

Biscayne
National Park

Big Cypress
National Preserve



VISITOR GUIDE

**NATIONAL PARKS
AND PRESERVES
OF
SOUTH FLORIDA**

Dry Tortugas
National Park

Everglades
National Park

Volume 6 No. 1

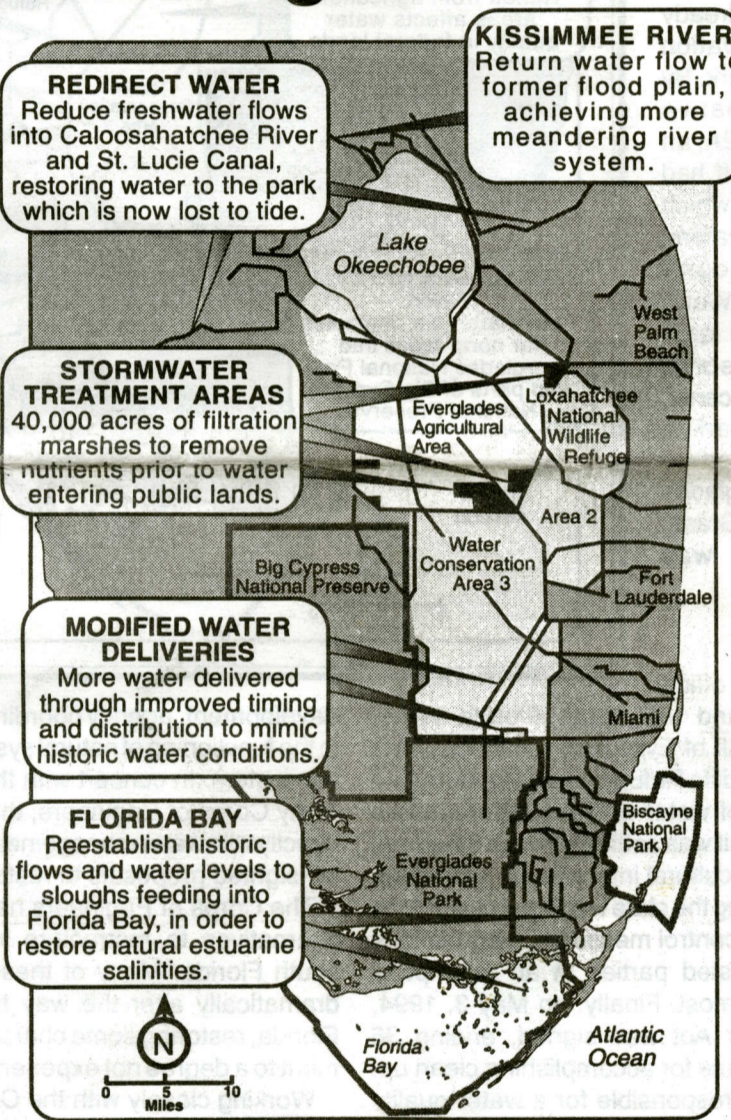
Winter 1994-95

Everglades: A Brighter Future

by Eve West and Peter Allen

It is difficult to imagine how vast the uninterrupted flow of water within the original Everglades once was. From its eastern boundary (nearly flanking the ocean in northern areas), water spanned south Florida's peninsula west to the Ten Thousand Islands. At its headwaters near present day Orlando, water flowed from lakes into the Kissimmee River, and travelled downstream into Lake Okeechobee. Beyond Lake Okeechobee, it traversed miles of sawgrass marshes, flowing over the yet undrawn boundaries of Everglades National Park and parts of Big Cypress National Preserve. Ultimately, freshwater mixed with saltwater where it entered the Gulf of Mexico, Biscayne Bay, and Florida Bay. Estimated at 10,700 square miles, the Everglades was an interconnected system where (figuratively speaking) a single drop of water began its journey in central Florida and ended it in the ocean.

Today this flow is still interconnected, but no longer uninterrupted. A drop of water



might end its journey in the ocean, or be drawn from a faucet. Today, canals and pumps control this droplet's travels. From Lake Okeechobee, it journeys through agricultural areas into water conservation areas. Here it is stored for agriculture, a growing population of people, and the national parks that border the suburbs of this population. Everglades National Park and parts of Big Cypress National Preserve lie downstream of this flow and represent the last leg of the journey. Consequently, the quality of freshwater within these areas depends a great deal on its previous travels.

An Alarming Trend

Water quality standards were established for Everglades National Park in the 1970's from water samples taken at inflow points along Tamiami Trail (Hwy 41). Here, water from Water Conservation Area 3 enters Shark River Slough, the major artery of water flowing through the park. Later analyses focused on (please turn to page 2)

In This Issue:

Introducing South Florida's National Parks, plus Commonly Asked Questions Pages 4 & 5.

Things to Do Pages 6 & 7.

Concession Services and Book/Video Sales Page 8

A Backcountry Introduction Page 9

Natural History Pages 10 & 11

Parks Map Page 12

Biscayne Bay: In the Nick of Time?

by Kelly Bulyis

If you talk to the old timers or the "natives", you will hear some intriguing tales about Biscayne Bay. There are stories of lobsters so large that they could climb out of a ten gallon bucket and pull another with it. One fellow even told of the time when he found commercial sponges the size of bean bag chairs. As time wears on, our memories deceive us and things begin to change.

The shoreline and waters of Biscayne Bay have been developed to suit the changing needs of people. In 1896, Hobart Smith did one of the first surveys of the Bay. During his



Life flourishes in the seagrass beds of Biscayne Bay.

study, he noted that "the water of [the] Bay is exceedingly clear. In no part can one fail to clearly distinguish objects on the bottom". Shortly thereafter, in the early part of the 1900's, the first dredging in the Bay occurred. Canals were later constructed to direct fresh water originally destined for the Everglades out into Biscayne Bay and causeways were erected. Eventually backfilling and bulkheading techniques were utilized. Mangrove swamps which play a crucial part in eventual land formation were lost to development.

As runoff from shoreline development and silt from

dredging increased, the overall water quality around those areas was reduced. If these practices continue for a long period of time, suspended material in the water column may reduce the amount of light that reaches the bottom grasses and an eventual die off may occur. Bottom grasses are essential to the food web and they provide oxygen for other marine life through photosynthesis. Mangroves and bottom grasses provide food and shelter to immature fish and crustaceans.

In 1956, a sewage treatment plant designed to serve Miami and surrounding areas was opened. Later studies indicated (please turn to page 3)

Everglades (from page 1):

trends showing changes to water quality. Phosphorous, present in organic soils and potentially applied as agricultural fertilizer, warranted special consideration as it causes the most change in the smallest concentrations. Tests conducted from 1977-1989 in Shark River and Taylor Sloughs showed significant increases in concentrations of phosphorus at park inflow points.

Isn't Nutrition Good?

As an "oligotrophic", or low-nutrient system, the community of plants and animals within Everglades is able to survive here partially because other things cannot.

Studies were conducted within Everglades National Park from 1983-1984 to determine the impacts of higher levels of phosphorus and nitrogen in a nutrient-poor system. When phosphorus was added, plant communities in one area changed from spike rushes (*Eleocharis*), bladderworts (*Utricularia*), and periphyton—a community of algae valued as food by small fish and invertebrates—to grasses (*Panicum*) and arrowhead (*Sagittaria*). Periphyton changes were most dramatic, resulting in an algal community less palatable and more tolerant of nutrient pollution.

Significant changes had already occurred in Water Conservation Areas (WCA's) north of the park. By 1986, 20,000 acres of native sawgrass marsh within WCA 2A, an area receiving agricultural runoff, had been replaced by cattails, which prosper in nutrient-enriched waters. In 1990, a two-day helicopter reconnaissance of the three Water Conservation Areas revealed large areas of cattails where sawgrass once dominated. At L-67 extension canal, a site of water inflow to the park, a visible strand of cattails bordered the edges, extending into Everglades National Park. The River of Grass, predominantly sawgrass, was undergoing dramatic change.

The Politics of Change

In 1988, the U.S. Attorney's office sued the state of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District on behalf of Everglades National Park and Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, charging them with failure to protect the quality of water entering federal areas from agricultural areas. The suit was settled through a Federal Consent Decree in 1991. Agricultural interests contested the settlement, however, presenting the state with legal challenges that prevented implementing control measures. Negotiations then ensued between interested parties in an attempt to develop a plan agreeable to most. Finally, on May 3, 1994, Florida's Everglades Forever Act was signed, ending 36 lawsuits, and providing a means for accomplishing clean up.

