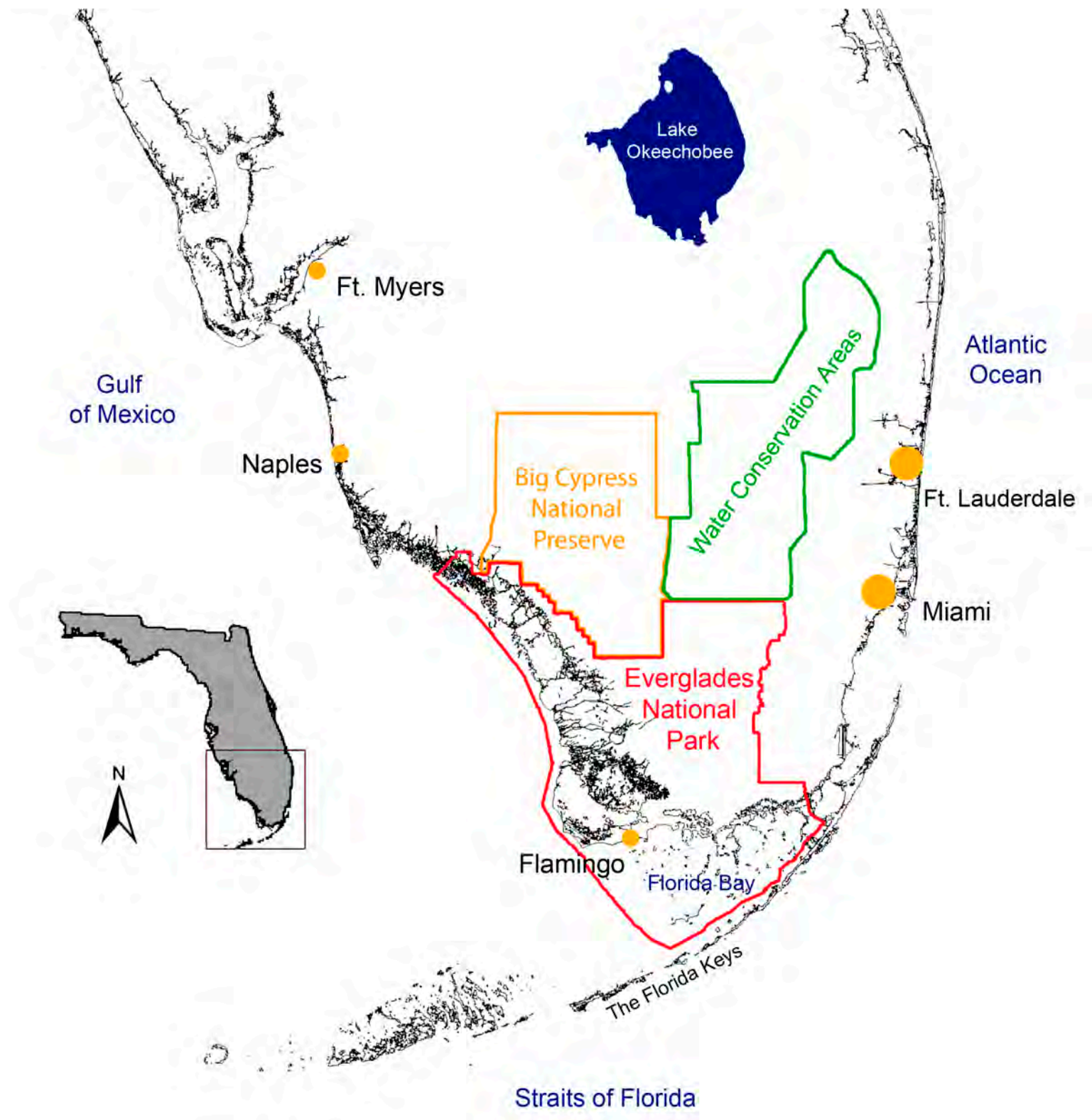


Everglades Imagery:



Intimate Detail of a Vast Landscape

Essays and Photographs by Andrew Fulton



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ESSAYS AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY ANDREW FULTON

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BIG CYPRESS DAYBREAK, LOOP ROAD, BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE

*Dawn breaks as the sun breaches the horizon illuminating a cypress dome. This iconic Everglades scene is characterized by the pond cypresses (*Taxodium ascendens*) which drop their needles during the winter dry season. The defoliated canopy reveals the presence of epiphytic bromeliads, many as large as bushel baskets, each of which holds its own micro-ecosystem.*



JUVENILE AMERICAN ALLIGATOR, LONG PINE KEY, EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

*The American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*), an apex predator, is common throughout the Everglades and an attraction for the millions of people who visit the region each year. Adult alligators are typically very dark, often black, while the young have bright yellow or orange stripes. Juveniles do not lose their colorful bands until they are several years old.*



