# Canoeing in Everglades NP Dave Burt & Mary Ellen Holmes 11/22/22 for Poudre Paddlers

- 1. Getting there: Fly to Miami or Ft. Lauderdale
- 2. Renting a car
- 3. Renting or borrowing a canoe
- 4. Reserving hotel and/or hostel (or campsite)
- 5. Taking or getting camping gear
- 6. Planning route(s), reserving sites
- 7. Potential hazards
- 8. Other activities
- 9. Sources & links
- 10. Pictures from trips
- 11. Appendix: Accounts of 3 o/n trips + lists

# 1. Getting to S. Florida

1. Fly to Miami (MIA)

Frontier (from \$88 RT)

Spirit (from \$88 RT)

Southwest (from \$188 RT)

2. Fly to Ft. Lauderdale (FLL)

Spirit (from \$96 RT)

Frontier (from \$138 RT)

Southwest (from \$252 RT)

## 2. Renting a car

- Usually need a weekly rental, even if much of the week you will be parked while canoeing & camping
- Prices on a recent Expedia search started at \$141, with more for a bigger car, insurance, toll coverage and/or a name brand rental agency
- Florida City is 66 mi from FLL & 43 mi from MIA via expressways. Florida City or Homestead, at E. end of park, is probably where you want to spend your first night. Everglades City is at W. end of park (damaged by Hurricane Ian).

### 3. Renting a canoe

- National Park Service (Flamingo Adventures, concessionaire): \$20 for 2 h, \$38 for 8 h, \$60 for 24 h, \$420 for week
- Garl's Coastal Kayaking (Homestead): Rent tandem kayaks for \$230 per week, also rent camping equipment
- Everglades Adventures (Everglades City):
   \$49/day (\$343/wk) for canoe, also do kayaks
- If staying at Hoosville Hostel, cheaper rentals?

# 4. Reserving a hotel

- Last Feb. we stayed in Floridian Hotel,
  Homestead, & were happy with it. (Free
  breakfast & WiFi, ~\$70/night) There are many
  other comparable choices nearby.
- Many years ago we stayed at the Hoosville Hostel, Florida City (in a previous incarnation as Everglades International Hostel), enjoyed it, & rented a relatively cheap canoe & bicycles from them (no prices on current web site). Bed prices range from \$32.52 for dorm bed to \$69.03 for large private room w. queen bed.

# 5. Camping gear

- Take camping gear in luggage (minimize as if backpacking, take no stove fuel)
- Buy some in thrift stores on way S from Miami (via US1 instead of FL Turnpike). Likely to find bedding, yoga mats, pots, utensils. May even find tent. Can donate again afterwards.
- Rent at high prices (e.g., Garl's Coastal Kayaking)
- Borrow from relatives or friends
- Useful extras: binoculars, big zoom camera

# 6. Planning routes, reserving sites (confusing: only available 24 h in advance)

Refer to NPS website for trails

https://www.nps.gov/ever/planyourvisit/canoe-and-kayak-trails.htm

- Day trips we have done: 9 Mile Pond, Buttonwood Canal, others long ago
- Overnight trips we have done: Gulf Coast loop (camped at Lopez River, the Watson Place & Pavillion Key), Hell's Bay Trail (camped at Pearl Bay Chickee), Florida Bay loop (camped at Shark Point Chickee & Little Rabbit Key)
- Big trip: 99 mile Wilderness Waterway (>8 d)

#### 7. Potential hazards

- GETTING LOST: Little or no cell phone service, want GPS; we made do with maps & compass
- Headwinds, waves/swells, T-storms, sun (temperatures 60s to low 80s in winter)
- Tides

Adverse currents

Low tide: scraping bottom, long carry

- Hurricane damage (e.g., lan, Nicole this year)
- Mosquitoes (April & later are deadly)
- Alligators +/-, thirsty raccoons

#### 8. Other activities

For more or better bird & alligator pictures:

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Walk Anhinga Trail (0.8 mi)
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- Cycle Shark Valley loop (15 mi)
- Drive Big Cypress Loop Road (24 mi)
- Key West, Dry Tortugas NP
- Snorkel in John C. Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park
- Double up w. short cruise (w. included air)
   (but usually a penalty for extending air dates)

#### 9. Sources & Links

A Paddler's Guide to Everglades National Park by Johnny Molloy, University Press of Florida, 2000, 3rd ed. 2015

