



Connecting Youth to our National Parks

Jackie Cruet and Kahlil Kettering

A fun and successful March For Parks took place on April 28, 2012 at Biscayne National Park, engaging more than 200 inner-city citizens from Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. Children and their families enjoyed an action-packed day that included fishing lessons, canoe rides, short films, and a boat ride on Biscayne Bay that featured an encounter with a Lancelot Jones re-enactor. Each activity featured an interactive educational component where participants learned about sustainable fishing practices, the wingspan and wing beats of local birds, skeleton identification of native and invasive fish, conservation efforts affecting the Everglades ecosystem, and the Jones family story that exemplifies the commitment of one Black American family to protect and preserve the natural beauty of Biscayne Bay forever. Through the generous support of The Batchelor Foundation, NPCA worked with National Park Service staff, South Florida Community Partners, and other community-based groups to provide free round-trip transportation, lunch, and activities to these first-time park visitors. The event proved a rich and rewarding national park experience for all.

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Florida Celebrates First Annual Everglades Day April 7th

Dawn Shirreffs

The Everglades is widely recognized as one of the world's most unique and spectacular natural wonders.

The State of Florida has a compelling interest in protecting and restoring the Everglades due to its tremendous ecological and economic value. In 2012, Florida lawmakers once again showed that restoring America's Everglades continues to be a bipartisan priority by establishing an annual Everglades Day.

Although national parks are managed by the federal government, state and local governments can have enormous impacts on them. In Florida, the volatile political climate and term limits have resulted in high turnover rates of decision makers at all levels and increased the need for policy-maker education. In order to galvanize stakeholders, agencies, and partners in support of Everglades restoration, NPCA's Sun Coast Region initiated legislation establishing an annual "Everglades Day" to help make Everglades and Biscayne National Parks a priority for lawmakers. We are thrilled to announce Governor Rick Scott and Florida lawmakers reaffirmed Florida's commitment to Everglades restoration and signed into law NPCA's bill creating this annual observance to take place each

April 7th, in honor of Everglades' activist Marjory Stoneman Douglas's birthday.

You can help elevate awareness and ensure the Everglades ecosystem remains a top priority for elected officials and all Floridians by joining us to celebrate the first annual Everglades Day in Tallahassee in April 2013. Together we can educate lawmakers and secure critical Everglades funding. For more information, contact Dawn Shirreffs at dshirreffs@npca.org.



Above: Everglades waters meandering to Gulf Coast ©Mac Stone **Top:** White Pelicans wintering in Everglades National Park ©Mac Stone

FIELD REPORT

Winter 2013

Florida, Louisiana, Coastal Mississippi,
the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
and the U.S. Virgin Islands

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NPCA is America's only private, nonprofit advocacy organization solely dedicated to protecting and preserving the National Park System. NPCA was founded in 1919 and today has over 330,000 members. Membership benefits include this newsletter, the quarterly National Parks magazine and more.

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Director's Letter by John Adornato, III

Another exciting year has come to pass in the Sun Coast region, from the successful authorization of the first annual Everglades Day, to the protections for the Florida Panther, to the creation of a ranger academy in Miami; we remain busy ensuring our parks are protected for future generations. Now that the election has passed, NPCA will focus on educating new members of the House and Senate about the needs of America's best idea—the National Park System.

NPCA needs your sustained commitment to make that happen. As this field report goes to print, it's uncertain if

America will run off a fiscal cliff, resulting in austere budget cuts across the board—including the National Park Service. If Congress doesn't address the nation's budget deficit by January, every national park will experience serious cuts which may require closing parks for hours, days,

and even entire seasons. The National Park Service may be ordered to cut all 9,200 seasonal law enforcement and interpretive rangers and other seasonal staff, which would greatly diminish visitors' experience and would not resolve this fiscal issue. No one is certain of the final outcome but we are certain America's national parks and the 258,000 jobs they create in and around our parks must be protected.

