

## **South Florida National Parks Newsletter**

Fall 2006

### **Helping Sea Turtles Survive in Biscayne National Park**

Three student interns spent the summer searching for turtle nests in Biscayne National Park as part of a new effort to protect sea turtles in South Florida.

Loggerhead turtles return to Biscayne National Park every summer to nest, but those nests rarely produce hatchlings. Raccoons have destroyed most turtle nests found in the park in recent years.

With help from the student interns, park rangers identified 12 turtle nests this summer on Elliott Key. Eleven of those nests were destroyed by predators before they could be protected. The sole remaining nest produced 62 hatchlings - a rare success the park hopes to repeat with greater frequency next season.

The park hired the students and expanded its turtle monitoring program this year with help from South Florida National Parks Trust and the state of Florida's sea turtle grants program.

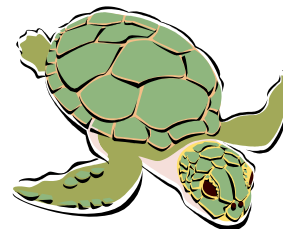
On most mornings, two of the students walked along remote park beaches, looking for signs of overnight nesting activity. Nests can be protected with wire mesh if they are found before predators arrive. The mesh is small enough to stop raccoons but large enough to allow hatchlings to escape the nest and reach the sea.

For more information about the South Florida National Parks Trust and our parent organization The National Park Foundation, visit our website:

**[www.nationalparks.org/southflorida](http://www.nationalparks.org/southflorida)**

The students also developed an outreach campaign to educate the public about sea turtles in South Florida, the dangers they face from predators, boaters and marine debris, and what people can do to help protect these marine animals.

The state of Florida's sea turtle grants program is funded with proceeds from the sale of the sea turtle license plates. For more information about the grant program, go to [www.helpingseaturtles.org](http://www.helpingseaturtles.org)



### **Watching Wildlife in Flamingo**

Everglades National Park has installed two new viewing scopes on the elevated breezeway in Flamingo overlooking Florida Bay, just in time for the return of winter wildlife. The scopes were purchased this year with grant money provided by the South Florida National Parks Trust.

## Big Cypress joins South Florida Trust as our 4<sup>th</sup> partner park

Big Cypress National Preserve has joined the South Florida National Parks Trust as one of our partner parks. The Trust voted to welcome Big Cypress as its newest park partner at a meeting in September.

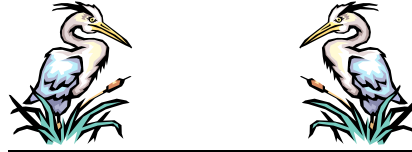
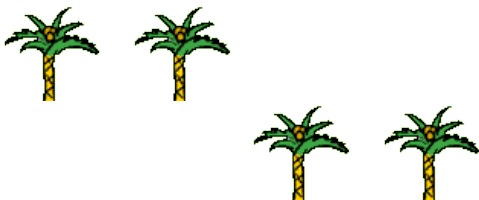
The Trust also approved a \$25,000 grant to support the preserve's education and community outreach programs in Collier County during the coming year.

With the addition of Big Cypress, the Trust now represents all four national parks in South Florida.

"We are thrilled to have Big Cypress on board as our newest partner," Trust Chairman Carlos Arazoza said. "We look forward to working with the superintendent and her staff to expand the preserve's education program."

Big Cypress will use the \$25,000 grant to expand the park's existing education and outreach programs for students and the public. Big Cypress currently provides educational programming for 6th-grade students in Collier County.

Congress established Big Cypress National Preserve in 1974 to preserve Big Cypress Swamp. The preserve covers 729,000 acres to the north and west of Everglades National Park.



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The South Florida National Parks Trust was established to improve the quality of life in South Florida by supporting the national parks that define our landscape and enrich our culture – Everglades, Biscayne and Dry Tortugas National Parks and Big Cypress National Preserve. The Trust is working to ensure that more people have an opportunity to experience and enjoy these remarkable parks by funding education programs, volunteer activities and visitor services within each park.

To learn more about the Trust or to make a contribution, contact us at:

**South Florida National Parks Trust**  
**1390 South Dixie Highway #2203**  
**Coral Gables, Florida 33146**

**Phone: 305.665.4769**

Or visit our website at:  
[www.nationalparks.org/southflorida](http://www.nationalparks.org/southflorida)

South Florida National Parks Trust presents

## Everglades After Dark

Saturday December 9, 2006

**Ever wonder what alligators do at night after all the park rangers go home?**

Join us for a moonlight tour of Everglades National Park to welcome the return of winter weather in South Florida. The tour features a ranger-led tram ride to the observation tower at Shark Valley, a buffet supper and star-gazing. Ticket sales benefit Everglades National Park and the South Florida Trust.