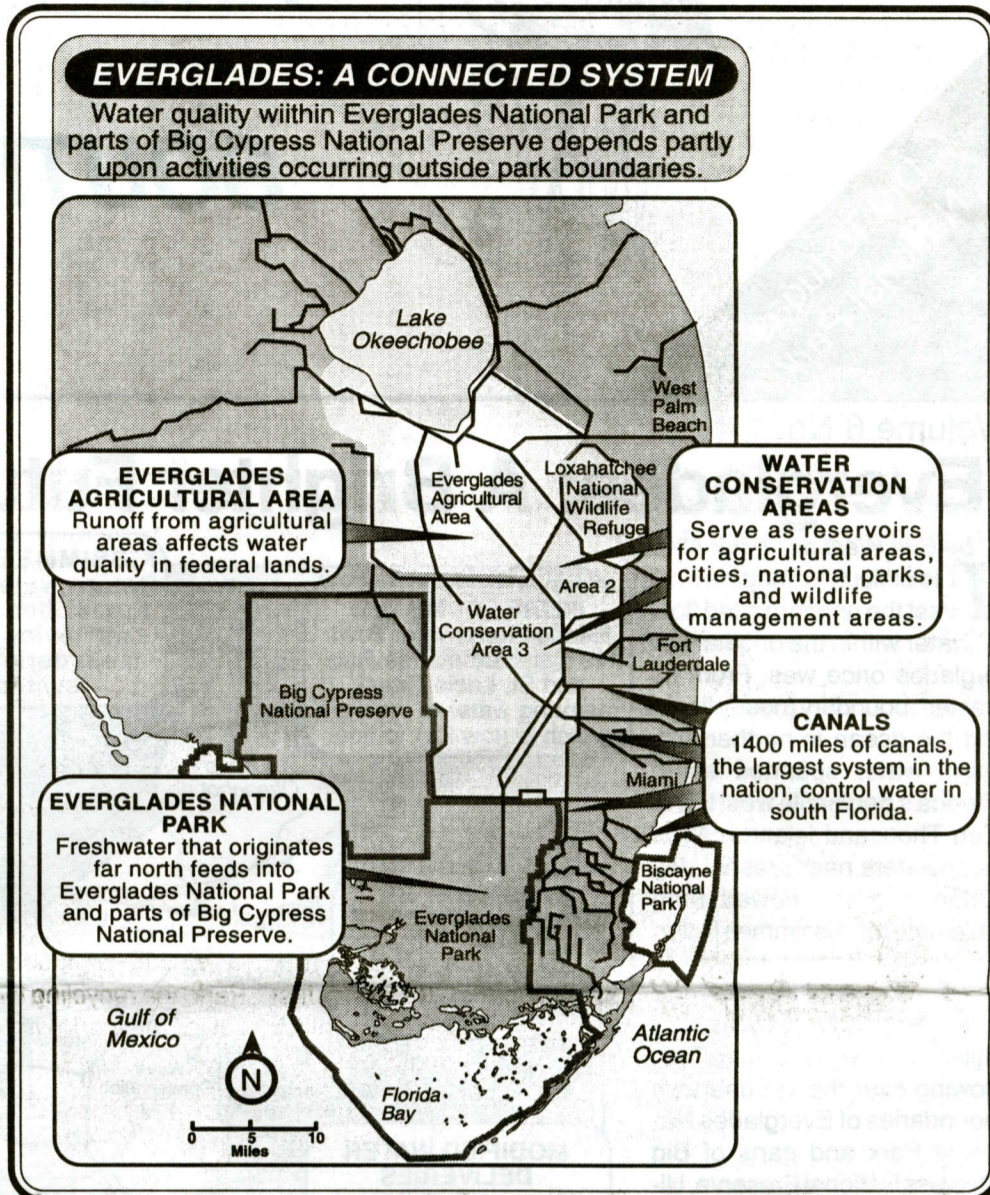
Under the Act, the state is responsible for a water quality cleanup and hydroperiod restoration plan that consists of a wetland treatment system, research and monitoring program, and regulatory program. Five Stormwater Treatment Areas (40,000 acres of filtration marshes designed to act as buffers to remove nutrients before they enter the public wetlands) are to be constructed by 2003. A final standard for allowable phosphorus levels will be established by scientific research. This final standard must then be met by 2006. The Act provides 10 parts per billion as a default standard if the Florida Department of Environmental Protection does not set a standard by 2003. The bill also specifies that in no case shall the phosphorus criterion allow waters in the WCA's, the Loxahatchee Refuge, and Everglades National Park to be altered so as to cause an imbalance in natural populations of aquatic wildlife or plants.

**A Hopeful Future:
Water Quality as Part of Ecosystem Solutions**

Improving water quality alone will not stop the biological decline of the Everglades. The vigor of the Everglades system is tied to the quantity, timing, and delivery of water through the wetlands of south Florida, as well as the quality of this water. An exciting new approach to resolving issues of regional water use is the evolving practice of ecosystem management. Through increasingly integrated efforts now underway at state, local and

federal levels, the entire Everglades system is moving toward wide-ranging improvements in ecological health.

A recently created Federal Task Force on South Florida Ecosystem Restoration is examining ways to restore the Everglades system. In Florida, this task force established an active working group comprised of eleven federal agencies. The National Park Service, as a member of this task force's working group, participates in the planning and implementation of broad ecosystem restoration measures throughout south Florida. The working group's first annual report was released in draft for public comment in August 1994. This 128 page report includes recommendations for achieving sustainable



development, agency coordination, and major improvements in the functioning of natural systems throughout the Everglades ecosystem. In concert with these recommendations, the US Army Corps of Engineers, the federal agency charged most directly with water management in south Florida, has developed far-sighted proposals to restore the Everglades.

The Corps of Engineers has outlined a range of proposed alternatives to restructure water management throughout south Florida. Many of these ambitious alternatives would dramatically alter the way that water flows through south Florida, restoring some characteristics of natural water movement to a degree not experienced in south Florida in decades.

Working closely with the Corps is the South Florida Water Management District, the state organization responsible for regional water control. The District has projects either initiated, ongoing, or proposed which will implement the Everglades Forever Act and bring about major improvements in water quality and flow. The State of Florida has produced a series of publications on ecosystem management, and is working closely with federal agencies to achieve the common goal of improvement of natural systems in south Florida. Recently created, the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida brings together regional civic leaders, government managers, environmental representatives, and business professionals to resolve issues of how to sustain south Florida's economy while improving the health of its natural communities. All the organizations mentioned above are collectively working to balance recovery of natural areas with south Florida's many other needs.

Through coordinated research, decision-making, and implementation of huge restoration measures, south Florida is moving rapidly toward an integration of water and land management among all levels of government. This grand experiment in large scale ecosystem collaboration is unprecedented in our nation. The very future of Florida, including our developed and wild areas, may depend upon the success of these efforts.

"This grand experiment in large scale ecosystem collaboration is unprecedented in our nation."

....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.

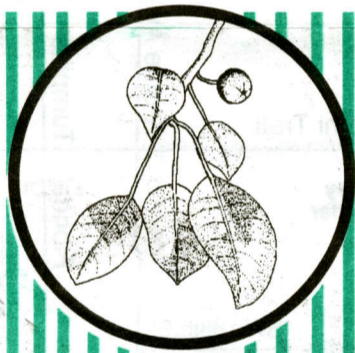


Strangler Fig

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

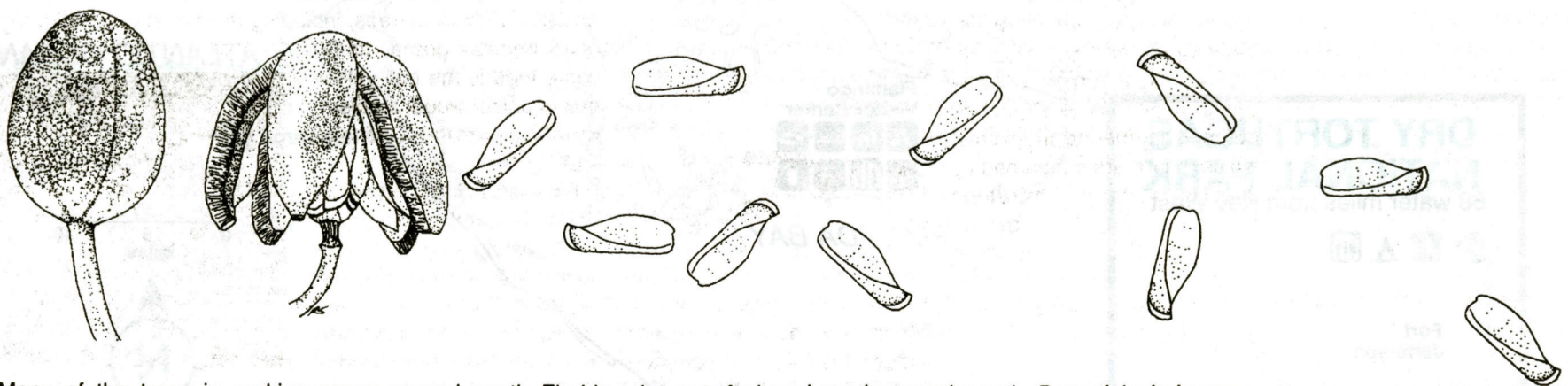
The toxic sap of this tree can produce a painful, blistering reaction upon contact. Calusa Indians may have tipped their arrows with manchineel sap. Fortunately, this coastal hammock tree is uncommon; in fact it is listed by the state of Florida as a threatened species.