SUNRISE OVER THE PRAIRIE, LOOP ROAD, BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE

*Small cypress trees dot the prairies of the Everglades and the Big Cypress Swamp. These trees, often referred to as dwarf or hat-rack cypress, are the same species as the bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) that form the larger cypress strands and domes. However, in the prairie, the growth of these trees is stunted due to a lack of nutrients in the soil. Their growth rate is so slow that many of the trees that are as tall as a man are well over a hundred years old.*

THE EVERGLADES

A small group of trees is the only break in the seemingly infinite prairie of grass. With an almost mathematical precision, the cypresses form a thirty-foot domed canopy. As the weather warms, needles begin to appear, dotting the silver and gray branches with points of vibrant green. A catlike hiss erupts from a clump of sticks nestled in a crook of the tree as a young barred owl begs for food. A parent arrives on silent wings and lays a freshly killed mouse on the edge of the nest. As her chick begins to feed, the female sidesteps toward the trunk of the tree and settles in to sleep for the day.

Twenty feet below, tea-colored water laps at the edge of the cypress trunks. Just below the surface lurks the world of fish, turtles, and alligators as well as a myriad of tiny insect larvae, snails, crawfish, and other invertebrates. Small mosquito fish dart between shadows, feeding on the larvae of the Everglades most infamous insect, the mosquito, all the while trying to avoid the beak of a tricolored heron that stalks the water nearby. Across the pool, a Florida redbelly turtle soaks up the warmth of the sun shining through the canopy while a banded water snake slithers by fluidly. Life abounds anywhere there is water, and in the Everglades, water is everywhere.

Throughout southern Florida, water is not only ubiquitous, but it is the thread that links together the web of diverse ecological communities across the Everglades. Water provides the connection between the small dome of cypress trees and the surrounding prairies. The water flows south, almost unnoticed, inundating prairies and forests, transporting vital nutrients, and influencing everything it touches. Water defines communities and provides nourishment for the numerous plants and animals throughout the region. While the water is the fundamental aspect of the Everglades ecosystem, it is not constant. The water does not continuously bubble up to the surface from an underground aquifer or drain high altitude glaciers. Instead, the water comes from the sky, falling from the mountainous clouds in torrential thunderstorms that develop nearly every summer day.

Each afternoon during the rainy season, the storms build and dump millions of gallons of water across the Everglades. The falling water floods the prairies of the northern Everglades where the story begins. Here, the vast landscape is flat and open. The ground is flooded, the vegetation dense. Tall stalks of sawgrass, well over a man's head, cover everything. Sawgrass, named for the small teeth that cover the edges of the blade, grows so dense it appears impenetrable. At first glance the landscape seems monotonous, same, uniform, and lifeless.

A large dark bird with a white band across its tail glides low over the prairie, flapping its dark wings occasionally. Without warning the bird drops out of the sky into the prairie, disappearing from sight. A moment later the bird returns to the air carrying a spherical snail. The snail kite, or Everglades