Everglades National Park Map (National Geographic Trails Illustrated Map, 243)

https://www.paddleflorida.net/everglades-paddle.htm

http://www.garlscoastalkayaking.com/rentals

https://evergladesadventures.com/kayak-tours-rentals/kayak-canoe-rentals/

https://floridianhotel.com/

https://www.hoosvillehostel.com/accommodations

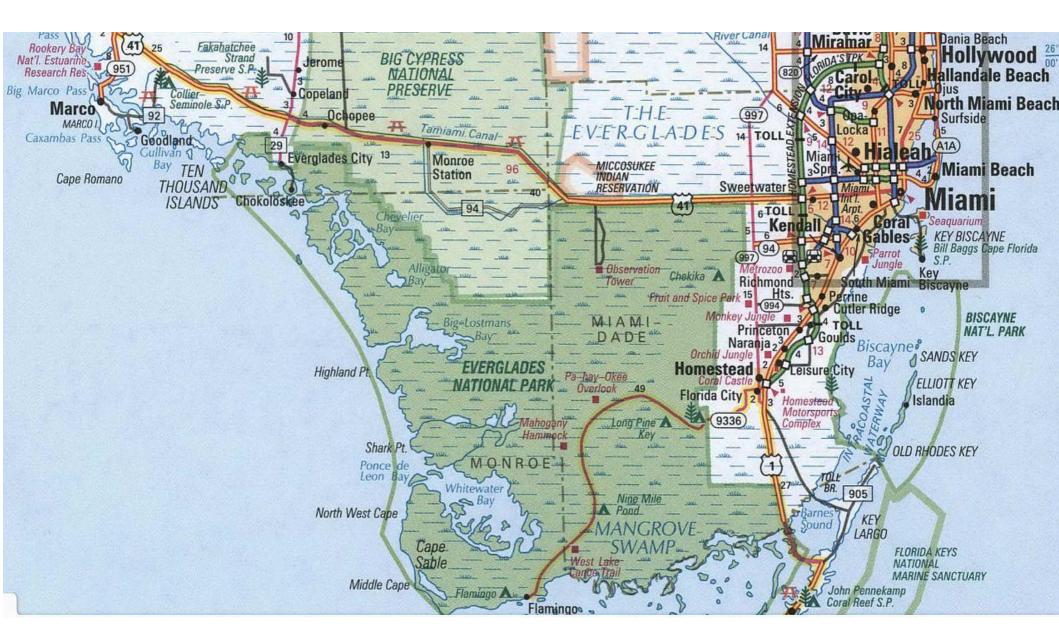
https://www.nps.gov/ever/planyourvisit/wildernesscamp.htm

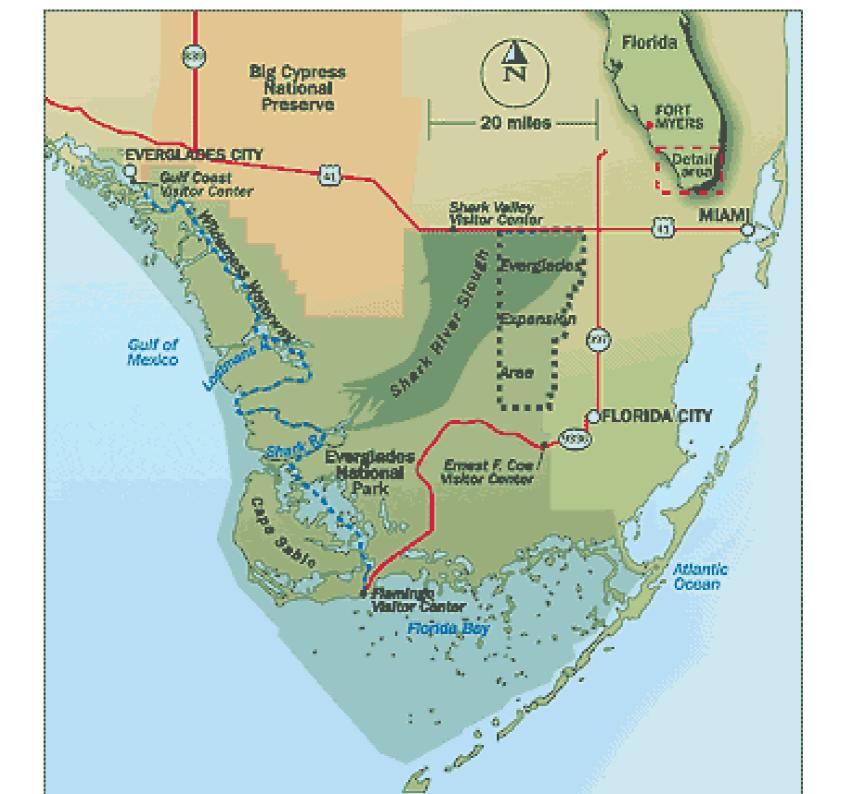
https://www.nps.gov/bicy/planyourvisit/scenic-drives.htm