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.

West Indies Mahogany

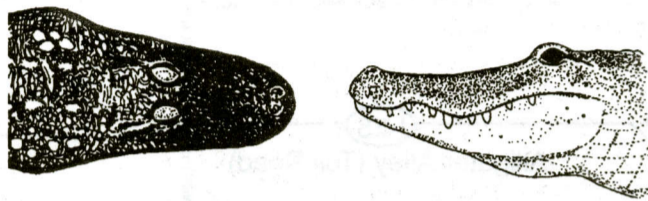


Many of the trees in parking areas around south Florida National Park visitor centers are West Indies mahoganies. They are easily recognized by their baseball-sized, gray-brown, rock-hard fruit. During spring and early summer, the fruit split open and

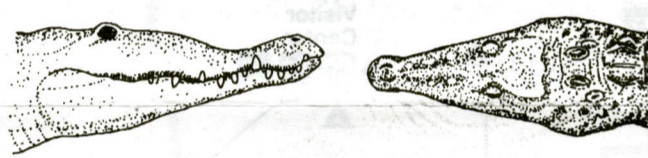
ALLIGATOR

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.



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.

CROCODILE

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.

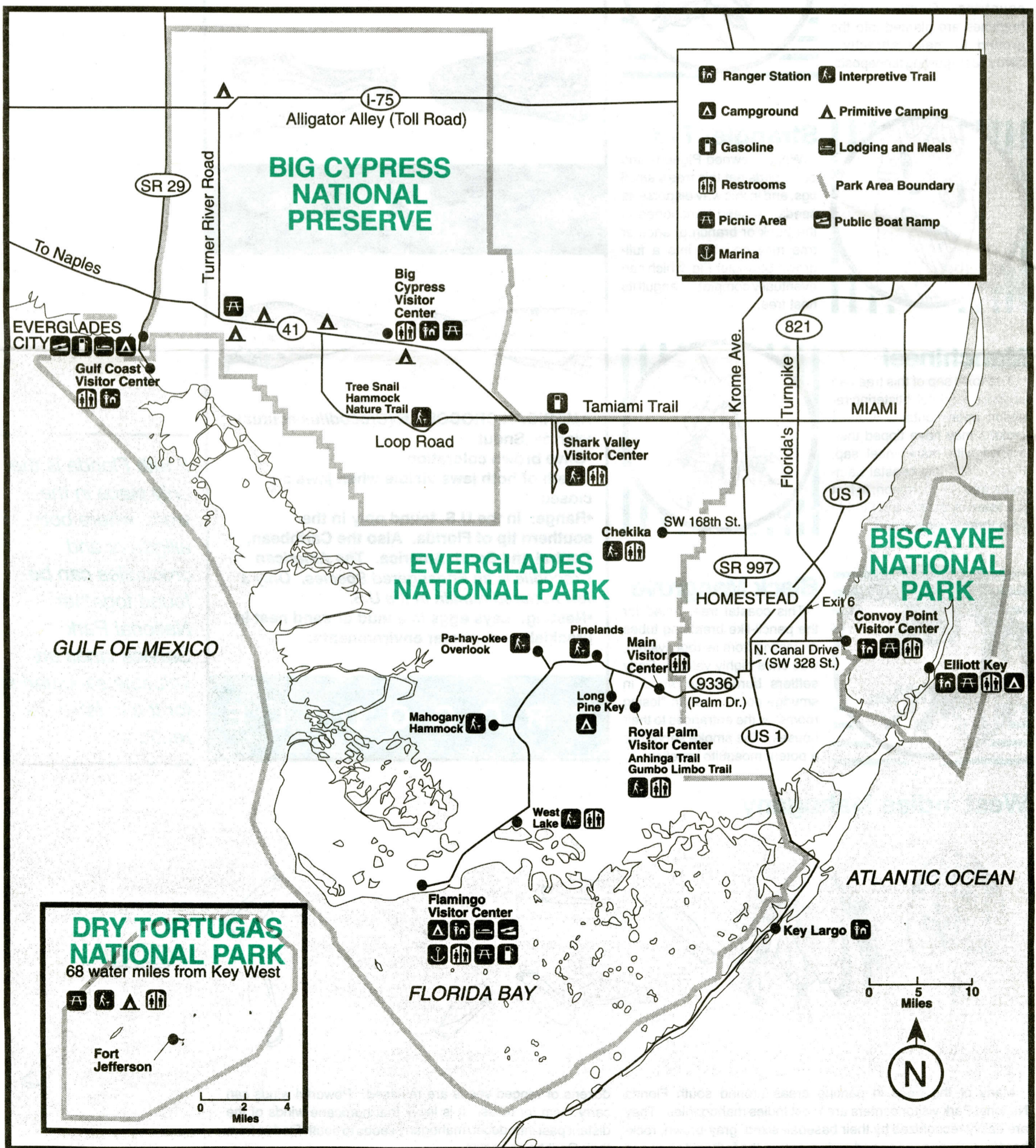
Everglades National Park

40001 State Road 9336
Homestead, Florida 33034-6733



To:

South Florida's National Parks



This publication is printed on recycled paper.

Biscayne (from page 1):

that raw sewage from the plant was being dumped directly into Biscayne Bay and the Miami River. Since then, sewage release standards have been upgraded and many release sites have been closed. Recent scientific data has suggested that high levels of coliform, bacteria that are found in mammal intestines, and excess amounts of nutrients are still being released into surrounding waters. Even though most coliform bacteria and other pathogens are killed quickly in salt water, excess nutrients may cause algal blooms. When this occurs, oxygen in the water is used by quickly reproducing algae as they die. Aquatic life suffers because of the resulting lack of oxygen.

The South Dade Solid Waste Disposal Facility was put into use in 1979. The 205 acre landfill, or "Mount Trashmore" as it is locally known, is located along the western border of Biscayne Bay. Built over a por-

tion of the Biscayne Aquifer that had experienced salt water intrusion, the landfill was constructed to exceed all local, state and federal standards that are designed to protect the surrounding area. Miles of underground pipes and liners have been laid under the newer parts of the landfill to contain harmful chemicals which come from decaying material.

Although these containment measures have been taken, scientists in Biscayne National Park still find abnormally high levels of ammonia in the Bay. This pollutant may be entering Bay waters via the older parts of the landfill where the underground piping system is only under the outer edges of the landfill instead of criss-crossing under it.

In June of 1994, the South Florida Water Management District updated the Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan (SWIM) for Biscayne Bay. Under this plan, funds are made

available to various organizations in a continuous effort to restore and strengthen the present state of the Bay. Most of the available funds have been used for public awareness campaigns and to address specific pollution problems that pose a threat to the Bay.

Recently, Dade County and other local organizations have used SWIM funds to plant and reseed mangroves and seagrass beds that have been lost as a result of shoreline construction and dredging. County codes and ordinances, as well as the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, regulate the amount of destruction allowed in a construction site when mangroves or seagrasses are involved. A permit is needed even if an individual wishes to trim a mangrove tree in his own yard.

SWIM funds have also been used to organize monitoring programs that help to identify problem areas within sewage

treatment facilities. Although these funds can not be used to pay for repairs to the facility's system, they can be used for clean up measures and state of the art water testing equipment. Since these resources have been made available to sewage treatment facilities, coliform counts have become noticeably lower at many testing sites in the Bay.

Through public awareness and mandatory laws, Dade County is reducing the amount of trash and garbage that goes into Mount Trashmore and other dumps in the county. During 1991 and 1992 alone, more than 29,000 tons of ferrous metal (the metal soup cans are composed of) and aluminum were recycled. Not only does recycling reduce the amount of refuse that goes into the landfills, it also eliminates the items that may release harmful compounds into the Bay and ground water as they decompose.

The people of Dade County

and Biscayne National Park play an important role in the future of the Bay. By participating in events such as "Baynanza", a local event that is held annually to celebrate the Bay and its resources, or by exposing our youth to educational programs such as "Drop By Drop", a curriculum that exposes young children to the importance of good water quality, you will be doing your part to enhance the quality of the Bay. By working together, perhaps one day we will once again find giant lobsters and huge sponges.

Credits



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**.

