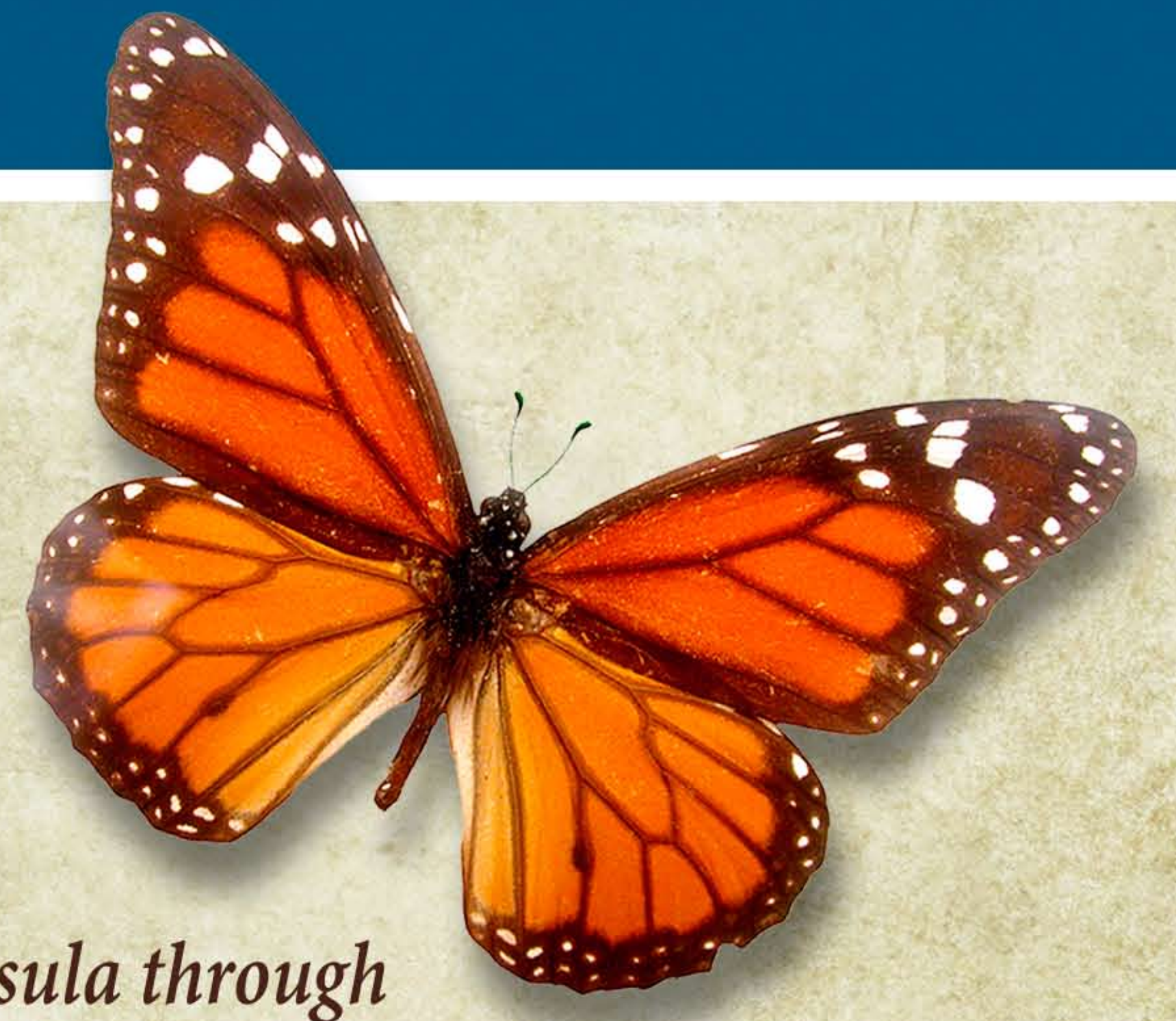


kissimmee • okeechobee • EVERGLADES



Once spreading over more than 8 million acres, the Everglades ecosystem was a vast wetland, with water depths ranging from a half-foot to two feet. A slow river, it flowed a quarter-mile a day down the southern peninsula through a few outlets east and west but mostly south to Florida Bay.

The Everglades is a low place in a low land with a towering stature. This famous wetland collects vast amounts of rainwater and shares it with an ever-growing urban population, filters and cleanses the water with the plants it nurtures and captures potential floodwaters like a giant sponge.

The Everglades is "Discovered"

Florida's Everglades is home to 68 threatened or endangered species, among them the Florida panther, the American crocodile and the wood stork. Just over a century ago, human impacts were almost nonexistent. Many people began discovering and moving into South Florida, and the vibrant Everglades ecosystem was altered to accommodate their needs.

