



Biscayne National Park **Science in the Park**



PHOTO BY RICHARD CURRY

Divers conduct research on coral reproduction and settlement.

Science plays an integral role in the ability of the National Park Service to effectively preserve its resources — a charge of the National Park Service since its creation in 1916. Protection of natural and cultural resources for present and future generations requires active and informed management strategies. A lack of information about park flora, fauna, ecosystems, and their interrelationships can have devastating consequences. A rigorous increase in nonnative species, pollutant loading, and incompatible uses of resources in and around parks are just a few of the dynamic issues that resource managers must contend with in the 21st century. Science aids in the stewardship of resources by answering important questions:

- What are parks protecting and preserving?
- What is the condition of park resources?
- How does the condition of our resources change over time?
- What is the condition of resources outside of park boundaries that impact park resources?
- What are the implications of these findings to parks and to the larger systems in which they reside?
- What actions need to be taken for preserving resources?
- How can this information be best communicated to the broader society?

Research conducted by park staff and the scientific community-at-large analyzes:

- native and endangered species (examples are the Schaus swallowtail butterfly and Sargent's cherry palm)
- nonnative species (Australian pine)
- air and water quality (considering the park's proximity to areas of dense urban development)
- critical habitats (including seagrass meadows, hardbottom communities and coral reefs).

Additionally, research is conducted on the park's cultural history, including prehistoric and historic, terrestrial and submerged archaeological sites. A comprehensive and academic science program, which includes both intra-park research and collaboration with non-Park Service entities will

continue to provide the foundation which enables the effective stewardship of Biscayne's natural and cultural resources.

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