Editors: **Bob Showler and Peter Allen**

Layout: **Bill Hayden, Bob Showler and Peter Allen**

Written contributions by: **Kelly Bulyis, Eve West, Peter Allen, Bob Showler, Scott Vay, Alan Scott, John Ogden, and Sue Bennett.**

Computer graphics and maps: **Bob Showler and Peter Allen**

Line drawings: **Bob Showler and others.**

Special thanks to: **Elizabeth Dupree, Marilyn Hause-Loftus, Beryl Given, Wayne Landrum, George Frederick, and Madeline Murgolo.**

Recycling in Your National Parks



Recycling is not a new concept for most of us; you may already recycle in your community. Now, in cooperation with Dow Chemical Company, the National Park Service has made it easy to recycle in your national parks. It's easy. Just look for the **green recycling bins** placed throughout Everglades National Park and

Biscayne National Park, and throw in your aluminum, glass, plastic, and steel.

The National Park Service not only collects recycleables, it uses many recycled products. In Everglades National Park, the recycling bins themselves are made with recycled plastic "lumber" called Timbrex, composed of re-

cycled plastic and sawdust from old wood products. Some boardwalks, such as the Anhinga Trail, are made from Timbrex. This material should last 4-5 times longer than wood. Other recycled materials used in the park are paper, picnic tables, bulletin boards, and carpeting.

Wading Birds and Water:

The Annual Cycle

by **John Ogden, Wildlife Biologist**

One of the more spectacular and, at the same time, predictable avian events in Everglades National Park is the tremendous increase in numbers of wading birds (herons, egrets, ibis, storks, etc.) that congregate each year during the dry season, November through May. Between 50,000 and 100,000 wading birds collect in the expansive freshwater

and estuarine wetlands of the park, attracted by the excellent feeding conditions created by the drying marshes. Beginning with the shallowest areas—those that dry first once the summer rains have ended—the flocks of waders follow the retreating water line in search of trapped and concentrated fishes, cray-

fish, prawns, and other aquatic organisms. By late in the dry season, usually March-April, these feeding flocks have moved into the deeper central marshes of the Shark River Slough. In these core refugia of the Everglades, park scientists have recorded densities as high as 600 fish per square meter.

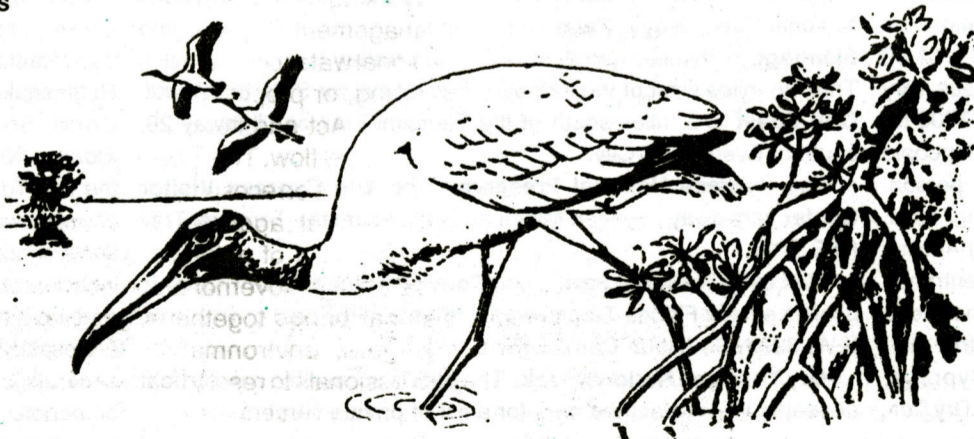
As the marshes dry, and food supplies become increasingly abundant and concentrated, the wading birds form nesting colonies. For the larger, long-ranging species like Common Egrets and Wood Storks, colonies may form as early as December or January. The smaller waders with shorter foraging ranges wait

until March to form colonies, at sites close to the better feeding areas. All species must complete nesting before the next cycle of summer rains, usually beginning in June. Once the marshes are reflooded, food concentrations are rapidly diluted and most of the wading birds are forced to disperse northward out of the

Everglades region. By late summer, the number of wading birds in the park may be as low as 5,000 to 10,000.

While this annual cycle appears simple, many subtle differences between years—in the amount of marshland that is reflooded by summer rains and water deliveries to the park, and

in the timing and rate of winter/spring drying—have major influence on both the food resource and the timing, location, and size of wading bird colonies. Water management projects in south Florida, mainly designed to stabilize and control the once dynamic Everglades wetlands, have severely disrupted the natural relationships between wading birds and water conditions. As a result, sharply reduced nesting success has led to a reduction in the number of wading birds nesting in the southern Everglades, from a maximum of 300,000 birds in the 1930's, to 10,000 - 15,000 by the early 1990's.

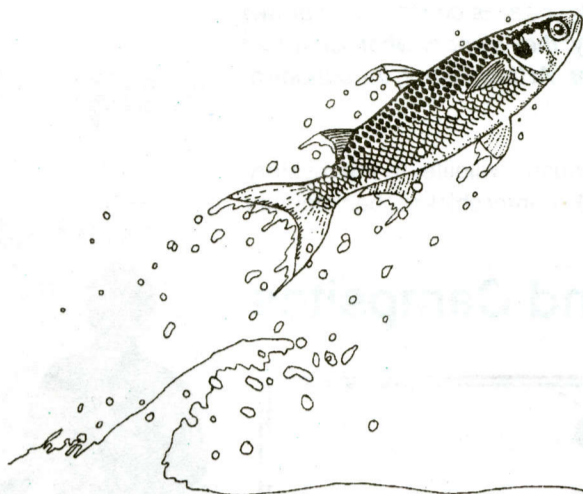


The Distinctive Natural History....

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.

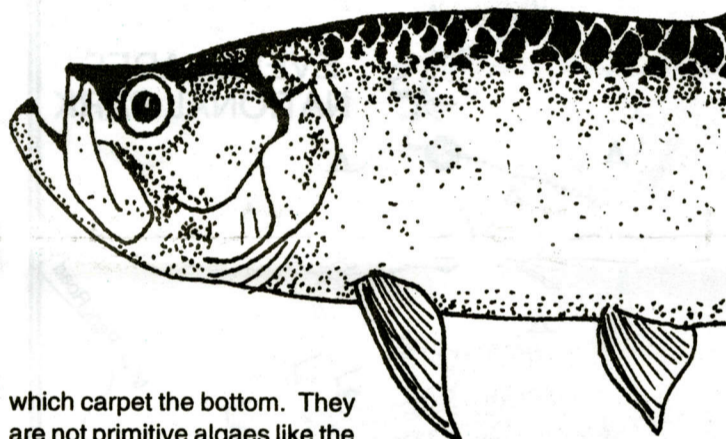
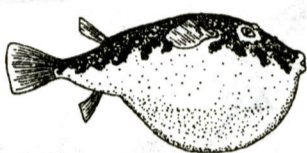
These waters support a great diversity and abundance of life.



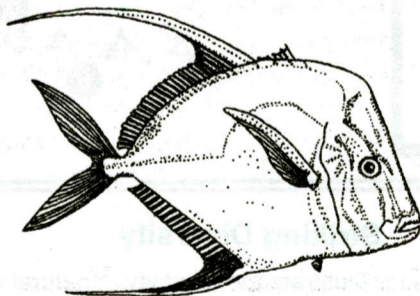
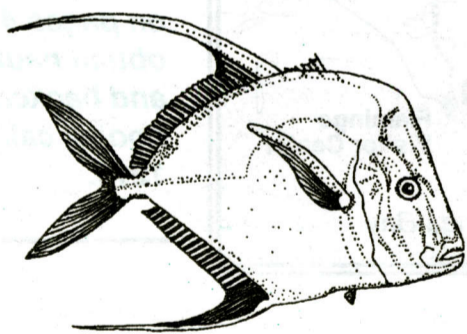
A leaping mullet provides just a glimpse of life found beneath south Florida's inshore waters. Seagrass beds serve as the foundation for an abundance of marine organisms.

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.