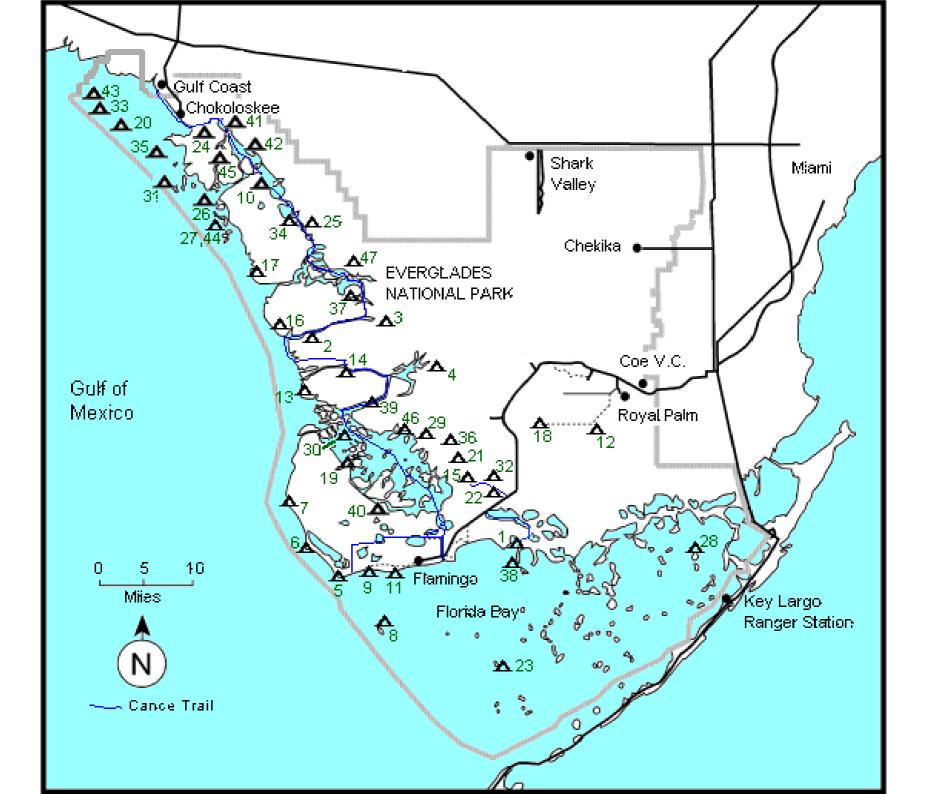
## Pictures from trips

- 2004: Day trip (Bear Lake trail, now closed)
- 2006: 4 d, 3 n from Everglades City (Flamingo had hurricane damage)
- 2012: 2 d, 1 n Hell's Bay Trail + day trip
- 2014: 3 d, 2 n on Florida Bay (swamps had too many mosquitoes)
- 2022: Day trips only
- Select pictures from all 5 trips: Anhinga Trail, Shark Valley, Big Cypress Loop Trail