NPCA is working on your behalf to ensure national parks are kept open for visitors and the local economies these visitors support. Your elected officials need to hear your voice on this important issue. As America's

voice for our national parks, NPCA depends on your continued financial and vocal support so that we may ensure our nation's treasured spaces remain open for all. Together we will work toward a stronger and more diverse National Park Service by its Centennial Anniversary in 2016.



Above: Sharing memories across generations, John Adornato, III with his father Paul at Yosemite National Park in 2012 ©David Bogardus

National Park Ranger Academy to Open at Miami Dade College

Jackie Crucet

Local residents now have the opportunity to become seasonal law enforcement rangers for the National Park Service through a new program at Miami Dade College (MDC) spurred on by NPCA. The Ranger Academy is an intensive 12-week program and the only academy south of North Carolina. Completion of this program enables graduates to be hired by the National Park Service on a seasonal basis at any national park in the country.

Miami Dade College is the largest and most diverse college in the nation. Housing this program at MDC will help diversify the National Park Service as a whole and will help address retention issues in national parks located in south Florida and throughout the Caribbean.

“Seasonal rangers typically come from out West, attracted by Florida’s winter weather.” says Chief Ranger Bonnie Foist of Everglades National Park. “We teach them how to navigate the tricky waters of Florida Bay and the backcountry but once summer temperatures and mosquitoes arrive, we find they high-tail it back to Yellowstone or Zion. We need to recruit locally, so the rangers we train already know what to expect in the summer. We are also seeking rangers with multiple language skills to better reflect local communities and communicate with all our visitors.”

This long-awaited program is the result of a focused joint effort by NPCA Sun Coast Regional staff and the Florida Bay Stewardship Fund Steering Committee, who for more than seven years have been working to

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Seasonal Ranger
TODAY!**

Miami Dade College
School of Justice
Dr. Hector Garcia
305.237.1326

address marine issues in the park resulting in better protection of Florida Bay and its unique fishery. The first Ranger Academy is due to open on February 25, 2013. For more information, contact Jackie Crucet at jcrucet@npca.org.

Below: Everglades National Park visitors camping on Florida Bay ©Mac Stone

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Support from Nature Valley made a second event possible. On October 13, 2012, more than 50 volunteers braved the elements to restore the Florida City Pineland Preserve—despite ominous thunder clouds and driving rain. These youth from Miami's urban core planted native species in this unique county park that still contains segments of the last remaining pine rockland habitat in Miami-Dade County. Cultivating the next generation of national parks advocates has increasingly become a priority for the Sun Coast Region. With both Everglades and Biscayne National Parks bordering the city of Miami, we have an opportunity to engage urban youth to become involved in enjoying and protecting our national parks. In the coming year, the Sun Coast Region plans to spearhead similar events to: expose urban youth to the enjoyment of our national parks; educate youth about threats facing the parks; empower youth with skills to advocate for preserving parks; and engage youth in public dialogue to ensure their voice is heard in support of parks for present and future generations.



Left: Volunteers restore local park ©Kahlil Kettering/NPCA. **Below:** Participants enjoy the waters of Biscayne National Park during the 2012 March for Parks event ©Thomas Strom/NPS

Staff Spotlight: Kahlil Kettering



MEET THE STAFF

What is your job?

As Biscayne Restoration Program Analyst for NPCA, I help ensure Everglades restoration projects directly benefitting Biscayne National Park move forward.

My work takes me beyond the physical boundaries of the park, where I help advance appropriate land use outside the park and oppose projects that would harm our national parks.

What kind of projects do you work on?

It varies. Right now, I'm working to protect Biscayne National Park from any harm the proposed expansion of Turkey Point Nuclear Power Plant, which sits right on Biscayne Bay, may cause. I've been active in protecting wetlands in Miami-Dade County from development and am continuously fighting to preserve the Urban Development Boundary line that protects the Everglades from being paved over. I work on preventing rock mining. Next to the park I keep an eye on canal operations that are based on agricultural needs and degrade the ecosystem. Our parks need to have fresh water in the right place at the right time for a healthier ecosystem, so I push to get restoration projects built and funded to make this a reality.

