

# Rookery Bay Reserve *Finding Solutions*

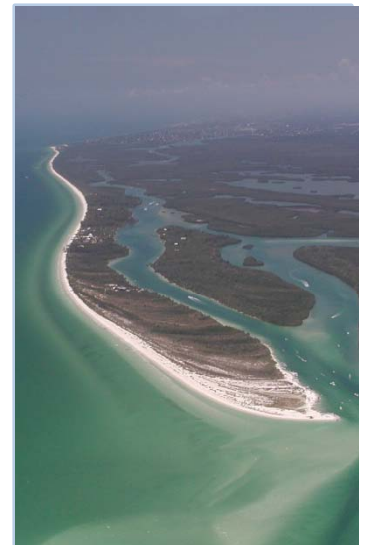


## Keewaydin Island Invasives

Barrier islands support a wide variety of marine and terrestrial plant and animal species. Keewaydin Island is one of the State's largest remaining unbridged barrier islands. The Reserve's restoration efforts on Keewaydin have been taking place since 1996 and will continue in perpetuity. In the

early 1900's Australian pine and Brazilian pepper, were introduced in Florida for landscaping. These invasives have now colonized sensitive natural areas, like Keewaydin, and upset the natural balance of its native plant communities. The challenge does not stop with plants, but also includes

nuisance animals that have been introduced over time. Keewaydin has a substantial population of Green iguanas, Spiny-tail iguanas and feral hogs that negatively impact Gopher tortoise and sea turtle nesting and generally disrupt the delicate balance on this unique Barrier Island ecosystem.



**Project Leaders**  
Rookery Bay Resource  
Stewardship Team

**Funding**  
National Marine  
Fisheries Service,  
Florida DEP, Bureau  
of Invasive Plant  
Management

**Project Dates**  
1996 to Present

## The Solution

In 1998, contractors began the removal of exotic plants on Keewaydin and more than 3,000 native plants were planted. Since the original project, the Island has undergone three maintenance treatments for exotic plants in 2003, 2005,

and 2007. Unfortunately, there are still private in-holdings harboring invasive plants that are major seed sources for treated state lands. Regarding exotic animals, the iguana population has been difficult to manage,

but progress has been made with feral hogs; their population on the island has been substantially thinned over the past several years.



Rookery Bay, located in southwest Florida, is recognized as one of the few remaining pristine, mangrove-forested estuaries in the U.S. As part of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, it serves as an outdoor classroom and laboratory for students and scientists. For more information, visit [www.rookerybay.org](http://www.rookerybay.org).