# Road map for orientation

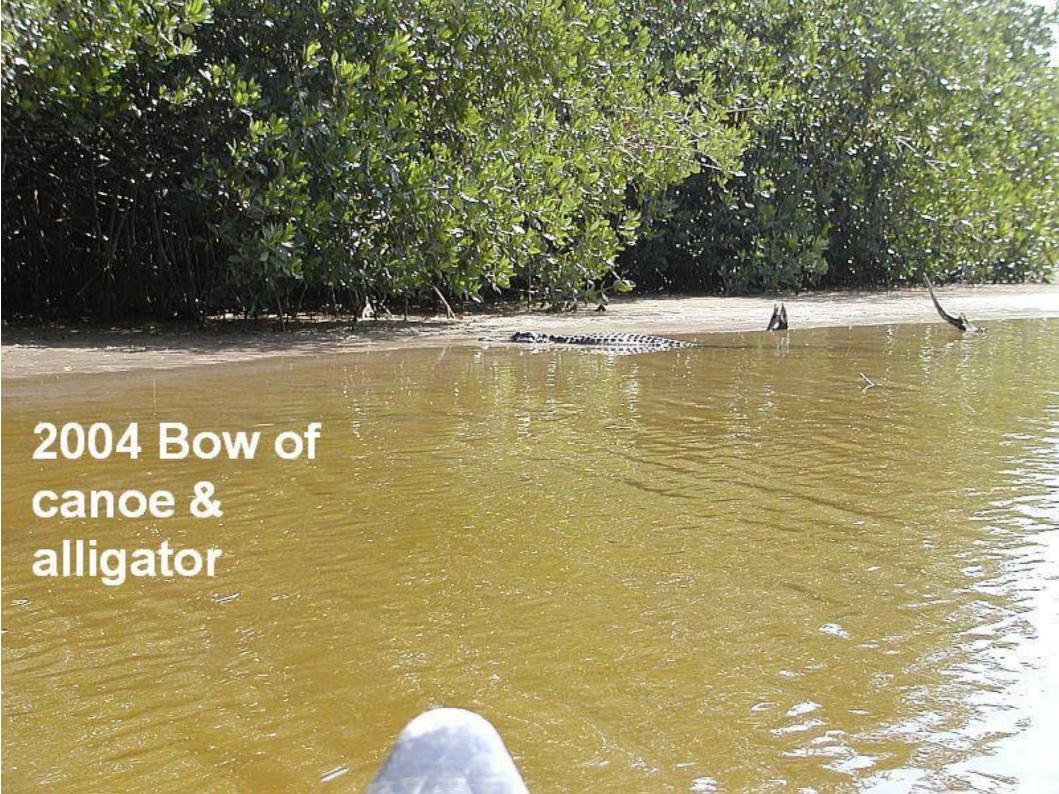










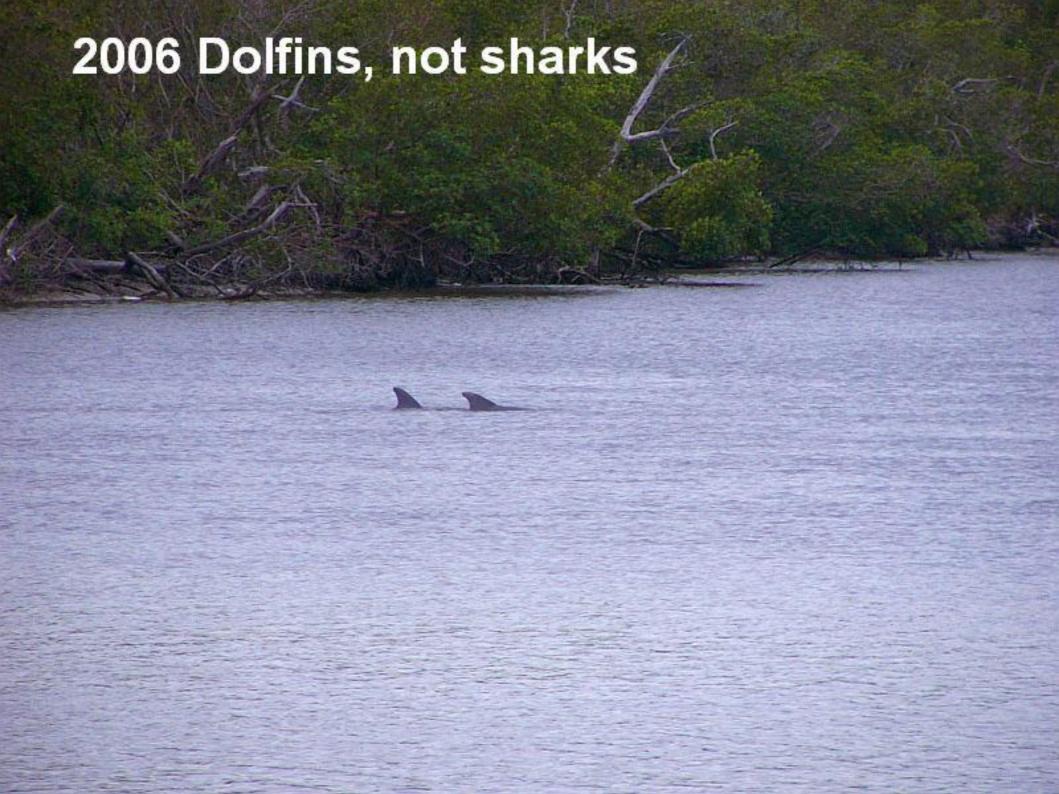












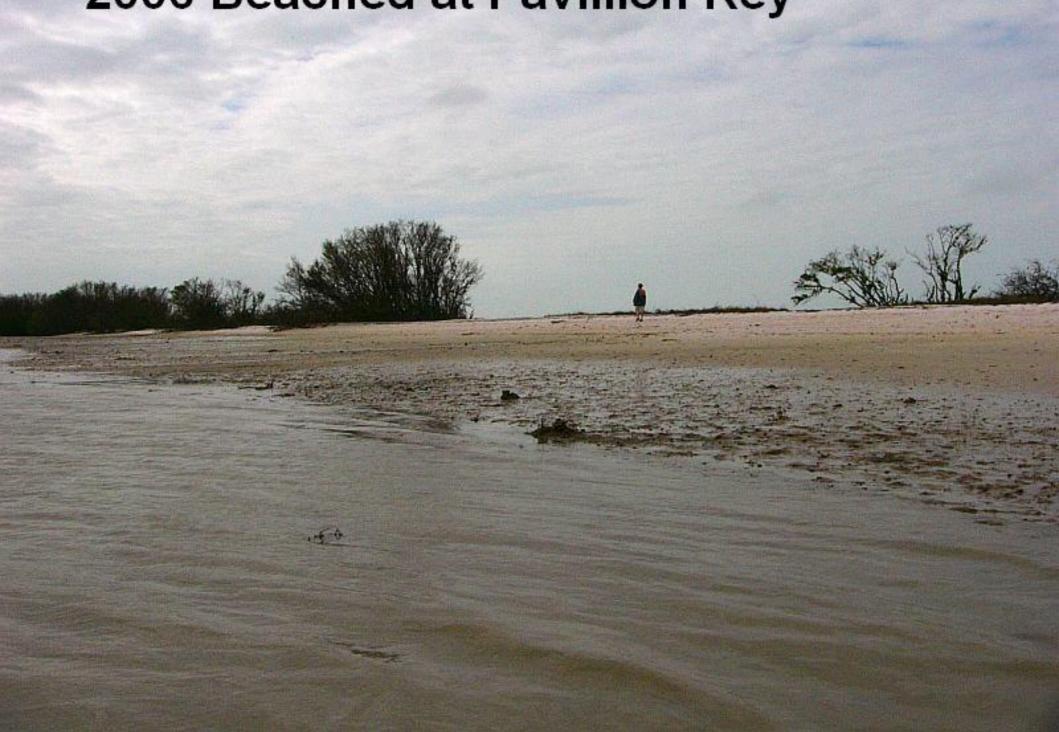


# 2006 We paddled through lots of open water

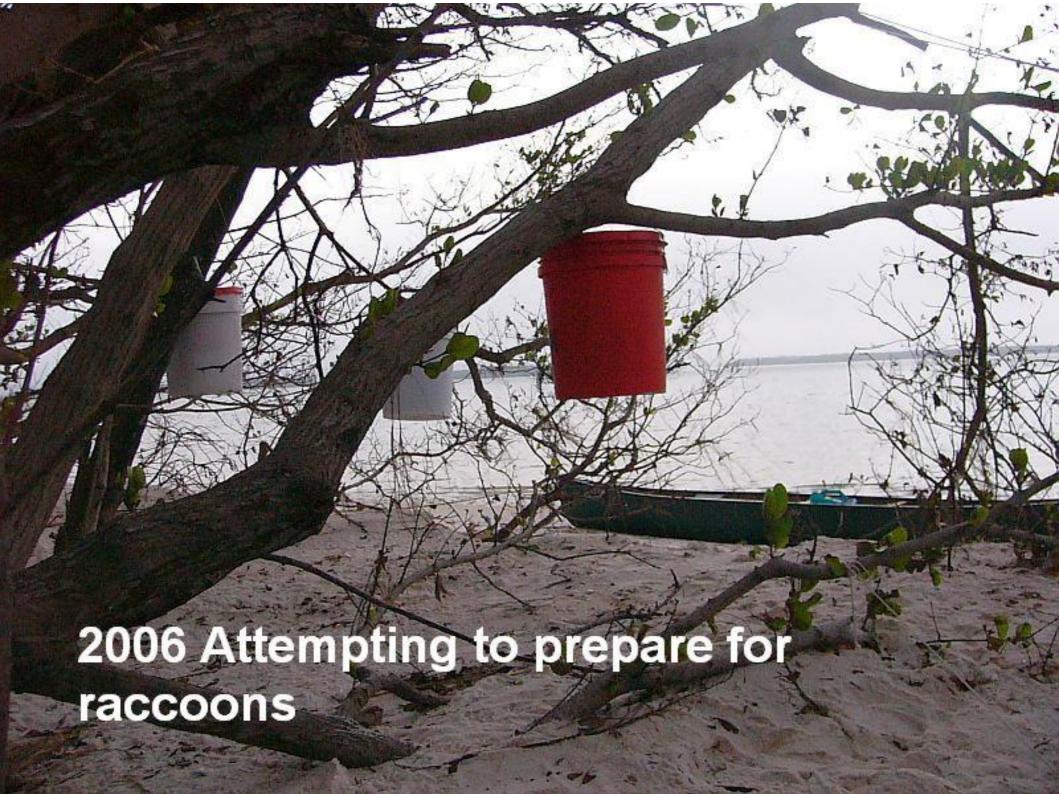




# 2006 Beached at Pavillion Key









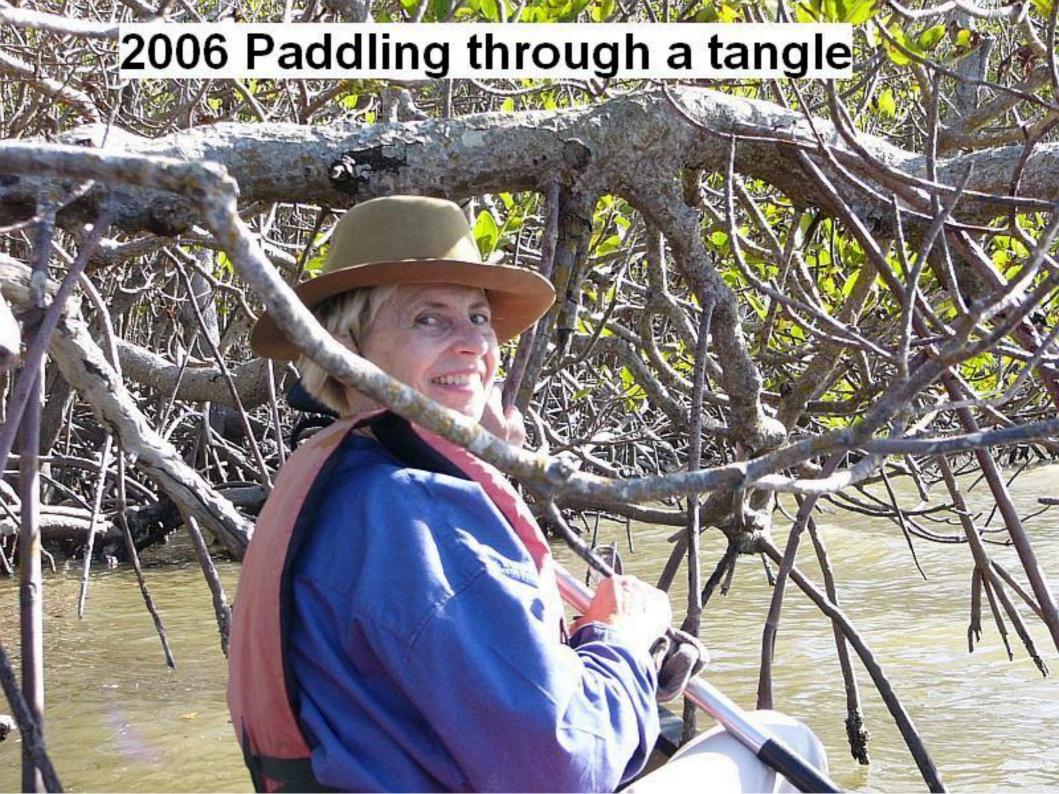




















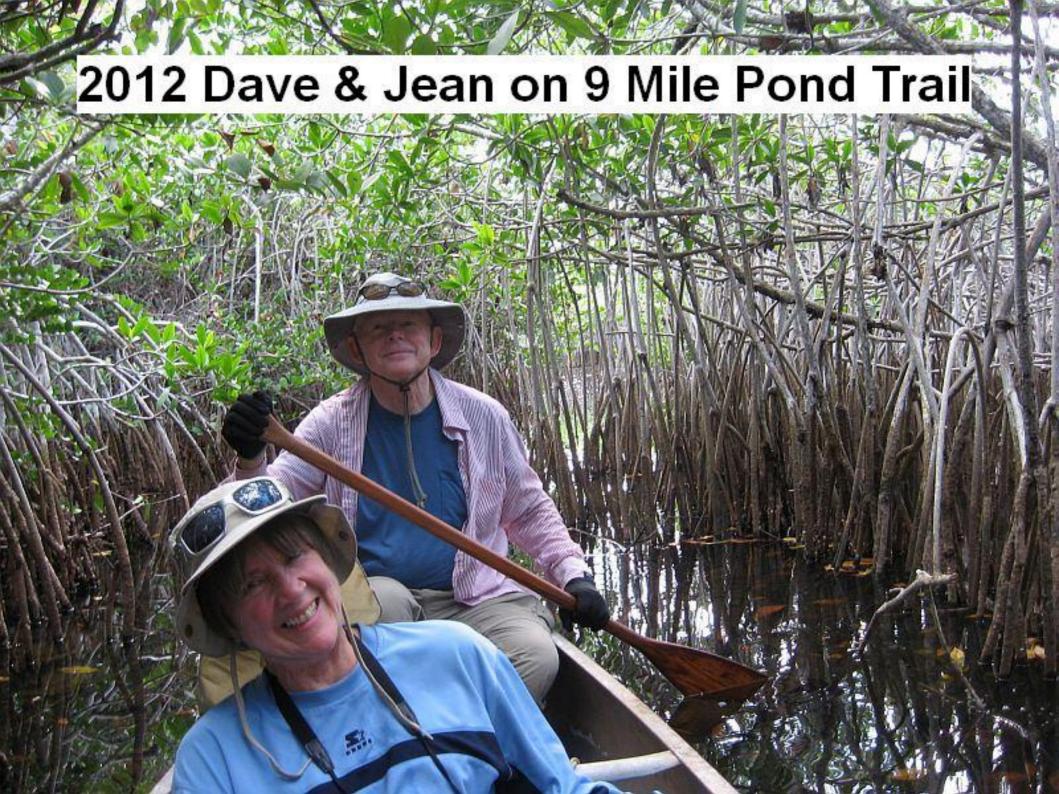


## 2012 Pearl Bay Chickee

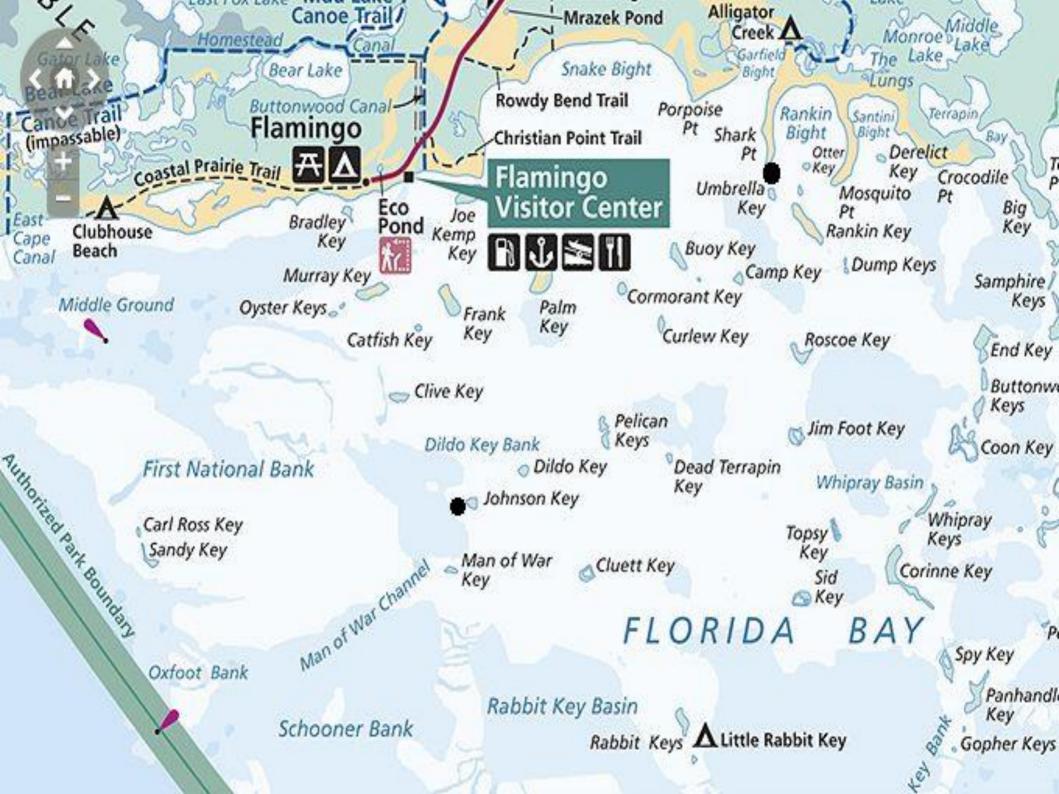




