Water is Harnessed

After more than half a century of many efforts to dike and drain the Greater Everglades, a federal public works project was built in the 1950s and 1960s to manage the free-flowing water. A system of canals and pump stations now provides flood control during the wet season and water supply during the dry months. The remnant Everglades is now divided into managed "Water Conservation Areas." The natural overland sheet flow, which is so important to the ecosystem, has been interrupted. A 90-percent decline in wading birds is just one indicator that the Everglades is in distress.

Returning the Water

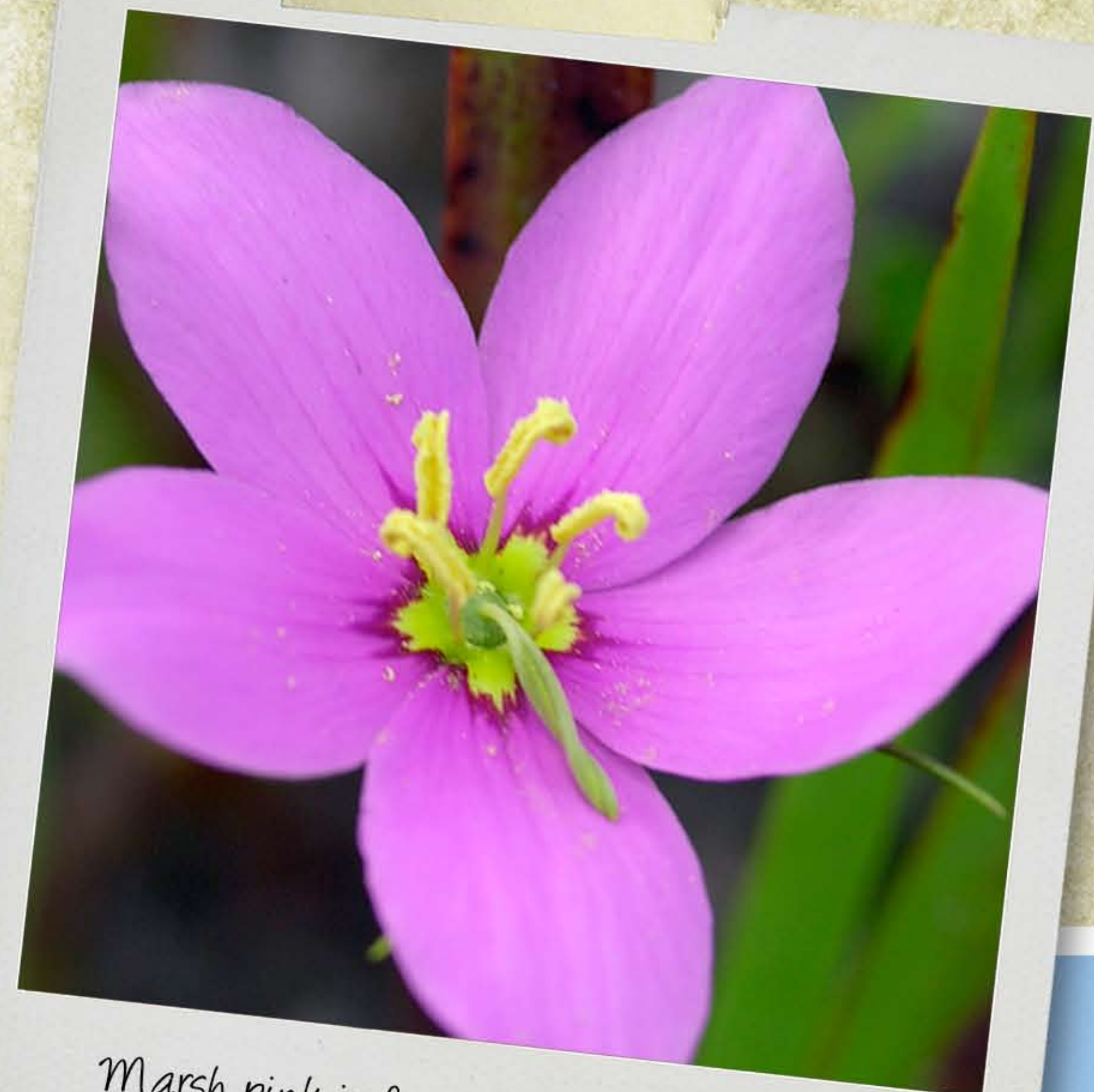
Restoration projects are under way that include constructed wetlands to treat the water and reservoirs to capture and store the water. The restoration will provide a more natural timing, flow, quality and quantity of water to the Everglades, improving the natural habitat for plants and animals and preserving a great American treasure for generations to come.



Roseate spoonbills have large, flat, spatulate bills. They feed by wading through shallow water, sweeping the partly opened bill from side to side.



Alligators travel very quickly in water, but are generally slow-moving on land. American alligators have the strongest bite of any living animal.



Marsh pink is found in coastal marshes from Massachusetts to Florida. The flower can be pink to slightly lavender.