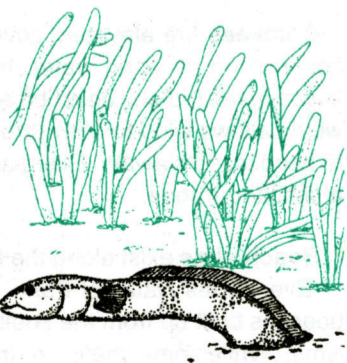
The foundation for all this life is vast meadows of marine grasses, most notably turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*),



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

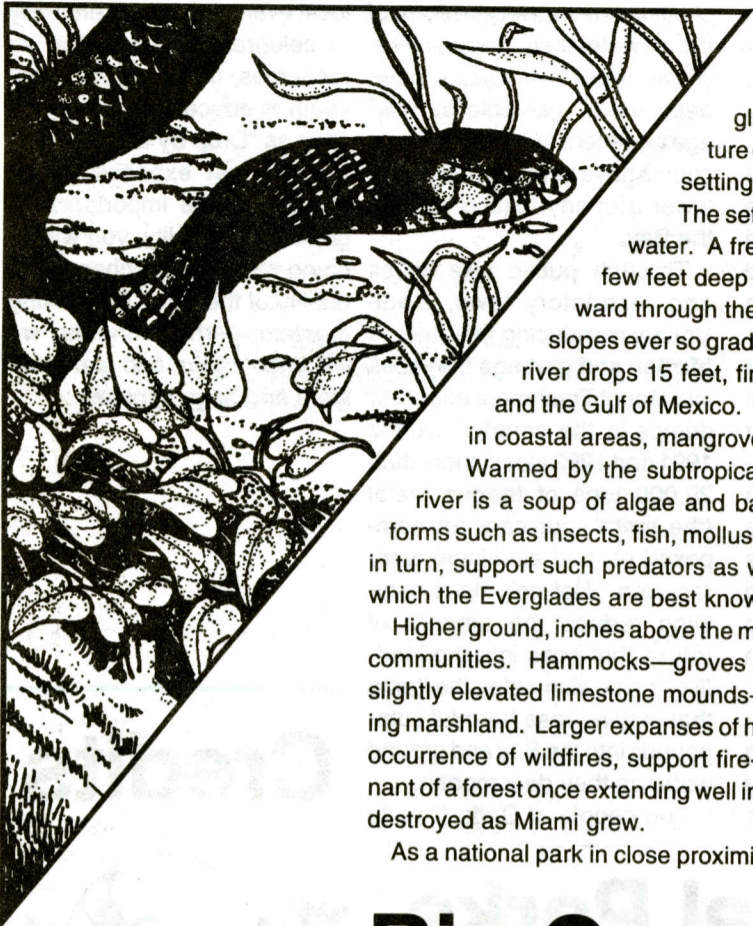
This attractive bird nests mainly in mangrove forests. It feeds on fruits of tropical trees, including mastic, strangler fig, pigeon plum, and sea grape. Its favorite food is the dull yellow fruit of poisonwood, a poison ivy relative with the same toxic sap.

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.



Everglades National Park



Tropical life from Caribbean islands blends with temperate species in the Everglades. The result is a rich mixture of plants and animals in a unique setting.

The setting 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 Everglades 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.

Warmed by the subtropical climate of south Florida, the river is a soup of algae and bacteria that sustains larger life forms such as insects, fish, molluscs, turtles, and snakes. These, in turn, support such predators as wading birds and alligators, for which the Everglades are best known.

Higher ground, inches above the moving water, holds unique plant communities. Hammocks—groves of hardwood trees growing on slightly elevated limestone mounds—are islands amidst surrounding marshland. Larger expanses of high ground, more subject to the occurrence of wildfires, support fire-dependent pine forest, a remnant of a forest once extending well into Dade County. Most of it was destroyed as Miami grew.

As a national park in close proximity to a large metropolitan area,

Everglades faces strong threats to its survival. The same water that supports all life in the Everglades also supports human life in urban areas.

Everglades National Park was established in 1947. The park encompasses 1.5 million acres.

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

**For Things To Do
in Everglades
National Park,
please see page 6**

Big Cypress National Preserve

Welcome Foreign Visitors!

*The National Park
Service distributes
brochures in many
languages. Ask at
visitor centers for
information in your
language.*

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.

*Big Cypress
National Preserve
HCR 61, Box 11
Ochopee, FL 33943
(813) 695-4111*

**For Things To Do
in Big Cypress
National Preserve,
please see page 7**

Are There Any

Are there entrance fees?

For cars, vans, and motorhomes, Everglades National Park charges a \$5.00 fee at the entrance station before the Main Visitor Center and a \$4.00 fee at Shark Valley. Fees vary for buses (call 305-242-7700 for details). Bicyclists and people on foot pay \$2.00 per person. Entrance fees are valid for 7 days. Golden Eagle, Age, and Access Passes are honored at entrance stations. No entrance fees are charged at the Gulf Coast, Big Cypress, Biscayne, or Dry Tortugas.

How do I get to various park areas?

Use the map on the back page to help you orient.

•Everglades National Park:

Main Visitor Center: If coming from Miami, take the Florida Turnpike south to the last exit, then follow the signs to Everglades National Park. **Royal Palm** is 4 miles further down the road, and **Flamingo** is 38 miles further down. **Shark Valley** is on the Tamiami Trail, 25 miles west of the Florida Turnpike exit for S.W. 8th Street. **Gulf Coast** is 3 miles south of the Tamiami Trail on Highway 29, south of Everglades City.

•Big Cypress National Preserve: The **Big Cypress Visitor Center** is midway between Miami and Naples on the Tamiami Trail (U.S. 41).

•Biscayne National Park: The **Convoy Point Visitor Center** is 6 miles east of Florida Turnpike Exit #6, or 9 miles east of U.S. 1 on S.W. 328th St. (North Canal Drive).

•Dry Tortugas National Park: The park is accessible only by boat or seaplane—contact the park for a list of private carriers.

What are the hours of operation?

In Everglades National Park, the road leading from the Main Visitor Center to Flamingo is open 24 hours and the entrance into Shark Valley is open from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. For visitor center hours, see pages 6 and 7.

Where can I take an airboat ride?

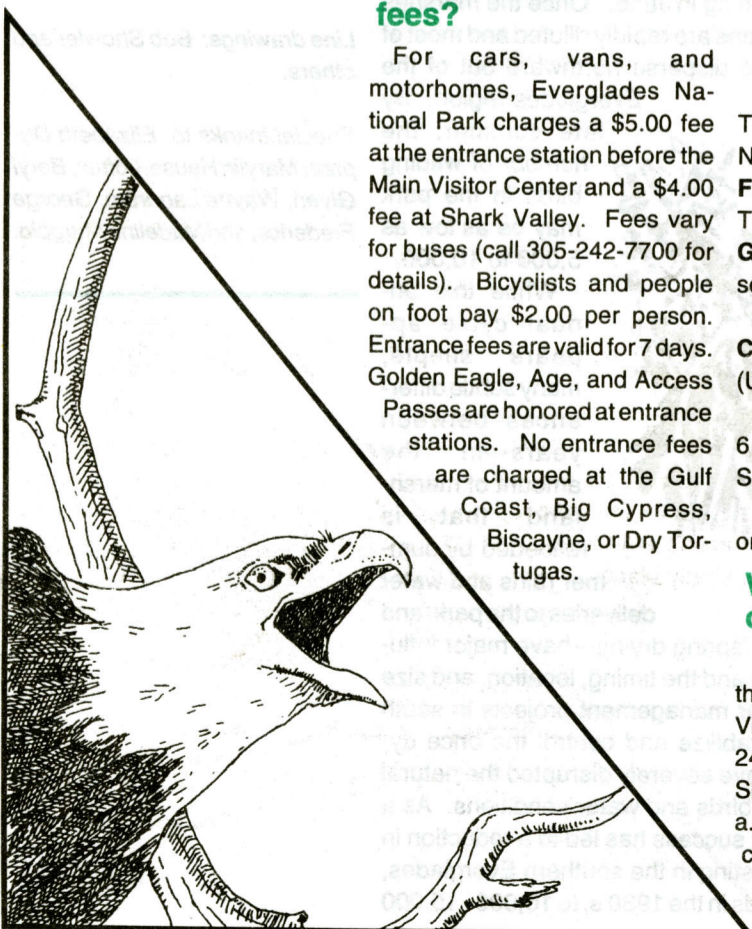
Airboats are not permitted in Everglades National Park, but you may take an airboat ride outside park boundaries along the Tamiami Trail and between Homestead and the Main Park Visitor Center off of route 9336. For information on other types of tours, see pages 6 and 7.

Should I be concerned about venomous snakes? Alligators? Toxic Plants?

Four species of venomous snakes—the Eastern Diamond-back Rattlesnake, Dusky Pygmy Rattlesnake, Cottonmouth, and Coral Snake—live in south Florida. No snakes are found 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 and it will not bother you.

Despite their fearsome appearance, alligators are normally wary of people; unprovoked attacks on humans are rare. Nevertheless, as with all wild animals, it is wise to keep a safe distance.

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, poison-wood, manchineel, and other poisonous plants.



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!

