Big Cypress

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Cypress
National Preserve

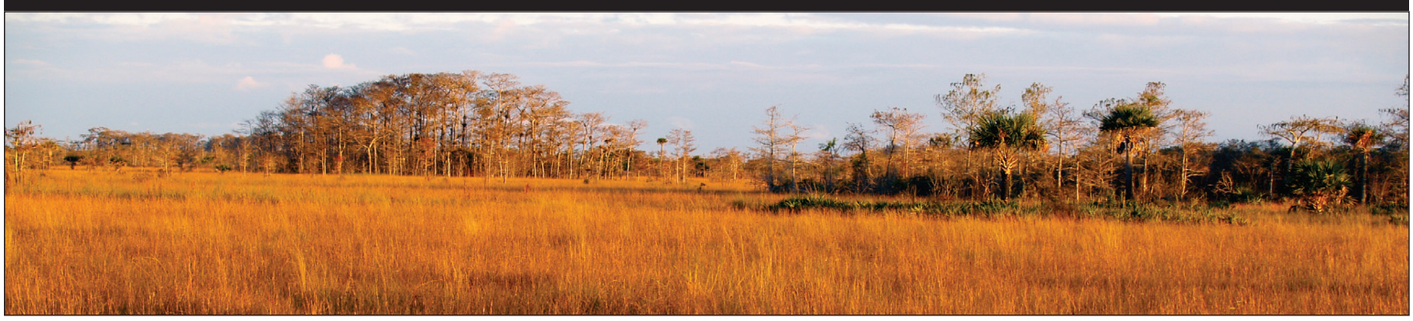


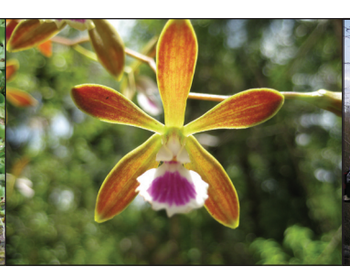
Photo by G. Pellerin

Ranger-Led Activities — Winter 2011 through Spring 2012

Join the Big Cypress staff for programs that explore the wonders of the Big Cypress Swamp. For details on activities, visit the Big Cypress National Preserve website at www.nps.gov/bicy. To make reservations please call: (239) 695-1201 between 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Reservations are accepted up to 14 days in advance of the activity date and are free. Programs begin November 26, 2011, and extend through April 15, 2012.*

Big Cypress Activities	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
Who's Home? – 1:00 p.m., 15 minute talk. Join a ranger or a volunteer at the H. P. Williams wildlife viewing platform to discover who's home. Sightings often include alligators, turtles, fishes and colorful wading birds.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Scales, Teeth and a Big Tail! or Wings of Wonder! – 2:00 p.m., 15 minute talk. Join a ranger or a volunteer on the Oasis Visitor Center boardwalk to learn about our largest native freshwater reptile, the alligator, or take a stroll through the native plant and butterfly garden. Discoveries abound!	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mangroves and Manatees! – 3:00 p.m., 15 minute talk. Join a ranger or a volunteer at the Big Cypress Swamp Welcome Center viewing platform to learn about one of our largest native marine mammals, the manatee and its primary habitat.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cypress Sights and Sounds – Kirby Storter Boardwalk Stroll –11:00 a.m. (1 hour). Explore a cypress forest while venturing into the heart of a cypress strand on this one mile round-trip leisurely stroll. Water, binoculars and insect repellent recommended. Meet at the boardwalk trailhead along US 41.		X			X	X	X
Wet and Wild Swamp Walks – 10:00 a.m. (2 hours). This is a great way to explore the swamp and discover what's beyond the road! Cypress knees and sawgrass make long pants necessary. Wear sturdy shoes that you can get wet and muddy. Bring a change of clothes and shoes. Meet at the Oasis Visitor Center. **Reservations required**.	X	X					X
Heart of the Swamp Canoe Trips – 10:00 a.m. (4 – 5 hours). We'll provide canoes and equipment, or bring your own. Come prepared with water, lunch, binoculars, sun protection, insect repellent and a sense of adventure. Trips vary by weather, water level, tide and ranger's choice of location and duration. Knowing canoeing basics is helpful. **Reservations required**.	X			X			X
Walk on the Wild Side - Deep Lake Hike – 1:00 p.m. (2 hours). Introduces swamp history. Deep Lake is a rare natural sinkhole lake. The hike runs through an oasis of green in bear country. Long pants necessary. Wear sturdy shoes that you can get wet and muddy. Bring a change of clothes and shoes. Come prepared with water, food, binoculars, sun protection and insect repellent. Hikes begin December 10, alternating Saturdays with the Gator Hook hike. **Reservations required**.							X
Walk on the Wild Side - Gator Hook Hike – 1:00 p.m. (3 hours). Gator Hook Strand is a rugged wet trail with a diversity of plants. Long pants necessary. Wear sturdy shoes that you can get wet and muddy. Bring a change of clothes and shoes. Come prepared with water, food, binoculars, sun protection and insect repellent. Hikes begin December 10, alternating Saturdays with the Deep Lake hike. **Reservations required**.							X
Campfire Programs – 7:30 p.m. (1 hour). Starting on December 10 through March 10. Friday campfire programs are at Midway Campground. Saturday campfire programs are at Monument Lake Campground. Ranger choice for talk topics. Some seating available, or bring your own folding chair. Insect repellent optional.						X	X

*Due to unforeseen circumstances this schedule is subject to change.



