

News from the Everglades

A Weekly Update from Everglades Imagery

January 30, 2005

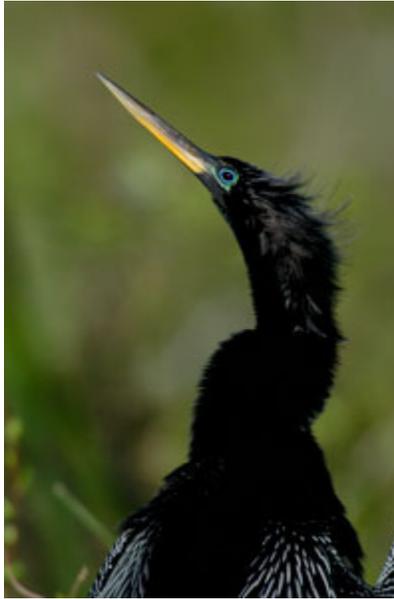
The Experience

The first week here, I spent a lot of hiking and most of the time I did not carry my camera, however this week I spent a lot of time behind the lens. It was nice to get back into the rhythm of photography and start to understand what I am really undertaking this semester. My goal for this week was to write all of the remaining sections for my website as well as take all the necessary photographs. This goal required me to explore a diverse range of environments in order to obtain the photographs of the different communities that are found throughout the region. Also, in continuing to explore the Everglades through the National Park Service's offerings, I spent a morning around the visitor center of the Shark Valley portion of the park and an evening taking the tram ride. To me, this was the most entertaining as well as educational activity that the park offers. A two hour tram ride provides great looks at a multitude of alligators of all sizes, the whole gamut of wading birds, and great views of sawgrass prairies from the observation tower at the end. My tour guide was informative and entertaining. The three young girls sitting next to me were thrilled with every alligator and interested in the plethora of birds. After leaving the tram everyone seemed to have enjoyed the two hours and the money spent.

In contrast to the tram ride, I had experienced the Everglades on my own earlier that day. In the afternoon I was exploring the Loop Road section of Big Cypress National Preserve and stopped alongside the road, donned my chest waders, and headed into the swamp. After hiking a half mile into the swamp through a cypress forest with sawgrass and various rushes covering the water, I came into a dense thicket with some deeper water. As I entered the area the grass exploded in white as a large flock of herons, egrets, and ibis took to the air. I had no idea they were there. A few minutes later three white-tailed deer spooked and went running off through the swamp. To me, discovering these things on my own was so much more rewarding than walking down a boardwalk at Anhinga Trail, walking around a water reclamation pond at Eco Pond, or taking a tram ride at Shark Valley. There is an element of self discovery that is hidden within the solitude of the swamp that really got me charged up about the coming months. It was the first time I had gotten off the beaten path in the Everglades and it was everything I had expected and much more.

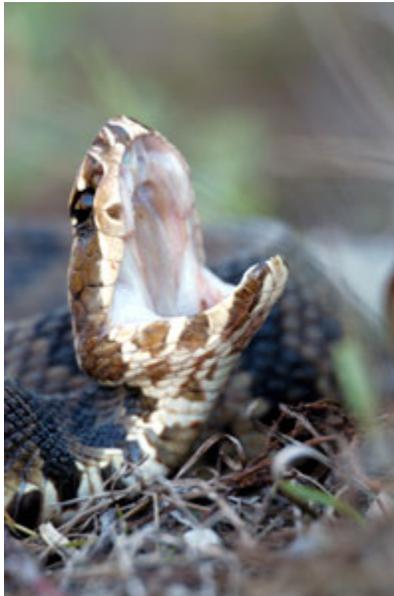
Next week I am going to finish exploring the National Park portion of the Everglades. There are a few trails left to hike and a few canoe trips to make but otherwise I will have covered everything. I also plan on driving all of the roads in Big Cypress National Preserve and hopefully venturing into Fakahatchee State Preserve if time permits. It should be a very exciting week with some great images as well as the launch of the website on Thursday.

The Photos



Male Anhinga in Breeding Plumage – Shark Valley, Everglades National Park

I mentioned last week that I was trying to capture the intense colors of the Anhingas at Anhinga Trail. This adult male at Shark Valley was one of many that had fully developed their plumage and the brilliant eye-ring was obvious. I thought I would include it this week as a comparison to last weeks male Anhinga.



Florida Cottonmouth – Loop Road, Big Cypress National Preserve

This is my favorite image of the week by far. I found this Florida Cottonmouth (the Florida subspecies of Eastern Cottonmouth) along the side of Loop Road. I had just spent my time wading in the swamp and had driven a little bit farther up the road. I used a very complex set up to shade this creature from the harsh light and then reflect light back up to light his head with. I was set up in the middle of the road and had many strange looks from passersby.



Bald Cypress in Sawgrass – Loop Road, Big Cypress National Preserve

These trees were photographed during my tromp through the swamp that I described earlier. I only carried my camera to record a few places and not to shoot seriously, but found this location and was determined to make an image. I plan on returning during better light and working this location thoroughly to try and make some more images here.



Great Egret Landing after Sunset – Anhinga Trail, Everglades National Park

I have decided to make the last image each week, an image that falls outside of what I typically photograph. Again this week I have chosen another post sunset flight image where the bird is landing. Again, the twilight sky is beautiful and the contrast with the soft white of the blurred feathers gives this a very tranquil feeling. Like the Cottonmouth image, I feel like this could be one of my more successful but unique images thus far.

Website Announcement

Please remember, the website will be officially launched this upcoming week on Thursday, February 3, 2005 and will be an opportunity for you to interact with me as well as other readers in a discussion about the Everglades, the photos, or whatever it is that this project brings to your mind.