

Definitive Destination

Everglades National Park Florida

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Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak. Nov. 19, 2005.



Above: Long Pine Key. Jan. 8, 2005.

Below: Florida Leafwing. Jan. 12, 2008.

Everglades National Park

(Park), one of the crown jewels of the National Park system, sprawls across the southern tip of Florida, with portions of the Park in Miami-Dade, Collier and Monroe Counties. The Park maintains a myriad of unique habitats and an astonishing array of butterfly species. Before we explore the Park and its diversity, let's first step back in time to see just how close we came to losing this wondrous place altogether.

The earliest Native American tribes known to inhabit the Everglades disappeared shortly after the Spanish arrived in Florida, succumbing to disease, warfare and slavery. In the early 1800s, escaping slaves, and Indians from throughout Florida, including the Miccosukee, formed the area's Seminole Nation within much of what is today known as the northern Everglades. These various

groups lived in relative isolation within the Everglades until early in the twentieth century, when a population boom, one that continues to this day, took hold throughout southern Florida.

A fact seemingly lost on many of those new Floridian pioneers was that the Everglades are, for the most part, a floodplain, lying in many places at or certainly not much above sea level. Mangroves, whose intricate networks of roots serve to protect the coastal areas from storm surge and erosion, were viewed as unsightly — and worse yet they were blocking the ocean view. Thus, most landscaping throughout the coastal regions of southern Florida focused on removal of mangroves and replacing them with shallow rooted ornamental species, such as palms.



Everglades National Park harbors the largest remaining stand of globally endangered pine rockland habitat. Pineland croton (*croton linearis*), a plant endemic to this habitat, is the caterpillar foodplant for two very different butterflies. Both Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak and Florida Leafwing are imperiled. While other populations of Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak exist throughout the West Indies, Florida Leafwing is a United States endemic and is one of the very few full species that is endangered in the United States.