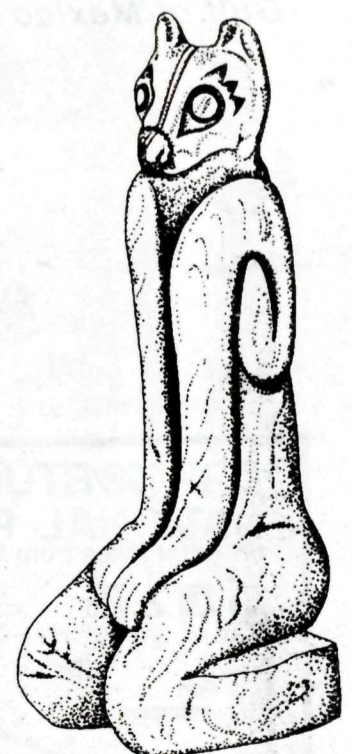
VS



American Crocodile *Crocodilus acutus*

- Narrow Snout
- Olive brown coloration
- Teeth of both jaws visible when jaws are closed
- Range: In the U.S. found only in the southern tip of Florida. Also the Caribbean, Central and South America. *The American Crocodile is an Endangered Species. Only a few hundred remain in the U.S.*
- Nesting: Lays eggs in a mud or sand nest in brackish or saltwater environments.

C R O C O D I L E



Calusa panther statuette

prey items, the white-tailed deer. Despite legends to the contrary, no black panthers have ever been documented.

Several subspecies of cougar once ranged throughout the U.S. Today, the only subspecies known to exist east of the Mississippi River is the Florida panther. The panther itself historically lived throughout the southeastern U.S., but now it is only known to occur in south Florida, primarily in the Big Cypress-Everglades area. With a population of 30-50 animals, the Florida panther, an endangered species, is one of the world's rarest mammals.

South Florida National Parks and Preserves
 40001 State Road 9336
 Homestead, Florida 33034-6733



To:

South Florida National Parks