What is your favorite part of your job?

My favorite part of my job is sharing our national parks with people, some of whom aren't even aware these places exist. I get a lot of fulfillment in raising peoples' understanding of the natural and cultural importance of our national parks and how these places define our shared heritage. Once people are aware of our national parks, they care and want to raise their voice to help protect them for the next generation.

Above: Sitting with President Lincoln at Gettysburg National Military Park 2011 ©Merlyn Kettering

Intern Corner

Natalie Harrison contributed significantly to Sun Coast Regional work as the NPCA legal intern this past summer. A University of Miami law student, Natalie researched Florida fishing laws and reviewed the scientific literature regarding marine reserves and south Florida marine ecology. Natalie helped build

support for the establishment of a marine reserve in Biscayne National Park, which would protect part of a coral reef from fishing pressures and debris. We wish Natalie well in her educational and professional pursuits. Great job!

Are you a motivated conservationist with a love for our national parks?

Are you interested in interning at NPCA's Sun Coast Regional Office?

If so, send word to suncoast@npca.org to advocate for our national parks.

A Win for the Florida Panther in Big Cypress National Preserve

John Adornato, III

The Florida Panther is safer today as a result of NPCA's recent victory in federal district court to reinstate protections for wetlands and critical Cypress Swamp habitat in Big Cypress National Preserve, the primary home of this endangered species. The federal district court ruled against the National Park Service and its plan to nearly double the number of off-road vehicle (ORV) trails in the Bear Island section of the preserve, a section that already provides 23 miles of open ORV trails. The court supported the closure of these additional ORV trails to destructive and noisy vehicles in order to protect delicate prairies and the natural soundscape of the preserve.

ORVs crush plants under their tires, turn prairies into mud and alter water flow through these wetlands while spreading invasive plant species deep into the preserve. Further loss and fragmentation of habitat in south Florida through ORV use would be detrimental to the remaining 150 adult Florida Panthers left in the wild.