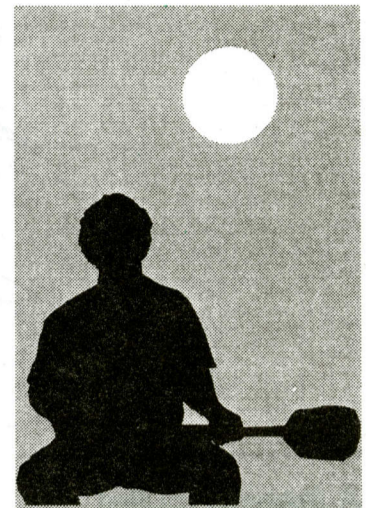
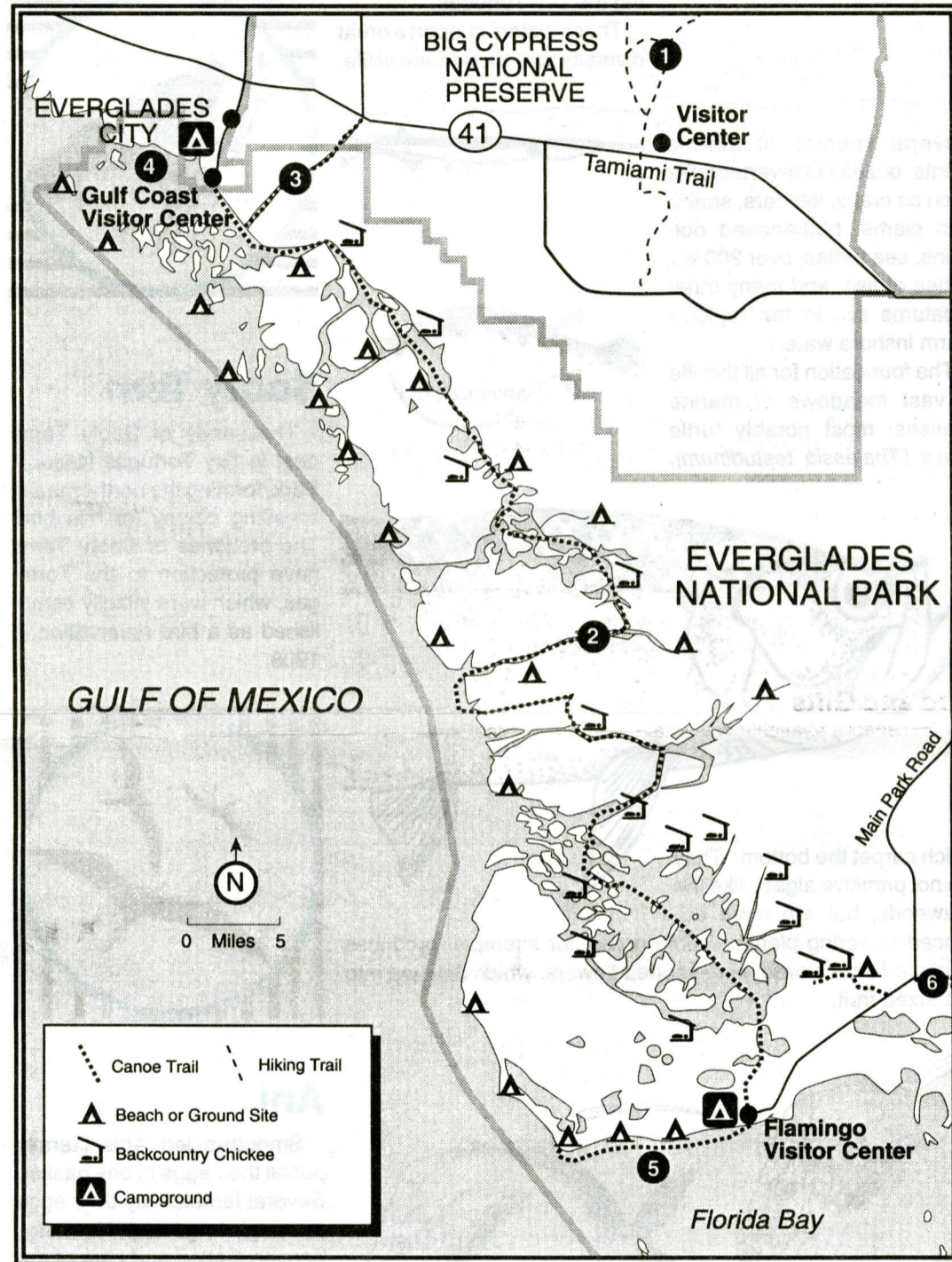
The backcountry of south Florida's national parks is full of surprises. From the thrill of spotting unusual wildlife, to the mystery of paddling a mangrove-lined creek, to the pleasure of watching the sunset from a remote beach or backcountry chickee, backcountry experiences are usually rewarding.

Selected 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 (pictured on back page map)—7 miles east of the Convoy Point mainland Visitor Center in Biscayne National Park. Accessible only by boat. Permits may be obtained from the Convoy Point Visitor Center, located at the east end of S.W. 328th Street (North Canal Drive). For information regarding boat transportation to Elliott Key, contact the park concessioner at (305) 230-1100.

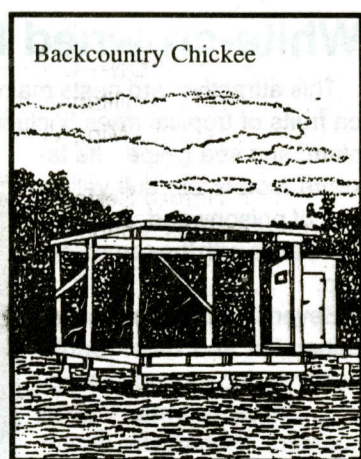
Selected Backcountry Trails and Campsites



Backcountry permits are required for overnight backcountry camping in Everglades and Biscayne National Parks. In Everglades, permits are obtained in person at the Flamingo and Gulf Coast Visitor Centers. 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 4 and 5. To obtain nautical charts and backcountry books, call (305) 247-1216.

Striking Diversity

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



Backcountry Chickee

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 aborigines, 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.



Biscayne National Park

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

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 25 years.

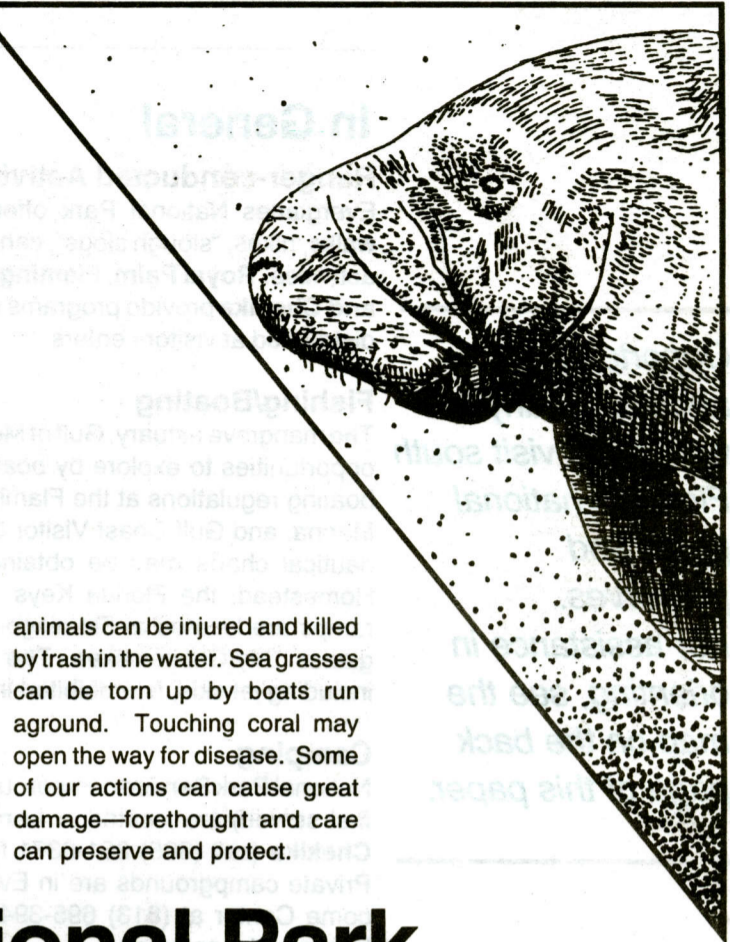
The shoreline of Biscayne Bay is lined with a deep green forest of mangroves. These trees, with their complex system of prop roots, help stabilize the shoreline and provide shelter for animals, birds, and marine life. Their leaves become a vital part of the food chain when they fall into the waters.

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.

For Things To Do in Biscayne National Park, please see page 7

Dry Tortugas National Park

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

Dry Tortugas National Park, formerly Fort Jefferson National Monument, was created on October 25, 1992. This new designation will increase the protection of the marine resource of the 60 square mile park.

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.

Dry Tortugas is only accessible by boat or seaplane. Contact the park for a list of private carriers.

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.

For Things To Do in Dry Tortugas National Park, please see page 7

.....Questions?

Were the parks affected by Hurricane Andrew?

Some areas were badly damaged by the storm, which struck on August 24, 1992. In Everglades, extensive damage to forests and facilities occurred near the Main Visitor Center. Virtually all facilities have been repaired or replaced, except at Chekika. Contact the park for updates.

Biscayne National Park was heavily damaged by Hurricane Andrew. A temporary visitor center is open at Convoy Point, and the park concessioner is running boat excursions (see page 7 for details). For the boating public, Elliott Key Campground and Harbor Complex is open. The rest of Elliott Key and all other park islands remain closed until further notice. While many facilities are reopened, Boca Chita and Adams Key remain closed.