Minimum donation: \$50 for adults; \$25 for children.

For information and reservations, call 305-665-4769

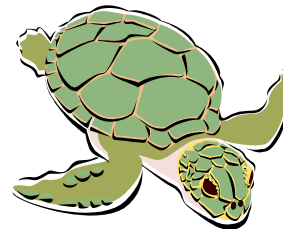
### Everglades National Park seeks input on rebuilding Flamingo



Everglades National Park will hold a public workshop on Thursday Oct. 26 in Miami to solicit ideas on how to rebuild the historic outpost of Flamingo on Florida Bay. Back-to-back hurricanes walloped the area in 2005, forcing the suspension of some services and the indefinite closing of Flamingo Lodge. The public can participate in the planning process by attending the workshop or by submitting comments in writing by November 17. The workshop will be held at Palmetto Golf Course, 9300 SW 152 Street in Miami (phone 305.238.2922). For more information about the planning process, contact Fred Herling at Everglades NP at 305.242.7704.

### Everglades Bike Club plans ride to benefit South Florida Trust

The Everglades Bicycle Club is organizing a bike ride on Sunday October 29 for the benefit of Everglades National Park and the South Florida National Parks Trust. Riders can enter the Fun Ride (25 miles), go the distance (100 miles) or opt for middle ground (rides of 41 or 62 miles). All rides start and finish at the Homestead Speedway, and all rides stop at the Schnebly Winery in the Redland. Helmets required. Entry fee is \$35 for non-club members. For more information go to [www.everglades-bicycleclub.org](http://www.everglades-bicycleclub.org)



## **South Florida Trust approves \$126,000 in New Grant Funding for four national parks in South Florida**

The South Florida National Parks Trust approved \$126,000 in new grant funding for four national parks in September. The grant awards will pay for ranger visits to local schools, a safe boating campaign in Biscayne Bay, education programs in the Big Cypress and the Florida Keys and 12 new episodes of the popular *Waterways* television program.

"South Florida residents are fortunate to have four national parks in their backyard," said Trust Chairman Carlos Arazoza. "These grants will ensure that more people - especially children - have an opportunity to learn about these parks."

The Trust has provided more than \$1 million since 2002 to its partner parks. The latest grants include:

Roving Ranger (\$23,368) - Everglades National Park will hire a park ranger to visit schools and libraries and meet with community groups to talk about the parks and the ecosystems they protect. The Trust funded this position last year with excellent results.

Education Programs at Big Cypress (\$25,000) - Big Cypress National Preserve will expand its education and outreach programming in Collier County with help from the Trust. Big Cypress joined the Trust in September as the organization's newest park partner.

Park Volunteers (\$29,225) - Biscayne National Park will hire a volunteer coordinator to develop and expand its

volunteer program. Volunteers will help the park protect coral reefs and develop a trail linking shipwrecks in the park.

Key West Visitor Center (\$18,121) - Dry Tortugas National Park will hire a student intern to staff a new multi-agency visitor center opening in Key West in January. The student intern will help to provide educational programming for students.

Safe Boating (\$6,650) - Biscayne National Park will continue its campaign to educate and inform boaters and the public about the importance of safe boating. This is the fourth grant approved by the Trust to support the safe boating campaign.

Waterways TV (\$16,640) - *Waterways Television* explores the natural wonders of South Florida in 30-minute episodes that air on cable channels throughout Florida. This grant will help to pay for 12 new episodes of the program.

Promoting our Parks (\$7,476) - Biscayne National Park will produce rack cards with information about the parks in English and Spanish for use at welcome centers along the Florida Turnpike and visitor locations.

In addition to these projects, the Trust has pledged \$26,163 to help Everglades National Park rebuild Flamingo Lodge on Florida Bay. The lodge was damaged during the 2005 hurricane season and is now closed indefinitely. The park will hold three public workshops this month to formulate a rebuilding plan for Flamingo. For information call 305-242-7704.

## What's Happening in our National Parks... news from South Florida's four national parks...

### Everglades NP installs new wayside exhibits on road to Flamingo

Everglades National Park has installed a new "interpretive trail" along the main park road to Flamingo to showcase the park's major habitats and introduce visitors to the incredible diversity of the Everglades. Nine new wayside exhibits describe the different habitats that make up the Everglades - from sawgrass sloughs and cypress domes to mangrove forests and coastal prairies - in English and Spanish. The exhibits were installed over the summer with grant money from the South Florida National Parks Trust.

The park will dedicate the new exhibits on Sunday December 3 with a ribbon cutting ceremony in the park. An estimated one million visitors a year are expected to view these exhibits. The exhibits are expected to be in place for fifteen to twenty years.