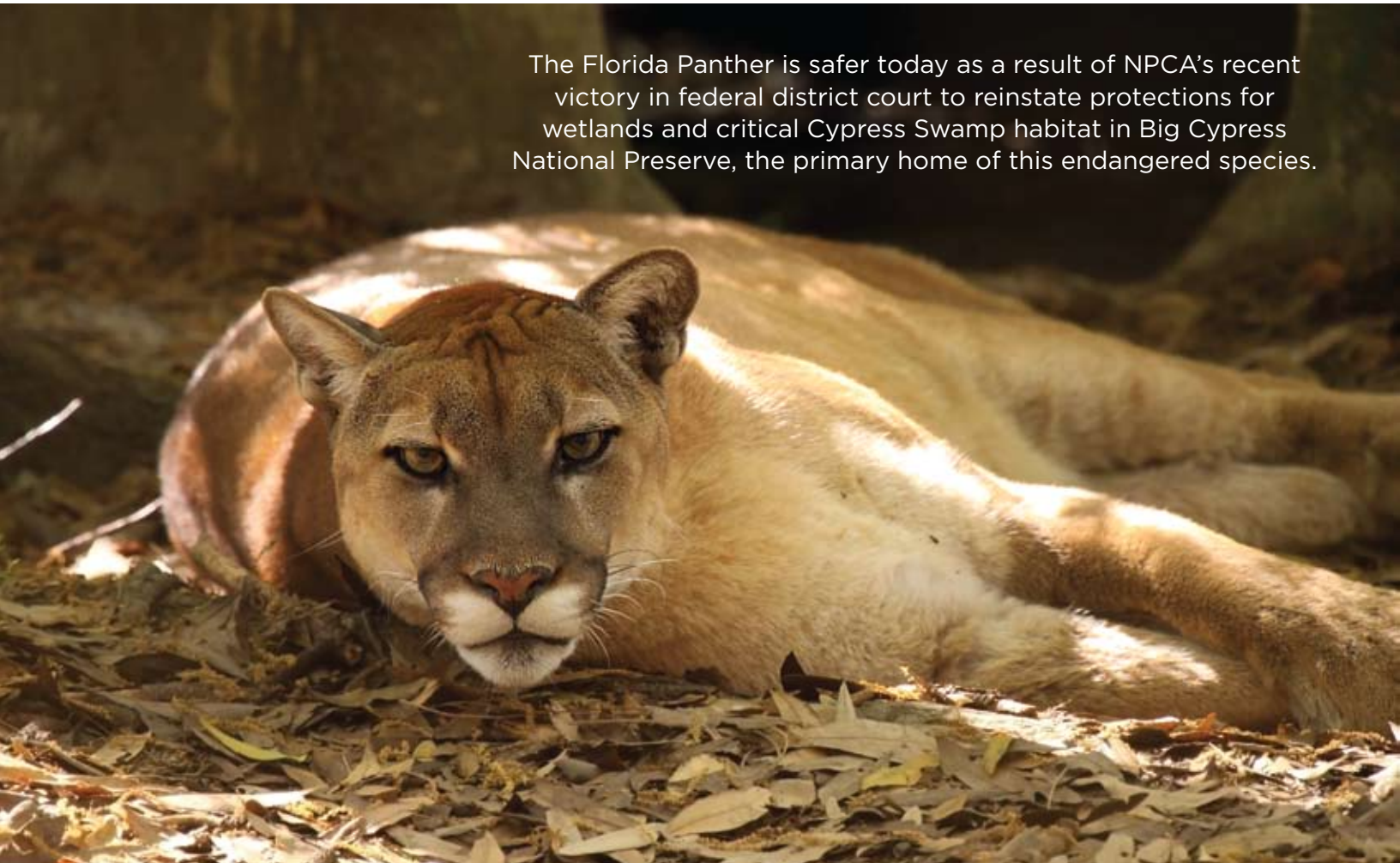


NPCA brought a second lawsuit against the National Park Service for also expanding ORV trails in the "addition lands" of the preserve, an area closed to ORV use since its incorporation into the preserve in 1989. NPCA will continue to fight for the protection of the endangered Florida Panther and native Ghost Orchid found in Big Cypress National

Preserve and its addition lands. The court is anticipated to rule on this second lawsuit in 2013.

Above: Panthers and Swamp Buggies can coexist in a responsible and controlled way ©John Adornato, III/NPCA **Below:** Florida Panther in its Big Cypress home ©Megan Lorenz/Bigstock

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Calendar of Events

28th Annual Everglades Coalition Conference

January 10-12, 2013 • The Biltmore Hotel • Coral Gables, FL

The largest annual forum for debate of Everglades conservation and restoration. NPCA will host a dinner Friday, January 11th at 6:30pm.

For information contact Dawn Shirreffs at dshirreffs@npca.org, 954.961.1280, ext. 401, or evergladescollection.org

Pythons and National Parks

January 15th, 2013 at 6pm

Pelican Landing Community Center

24501 Walden Center Drive • Bonita Springs, FL 34134

Everglades National Park Superintendent Dan Kimball and NPCA Regional Director John Adornato, III discuss efforts to address these Burmese python invaders, restoration of America's Everglades, and the National Park Service's 2016 Centennial.

Space is limited. Please RSVP by January 8th to suncoast@npca.org

Sun Coast Regional Council and Friends 10,000 Islands Tour

March 2013 (exact dates to follow) • Naples, FL

Maneuver the shallow waters of this intricate web of mangrove islands with NPCA staff and friends on a boat tour of the 10,000 Islands of Everglades National Park. If dry land is of more interest, join us later for a discussion on current efforts to protect America's national parks.

For more information, contact suncoast@npca.org

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Photo: Scenic showing Courthouse Towers and the Organ formations in Arches National Park, Utah (US) by Images/Thomas



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