
Everglades Overview

Material for the Quiz

More than just a National Park

- The term Everglades traditionally referred to the great sawgrass marsh system extending from Lake Okeechobee towards extreme South Florida
 - Today, we use the term Everglades to refer to the entire, hydrologically connected ecosystem of South Florida, from just south of Orlando to the Florida Keys (see following map)
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**The Greater
Everglades
Ecosystem**

Kissimmee
River Basin

Connections
to Estuaries

Corkscrew and
Big Cypress



Upper Chain
of Lakes

Lake
Okeechobee

The River of Grass
Everglades

Miami

Florida and
Biscayne Bays

Habitat Diversity

- The Everglades ecosystem contains numerous habitat types: aquatic, wetland, and upland (i.e., wet the whole year, wet some of the year, dry almost the whole year)
 - 50% of the natural areas in South Florida have been converted to agriculture or urban use
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Species Diversity

- The Everglades contains an incredible diversity of animals that use to be extremely abundant (i.e., large populations)
 - Now, 69 species are listed as federally endangered
 - Wading bird populations are 10% of what they were 100 years ago
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Draining the Everglades

- Drainage and development have drastically impacted the Everglades
 - Starting in the late 1880s, drainage canals have opened the land up for agriculture and higher-intensity development (as compared to indians that lived in South Florida for centuries)
 - Hurricanes have spurred more drainage
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Problems, problems, problems...

- Subsidence (loss) of organic soils
 - High mercury levels in wetlands
 - Exotic species on >1.5 million acres
 - Eutrophication (high nutrient levels) creating algal blooms and changing the structure (species composition) of habitats
 - 1.7 BILLION gallons of water (avg.) being released to the ocean each day
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Restoration

- Kissimmee River Restoration project underway
 - Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan
 - Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan
 - Fix the QQTD – Quantity, Quality, Timing, and Delivery of water throughout the Everglades
 - Underway now, but needs money appropriated from Congress to continue
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