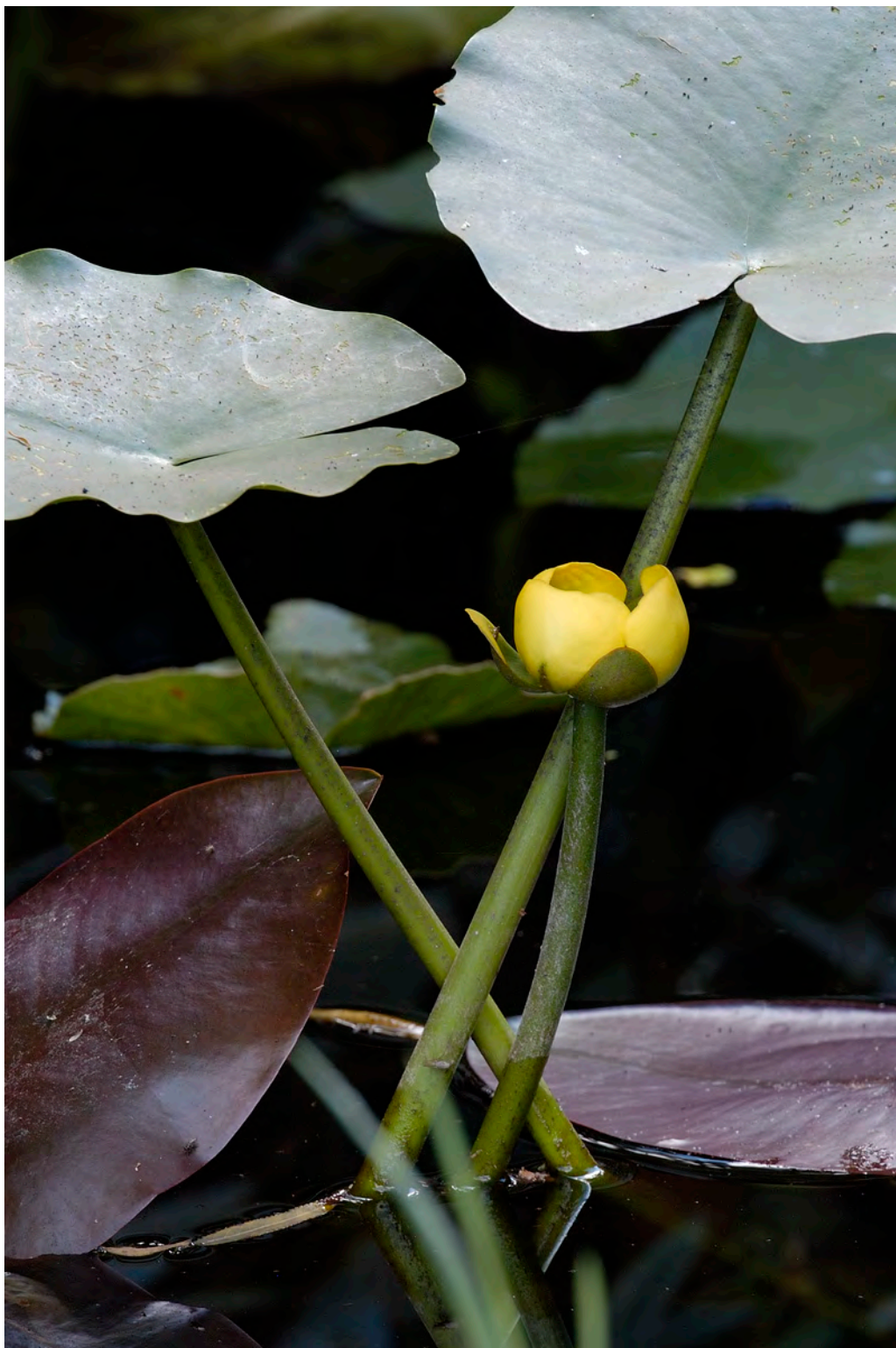
MORNING AT ECO POND, FLAMINGO, EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

*Eco Pond is renowned as one of the national park's top destinations for birdwatchers each winter, attracting both waterbirds such as these two common moorhens (*Gallinula chloropus*) and American coot (*Fulica americana*) as well as numerous songbirds in the brush around the pond. Wildlife flocks to the abundance of freshwater, a rarity in this part of the Everglades. Eco Pond is not a natural pond but rather a settling pond for the waste water treatment system that once supported the community of Flamingo. In October of 2005, Hurricane Wilma flooded Eco Pond with saltwater from Florida Bay, killing all the vegetation and providing a prime opportunity for researchers to monitor the affects of saltwater inundation of a freshwater system.*

kite, feeds solely on large apple snails which are found throughout the prairie. As the kite perches on a tuft of fallen sawgrass to eat its catch, a flock of white ibis with black wingtips and fiery red bills land in the nearby marsh and begin to probe the ground for small invertebrates.

With the exception of wading birds and raptors, large conspicuous vertebrates may be difficult to observe in the dense sawgrass, but a plethora of crustaceans, insects, mollusks, and more can be found everywhere underfoot. This network of invertebrates and plants forms the base of a food web that supports a vast array of life, extending from the small minnows and other fish that take shelter among the roots of the dense sawgrass to the alligators and wading birds that feed throughout the prairies.

Pockets of deeper water are scattered across the prairie where water lilies, pickerelweed, and other plants fill in the gaps in sawgrass. Largemouth bass and Florida gar patrol the waters in search of an unsuspecting bluegill or sunfish. A ray of sunlight catches the iridescent blue of a cichlid. Wherever the prairie rises a few inches, reducing the amount of time the ground is submerged, woody plants are able to take hold. These clumps of trees, often willows, form islands among a sea of sawgrass. By providing shelter from the elements and predators, tree islands increase the diversity of birds and mammals that are found in the prairies. Mammals such as white-tailed deer forage extensively in the wet prairies but must return to the islands to seek shelter and allow their hooves to dry. Wading birds like the white ibis and tricolored heron nest in the willows while the surrounding prairies provide enough food for them to raise their young. Matrices of habitats like the tree



SPATTERDOCK,
SHARK VALLEY,
EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

Most deep canals and sloughs throughout the Everglades are lined, if not completely covered, by the native lily-like plant, Spatterdock (Nuphar lutea). These plants quickly colonize regions, providing cover for fish and aquatic animals. Unlike the related water lilies, the spatterdock's flowers do not appear to open completely and are held above the surface of the water.



PURPLE GALLINULE, SHARK VALLEY, EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

The purple gallinule (Porphyryula martinica) is one of the most colorful birds of the Everglades. These birds, related to rails, coots, and moorhens, are often seen walking across the tops of water lilies and spatterdock supporting themselves on their long yellow toes. A bird of the Gulf Coast region, it is found exclusively in freshwater marshes and is often very secretive, taking cover in dense cattails and reeds.