### Biscayne National Park recruits volunteers during Park Tour

Twenty-five divers explored the waters of Biscayne National Park on Saturday September 9 as part of an Experience Your Backyard trip sponsored by the Trust. The trip - the first Experience Your Backyard tour of the season - doubled as a recruitment drive for the park. The park is hoping to attract volunteers to support the coral reef nursery program and the underwater marine heritage trail, two programs supported by the Trust. For more information about the volunteer program, call 305-224-4203.



### West Miami kids explore Shark Valley, Biscayne National Park

Sixty-five kids from West Miami dodged rain drops on July 13 as they explored Shark Valley on a field trip arranged by the Trust. Forty of the younger kids rode the morning tram to the observation tower, while 25 others rode bikes along the 15-mile loop trail. A month earlier, some of the same kids visited Biscayne NP on another summer field trip organized by West Miami Recreation Director Jim Gestwicki with help from the Trust.

### Biscayne National Park publishes new map and guide in Spanish

Biscayne National Park has reprinted its popular boating map and guide in Spanish. The new guide includes a map of Biscayne Bay and information on public boat ramps, artificial reefs, native habitats and wildlife and important phone numbers. Copies of the map and guide are available in English and Spanish. To obtain a free copy, call the Trust at 305-665-4769.

### Art in the Park: Paintings by Marine Artist Carey Chen

The newest show in our Community Artist program - *Paradise for Marine Life* - features paintings by popular marine artist Carey Chen. The show opens Friday November 3 with a reception for the artist from 7 to 9 p.m.

## YOUR NATIONAL PARKS

By John Reynolds, Senior Fellow  
National Park Foundation

This country's national parks are my life. I grew up in the parks and then worked for the National Park Service for nearly forty years. I love the national parks, all 390 of them. I love the idea, the spirit embracing the national parks. It is truly an American idea, and it has spread all over the world.

Have you ever stopped and thought about what these parks mean to you?

Yellowstone became the nation's (and the world's) first national park in 1872. Several others — including Yosemite — followed in quick succession. Then, 90 years ago, Congress created the National Park Service to preserve these places "unimpaired" for all time for "future generations" (you and I and our kids and their kids) for their "enjoyment."

If I could propose two thoughts, two ideas to consider, this is what they would be: First, the 390 parks in the National Park System are yours to enjoy. They are places to learn great stories about what we value most in our nation. Visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov) for a quick and enticing wander. Look for the differences first. Most of these parks preserve more than great landscapes. Far more often, they are places that reflect our common history and genius, places like Nez Perce, New Bedford Whaling, Brown v. Board of Education and Manzanar. What a wonderful heritage we share!

Second, sit back and think for a moment about what the national parks mean to you - or what they might mean to your children as they grow up. The great value

of the National Park System is not just visual, though certainly that is part of it. For inspiration, it is hard to beat the Grand Tetons. But for sheer value, consider the 390 parks as campuses of a great learning system, a system dedicated to engaging you and your kids in what has made America what it is, and pointing to what America can be.

Immense change is taking place everywhere around us. We often long for stability, for places that stay the same. Our national parks are the real thing. They are authentic. They represent the very best about us as a nation - preserved for future generations.

In a changing world, it is essential that we share a commitment to protect the authenticity of these places, the real touchstones of America's natural world, its history and - embodied throughout - its dreams and inspiration for the future.

What the national parks need most of all is your support, your commitment to a national expectation that the integrity of these places will be maintained and that they will always be there for you and your children to visit and to learn about your nation. These parks welcome your personal stewardship through participation in philanthropic organizations such as the South Florida National Parks Trust and the National Park Foundation. These parks are important to the nation and to you. They are yours, watched over by the wonderful women and men of the National Park Service.

John Reynolds is the son of a career Park Ranger who became a Ranger himself before joining the National Park Foundation as executive vice president for park grants and strategic alliances.

The Trust thanks all those who made recent donations



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**South Florida National Parks Trust**  
**1390 South Dixie Highway, Suite 2203, Coral Gables, FL 33146**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount of Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**SUNDAY OCTOBER 29:** Bike Ride benefiting Everglades National Park and the South Florida National Parks Trust. For information go to [www.everglades-bicycleclub.org](http://www.everglades-bicycleclub.org)

**FRIDAY NOVEMBER 3:** Opening reception for "Paradise for Marine Life," an exhibition of paintings by marine artist Carey Chen, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Dante Fascell Visitor Center at Biscayne National Park in Homstead. For information, call 305-230-7275.

**SUNDAY DECEMBER 3:** Everglades National Park dedicates new wayside exhibits with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the park. For details, call 305-665-4769.

**SATURDAY DECEMBER 9:** The third annual Everglades After Dark event in Shark Valley sponsored by Everglades National Park and the South Florida National Parks Trust. For information and reservations, call 305-665-4769.

**SATURDAY JANUARY 13:** Official opening of the new \$13 million Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center in Key West. For details, call 305-809-4750.