

Archive: Everglades National Park Brochure 1962 Edition

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### [Change is grim: Everglades National Park environment and tourism before and after](#)

The Everglades National Park brochure (1962) made by the United States National Park Service offers a detailed insight into the reality of tourism and the environment surrounding the Everglades National Park, which was established to protect a unique environment. As the degradation of the Everglades has been a tragic issue for many years and restoration is finally starting to be put into action (Blake 409), it is important for any individual who cares for the environment and their communities to look back and experience the urgency of the situation and gain a new perspective on the issue and understand why the founders chose preservation as they did.

### [History of the Park](#)

The Everglades National Park was created to protect the natural environment of the Everglades and its native species. By the time it was established in 1947, Florida was a place where people all over the country were migrating. The promise of work and urbanization were enticing to many, along with the great opportunities for the agriculture of sugar and oranges. The Everglades were continuously being drained in favor of projects like railways and canals, and resources were being sucked out of the Everglades more than ever before without replenishment. The environmentalists started getting concerned about this rapid erasure of wildlife and imbalance in the delicate ecosystem of the Everglades. Notably, Ernest F. Coe and Marjory Stoneman Douglas contributed hugely to the establishment of the park with their works and leadership. Ernest F. Coe was the founder of the Everglades National Park Association which played a massive role in persuading Congress into acquiring Everglades land and protecting it.

Douglas actively participated in the committee and spread awareness through her book which was published in the same year the park was opened, called *Everglades: River of Grass*. The book's descriptions of the Everglades as an alive, flowing river instead of a worthless unlivable swamp convinced people of its unique biodiversity, and the accounts of how man's actions were harming and destroying the ecosystem highlighted why it had to be protected.

A 1962 brochure [produced by the National Park Service] about the Everglades National Park contains a wealth of in-depth knowledge about the Everglades. In the brochure, some additional information regarding the history is also provided. Under the "THE HISTORY OF THE LAND" heading, the geologic past is highlighted in a narrative manner, making it compelling to the casual reader. The various layers of the Everglades rock are described, starting with the igneous rock deep underground which is covered by sedimentary rock and the upper layers are limestone and Miami oolite. The section ends by emphasizing the importance of the limestone to the wildlife, such as by stating, "they play a major role in determining the nature of the plant communities and related animal communities that make up the landscape" (page 23). This detailed description shows the appreciation of the author(s) towards the Everglades and its history and origin. This brochure is clearly designed to make the visitor have a better understanding of the Everglades beyond just the surface level of recreation or enjoyment.

### Everglades Restoration

The Everglades National Park was established as an effort to protect the Everglades' natural ecosystem, however, preserving only part of a rich ecosystem hardly guaranteed its safety from the actions of man. By the 2000s, 50% of the original Everglades had been urbanized, and most of the rest converted and subverted into canals and waterways with artificial and induced water flow. In the article, *Lessons from the Everglades*, the author remarks, "For the most part,

the history of water management is characterized by a series of events that were perceived as crises. Each crisis precipitated actions (or a series of actions) that resulted in new management strategies” (Gunderson 67), implying that these plans were based mostly on meeting short-time needs and averting immediate crises and the consideration of long-lasting effects was not taken properly. With the passage and increase of population, the neglect continued. The quality of the freshwater had deteriorated due to pollution by excess phosphorus and mercury in all sources, be it groundwater or surface water (Pruitt, L. Lynn, and J. McAlister 4). To combat the imminent doom of the Everglades, the federal government joined with state, regional and tribal organizations under the Everglades Restoration Plan to protect water and environmental quality while still meeting the water needs of those who live in the area. The plan was approved by congress in 2000 (Alles 22). The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan or CERP has many stages and focuses on different parts of the Everglades, a point of interest is the plan for the Everglades National Park. Twenty miles (32 km) of Tamiami Trail (U.S. Route 41) will be rebuilt with additional bridges and culverts to allow sheet flow into Everglades National Park (Pruitt, L. Lynn, and Ian J. McAlister 4). This would repair the damage done by years of excessive water drainage and lack of refill of water flow on time since 1970 (Gunderson 64). The restoration of the pristine environment and scenery of the Everglades would undoubtedly increase tourism and the public’s admiration and would be a huge victory for environmentalists.