## 2014 Little Rabbit Key facilities & dock



## 2014 Johnson Key Chickee: We were supposed to camp here, but only arrived in time for lunch























































# **Wood Stork in flight**



# Ospry guarding nest





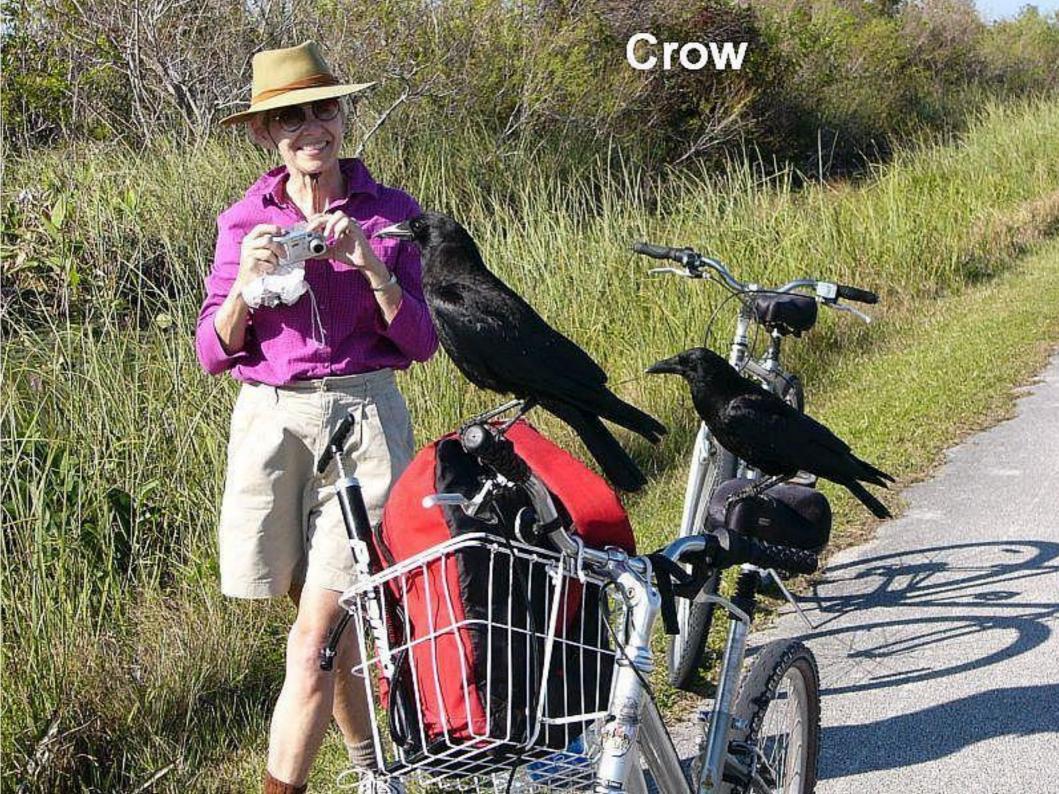












### Trams & viewing platform at Shark Valley



# View S from Shark Valley observation tower





# Appendix: some accounts of 3 trips (exerpts from Xmas letters)

1. Our trip to the Everglades in January 2006 included a 4 day, 3 night canoe trip. We stuffed our camping gear into 2 checked suitcases and rented a 17' canoe from the Everglades Youth Hostel in Florida City, where we stayed when we weren't camping. We had to drive to the west end of the park (Everglades City-1000 Islands section) to launch, since all the sites at the Flamingo (Florida City) end were still closed from fall hurricane damage. The 3rd night we had a windy island (Pavillion Key) all to ourselves, except for some voraciously thirsty raccoons. (Only fresh water is campers' water bottles and occasional rain caught in shells. Earlier sites were Lopez River and Watson's Place.) The trip also had a lot of open water, strong winds, and big waves for an open canoe, with tricky map reading to find our way among mangrove swamps that all looked the same, but at least (because of salt water) the only big animals we saw in water were dolphins and not alligators. (We saw lots of alligators elsewhere in fresher water.) As on our similar trip 2 years earlier (no camping then), we got some great bird (and alligator) pictures, especially at Shark Valley, where we again took bikes rented (cheaply) from the hostel. It was warm (highs ~80 F), but we only had a few mosquitoes (and a little light rain) while camping.