WHITE IBIS PORTRAIT,
ECO POND, FLAMINGO,
EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

The white ibis (Eudocimus albus) is the most abundant wading bird in the Everglades. These stately birds probe the muck with their long red decurved bills, often while wading in several inches of water. When feeding underneath the mud, the birds are primarily tactile feeders, capturing insects and small fish by feeling them with the tip of their bill. These birds also pluck insects from plants while feeding on land.



BAYHEAD AND MANGROVES, WHITE ZONE, EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

In the distance, the bayhead is easily recognizable by the palms, specifically paurotis or Everglades palms (Acoelorrhaphe wrightii), that protrude from the canopy. The prairie is dotted with dwarf red mangroves (Rhizophora mangle) that were pushed inland by the storm surges associated with hurricanes and tropical storms, particularly Hurricane Betsy in 1965.

islands and prairies help support a high diversity of life that a single habitat could not support alone.

Many of these small islands are composed almost exclusively of coastalplain willows and are often flooded most of the year. Birds build their nests in the low canopy, keeping them out of reach of alligators while the flood waters prevent land predators such as raccoons and snakes from raiding the nests for eggs. Wading birds such as white ibis, great and snowy egrets, and tricolored herons form large colonies known as rookeries that typically include several hundred nests with some occasionally containing over 20,000 nests. This extraordinary concentration of birds that must feed locally demonstrates the capacity of the surrounding sawgrass prairie to produce high concentrations of food for upper level predators.

Tree islands come in three varieties, each named for the dominant vegetation of the canopy. The first, willowheads, commonly support the large wading bird rookeries found throughout the prairies. However, the most common island is the bayhead, named for the swamp bay trees that grow there. These bays and other species are able to grow here as, unlike the prairies, the ground of a bayhead is dry for at least two months, sometimes up to eight months, of the year. The flood regime of each bayhead determines the concentrations of swamp bay, dalhoon holly, wax myrtles, red maples, strangler figs, coco plums, and other trees and shrubs. Islands with dry ground for eight months have a higher concentration of flood intolerant species than those that are dry for only two months each year. Many bayheads are easily recognized by the palms that extend high above the surrounding canopy

like a pineapple in a fruit basket. Below the canopy is a chaotic maze of vines, bushes, and other plants, making most bayheads difficult to explore.

Bayheads form a number of very large islands in Shark River Slough in the central Everglades. The larger islands reach several hundred acres in size. Names like Skinner's Island, Nut House Island, and Tommy Tiger's Camp reveal the character of the men that once called these islands home. The islands provided dry ground where both Native Americans and white pioneers could build a shelter and a life. The Miccosukee and Seminole Indians alike moved from island to island as they were pursued by American armies during the Seminole Wars of the early nineteenth century. Native Americans and white settlers both set up camps that could be used while they were hunting in the surrounding marshes for wading bird plumes or alligators. In later years, these isolated camps eventually became a haven for moonshining and smuggling, well out of reach of the authorities.

Unlike bayheads, which are dry for a significant portion of the year, cypress domes are flooded for most of the year. In contrast to the other tree islands, cypress domes are open beneath the canopy since almost constant flooding prevents small shrubs and other woody plants that thrive in bayheads from taking hold. Inside these sheltered islands, most of the floral diversity is found within the canopy. Bromeliads and orchids cling to branches and trunks. Ferns grow at the base of trees where tiny amounts of soil accumulate. Alligators and turtles lurk below the surface while barred owls and great-crested flycatchers flit through the canopy. Small cypress domes, often only a few hundred yards in diameter, are like miniature primeval swamps.



FLORIDA BUTTERFLY ORCHID,
TAYLOR SLOUGH,
EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

The Florida butterfly orchid (Encyclia tampensis) is Florida's most common orchid, found throughout the central and southern portion of the state in swamps and hammocks. It is a striking flower, exhibiting wide variability in color. Most flowers are a yellow-green with a large purple spot on the lip. However, plants in the sun and shade often differ in color, with those in the sun taking a warmer tone with browns or purples infused into the petals. This plant has become a favorite of collectors and breeders because of the ease in which it can be grown and its tolerance for colder weather. However, the Florida butterfly orchid and all other native orchids in the state are protected under state law.

Cypress domes are a microcosm of the much larger Big Cypress Swamp. While some trees grow to over 130 feet, it is not the height of the trees that give the region its name, but the amount of land the swamp occupies. The Big Cypress Swamp covers approximately 1,500 square miles along the western edge of the sawgrass prairie. Like the rest of the Everglades system, Big Cypress once extended beyond today's boundaries but development and the growth of cities such as Naples have encroached upon large areas of the swamp.