### Wildlife

The Everglades has always hosted numerous species of flora and fauna because of its amiable climate and unique ecosystem and in the park, the presence of birds especially is a great tourist attraction. It has been home to storks, alligators, panthers, wading birds and migratory waterfowl, numerous fisheries, and diverse organisms. The flights of thousands of migratory

birds make the skies appear to be covered with thick storm clouds even in the daytime. In 1940, researchers counted 60,000 nests in a Broad River Colony (Douglas 396). Some noteworthy birds mentioned in the brochure include the park's wading birds, the egrets, Louisiana and little blue herons, and the white ibises. The wood ibis is actually a stork, the lone representative of its family in the United States. In the coastal areas are many shorebirds, such as sandpipers, stilts, willets, and plovers (page 25).

These birds, according to the brochure, are “uncommon birds to add to your life list” implying that they are endangered even at this time. The rest of the section on birds explains the hunting tactics of the birds and other interesting mannerisms such as swimming or “doing a weird dance.” The birds were facing a harsh challenge around this time due to the drainage of the Everglades. The number of birds from the white ibis species and the heron reduced in the breeding grounds compared to previous years due to the lack of food, due to the reduction of the marsh. Additionally, it is documented that the number of wood storks had been affected as well, as stated in this report, “We can document that the number of Wood Storks attempting to nest decreased from 1967 to 1981-82, overall, and in the southern Everglades population (Regions I-IV) decreased by about 70%, ” (Kushlan 378). This evidence supports the brochure’s claims of the rarity of the birds. Scientists say that the removal of the birds is mainly due to man’s actions in controlling nature, such as time of water flow and destruction of habitats. It is also often seen as a sign that the environment itself is damaged in some way, as stated in *Everglades: River of Grass*, “the ability of birds to show us the consequences of our own actions is among their most important and least appreciated attributes” (Douglas 398). It can be inferred that the species of birds in the park are currently on the way to becoming extinct and the devastating change is visible if compared to the brochure and its pictures. This is undeniable evidence of degradation

to the environment of the Everglades National Park across time. Due to the Flood Control project, water was excessively drained or filled according to the whims of man ignorant to nature's own rules and this affected the birds' habitats and breeding areas greatly. The dried peripheral marsh used to be the primary source of food for many bird species but that was gone due to the Flood Control project and insufficient planning. Douglas describes the project's application as "a line drawn on a map—here will be wet, and here will be dry—foreshadowed the elimination of the peripheral marshes" (Douglas 398). This shows how something dynamic and delicate like the water cycle of an entire ecosystem was taken into man's grasp and ruined for all of the organisms in and around it, most notably the demise of the plentiful birds advertised in the brochure.

#### Current situation

Although the CERP agreement showed great promise for the future of the Everglades in theory, the reality was quite different and the efforts of the founders of the park and its supporters were continuously being challenged and undone. The imminent problem is the phosphorus levels of the water in the park. Native and rare plant species to the park are adapted to low levels of phosphorus and water with even a small amount of excess can dramatically change the ecology. A prominent threat to these plants are invasive species such as cattails which outgrow and push the native plants out of their habitats. However, the plan to reduce water pollution has been delayed due to political ties of Florida with the sugar cane industries, and the thirst for further economic stimulation is in this case outweighing the importance of the delicate environment of one of the only protected parts of the Everglades, the park (Alles 25). A lawsuit was enacted against the State of Florida, but the sugar farmers were not discouraged. According to Blake, "the farmers preferred to duke it out in court, ultimately spending several million dollars of the

public's tax money challenging the lawsuit" (Blake 389). The elevation of the Tamiami Trail seems to have found better success and is set to finish in 2024 (fdotmiamidade.com). However, experts worry that even if the necessary water is directed to the Everglades to sustain the park, it will only cause more harm than good if the water is polluted.

The Everglades National Park painted in the 1962 brochure is indeed quite different from the state of the park in reality, and it is worth wondering whether the change went according to the plans of the environmentalists who founded the park. Ernest F. Coe was known to integrate himself deeply into the Everglades, even though it was a "muck" or "wasteland," and fell in love with the "great empire of solitude." His original plan for the park was to include areas to the north he deemed crucial for water to supply the habitat of the southern area, however, this plan was not honored, to his great frustration. Douglas was equally a great enthusiast of the Everglades and was dubbed the "mother" of the Everglades. In *Everglades: River of Grass*, she argues that an environment can not be stable nor sustained without preserving all of its individual components, and harm to one layer is detrimental to the environment as a whole. In the epilogue of the book, she laments the loss of the wildlife species and the deterioration of water of the park and although the ending of the book is bittersweet, the devastation can be felt.

The brochure serves as a grim reminder to the politicians and environmentalists of the current time of what the Everglades National Park could have been and also a sliver of hope of an image the park can potentially be again one day.

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