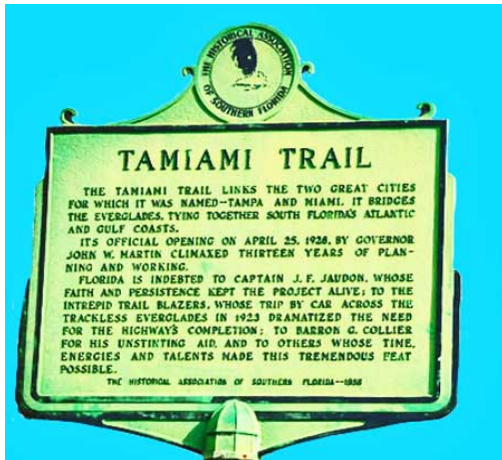




[Watch Big Cypress Alligators on youtube](#)

It has been many years since my wife and I were on the Tamiami Trail, Route 41, between Miami and Naples, Florida. Our recollection of the road was a lot different than the road we traveled before in terms of changes to the landscape and the roadway. The last time we did not travel the entire length but only visited Shark Valley Visitor Center in the Everglades. The Everglades is made up of 1.5 million acres of wetlands in the southern part of Florida. The Everglades is a complex area with a diverse flora and fauna eco-system. The area includes freshwater sloughs, marl prairies, tropical hammocks, pinelands, cypress, mangrove, coastal lowlands, marine, and estuarine. <nps.org>

This photo program shares our stop at the Big Cypress Oasis Visitor Center to view the alligators in the wild and Miccosukee Tribe along the Tamiami Trail.



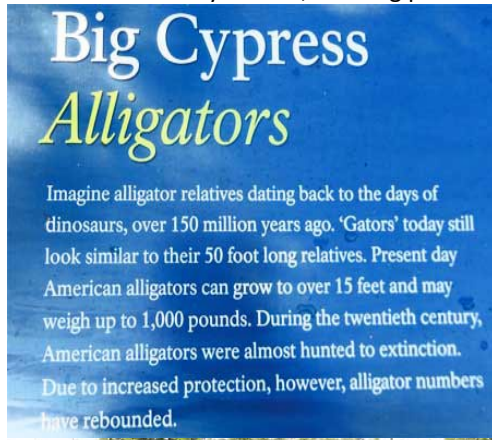
As one enters the Tamiami Trail from Miami there are several freshwater sloughs along the way that manage the flow of water within the Everglades for ecological purposes. "A slough is a low-lying area of land that channels water through the Everglades. These marshy rivers are relatively deep and remain flooded almost year-round. Though they are the main avenue of waterflow, the current remains leisurely, moving about 100 feet (30 meters) per day...The vast Everglades landscape channels life-giving waters from Lake Okeechobee southward. Everglades National Park contains two distinct sloughs. On the west is the larger Shark River Slough, also known as the "River of Grass." The smaller, narrower Taylor Slough lies to the east of Shark River Slough. Both sloughs discharge into Florida Bay. A series of other sloughs that flow through the Big Cypress Swamp supply freshwater to western Florida Bay and the Ten Thousand Islands." <nps.gov>



"Big Cypress National Preserve in southern Florida preserves more than 720,000 acres of the vast and ecologically essential Big Cypress swamp. Established in 1974 as one of the first national preserves, the Big Cypress National Preserve protects the water quality, natural resources, and ecological integrity of the Big Cypress Swamp. This diverse place, which is home to American

alligators, anhinga, egrets, herons, river otters, bobcats, black bears, Florida panthers, Cypress trees, air plants, bromeliads, orchids, and hammock trees, has also been a home and refuge to both the Miccosukee Tribe of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida.” <nps.org>

Status of American alligators --“some 1.3 million of them – are all over the state of Florida. And you’ll have plenty of places in captivity or the wild to choose from when you set out to observe some of the remaining creatures of the dinosaur age. Gators were once on the brink of extinction in the Sunshine State, but aggressive conservation efforts reversed their decline. The prehistoric reptiles are an important part of the state’s ecosystem. For example, the “gator holes” where they collect food and occasionally sleep hold water in the dry season, creating places of refuge and sustenance for fish, insects, snakes, turtles, and birds.” <visitflorida.com>



Miccosukee and Seminole Tribes

“For a long time, beginning well before the arrival of the Miccosukee and Seminole, the Big Cypress Swamp was a homeland for a variety of American Indian tribes. Evidence that pre-contact American Indians inhabited this area exists in pottery shards, ceramics, bone and shell tools, and charcoal remains. At the time of European contact around A.D. 1500, a thriving population lived in southern Florida, including at least four separate tribes: the Calusa, the Tequesta, the Jega, and the Ais. These tribes occupied the Big Cypress Swamp area primarily from about A.D. 500 until about A.D. 1400.” <nps.org>

“Miccosukee Tribe has a proud history, which predates Columbus. The Miccosukee Indians were originally part of the Creek Nation, and then migrated to Florida before it became part of the United States.

During the Indian Wars of the 1800s, most of the Miccosukee were removed to the West, but about 100, mostly Mikasuki-speaking Creeks, never surrendered and hid out in the Everglades. Present Tribal members now number over 600 and are direct descendants of those who eluded capture.

To survive in this new environment, the Miccosukee adapted to living in small groups in temporary “hammock style” camps spread throughout the Everglades’ vast river of grass. In this fashion, they stayed to themselves for about 100 years, resisting efforts to become assimilated. Then, after the Tamiami Trail highway was built in 1928, the Tribe began to accept New World concepts.

To ensure that the federal government would formally recognize the Miccosukee Tribe, Buffalo Tiger, an esteemed member of the Tribe, led a group to Cuba in 1959, where they asked Fidel Castro for, and were granted, international recognition as a sovereign country within the United States.

Following this, on January 11, 1962, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior approved the Miccosukee Constitution, and the Tribe was officially recognized as the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida. This legally established the Miccosukee’s tribal existence and their sovereign, domestic dependent nation status with the United States Government.” <miccosukee.com>



Sources: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/bigcypress.htm>, <https://www.visitflorida.com/travel-ideas/articles/cruising-the-tamiami-trail-east-to-west-road-trip/>, <https://www.nps.gov/ever/planyourvisit/basicinfo.htm>, <https://www.nps.gov/ever/learn/nature/freshwaterslough.htm>, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/old.2003/fs-097-03/>, <https://gohydrology.org/big-cypress-watershed/>, <https://www.us-parks.com/nps/big-cypress-national-preserve/nature-and-science.html>, <https://www.nps.gov/bicy/planyourvisit/oasis-visitor-center.htm>, <https://www.miamiscapes.com/big-cypress-preserve-oasis.html>, <https://nnpplan.com/parks-by-state/florida-national-parks/big-cypress-national-preserve-park-at-a-glance/big-cypress-national-preserve-visitor-centers/big-cypress-national-preserve-oasis-visitor-center/>, <https://www.nps.gov/bicy/learn/nature/fish.htm>, <https://floridaseminoletourism.com/customary-use-in-big-cypress-national-preserve/>, <https://www.visitflorida.com/travel-ideas/articles/where-to-see-alligators-in-florida/>, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miccosukee>, <https://winterberrywildlife.ouroneacrefarm.com/2019/06/06/alligator-tracks-and-sign-part-i/>, <https://www.semtribe.com/stof/enterprises/big-cypress-reservation>, <https://www.winknews.com/2021/04/12/miccosukee-tribe-protests-big-oil-company-drilling-at-big-cypress/>, <https://www.fnps.org/natives/native-plant-community/wetland-glades>, and <https://www.miccosukee.com/history>. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lcl2_0boiA