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Press Materials: [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pbs.org/pressroom) or [thirteen.org/pressroom](http://www.thirteen.org/pressroom)

***Nature: Wild Florida***

*Premieres Wednesday, February 12 at 8 p.m. on PBS (check local listings),* [*pbs.org/nature*](http://pbs.org/nature) *and the PBS Video app*

**Synopsis:**

Florida is well-known for its beaches, blue water and year-round sun, but it also has a surprising wild side. It is home to pine forests, coral reefs and the famous Everglades wetland, the largest subtropical wilderness in the United States. Here, manatees swim in crystal-clear rivers, baby alligators practice their hunting skills and miniature deer roam free. Every year, this state faces the full forces of nature: from wildfires to flooding to powerful hurricanes. Now, a growing human population, climate change and abandoned exotic pets – like the Burmese python which can eat alligators – are added threats to this wild paradise. With the help of pioneering scientists, can Florida’s ecosystems continue to weather the storm?

**Featured Creatures:**

* American alligator
* Burmese python
* Gopher tortoise
* Florida manatee
* Key deer
* Moorhen
* Swallow-tailed kite
* Staghorn coral

**Noteworthy Facts:**

* The Florida Everglades is the largest subtropical wilderness in the United States. With 1.5 million acres of wetland, the Everglades is home to hundreds of marshland species and thousands of visiting birds.
* In order to attract a mate, male alligators vibrate their larynx to let out deep growls. Low frequency sounds, inaudible to human hearing, make the water dance and can be heard over a mile away. Once a male successfully attracts a female, the mating can last for days before the couple goes their separate ways.
* Florida is home to 20 major rivers and 700 warm springs. The Silver River in Central Florida is one of the largest freshwater springs in the United States and is where Florida Manatees live during the winter. The river is so warm and shallow that algae blooms on the manatees’ backs. Once critically endangered, there are now more than 8,000 manatees thanks to recovery efforts.
* Florida experiences more direct hits by hurricanes than anywhere else in North America, and due to climate change, these hurricanes are more powerful than ever before. Hurricane Michael in 2018 was one of the most powerful storms to ever make landfall in Florida, with winds of 155 miles per hour.

**Buzzworthy Moments:**

* An ongoing threat to the native wildlife in Florida is the trend of abandoning exotic pets. There are now more than 500 non-native species living in the state, the most notorious of which is the Burmese python. Originally from the jungles and marshes of Southeast Asia, the pythons in the Everglades are now estimated to number more than 100,000 and have eaten around 98 percent of mammals in the area. Because of this crisis, licensed python hunting is now permitted in the Everglades year-round, where the hunters must carefully and humanely extricate them.
* Florida is the lightning capital of the United States. More than one million lightning bolts strike the state each year and just one can ignite the longleaf pine forest. However, these fires help clear the forest floor of unwanted scrub and allow new pines to germinate and grow without competition. But with the growing human population nearby, the lightning strike fires must be put out immediately. To keep longleaf forests alive, burns are now man-made and carefully managed by organizations like [The Nature Conservancy](http://www.nature.org).
* A female alligator watches over her babies after they’ve hatched. The babies, just eight inches long and defenseless, spend their days close together in groups called pods. Bright yellow stripes make them invisible among the dry grasses of the nest. When darkness falls, these hatchlings grow more courageous, breaking away from the pod and learning to hunt.
* The Florida Reef Tract in the Keys is the third largest barrier reef in the world and the only one in North America. Between strong hurricanes and human interaction, the corals have lost about 97 percent of their population. The [Coral Restoration Foundation](https://www.coralrestoration.org) is leading the way in saving this reef through pioneering efforts. Growing thousands of corals in a nursery setting, the scientists harvest them when ready and then attach them directly onto the reef. More than 70,000 fragments have been planted in the past decade.

**Long TV Listing:**

Florida is home to beaches, coral reefs, pine forests and the famous Everglades wetland, but a growing human population and abandoned exotic pets like pythons are threatening this wild paradise. Can Florida’s ecosystems continue to weather the storm?

**Short TV Listing:**

Discover the wildlife of the Sunshine State and how experts are battling threats to its ecosystems.

**Running Time:** 60 minutes

**Series Overview:**

Now in its 38th season on PBS, **Nature** is a voice for the natural world, bringing the wonders of wildlife and stories of conservation to millions of American viewers. The series has won more than 700 honors from the television industry, the international wildlife film communities and environmental organizations, including 18 Emmys and three Peabody Awards. ***Nature***’s award-winning website, [pbs.org/nature](https://pbs.org/nature), features full episodes, short films, behind-the-scenes content, nature articles, educational resources and more. The series is available for streaming simultaneously on all station-branded PBS platforms, including PBS.org and the PBS Video app, which is available on iOS, Android, Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV and Chromecast. PBS station members can view episodes via Passport (contact your local PBS station for details).

**Production Credits:**

***Nature*** is a production of THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC for WNET and PBS. For ***Nature***, Fred Kaufman is Executive Producer. Bill Murphy is Series Producer and Janet Hess is Series Editor. ***Wild Florida*** is a co-production of THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC and BBC Studios in association with WNET. The documentary is produced and directed by Rowan Crawford. Edited by Jack Johnston with photography from George Woodcock, Erin Ranney, Mark Emery and Tom Fitz. Mark Emery is narrator.

**Underwriters:**

Support for this **Nature** program was made possible in part by The Arnhold Family in memory of Henry and Clarisse Arnhold, Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III, The Fairweather Foundation, the Kate W. Cassidy Foundation, Kathy Chiao and Ken Hao, the Lillian Goldman Charitable Trust, Charles Rosenblum, the Filomen M. D’Agostino Foundation, Rosalind P. Walter, Sandra Atlas Bass, Doris R. and Robert J. Thomas, The Hite Foundation, by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and by public television viewers.

**Websites:**

[pbs.org/nature](http://pbs.org/nature); [facebook.com/PBSNature](http://www.facebook.com/PBSNature); [twitter.com/PBSNature](https://twitter.com/PBSNature); [instagram.com/pbsnature](http://www.instagram.com/pbsnature); [youtube.com/naturepbs](https://www.youtube.com/naturepbs); #NaturePBS

**About WNET**

WNET is America’s flagship PBS station: parent company of New York’s [THIRTEEN](http://thirteen.org/) and [WLIW21](http://wliw.org/) and operator of [NJTV](http://www.njtvonline.org/), the statewide public media network in New Jersey. Through its new [ALL ARTS](http://allarts.org/) multi-platform initiative, its broadcast channels, three cable services (THIRTEEN PBSKids, Create and World) and online streaming sites, WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than five million viewers each month. WNET produces and presents a wide range of acclaimed PBS series, including ***Nature***, ***Great Performances***, ***American Masters***, ***PBS NewsHour Weekend***, and the nightly interview program ***Amanpour and Company***. In addition, WNET produces numerous documentaries, children’s programs, and local news and cultural offerings, as well as multi-platform initiatives addressing poverty and climate. Through THIRTEEN Passport and WLIW Passport, station members can stream new and archival THIRTEEN, WLIW and PBS programming anytime, anywhere.