

Key West and Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuges

This blue goose, designed by J. N. "Ding" Darling, has become a symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.



Key West National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1908 as a preserve and breeding ground for native birds and other wildlife. The refuge encompasses more than 200,000 acres with only 2,000 acres of land. The area is home to more than 250 species of birds and is important for sea turtle nesting.

All of the islands in the refuge are designated as a part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. Designated wilderness areas are managed to minimize human impacts and influences and to let natural processes occur without intervention. The refuge limits human use and influence in order to preserve the quality, character and integrity of these protected wilderness lands.

Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1938 as a haven for great white herons, migratory birds, and other wildlife. The refuge consists of almost 200,000 acres of open water and islands, and is known locally as the “backcountry.” The refuge provides critical nesting, feeding, and resting areas for hundreds of species of birds and sea turtles.

The refuge was created to protect great white herons from extinction since the population was decimated by the demand for feathered hats. Protection of great white herons was successful, and these magnificent powder-white birds can be observed feeding on tidal-flats around hundreds of backcountry islands each dawn and dusk.

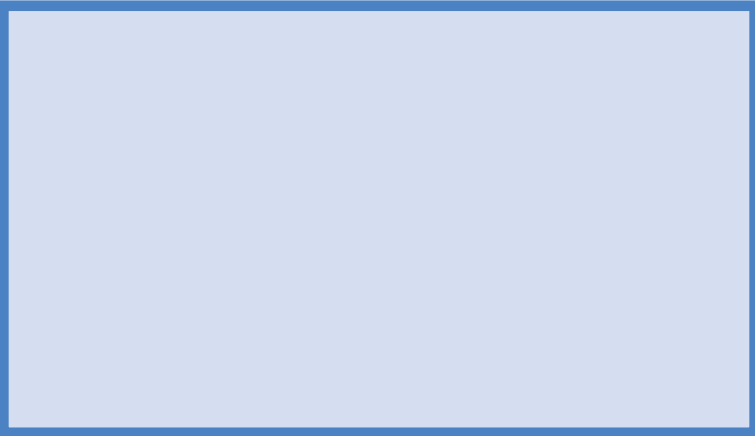
Mangrove islands are important bird nesting and roosting areas, and provide virtually no public use opportunities because upland areas do not exist. Islands with beaches are open to limited public access as marked with signs. Please obey refuge signs to help minimize disturbance to wildlife.

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary was designated in 1990 and protects 2,800 square nautical miles from Key Largo to the Dry Tortugas. This includes the waters of the Key West and Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuges. Visitors to the refuges should be aware that the sanctuary has established additional rules to protect the marine environment.

The sanctuary protects the marine portions of the refuges through a management partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Sanctuary Preservation Areas have been designated at Sand Key, Rock Key and Eastern Dry Rocks (all located within Key West NWR) to protect coral reef habitats.

For the most current National Marine Sanctuary regulations please contact the Sanctuary office at 305/809 4700.



For questions about allowable activities within the refuges please call 305/872 0774.

Allowed Activities

- Sport and commercial fishing in accordance with state and federal regulations.
- Recreational boating with conventional propeller- driven crafts, kayaks, canoes and sailboats.
- SCUBA diving and snorkeling.
- Wildlife viewing and photography.
- Refuge hours on islands are 1/2 hour before sunrise to 1/2 hour after sunset.



Brown pelican/USFWS

Prohibited Activities

- Use of personal watercrafts, hovercrafts and airboats.
- Landing airplanes, helicopters or ultra-lights.
- Water skiing.
- Camping, open fires and pets on islands.
- Search for or removal of antiquities.
- Camping on refuge managed islands.
- No open fires.

Boating in the backcountry is challenging due to very shallow water depths. If you should run aground, please do not try to power-off the area since this results in extreme damage to the environment. Instead, trim up the motor and try to walk the boat to deeper water. You might have to wait for a high-tide to accomplish this.

