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PRIVATE GROUPS LAUDED FOR ROLE IN NATIONAL KEY DEER REFUGE IN FLORIDA

The contribution of private organizations and individuals in helping create the National Key Deer Refuge in the Florida Keys was noted today by Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall.

Secretary Udall will dedicate the refuge November 8 at its headquarters at Big Pine Key. Also on the program will be Max McGraw, president; C. R. Gutermuth, secretary; and Radford R. Crane, trustee, all of the North American Wildlife Foundation.

The Foundation led a campaign to obtain donations of cash and land for the conservation area. The donations in cash and land amounted to more than \$185,000.

Contributors included the Raymond E. and Ellen F. Crane Foundation of Miami Beach; Boone and Crockett Club of New York City; Laurel Foundation of Pittsburgh; Congressman Charles A. Bennett of Florida's Second District; the National Audubon Society; the State of Florida; Philadelphia Conservationists, Inc.; the Wilderness Club of Philadelphia; and the Wildlife Management Institute.

The refuge contains 7,100 acres, more than 6,200 acres of which are leased land. In addition to 523 acres of donated land, the Department of the Interior has purchased 240 acres with appropriated funds and cash donations. The latter included \$17,400 raised by the Foundation and \$5,000 donated by Congressman Bennett.

The refuge is just off U. S. Highway 1. It will be primarily for the tiny Key deer, but it also will benefit birds and other animals and plants of the sub-tropical environment. The refuge is managed by the Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service.

The adult male Key deer measures only 28 to 32 inches in height at the shoulder and is from 45 to 50 inches in length. He seldom weighs more than 70 pounds--far short of the 250 pounds typical of large whitetail deer on the mainland.

In 1951, when conservation efforts were begun, there were only an estimated 32 Key deer remaining. At present, there are about 300 Key deer on the islands. Large numbers of the diminutive animal formerly ranged over most of the islands between Key Largo and Key West. The first recorded description of them was contained in the log of Columbus' fourth voyage to the New World.

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