

THE EVERGLADES AN HISTORIC TREASURE

Although the Everglades contain the proverbial swamp many people associate with it, nine distinct habitats have been identified in the area and the landscape remains dynamic. It is technically the land in Florida covered by a 40-mile-wide shallow river, flowing southwest at the slow rate of about a quarter mile per day. The waters of the Everglades once flowed freely across South Florida from the Kissimmee River to Lake Okeechobee and further southward over low-lying lands to the estuaries of Biscayne Bay, the Ten Thousand Islands, and Florida Bay. This sheet of water once covered almost 11,000 square miles, creating the mosaic of habitats the Everglades encompasses today.



SAWGRASS PRAIRIE

NATIONAL PARK AND RAMSAR WETLANDS

With the support of many early conservationists, scientists, and other advocates, Everglades National Park was established in 1947 to conserve an area of the wetland wilderness that was like no other in the world. The boundaries of the Park (about 2,400 square miles) protect the southern one-fifth of the historic Everglades ecosystem. The Park is the largest federally-designated wilderness area east of the Mississippi River. So unique is it, that it was named the 5th Ramsar Wetland of International Importance in the United States. The Everglades's continuing value to scientific research as well as its species diversity recommended its selection.



BROWN PELICAN

Despite problems common to many wetlands - pollution, contested water flow regimens, and invasive species - the Everglades remain synonymous with the term "wetlands" for many Americans. The area also plays an extremely important role in municipal, industrial and agricultural water supply, flood protection, and sports and commercial fishery.

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www.nps.gov/ever/index.htm



CLIMBING FERN ON CYPRESS TREES

DIVERSE HABITAT AND WILDLIFE

In its entirety, this massive watershed boasts a multitude of habitats that provide a subtropical refuge to a unique assemblage of wildlife. The Everglades includes large areas of freshwater flooded prairies, islands of tropical hardwood trees, ponds, sloughs, saltmarshes, mangrove forests, beach and dune complexes, estuaries, hardwood hammock, and forested uplands. Thriving amidst this verdant, expansive wetland, the wildlife of the Everglades encompasses the tiny grass frog (.5 to .75 inches long) and the big American crocodile (the average adult male is 13 feet long and weighs 840 pounds.) The area is extremely important for nesting, staging and wintering birds, and supports a number of endangered plant and animal species. Over one thousand species of seed-bearing plants and 120 tropical and temperate trees (60 of which are endemic) occur. Life from the Caribbean tropics coexists with more familiar species from temperate North America.