Most of Big Cypress National Preserve received only minor damage; The Dry Tortugas were not in the hurricane's path.

What areas are good for wildlife viewing?

In Everglades National Park, **Shark Valley**, the **Anhinga Trail** (at Royal Palm), and **Eco Pond** (½ mile past the Flamingo Visitor Center), are good for viewing alligators, wading birds, and other freshwater wildlife. Canoeists can paddle into **Snake Bight** (near Flamingo) and **Chokoloskee Bay** (Gulf Coast) before low tide to witness large numbers of water birds feeding in the shallows and on mud flats. A productive freshwater canoeing area is **Nine Mile Pond** and adjacent borrow pits (12 miles up the road from Flamingo).

In Big Cypress National Preserve, the **Loop Road** (check with a ranger for current conditions) and **Turner River Road** afford good opportunities to view alligators, birds and other wildlife of the swamp.

Biscayne National Park protects a pristine coral reef tract. Glass bottom boat and snorkeling trips depart from the Convoy Point Visitor Center. Good birdwatching at Convoy Point and Elliott Key.

Dry Tortugas National Park is renowned for its coral reef and tropical and migratory birdlife.

Should I be especially aware of certain regulations?

- When observing animals, especially on major highways, pull completely off the road. Rangers use radar to clock speeders. 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 jet skis are prohibited in Everglades National Park.

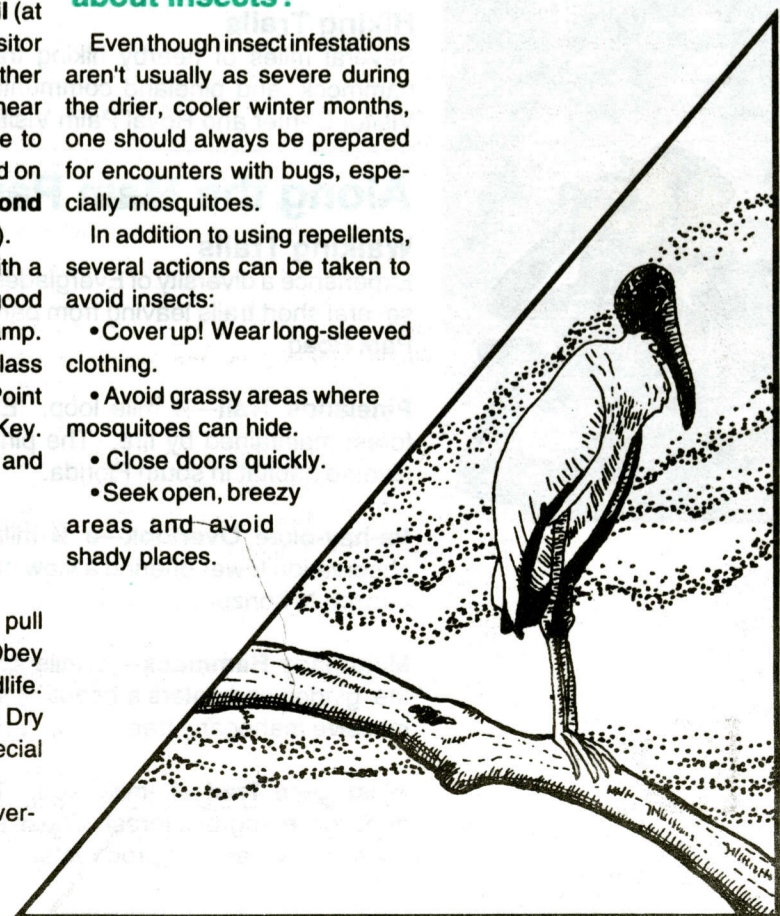
- Pets are allowed in some areas. Ask a ranger for regulations regarding pets.

What should I do about insects?

Even though insect infestations aren't usually as severe during the drier, cooler winter months, one should always be prepared for encounters with bugs, especially mosquitoes.

In addition to using repellents, several actions can be taken to avoid insects:

- Cover up! Wear long-sleeved clothing.
- Avoid grassy areas where mosquitoes can hide.
- Close doors quickly.
- Seek open, breezy areas and avoid shady places.



Concession Services in the Parks

Everglades Flamingo

38 Miles southwest of Main Visitor Center. Authorized concessioner: TW Services, Flamingo Lodge, Marina & Outpost Resort, Flamingo, FL 33030. Phone: (305) 253-2241 or (813) 695-3101.

Lodging, Restaurants, and Lounges

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 Buttonwood Lounge.

Food, Fuel, Supplies, and Gifts

Gasoline, propane, limited selection of groceries, and camping and marine supplies available at the Marina Store. Gifts and souvenirs in the Gift Shop downstairs from the restaurant.

Boat/Tram Tours, Boat/Canoe/Bicycle Rentals

Daily boat tours into Florida Bay and the mangrove estuary and tram tours on the Snake Bight Trail are offered. Call ahead for reservations. Houseboats, skiffs, and canoes rented; charter fishing trips available at the Marina. Canoes also rented at Nine Mile Pond during the busy season. 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 33929. Phone: 1-800-445-7724 (Florida only) and (813) 695-2591.

Boat Tours/Canoe Rentals

Daily boat tours to the Ten Thousand Islands region, operated by Everglades National Park Boat Tours, Inc. For reservations, call 1-800-445-7724 (Florida only) or (813) 695-2591. Canoe rentals available on the lower level of the Visitor Center.

Food and Gifts

Gifts and snacks available downstairs from the Visitor Center.

Shark Valley

40 miles west of 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

Offered by Shark Valley Tram Tours, Inc. 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 office.

Biscayne Convoy Point

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

Glass Bottom Boat Tours (Morning)

For glass bottom boat tours of the park, call for schedule, information, and reservations: (305) 230-1100.

Snorkeling/SCUBA Trips (Afternoon)

For reef trips, call for schedule and reservations: (305) 230-1100.

Canoe Rentals

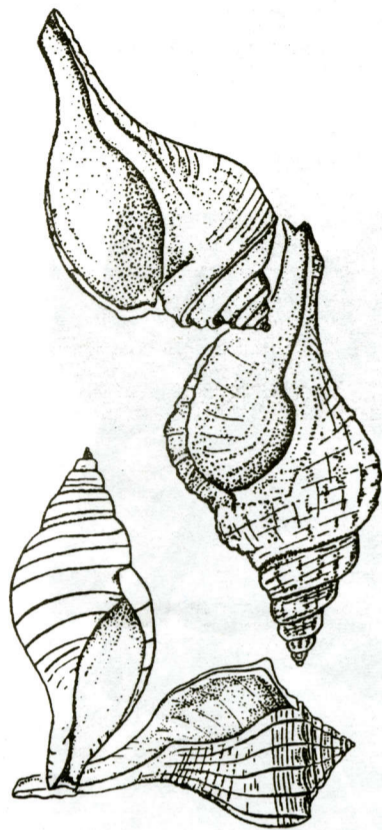
Canoes rented for trips to explore the mangrove shoreline.

Dry Tortugas

68 miles west of Key West

Charter Boat/Air Taxi

The National Park Service authorizes charter boats and air taxis to the park from Miami and Key West. A list of authorized carriers is available upon request. Call (305) 242-7700.



Something to Squawk About!

With these Books and Videos offered by Florida National Parks and Monuments Association

Below is a sample of the many books, videos, and related products available at park visitor center bookstores from **Florida National Parks & Monuments Association**. Be sure to stop in and browse! Mail order catalog is available at visitor centers or by writing 10 Parachute Key #51, Homestead, FL 33034-6735 or by calling (305) 247-1216. Phone orders accepted with Visa or MasterCard.