Refuge Information/Visitor Center	305/872 0774
Refuge Headquarters	305/872 2239
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.....	305/809 4700
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission ...	305/289 2320
U.S. Coast Guard Key West.....	305/292 8856
Monroe County Sheriff.....	305/289 2430
Marine Mammal Stranding Hotline.....	888/404 3922
Injured or dead sea turtles	305/743 2552
Injured or sick birds	
Key West.....	305/292 1008
Marathon.....	305/743 8382
Tavernier	305/852 4486
Monroe County Animal Control	
Key West SPCA.....	305/294 4857
Marathon SPCA.....	305/743 4800

Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges National Key Deer Refuge

28950 Watson Boulevard
Big Pine Key, FL 33043
Headquarters: 305/872 2239
Fax: 305/872 3675
Visitor Center: 305/872 0774
E-mail: keydeer@fws.gov
Facebook: Florida Keys Refuges

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

Key West Office
Nancy Foster Florida
Keys Environmental Complex
33 East Quay Road
Key West, FL 33040
305/809 4700



Great white heron/USFWS



PERSONAL WATERCRAFT CLOSURE ZONE

NO ENTRY ZONE (1 ISLAND)

NO MOTOR ZONE (3 ISLANDS)

NO MOTOR ZONE

NO ACCESS ZONE

PARTIAL BEACH OPENING

NO VESSEL ZONE

NOT FOR NAVIGATION PURPOSES

Geographical Features: GULF OF MEXICO, BOCA GRANDE CHANNEL, NORTHWEST CHANNEL, WEST CHANNEL, EAST CHANNEL, MARQUESAS KEYS, MOONEY HBR. KEY, GULL KEYS, BOCA GRANDE KEY, WOMAN KEY, BALLAST KEY, CRAWFISH KEY, MAN KEY, JOE INGRAM KEY, MULE KEY, ARCHER KEY, BIG MULLET KEY, LITTLE MULLET KEY, COTTRELL KEY, ROCK KEY, SAND KEY, EAST DRY KEY.

NOT FOR NAVIGATION PURPOSES

This map illustrates the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, highlighting various marine protected areas and keys. The sanctuary is divided into several zones, including the Idle Speed Zone, No Entry Zone, and No Motor Zone. Key locations marked include the Gulf of Mexico, Snipe Point, Mud Key Channel, Waltz Key Basin, Jewfish Basin, Lower Harbor Keys, Coon Key, Fish Hawk Key, Harper Key, Big Harper Key, Channel Key, Boca Chica Key, Key West, Bay Keys, Cayo Agua, Grassy Keys, Duck Key, Round Keys, Crane Keys, Whiting Key, Waltz Key, Snipe Keys, Mallory Key, Squirrel Key, Sugarloaf Key, Saddlebunch Keys, Happy Jack Key, Pumpkin Key, Johnstone Key, Pigeon Key, Galatin Key, Little Swash Keys, Budd Key, and Marvin Keys. The map also shows the location of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary relative to the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean.

- Buoys and signs are used to mark no entry, no motor and idle speed zones. Buoys are placed in areas important to wildlife and for human safety.
- Follow the directions on the buoys.
- These are not mooring buoys—do not tie-up to them.

- Use of personal watercraft (PWC), airboats, hovercrafts, water-skiing and landing of aircrafts or ultra-lights is prohibited within the boundaries of the Key West and Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuges (indicated by orange dashed line).
- A personal watercraft is defined as a State of Florida Class A-1 vessel, shallow-draft, jet-drive watercraft operated by standing, sitting or kneeling on or behind the vessel (in contrast to a conventional boat where the operator stands or sits inside the vessel). Propeller driven boats, row boats, kayaks, canoes and sail boats are permitted. Other state and federal regulations still apply.

- **Vessel Exclusion and No Entry Zone**
Area closed to all boat and visitor access within areas marked by these buoys or “Area Closed” signs.
- **Combustion Vessel Exclusion**
Use of internal combustion engines is not allowed within areas marked by “No Motor” buoys.
- **Idle Speed Zone**
Watercraft must operate at no greater than idle speed within areas marked by “Idle Speed” buoys.