Like the sawgrass prairie, the Big Cypress Swamp is nearly flat. However, the elevation is more variable here than in the prairies, resulting in a wealth of diverse plant communities such as pinelands, prairies, hardwood hammocks, cypress swamps, and sloughs. These communities hold the highest floral diversity of any region in the Everglades. Orchids and bromeliads hang from branches while vines climb trunks in search of the sun's energy. Ferns are almost everywhere, mimicking the feel of a dense tropical rainforest. Many plants found no where else on earth grow throughout these swamps. One such orchid emerges as a single spot of white shimmering in the air deep in the heavily shadowed understory of the swamp. The ghost orchid, among Big Cypress's rarest and most intriguing plants with its brilliant white petals and large white lip, appears to dance on its long thin stem under the tiniest of breezes. When not in bloom, the ghost is only a tangle of grayish roots, inconspicuous among the vines and other plants that climb the trees of the Big Cypress Swamp.



SNAKESKIN, BROMELIAD, & FERN,
TRIPLE DOME,
EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

Epiphytes such as this fuzzywuzzy airplant (Tillandsia pruinosa) and ferns use the trunk of the cypress tree for support, but they do not generally cause harm to the tree. Instead, these non-parasitic plants harvest all of the nutrients necessary for survival and growth from the air and rainwater. While the plants do not extract nutrients or resources from the tree, they can sometimes be detrimental to a tree. For example, in strong winds or heavy rains, the plants add extra weight, often contributing to the breaking of branches or possibly even the trunk.



RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER ON BROMELIAD, PA-HAY-OKEE, EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

Red-bellied woodpeckers (Melanerpes carolinus) can be found in nearly every habitat in the Everglades, from hammocks to pinelands to cypress domes. If trees are present then red-bellied woodpeckers are likely to be present as well. The woodpeckers feed on insects and sap found on tree trunks as well as the nectar found in flowers like this bromeliad.



GREEN ANOLE IN BROMELIAD, PA-HAY-OKEE, EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

The cupped base of a bromeliad such as this stiff-leaved wild pine (Tillandsia fasciculata) serves as an entire micro-ecosystem. The cup holds rainwater where mosquitoes and other insect larvae are able to grow. Animals such as the green anole (Anolis carolinensis), which is Florida's only native anole, travel between plants looking for insects and other prey as well as seeking drinking water from the cup in times of drought.



FIVE-LINED SKINK, SHARK VALLEY, EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

The red color on this male five-lined skink (Eumeces fasciatus) signals to females that that he is in breeding condition, but studies have shown it is the width of his head that signals his condition relative to other male skinks. During the breeding season, males with larger heads are able to dominate smaller males. Unlike the rest of the year when males coexist peacefully, in spring the males are very aggressive towards other males, engaging in chases and fights. After the breeding season, the reddish color on his head fades, leaving a black and yellow pattern matching the rest of his body.

A number of animals such as the small Big Cypress fox squirrel and Everglades mink slink through the undergrowth while Florida black bears lumber through the swamp. The Florida panther, one of the best known predators of the region, prowls the swamp and the prairies of the Everglades. This sleek cat is rarely seen by visitors as the population hovers between 50 and 70 individuals in the wild. While the population has increased since the mid 1990s, the cat balances on the brink of extinction as numerous organizations from around the country try to ensure the continued existence of one of the great mammalian predators of the Everglades.

The Big Cypress Swamp and its multitude of communities hold fascinating creatures like the panther and the ghost orchid around every turn, under every rock, and in every slough. Crawfish feed in the leaves decomposing at the bottom of the swamp while iridescent five-lined skinks and camouflaged brown anoles climb the fallen trunks of cypress. Moths with wingspans of over six inches pollinate the flowers of orchids at night while black and yellow zebra butterflies flutter through the air during the day. A few majestic pond cypress that escaped the logging of the early twentieth century tower over a hundred feet into the air, throwing the world of water, plants, and animals that form the western border of the Everglades into shadow and contrast with the harsh, open sawgrass prairie.

Across the prairie to the east, a rocky ridge marks the end of the sawgrass. On this small strip of rock and sand grows another forest, full of palmettos, pines, and a multitude of tiny herbs unique to the Everglades. This is the Rocky Pinelands of the Everglades and the eastern edge of the



TRUNKS, LONG PINE KEY, EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

*If the pinelands have burned in the last five years or so, the area above the saw palmettos and below the canopy should be open except for the multitude of trunks of the slash pine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*). Pines found in the southern portion of the state are classified as a special variety, known as Dade County pine, because of their extremely dense wood. These pines are extraordinarily good for building homes and other structures because the density of the wood provides a natural termite repellent. However, the wood is so dense that it is also difficult to drive a nail into it.*

Everglades system. Slash pines as tall and straight as a ship's mast dominate the landscape. Below the canopy of pines, saw palmettos and other small shrubs only a few feet tall form the understory. Wide vistas are interrupted only by thousands of pine trunks. While the openness of the pinelands seems to invite visitors, the saw palmettos that cover the ground are virtually impenetrable. The broad palmetto leaves nearly two feet across mask sharp teeth that line the edge of the stiff stalks supporting the palm fronds and obscure the frequent rock formations that easily catch the foot of an unwary visitor.

