



Name: _____

Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow Comprehension Questions

On June 18, 2019, large flows of water went under the Tamiami Trail bridges, rehydrating the Northeast Shark River Slough area of Everglades National Park. This restoration effort is especially beneficial for one of the Everglades bird species, nicknamed appropriately, the “Goldilocks” of Everglades restoration.

A federally endangered species found only in America’s Everglades, the Cape Sable seaside sparrow needs the water conditions to be just right (not too much, not too little).

Directions: Learn more about the specific water level needs and unique features of the Cape Sable seaside sparrow by reading The “Goldilocks” of Everglades Restoration ([attached below](#)), and answering the reading comprehension questions ([attached below](#)).

Everglades Literacy Lesson Connections:

Grade 3 Lesson 1: Classifying Everglades Animals and their Habitats

<https://www.evergladesliteracy.org/third-grade>

-Students will learn that animals can be classified into six major animal groups and become familiar with representative Everglades animals from all the major groups and with five different habitats of the Everglades where these animals live

CAPE SABLE SEASIDE SPARROW

The “Goldilocks” of Everglades Restoration

By Kristie Wendelberger, Ph.D.

This summer marked a historic occasion for the Everglades. On June 18, large flows of water went under the Tamiami Trail bridges, rehydrating the Northeast Shark River Slough area of Everglades National Park. Over the following 5 weeks, more than 30 billion gallons of water flowed into Everglades National Park, eventually making its way to Florida Bay. The Cape Sable seaside sparrow, an important indicator of Everglades restoration progress, is already seeing benefits from these new flows.

A federally endangered species found only in America’s Everglades, the Cape Sable seaside sparrow needs the water conditions to be just right (not too much,

not too little). These “Goldilocks” birds evolved in Muhly grass prairies that dry down in the winter months, allowing them to build their nests just a few inches from the ground. The prairies then flood in the rainy summer just long enough to prevent the growth of shrubby vegetation that provides perches for the sparrow’s predators.

It’s a very delicate water balance for the Cape Sable seaside sparrow, which live only two to three years, giving them relatively little time to reproduce. The birds need a dry period of 80 to 90 days to produce the two broods of chicks per season

required to maintain the population. For years, sparrow nesting seasons have been disrupted and as a result, sparrow populations have plummeted. Today, the sparrow is a critically endangered species that faces extinction if more natural water management regimes are not restored to Everglades National Park.

The sparrow’s behavior and life cycle were defined by the historic Everglades, the bird adapted to the ecosystem when it was healthy, before humans altered the way water flows through the system. In the late 1800s, the Everglades water balance was altered when the first canals were built to drain the land for agriculture and development, a process of drainage that continued for almost 100 years. In 1928, construction crews completed Tamiami Trail, the 264-mile road connecting Miami to Naples along what is today the northern boundary of Everglades National Park and the southern boundary of Water Conservation Area 3A and 3B. It blocked the natural sheet flow of water south, drying Everglades National Park, and harming habitats in the park, including the sparrows’ nesting grounds.

In the 1960s, to help restore some flow to the park, and to provide outflow for the central Everglades, four large gates were built along western Tamiami Trail. Unfortunately, these structures deliver water to the park at the wrong place at the wrong time — namely they flood sparrow habitat at the time of year when it should be drying down, just when the