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, paper. \$6.95

Everglades National Park & the Nearby Florida Keys by H. Zim.....Comprehensive pocket guide to identify plant & animal life most commonly seen. Paper. \$3.95

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 \$5.95; Hardbound \$17.95

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. \$8.95

Everglades Wildguide by J. C. George.....Official National Park Service handbook detailing the plants and animals of the Everglades. Includes checklists and glossaries. Full-color, paper. \$5.95

Everglades—The Story Behind the Scenery by J. de Golia.....An Everglades pictorial review with scenes and wildlife illustrated in full-color. Paper. \$6.95

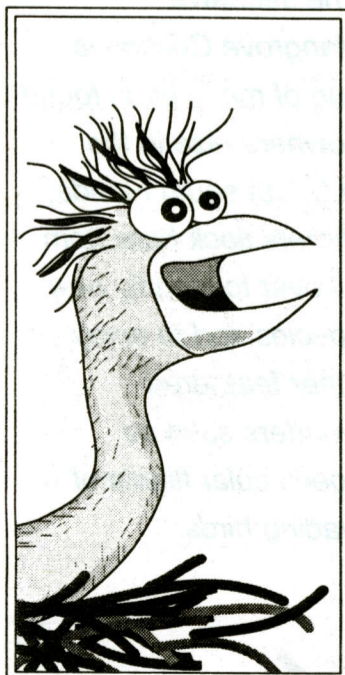
VIDEOS

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's Nature Series: Everglades.....A comprehensive look at the prairies, ponds, hammocks, waterflow and amazing wildlife of the Everglades. 40 min., VHS, English PAL, & German PAL. \$24.95

Rich Kern's Hidden Worlds of Big Cypress Swamp....Visit the swamp and see the many creatures that live in its shallow water. 45 min., VHS, English PAL & German PAL. \$24.95

South Florida's National Parks.....Finley-Holiday Films.....Tour Everglades and Biscayne National Parks, Big Cypress National Preserve and historic Fort Jefferson. Discover the natural beauty and amazing variety of plants and wildlife found throughout these national treasures. 56 min., VHS or PAL. \$24.95



Experiencing Big Cypress, Biscayne, and Dry Tortugas

Big Cypress National Preserve

HCR 61, Box 11, Ochopee, FL 33943 (813) 695-4111

Visitor Center

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

Wildlife Viewing

Motorists and bicyclists can explore the Turner River Road and the Loop Road for wildlife, including alligators, birds, and deer. Contact the Preserve for the condition of the Loop Road.

Canoeing

The Turner River Canoe Trail starts on U.S. 41 and ends in Chokoloskee Bay. Contact the Preserve for details.

Fishing

Anglers can pursue freshwater fish in the canals along the Tamiami Trail, the Turner River Road, and elsewhere in the preserve. High mercury content in fish; observe posted signs for recommended consumption amounts. Licenses and regulations are available in Everglades City.

O.R.V.'s (including airboats)

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

Camping

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

Bicycling

Trails suitable for mountain bicycles can be found in the northern portion of the preserve. Contact the preserve for details.

Biscayne National Park

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

Convoy Point Visitor Center

See exhibits of the park's history and Hurricane Andrew displays. View the park slide show and hurricane video. Publication sales. Open daily, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekends.

Canoeing/Kayaking

Canoeists can explore the mangrove shoreline along the mainland. Canoes are rented by the park concessioner next to the Visitor Center. Ranger-guided canoe tours are offered Sundays at 9:00 a.m. starting January 9.

Fishing/boating

Anglers and boaters can launch their own boats at the Homestead Bayfront Park boat ramp next to Convoy Point to venture into Biscayne Bay and to explore offshore coral reef. Stop at the Visitor Center for regulations and to purchase nautical charts. Fishing licenses are sold in Homestead.

Boat Excursions

The park concessioner provides snorkeling/diving and glass bottom boat tours of the park. Reservations are required. Call (305) 230-1100 for schedule and reservations.

Camping

A campground accessible only by concession or private boat is located on Elliott Key. Private campgrounds are in Homestead. Call the Tourism Center at (305) 245-9180 or 1-800-388-9669 for a list.

Dry Tortugas National Park

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

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 slide show, 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 dock's announcement board or the Visitor Center for dates and times of ranger-guided programs.

Camping

Camping is available, but all supplies, including fresh water, must be brought in. Parties of more than ten must make reservations by writing to the park.

Fishing

The dock on Garden Key is a good place to catch saltwater fish. Sportsmen can fish from their own boats offshore. Check with a ranger for specifics. Lobstering is prohibited in the park. Fishing licenses are available in Key West.

Boating

Private boaters can visit the park. Nautical charts are sold 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

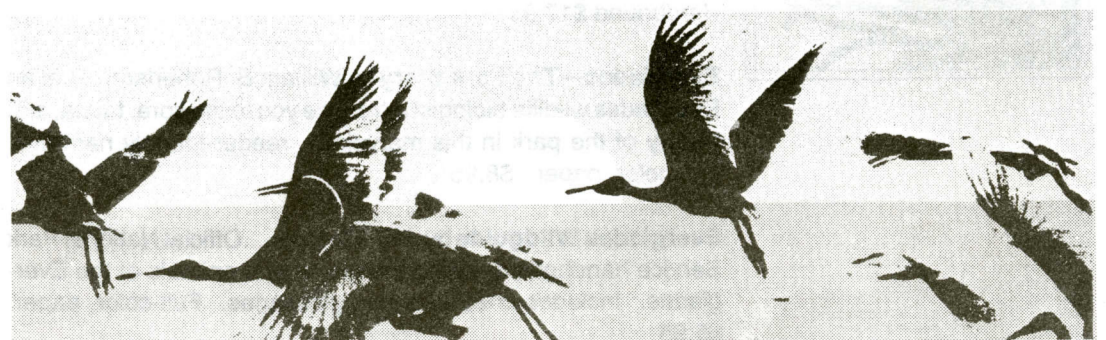
Patches of healthy coral reef, some easily accessible from shore and in shallow water, are snorkeling havens. Ask a ranger about the best snorkeling opportunities. Snorkeling equipment may be borrowed at the Visitor Center.

Bird Watching

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



The secretive Mangrove Cuckoo is one of many birds found nowhere else in the U.S. but south Florida. Birders flock here from all over to identify new species and to enjoy other feathered wonders such as spectacular flights of wading birds.



Enjoying Everglades National Park

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

*Opportunities
abound for anyone
wishing to visit south
Florida's national
parks and
preserves.
For assistance in
orienting, see the
map on the back
page of this paper.*

In General

Ranger-conducted Activities

Everglades National Park offers evening programs, talks, walks, hikes, "slough slogs", canoe trips, and other ranger-led activities. **Royal Palm, Flamingo, Shark Valley, Gulf Coast, and Chekika** provide programs during winter. Schedules are distributed at visitor centers.

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. Fishing licenses and nautical charts may be obtained at the Flamingo Marina, Homestead, the Florida Keys, and Everglades City. Boat ramps are located at Flamingo, the Florida Keys, and Everglades City/Chokoloskee. The use of personal watercraft, including jet skis, is prohibited in Everglades NP.

Camping

National Park Service campgrounds (fees charged, first come, first served) are located at **Long Pine Key, Flamingo, and Chekika** (call (305) 251-0371 for opening date at Chekika). Private campgrounds are in Everglades City. Call the Welcome Center at (813) 695-3941 for a list. See page 9 for backcountry camping.

Concession Services

Please see page 8 for information on lodging, supplies, gifts, tours, and other concession services.

Main Visitor Center

Open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Information and publications sales.

Royal Palm

Royal Palm Visitor Center

Open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Information and publications sales. The well-known habitat exhibit by Charles Harper is also on site.

Anhinga Trail

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

Gumbo Limbo Trail

½-mile loop. This trail winds through a once-dense tropical hardwood hammock, recently reshaped by Hurricane Andrew.

Hiking Trails

Several miles of nearby hiking trails pass through marsh, hammock, and pineland communities. Inquire at the Main Visitor Center and Royal Palm Visitor Center.

Along the Main Park Road

Walking Trails

Experience a diversity of Everglades environments by walking several short 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

Flamingo Visitor Center

The information desk is staffed from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily. Florida Bay Museum open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Wildlife viewing

Nearby Eco Pond provides good bird watching (Note: to conform to State water quality requirements for an evaporation pond, some trees have been removed and the pond has been re-dredged). At certain times, Mrazek Pond is a birding hotspot. Snake Bight (accessible by foot, bicycle, or canoe) provides good birdwatching opportunities.

Canoeing/Hiking

Information and a map of local canoe and hiking trails can be obtained at the Flamingo Visitor Center. Canoe rentals are available at Nine Mile Pond (canoe shuttle service also provided) and the Flamingo Marina.

Boat and Tram Tours

Narrated boat tours into the mangrove swamp and Florida Bay depart daily from the Flamingo Marina. Tram Tours on the Snake Bight Trail leave from the Gift Shop. Schedules, tickets, and additional information are available at the Marina and Gift Shop or by calling (305) 253-2241.

Shark Valley

Shark Valley Visitor Center

The Shark Valley Visitor Center is staffed by park personnel daily between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Publications sales.

Walking Trails

Bobcat Boardwalk—this 1/3-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 and slough animals may be seen. Bicycle rentals are available at Shark Valley. Permits are required for groups of 10 or more.

Tram Tour

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

Gulf Coast

Gulf Coast Visitor Center

Come see the all-new exhibits. The desk is staffed from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Boat Tours

Daily boat tours into the mangrove estuary and Ten Thousand Islands offer views of a unique environment and its wildlife. Schedules, tickets, and information available from park concessioner located downstairs from the Visitor Center or by calling (813) 695-2591 or 1-800-445-7724 (Florida only).

Canoeing/Kayaking

From the Visitor Center, paddlers can explore the mangrove environment and look for local wildlife. Canoe rentals are available downstairs from the Visitor Center.

Chekika

The Chekika area has a picnic area and nature trail. Call (305) 251-0371 for the opening date of the campground.