The name, Rocky Pinelands, refers to the limestone bedrock that creeps to the surface along this eastern ridge. The limestone is pitted with solution holes, sometimes several feet deep that are nearly invisible among the low growing ground cover. Small outcroppings of sharp limestone thrust up from the earth like stubby stalagmites in a cave. At first glance, the limestone bedrock distinguishes the pinelands from any other sandy pine flatwoods throughout the southeastern United States, but closer inspection reveals minute variations in the plants of the understory as well.

The pinelands of the Everglades host a variety of small tropical herbs that, along with temperate species characteristic of the southeast, form the ground cover. When these small plants bloom, the landscape is transformed from the typically brown and green pinelands into a spectacle of the yellow, red, orange, and white flowers. Species such as pineland allamanda, pineland jacquemontia, and pineland lantana are unique to the Rocky Pinelands and distinguish the pinelands of the Everglades from other pineland communities.

The temperate pine flatwoods of the southeast United States lack the tropical plants like the West Indian lilac and man-in-the-ground vine with its brilliant red flowers. Even the slash pines are a different variety than the subspecies in the Rocky Pinelands.

The rocky ridge that lies beneath the pinelands channels the sawgrass prairies to the southwest towards Florida Bay. Before the water reaches the bay, it must travel through the extensive mangrove forests of the southwest coast, a transitional environment between the wet freshwater prairies and the saltwater Florida Bay. The sawgrass prairies drain into a dozen or so small rivers and an abundance of small streams as they approach the coast. Here the distinction between land and water blurs. Inland, these rivers are shallow, many impassable during the dry season, but as the water approaches the coast, the channels deepen considerably and the influence of the Gulf of Mexico and Florida Bay becomes more pronounced. Salinity increases, allowing marine fish to thrive; tides rise and fall, exposing mudflats, further blurring the line between land and water. The matrix of tree islands and prairies yields to a maze of gracefully arching roots of the red mangrove which cover the bank. These prop roots, as well as those dropping from overhead branches, support the trees through the violent hurricanes that often lash the coasts of the tropics.

A yellow mangrove leaf falls into the water and slowly sinks to the bottom. This single, waxy leaf provides nourishment for microscopic organisms that float in the water column. These tiny organisms are prey for small minnows which in turn are eaten by larger fish. While this single yellow leaf supports an ecosystem below the tree, it actually is a survival mechanism