# 2. Hell's Bay trip in 2012

January 2012 was marked by our 3<sup>rd</sup> trip to Florida and the Everglades, this time accompanied by Mary Ellen's sister, Jean. Due to Jean's influence, we stayed in a hotel in Miami Beach rather than the Everglades Hostel, and spent less time in the Everglades and more time sightseeing around Miami. We borrowed a canoe from some old canoeing friends of mine from graduate school, who also had us over for dinner. (They hadn't used canoe, which has a slow leak, in years if not decades.) We did a day trip canoeing with Jean, passing right over a smallish alligator (I could have reached out and touched it, but didn't), and an overnight camping trip by ourselves to a chickee, or raised wooden platform in the middle of the swamp. It made for a hard bed with the minimal padding that fit in 2 suitcases with tent, sleeping bags, etc. There were few mosquitoes and the weather was nice, but we got our best bird and alligator pictures on a 15 mile bicycle circuit we took with Jean at Shark Valley, and on foot on the Anhinga Trail near the east entrance of the park.

# 3. Florida Bay trip in 2016

Our January 2016 Florida trip included a 3 day, 2 night canoe trip on Florida Bay, chosen because a wet fall had left more mosquitoes than usual in the swamps. We borrowed the canoe, an old Grumman, from friends I had canoed with in graduate school, and planned a triangular route. Florida Bay generated some new problems. We didn't have to worry about mosquitoes or getting lost in the mangroves, but did have to worry about tides and having to pole across shallow spots if we mistimed them, headwinds and crosswinds (all 3 days) and overcompensating for the latter, and squalls (fortunately just one). The first day we got off to a late start, almost got stuck in shallows, and barely made it to the chickee (raised camping platform) by sunset, only to find both halves already occupied by 3 sea kayakers. (We had reserved one of the halves.) We squeezed our tent in before dark. The next day we overcompensated for a cross wind (we just had a compass, no GPS), never even saw the chickee we had reserved, but fortunately found ourselves near another camping site on a small key (island), which we spotted only because another sea kayaker was there. The camping was muddy but much better than spending the night in our canoe. The final day we had an extra 4-5 miles to paddle (giving a total of 14-15), against a headwind, because of our starting too far south. So we made it to the chickee where we should have camped only in time for lunch. There we gladly accepted the offer of a motorboat tow part way (~1 mile). The motorboat could only go where the water was deep, and we still had to pole across some shallows, but we made it back to our starting point (Flamingo) before dark. The rest of the trip we did some sightseeing, including a night at Key West and a little cycling at Shark Valley. On the way back, we allowed ourselves to get bumped off our connecting flight to Denver in Atlanta in return for 600 Delta dollars each, getting seats on the next flight a few hours later.

# Everglades Back Country Camping Check List

<b>(a)</b>	drybag/s for all personal gear clothes/long sleeve white cotton shirt for sun) tevas/swamp-tromp shoes/socks, some like clean dry galoshes for camp hat with good wide brim sunglasses with neck strap sunblock (good and strong since you have no shade all day while you paddling) toilet paper/hand trowel/small Ziplocs	toes (Deep woods Off) eeums (Skim-so-soft) days paddle in the saltwater)	E #2.?	& spare)  stone/diamond board)	2
Personal	drybag/s for all personal gear clothes (hot and cold weather clothes/ tevas/swamp-tromp shoes/socks, some hat with good wide brim sunglasses with neck strap sunblock (good and strong since you h toilet paper/hand trowel/small Ziplocs head lamp	repellent repellent repellent head net/l hand lotic towels fishing lir camera/fil binocular book you	<ul> <li>Small dry box (easy quick access stuff i.e. camera/binocular</li> <li>Kitchen</li> <li>md/lg hard-sided container for all kitchen gear</li> <li>cooler/s</li> <li>water in hard-sided containers (I gallon per person per day)</li> <li>prepare all food (remove extra packaging, slice, dice, pre-co ice only lasts a few days so plan your menu accordingly</li> <li>stove (&amp; spare i.e. Sterno)</li> <li>propane/gas/fuel</li> </ul>		<ul> <li>garbage bags (empty coolers work great for trash storage and raccoon proofing)</li> <li>kitchen rags</li> <li>hand sterilizing towels</li> <li>kitchen equipment sterilizer (10% bleach solution)</li> <li>cast iron griddle</li> <li>treats (Kalus/mango salsa with scoop chips/chewing gum, peanut butter granola</li> </ul>

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