



12 Easy Things You Can Do for South Florida's Oceans and Biscayne National Park



Help others to care about the ocean and its magical creatures - right in your backyard! These twelve tips are fun, easy to do and best shared with others. We summarize our twelve tips here but provide additional details below. Together we can make sure our oceans remain a healthy and enjoyable place to visit.

- Save a seahorse or pipefish! avoid anchoring in sensitive habitats
- Save a sea turtle! organize or participate in a beach or underwater clean up
- Use a mooring buoy
- Practice good diving and snorkeling habits
- Volunteer in Biscayne National Park
- Look after your litter
- Help get rid of lionfish: report sightings online
- Participate in citizen science projects
- Support local water quality initiatives
- Take a fisheries awareness class
- Share your love of Biscayne National Park with others
- Share your opinion -> participate in park planning efforts

Important note: please do not handle seahorses, and other wildlife, unless under the supervision of trained professionals



Biscayne National Park (BNP) is truly a natural wonder. It is our country's largest marine national park, home to part of the third largest barrier reef tract in the world, and supports incredible biodiversity. The park's location on the periphery of Miami-Dade County makes it one of the most accessible parks but also the most vulnerable. Unfortunately, this has led to a decline in the health of BNP ecosystems and native fish populations attributable to overfishing, pollution, and warming sea temperatures. However, there are simple things you can do to help Biscayne National Park protect and manage its natural resources.

1. Save a Seahorse or pipefish! Avoid anchoring in sensitive habitats like seagrass beds or coral reefs

- Seahorses live in the seagrass beds of the park and anchoring in sensitive habitats can damage these creatures' homes
- When anchoring your boat, place the anchor in clean sandy areas downwind from coral reefs and seagrass beds. This will keep the anchor line from being dragged across the reef
- Use 5 to 7 times the length of rope as the depth of the water to ensure the anchor won't drag
- Snorkel or dive to check the anchor and line are secure and not touching any sensitive habitat

2. Save a Sea Turtle! By organizing or participating in a beach or underwater clean up

- Marine debris constantly accumulates on nesting beach making it hard for sea turtles to find and reach suitable nesting spots. Beach clean ups can improve the quality of nesting grounds for sea turtles and increase the chances of successful nests
- 100 % of American green turtles and 90% of American loggerheads nest in Florida
- For more tips on how to help local sea turtles go here
<https://www.nps.gov/bisc/learn/nature/how-you-can-help-protect-sea-turtles.htm>

3. Use a mooring buoy

- Mooring buoys help preserve the fragile coral reef ecosystem by preventing anchors from striking the coral and anchor ropes / chains from chafing or breaking coral
- Look for the hard, white plastic spheres located adjacent to 19 popular reefs in the park
- Park Map: <https://www.nps.gov/bisc/planyourvisit/maps.htm>
- GPS coordinates: <https://www.nps.gov/bisc/planyourvisit/mooring-buoy-locations.htm>



4. Practice good diving and snorkeling habits

- Marine ecosystems are sensitive to impacts from divers and snorkelers. The kick of a fin, bump of a camera or touch from a hand can destroy decades of coral growth, damage a plant or harm an animal
- Minimize your impact as you explore the diverse underwater ecosystems of Biscayne National Park by following these tips:
http://www.projectaware.org/sites/default/files/PA_10Tips_Poster.pdf

5. Volunteer in Biscayne National Park

- Many parks are looking for dedicated people who can lend a helping hand. Park volunteers fill a variety of roles including counting and measuring fish at area marinas, providing information to visits on land (at the Visitor Center) or at sea (boat patrol) and more
- Check out the BNP website for more information about volunteering
<https://www.nps.gov/bisc/getinvolved/volunteer.htm>

6. Look after your litter

- Marine debris is an important issue for the health of our oceans
- We have more plastics in the ocean than stars in our galaxy
- The solution is simple: look after your litter & use less plastic
- Check out Debris Free Oceans for more information <http://www.debrisfreeoceans.org>

7. Help Get Rid of Lionfish: Report Sightings Online

- Indo-Pacific lionfish are invasive species from Asia that are growing in number throughout the Caribbean and Eastern United States
- Lionfish are voracious predators that compete for food resources of commercially and ecologically important fish such as snapper and grouper
- Lionfish have venomous spines that can cause intense pain, swelling, headache, nausea, paralysis and convulsions
- If you see a lionfish report your sighting online <https://www.nps.gov/bisc/learn/nature/exotic-lionfish.htm> or dial 786 335 3659

8. Participate in Citizen Science Projects

- By reporting sightings, you can help to support scientific research and management efforts in Biscayne National Park and abroad.
- Spot a seahorse? Report your sighting here - iSeahorse www.iseahorse.org
- Key Biscayne Citizen Science Program <http://www.keyscience.org>



9. Support Local Water Quality Initiatives

- Biscayne Bay fuels the tourism economy of Miami-Dade County - clean water is critical to our local economy
- Land-based pollution, algal blooms, pollution, storm-water runoff, and disposal of waste water & chemicals threaten our clean water
- You can help by reporting land-based run-off and algal blooms
- Learn which beaches have good water quality for swimming
- All this information & more on water quality initiatives in your area
<http://www.miamiwaterkeeper.org>

10. Take a Fisheries Awareness Class

- Learn about BNP fishing regulations and why they are important.
- Learn to correctly identify your catch
- Learn catch and release techniques & new tips from local guides
- <https://www.nps.gov/bisc/planyourvisit/fisheries-awareness-class.htm>

11. Share your love of BNP with others

- Help raise awareness about the amazing habitats, activities and cultural importance of BNP
- Share fun facts about @BiscayneNPS over social media such as with Facebook, Twitter or Instagram
- Better yet, explore a new section of the park with a friend who has never visited

12. Share Your Opinion -> Participate in Park Planning Efforts

- Make sure the park is managed well and make your voice heard. There are opportunities to learn about current management plans and future park planning efforts at public meetings
Learn more about these plans and share your opinion
- BNP is currently writing a Fisheries Management Plan, updating its General Management Plan and developing a Restoration Plan; and your ideas are welcome
- Information on public meetings, management plans and other park planning news can be found here <https://www.nps.gov/bisc/getinvolved/planning.htm>

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