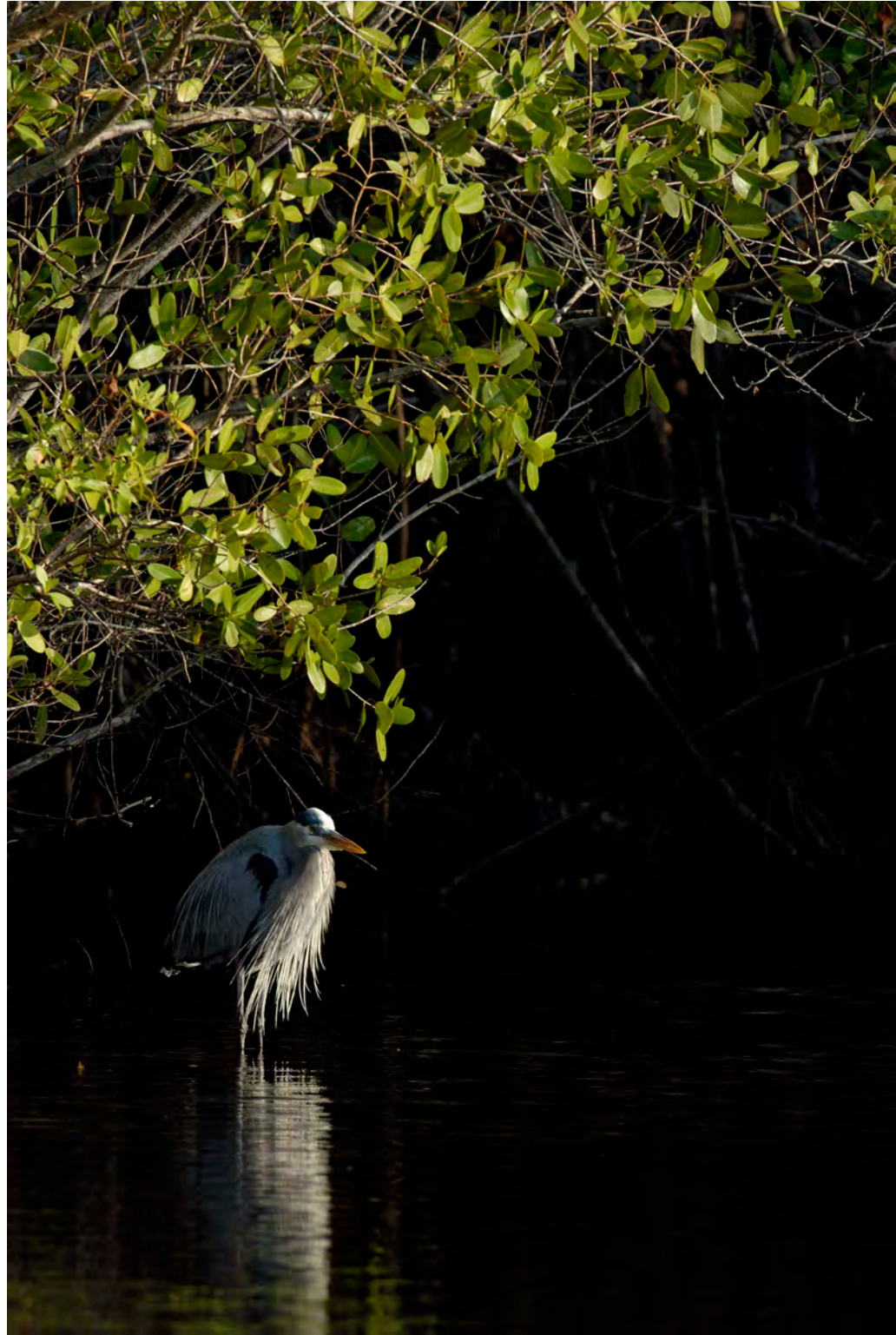


FINGERS OF THE MANGROVES, COOT BAY, EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

The prop roots of red mangroves contribute to the foundation and growth of small islands in Florida Bay. The prop roots interfere with the water currents slowing them down. As current speeds are reduced, particles such as sand and silt that are being carried along settle out. While it may take years, or even decades, the constant settling of sand and silt, facilitated by the mangroves, slowly allows the islands to expand outward into the water.

GREAT BLUE ALONG BANK,
MRAZEK POND,
EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

Egrets and herons, such as this great blue heron (Ardea herodias), are common sights along the mangrove-covered banks of tidal creeks and pools throughout the coastal Everglades. Here their prey is abundant among the estuaries of the mangrove roots. Rather than continuously probing the mud like an ibis, the great blue heron prefers to sit motionlessly and wait for a minnow or other prey item to swim within striking distance. Typical prey includes small fish but great blue herons are opportunistic and have been known to take large fish, snakes, turtles, young birds, and baby alligators.





EYE OF THE NIGHT HERON,
LOOP ROAD,
BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE

Hérons and egrets that either sit and wait for their food or slowly stalk their prey must have exceptional eyesight to see small minnows and invertebrates. Herons' eyes are located on the side of their head, slightly facing forward. This allows for a wide field of view, but only a narrow band of binocular vision straight ahead. This wide field of vision allows birds to spot their prey and predators anywhere to either side, while their forward binocular vision allows for precise depth perception and accurate striking.

for the tree itself. As roots take up salt water from the tidal creek, the tree removes the salt from the water and stores it in its leaves. As the concentration of salt rises in the leaf, it dies and is dropped into the creek, disposing of excess salt as well as supporting a diverse estuary of marine life.

Among the roots, fallen leaves, and branches, small fish take shelter from predators. These are the breeding grounds of hundreds of marine fish that patrol the mudflats and deeper waters just offshore. Small shrimp and crabs can be seen crawling and swimming among the oysters and barnacles that cling to the roots of the mangroves. Snapper feed on small minnows and shrimp while a snook, the elusive target of the sports fisherman, strikes the surface of the water, sending a spray of small finger mullet into the air. A bull shark cruises down the channel just beyond the edge of the mangrove as she heads to the open water of Florida Bay.

Florida Bay is the final link in the chain of interconnected environments that constitute the Florida Everglades. Like every other environment in this system, it is intricately linked to the others by the flow of water, and here the freshwater drains into the sea. Throughout the bay, small islands of mangroves dot the horizon; birds fly back and forth from the mainland to the islands to feed or nest. Fish spawn in the mangrove estuaries and return to the open water of the bay or even the Gulf of Mexico or Straits of Florida to live their adult life. Water from the Everglades influences the chemical composition of the bay, diluting the saltwater, adding nutrients—as well as possible pollutants and runoff. Rain from a thunderstorm over the sawgrass prairie a hundred



FLORIDA BAY DAWN, FLAMINGO, EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

Low tide at Flamingo reveals two small pilings just off the beach. These stubs are all that remain of a dock that once stood along the shore. Before the establishment of the national park, Flamingo was a lonely settlement at the extreme tip of the peninsula. This small village with a handful of residents did not even have access to the outside world by road until the 1940s and even then the road was impassible for large portions of the year. With the road came the opening of a new market for fish. Fishing became the main industry until residents were forced to move out when Everglades National Park was formed in 1947.