Photos credits: Jan Shirey, PJ Stevko

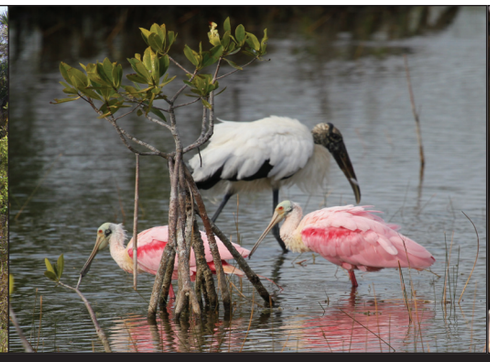


Photo credits: Jan Shirey, Dave Gates

	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
Night Sounds – Kirby Storter Evening Boardwalk Stroll – First and Third Sunday of each month beginning December 4 through March 4 (1 1/2 hours). Explore night sounds and the night sky in a cypress forest habitat. Bring a flashlight and water. Insect repellent optional. Meet at the Kirby Storter boardwalk trailhead along US 41. **Reservations suggested.**	X						
Hike to the Big Trees – Old Growth Cypress – Presented on November 26 and February 11 at 9:00 a.m. (6 - 7 hours). Strenuous eight mile round trip hike on the FL Trail from Oasis VC to Robert's Lake Strand where tall ferns, epiphytes, and old growth trees that escaped the loggers' saws, still stand. Long pants necessary. Wear sturdy shoes that you can get wet and muddy. Bring a change of clothes, including shoes, for your ride home. Meet at the Oasis Visitor Center. **Reservations required**.							X
The Right Route – Off-Road Vehicle Tour – Offered January 14 at 10:00 a.m. (4 - 5 hours). Join a ranger to learn more about Big Cypress, Tread Lightly and Leave No Trace philosophies while operating your own off-road vehicle, a traditional way to explore this area. Learn about native wildlife, plants, and the land, along the Bear Island backcountry trails. Meet at the Bear Island Campground. **Proper permits and reservations required.**							X
Cypress Sawyers History Hike – Presented on December 10 at 10:00 a.m. (2 hours). Discover the story of the Tamiami Trail and how it opened the Big Cypress Swamp to logging and development. Long pants recommended, bring water and wear sturdy shoes that can get wet and muddy. Meet at the Kirby Storter Boardwalk trailhead along US 41. Bring a change of clothes for the ride home. **Reservations required.**							X
Bear Island Bike Ride – Offered April 15 at 10:00 a.m. (5-6 hours). Ride on a mixed limestone and gravel roadbed over rough terrain. Bring your own bike, water, food, and sun protection. Meet the ranger at the Bear Island Access Point along Hwy 29, four miles north of I-75. Vistas of cypress, pines and sawgrass abound. **Reservations required.**							X
Discovering Parkcaching – Presented March 10 at 10:00 a.m. (3-4 hours). Join a ranger for a virtual treasure hunt around Big Cypress. Learn GPS basics while discovering the natural history of Big Cypress. Meet at the Big Cypress Swamp Welcome Center. GPS provided, one per family, or bring your own. Be prepared for a sunny stroll. **Reservations required.**							X

Activities On Your Own

Safety First

When traveling in Big Cypress National Preserve always let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return. Remember to fill out a backcountry permit if you are entering at one of the backcountry access points. To enjoy your visit come prepared by bringing water, food, sturdy shoes, sun protection, and insect repellent, Always be aware of your surroundings and be respectful of the wildlife.

Wildlife Viewing

While visiting you may see a multitude of bird life, or alligators and the fish they prey on. Observe wildlife respectfully and never attempt to feed or approach wild animals! Wildlife observation platforms are located at the Big Cypress Swamp Welcome Center - Seagrape Drive and U.S. 41, H. P. Williams Picnic Area - Turner River Road and U.S. 41, and at the Oasis Visitor Center on U.S. 41.

Driving

Excellent wildlife viewing by car may be found along the Turner River/Birdon Road loop, 17 miles in length. This gravel road offers a view of Preserve's animal life and subtropical habitats. Help protect wildlife by observing the speed limit. Stop by the Big Cypress Swamp Welcome Center or the Oasis Visitor Center for more information.

Hiking

The Florida National Scenic Trail runs through the heart of Big Cypress, presenting excellent backpacking opportunities. Fire Prairie Trail is five miles round trip and is found off of the northern end of Turner River Road, providing superb views of several of South Florida's natural habitats.

Canoeing

Wander the waters of Big Cypress by bringing your own canoe or kayak, or renting them in nearby communities. The access for Turner River Canoe Trail is located along U.S. 41. Halfway Creek Canoe Trail offers a saltwater option with the ramp located off of U.S. 41 at the end of Seagrape Drive, three miles east of State Road 29. Typical canoe trips in the area will take a minimum of two to three hours.

Biking

Within the Preserve, many of the gravel roads off of Tamiami Trail, and several of the off-road vehicle trails, provide opportunities for exploration by bicycle. The Bear Island Grade, accessible from State Road 29, is a popular route. While biking in the preserve please be aware of traffic. While on backcountry trails yield to hikers and Off RoadVehicles. For more details on bike riding speak to a ranger.

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