

NATURE WORLD NEWS

Rising Seas Endanger Several Everglades Plants

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(Photo : Flickr: Chauncey Davis)

Thanks to rising sea levels caused by climate change, nearly 60 plants in Everglades National Park are critically endangered, highlighting the need for stepped up conservation efforts.

The Everglades are the tropical wetlands in the southern region of Florida, and are home to about 760 plant species. Surprisingly, poaching is actually the biggest threat to most of these plants. Long ago, orchid collectors and attempts to drain the Everglades swamps ravaged the region. But now, as vegetation is still recovering, a new study has revealed another danger to coastal plants.

"Any of the species that have coastal distribution entirely or in part are going to be a priority in the face of imminent sea level rise," Jimi Sadle, a botanist at the park, told The Associated Press ([AP](#)).

The study found that 16 species may have already vanished from the park whereas other species have not yet fully recovered from previous damage. Some species of rare ferns and orchids are already believed to be extinct.

It has previously [been revealed](#) by the NOAA that US coasts will see month-long floods by 2050 as a result of climate change-related sea level rise, and now it seems that these rising waters are already taking their toll.

Earlier research found that one in four plants native to Florida is now extinct or endangered; however, just one rare plant in the Everglades park is on the Endangered Species List. Now, a new 10-year report by the Institute for Regional Conservation hopes to change that.

The researchers suggest that previous studies merely made a count of rare plants. This time around the team also identified the habitat of endangered species, which will help officials take a better approach for saving plants.

"Patterns pop out and can really show why we really need to pay attention to these parts of the park and these habitats," George Gann, the chief conservation strategist at the Institute for Regional Conservation who led the study, told the [Miami Herald](#).

For the study, Gann and his colleagues examined 59 rare plants, finding that the most endangered species of plants are found in the interior of the park, rather than on the coast. Also, 56 percent of the rarest plant species are found in the hardwood hammocks in the Everglades, while pine rocklands come in second, housing 27 percent of the endangered flora.

Some plants actually moved to much safer spots on the endangered plants list, but concurrently others became more endangered.

While experts are mainly focused on declining plant populations in the Everglades, this research will also shed more light on the management of various plant habitats across southern Florida.

Gann presented the findings Monday at Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden in Coral Gables.

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