PAROUTIS PALM AND MOAT,
MAHOGANY HAMMOCK,
EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

Many tree islands are surrounded by a natural moat of deep water. These moats protect the hammocks from prairie fires that would destroy the canopy of hardwoods. In the past few decades a vine, old world climbing fern (Lygodium microphyllum), has been introduced to South Florida. This vine is able to cross the moat and actually grow over top of the canopy of the hammock. This is detrimental to the hammock in two ways. First, this smothers the hammock, reducing the amount of sunlight reaching the canopy, thereby killing many of the plants. Secondly, if the prairie catches fire, the vine acts as a bridge, allowing the fire to cross the moat and incinerate the hammock. Eradication efforts are underway but old world climbing fern is just one of the hundreds of exotic species that wreaks havoc on the native Everglades ecosystem.



miles to the north reaches the bay weeks or months after passing through the entirety of the Everglades system.

As the Florida peninsula sinks into Florida Bay and sawgrass prairies give way to beds of seagrass, the journey through the Everglades is complete. Water is the thread that ties each of these diverse communities together. Subtle transitions and details define the Florida Everglades. Borders between communities blur. Sawgrass creeps into tree islands. Mangroves spread through the prairies. Pinelands grow in pockets throughout the Big Cypress Swamp. Alligators and fish seek refuge from the drying prairies in sloughs while wading birds nest in willowheads and feed in the prairies. All the while, the water flows through, in, and among the Florida Everglades.



BLACK SKIMMER AND SANDPIPERS, SNAKE BIGHT, EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

*Every winter hundreds of thousands of birds migrate to Florida Bay to spend the winter. Shorebirds like the short-billed dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*) and willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) as well as black skimmers (*Rynchops niger*), terns, and gulls are common throughout the Bay anywhere mudflats are exposed. As the tide rises, dry ground becomes a commodity and birds crowd onto very small sandbars, often fighting with each other to make room. Once the birds have settled in, they will wait for the tide to fall, once again exposing the mudflats where they return to feed.*



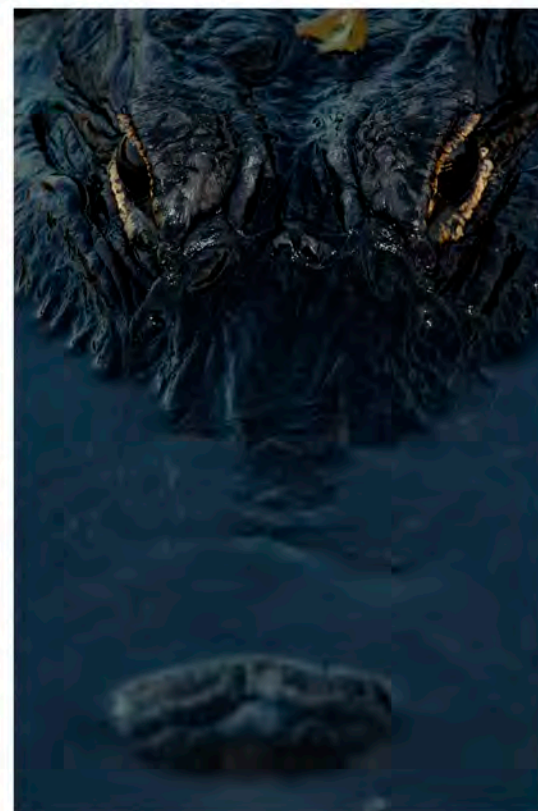
ONE OF 10,000, CHOKOLOSKEE, EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

*The southwest coast of the peninsula is scattered with thousands of small mangrove islands. On the water, this region, known as the 10,000 Islands, can be quite disorienting as every island looks like every other. Kayakers and anglers alike frequent this area, traveling from island to island camping on small chickees, covered platforms above the water, and the occasional beach. Fishermen flock to this region for the world class angling for snook (*Centropomus undecimalis*), redfish (*Sciaenops ocellatus*), and tarpon (*Megalops atlanticus*).*

THUNDERHEAD AND BRUSHFIRE,
LONG PINE KEY,
EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

The relationship between fire and thunderstorms is tenuous. Thunderstorms cause fires through lightning strikes, yet the amount of water in the vegetation and soil from previous rains determines the severity of the burn. These complex dualities are what make the Everglades such a complicated ecosystem.





“Fulton’s photographs are richly illustrative of our most exotic and astounding ecosystem. But they satisfy more than our curiosity: they are works of art—beautiful, haunting, and evoking a sense of both power and fragility, violence and serenity. His text is full of information: geological, botanical, meteorological, zoological, historical, and political. Yet it reads easily, a tribute to its intelligent organization and to the best kind of authorial modesty. Great labor and long hours obviously went into this book, but it is never laborious, never self-important.”

—Franklin Burroughs