

# *News from the Everglades*

*A Weekly Update from Everglades Imagery*

January 23, 2005

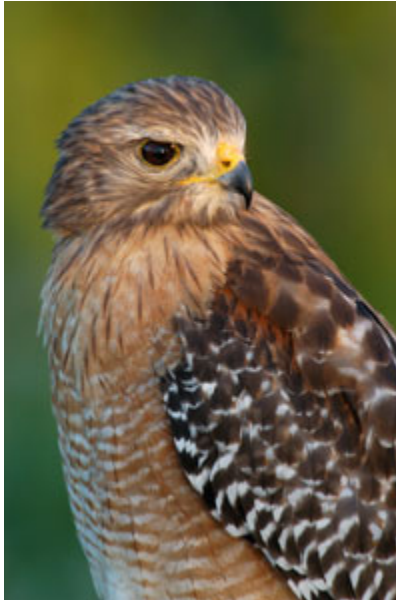
## **The Experience**

A week has passed and I am still alive. I still can't quite believe I am here and am actually doing this project. It is a somewhat surreal experience. This week has gone beautifully even though the weather was a bit chilly by south Florida standards and extremely windy.

This first week was spent exploring Everglades National Park from the Royal Palm area south to Flamingo. For me, the best way to start this project was to see the Everglades through the eyes of the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS offers a series of hiking and canoe trails, interpretive areas, scenic views, and other similar places which showcase "the Everglades" to visitors. I would argue that a very high percentage of visitors are never more than a mile or two from the highway and their cars and most of that time they are never more than a couple hundred yards away on a boardwalk or viewing platform. What the NPS offers as "the Everglades" may or may not be representative of the Everglades but it is all that most visitors experience. Once I have spent more time off the road, in the wilderness, and out exploring the system on my own, I hope to be able to make interesting comparisons between what I have experienced and the experience of the average visitor.

This upcoming week I will continue to explore the park as I have this week. Next week I will continue taking some of the hikes and canoe trails in the Flamingo area as well as venturing up to Shark Valley. However, the main goal for next week is to finish writing my website and prepare for an official launch on Thursday, February 3, 2005 when I finally have a phone line installed.

## **The Photos**



*Red-shouldered Hawk – Eco Pond, Flamingo*

This Red-shouldered Hawk perched nicely on the railing that encircles Eco Pond one evening. It is one of a pair of hawks that live in the area and are often seen around the pond. The warm evening light really made this portrait spectacular. When it comes to bird photographs there are two different styles that I really enjoy. The first is the clean portrait, commonly known as the

“bird-on-a-stick” method. Here, the goal is to eliminate all distractions such as a busy background or other items in order to isolate the bird and simply show feather details and patterns. This and the next images are examples of this method.



*Red-shouldered Hawk Portrait – Eco Pond, Flamingo*

This is another image from the same bird as above. Here I have made a somewhat unconventional square crop to focus your attention on the fierce eyes and beak. This bird was extremely cooperative and allowed close approach from a large number of people. One woman even ventured within about 15 feet and the hawk never even reacted to her presence.



*Male Anhinga – Anhinga Trail, Royal Palm, Everglades National Park*

This week I noticed that a few of the male and female Anhingas at the Anhinga Trail were in spectacular breeding plumage. This male does not have the spectacular green and blue eye ring that is so stunning on birds in peak plumage (see weblog on 1/22/05) but the blond highlights around his head show that he is starting to develop the full plumage.

This is closer to the style of the “environmental portrait” that displays the bird not in isolation but in its surrounding environment. As someone interested in ecology, I find these shots extremely interesting because it tells more of a story than simply a bird on a stick. However, at the same time, it can be very difficult to obtain a photograph that shows the bird’s environment without creating a distraction.



*White Ibis in flight – Eco Pond, Flamingo*

This shot is more of an experiment and a risk for me, but one that I am very pleased with. With the light dropping I decided to show the motion of flight by blurring the Ibis as they left the island to go roost in Florida Bay. To me, the soft colors of the sky, coupled with the motion, make this a pleasing shot. However, what makes this image possible is that despite being blurred, individual birds are easily distinguished and your mind isn't left trying to figure out what you are looking at.

### **Website Announcement**

Please remember, the website will be officially launched 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.