**Cape Sable
Seaside Sparrow**
Photo by Lori Oberhofner

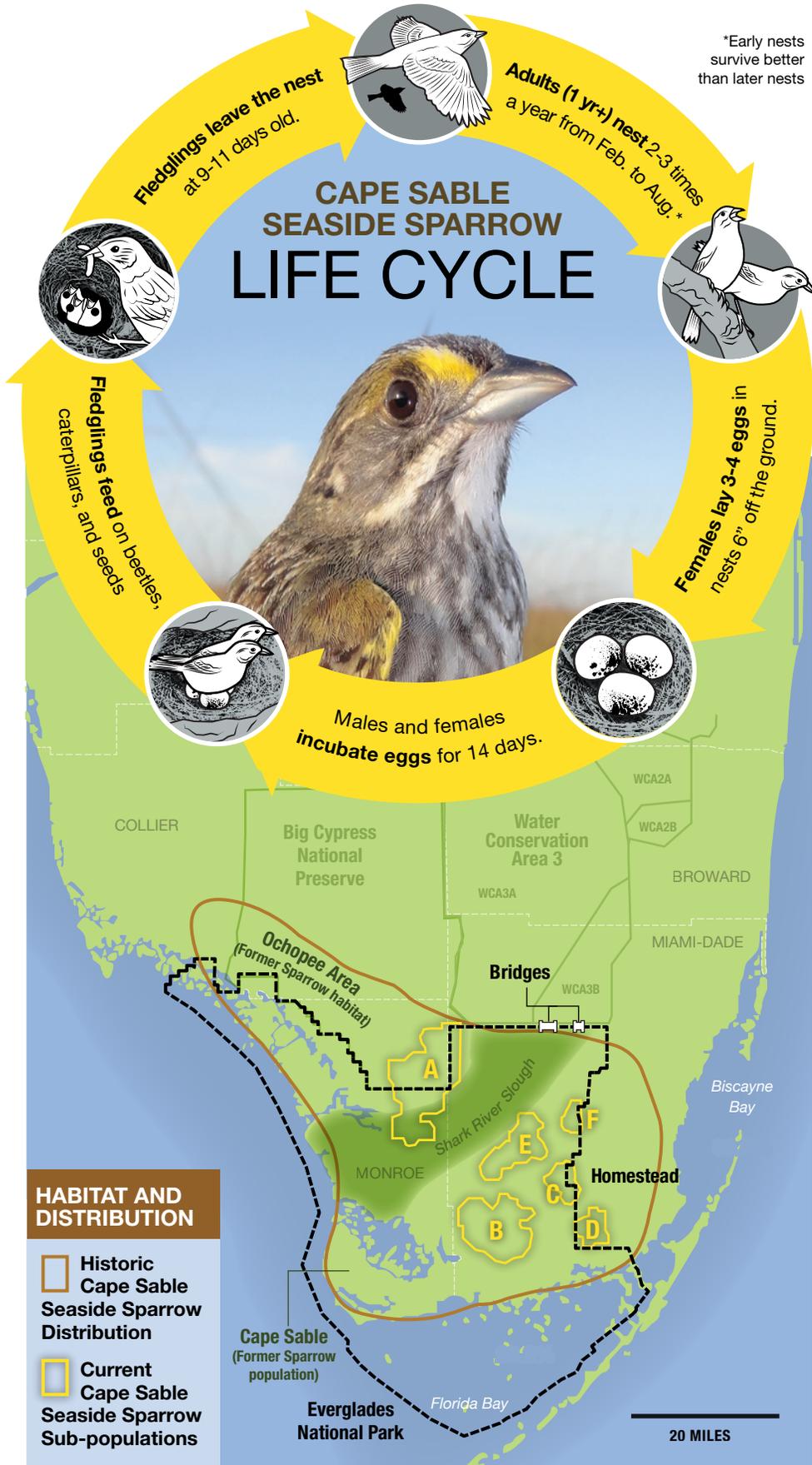


Photo by David LaPuma

Graphic by Hiram Henriquez/H2H Graphics & Design

birds are trying to nest. To make matters worse, the parts of the park that still need more water aren't getting it and sparrow habitat in those areas is too dry, subject to wildfire and the growth of trees and woody vegetation. The sparrow helps us see that it's not just volume of water that matters to the Everglades — timing and distribution matter as well.

In 1999 and 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined the sparrow was in jeopardy of extinction under the Endangered Species Act. The remedy for the sparrow is and has always been to restore the quantity, timing and distribution of water flows to Everglades National Park. Fortunately, that is the same remedy for the other imperiled habitats in the park such as Northeast Shark River Slough and Florida Bay.

Restoration projects such as the Modified Waters Delivery Project, C-111 South Dade Project, Tamiami Trail bridging and road raising and the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan will ultimately work together to "get the water right" in the park for sparrows and every other species that depends on a healthy Everglades. The great news is that we don't have to wait until they are all complete to see benefits for sparrows and the park. Each project provides incremental benefits improving conditions in the natural system over time.

The Cape Sable seaside sparrow is not a canary, but like that famous bird whose welfare was an indicator of the conditions in a coal mine, the sparrow is an indicator of conditions in the Everglades. It's not just that the sparrow prefers a healthy Everglades, it literally cannot exist without a healthy Everglades. Fortunately, Everglades restoration is coming to the sparrow's rescue.

Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow Comprehension Questions

1. **True/False** (Choose one) - The Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow is an indicator species of Everglades restoration.
2. Why is the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow nicknamed "Goldilocks"?

3. About how many years is the lifespan of a Cape Sable Seaside Sparrows?
 - a. About 5-6 years
 - b. About 9-12 years
 - c. About 1-2 years
 - d. About 2-3 years
4. About how many days of dry period do these birds need to have a successful brood of chicks?
 - a. 80-90 days
 - b. 100-140 days
 - c. 15-25 days
 - d. 70-80 days
5. In the 1960s, what was the main issue (in regards to the survival of the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow) with the four large gates built along western Tamiami Trail?

6. **True/False** (Choose one) - The timing and distribution of water in the Everglades is just as important as the volume of water.
7. What are the names of two other imperiled habitats in Everglades National Park?

8. Which of the following is **NOT** the name of an Everglades restoration project mentioned in the article?
 - a. Tamiami Trail bridging
 - b. C-111 South Dade Project
 - c. Tamiami Trail Closure Project
 - d. Modified Waters Delivery Project
9. **True/False** (Choose one) - The Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow will not see any improvements in their conservation status until after every restoration project is fully completed.
10. Looking at the life cycle graphic, how many eggs do females lay? How high off the ground are the nests?

Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow Comprehension Questions - Answer Key

1. The Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow is an indicator species of Everglades restoration. - **True**/False (Choose one)
2. Why is the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow nicknamed “Goldilocks”?
Because the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow needs the water conditions to be just right (not too much, not too little).
3. About how many years is the lifespan of a Cape Sable Seaside Sparrows?
 - a. About 5-6 years
 - b. About 9-12 years
 - c. About 1-2 years
 - d. **About 2-3 years**
4. About how many days of dry period do these birds need to have a successful brood of chicks?
 - a. **80-90 days**
 - b. 100-140 days
 - c. 15-25 days
 - d. 70-80 days
5. In the 1960s, what was the main issue (in regards to the survival of the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow) with the four large gates built along western Tamiami Trail?
The four large gates delivered water to the park at the wrong place at the wrong time. It flooded sparrow habitat.
6. **True**/False (Choose one) - The timing and distribution of water in the Everglades is just as important as the volume of water.
7. What are the names of two other imperiled habitats in Everglades National Park mentioned in the article?
Northeast Shark River Slough and Florida Bay.
8. Which of the following is **NOT** the name of an Everglades restoration project mentioned in the article?
 - a. Tamiami Trail bridging
 - b. C-111 South Dade Project
 - c. **Tamiami Trail Closure Project**
 - d. Modified Waters Delivery Project

9. True/**False** (Choose one) - The Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow will not see any improvements in their conservation status until after every restoration project is fully completed.
11. Looking at the life cycle graphic, how many eggs do females lay? How high off the ground are the nests?
Females lay 3-4 eggs in nests that are 6" off the ground.