

# Egmont Key National Wildlife Refuge



Located at the mouth of Tampa Bay, Egmont Key National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1974 to preserve its natural, cultural and historic significance for the benefit of present and future generations. It is managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with the Florida Park Service as a National Wildlife Refuge and State Park. Egmont Key is the only Refuge of the Tampa Bay refuges that is open to the public.



*Left: Brown pelican populations are thriving in the Gulf Coast. Over 1000 pairs of pelicans have nested on Egmont Key at one time during the summer. Right: A loggerhead sea turtle crawls ashore and digs a nest with its back flippers. If the nest survives the impacts of erosion, dozens of turtles will hatch in 60 days to begin their treacherous ocean journey. Only one hatchling in every 1000 reaches adult maturity.*



## Wildlife

Egmont Key's pristine habitats make it a safe haven that supports over 117 species of nesting, migratory, and wintering birds, provides nesting habitat to the threatened Atlantic loggerhead sea turtles and protects an unusually large population of gopher tortoises and box turtles.

Two designated wildlife sanctuaries (see map on reverse side) are closed to the public year-round to protect nesting, wintering, and migrating birds and nesting sea turtles. Disturbance by people and pets entering closed areas threatens birds, by causing adult birds in the summer to

photo: Keith Ramos



*Egmont Key provides excellent gopher tortoise habitat. Between 1000 and 1500 gopher tortoises roam the 280-acre island interior, but can also be found foraging on vegetation near the beach.*

fly from their nests which leads to chick predation or fatal exposure of eggs/chicks to the hot sun, and by preventing wintering birds to gain the body fat needed to complete long migrations.

Approximately 30-70 Atlantic loggerhead sea turtles nest on Egmont Key each year. Due to recent habitat loss, fewer nests are being documented. The main threat sea turtles face on Egmont Key is the erosion of the shoreline. Often sea turtles nest too close to the shore, and their nests are lost due to erosion.

photo: Joyce Kleen



photo: Joyce Kleen



From April to August, you may witness the incredible sights and sounds of thousands of birds nesting and roosting together within the wildlife sanctuaries.

Egmont Key supports more than 35,000 pairs of colonial beach-nesting birds. Royal and sandwich terns, brown pelicans, and laughing gulls make up the majority of the colony. Known as colonial nesters, these birds find safety in numbers. Egmont Key holds the highest nesting colony of laughing gulls in Florida. Over 7,000 pairs of royal terns have nested on Egmont Key, which makes it one of the highest nesting royal tern colonies in the state. Around 550 pairs of black skimmers have also nested on Egmont Key NWR.

## Unique and Rich Cultural Past

Egmont Key was named by the English in honor of John Perceval, the second Earl of Egmont in 1763. Egmont's first historical structure was built in 1847, when U.S. Congress

photo: Keith Ramos



photo: Joyce Kleen



photo: Joyce Kleen



*Top (left): A black skimmer skims the surface while fishing. (middle), A royal tern tends to its chick at the southern bird sanctuary. Top (right): Sandwich terns getting ready to nest in a colony.*

authorized the construction of a lighthouse, which was used by the U.S. Army through the Seminole Indian War in 1854 and the Civil War in the 1860's. Most of Egmont Key's historical structures were constructed during the Spanish-American War in 1898, when Egmont Key became part of the Fort Dade Military reservation. Fort Dade was a small military garrison of some 300 residents, until it was deactivated in 1929. Remnants of a carriage brick road, side walks, several gun batteries and guard house remain today to remind visitors of this island's unique historical past.



Lighthouse-Rebuilt 1858

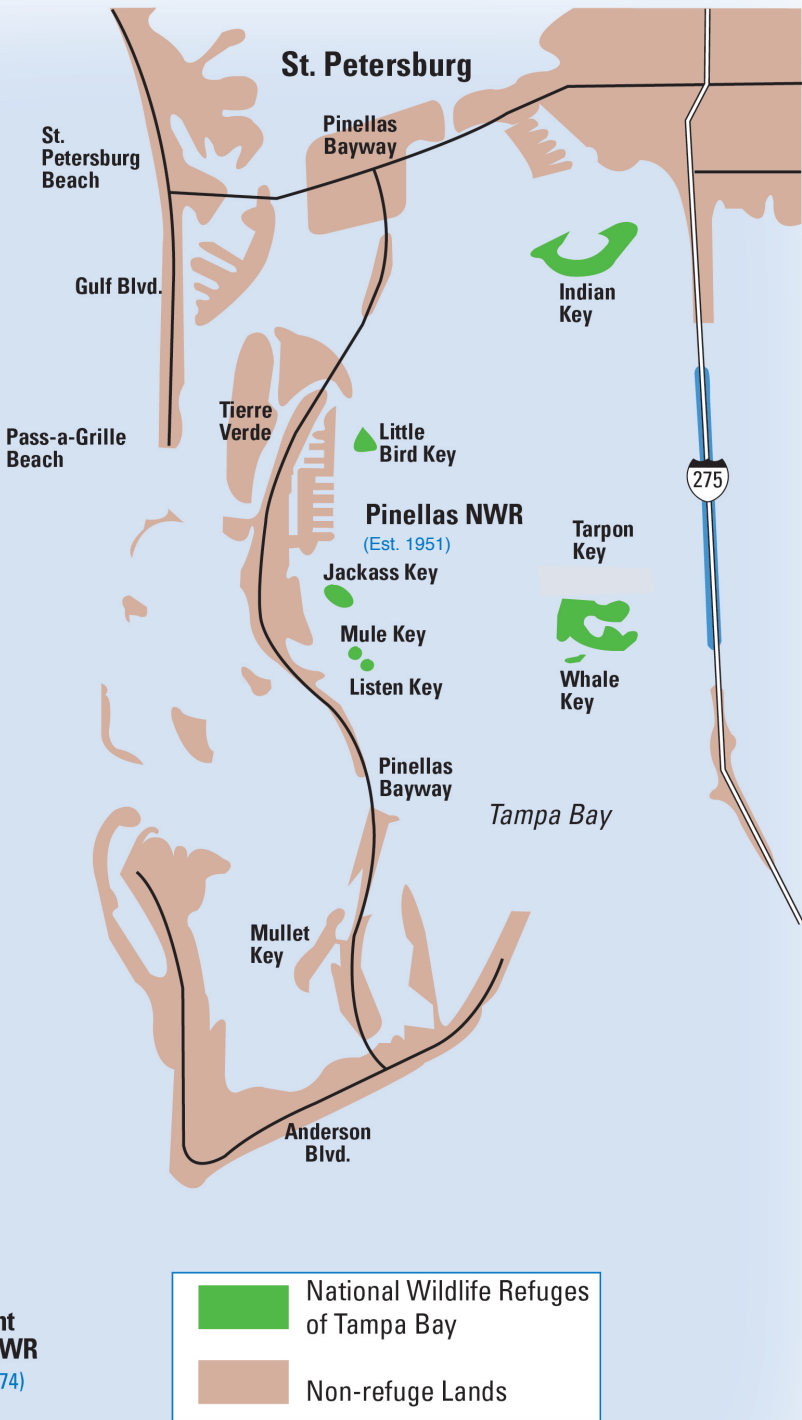
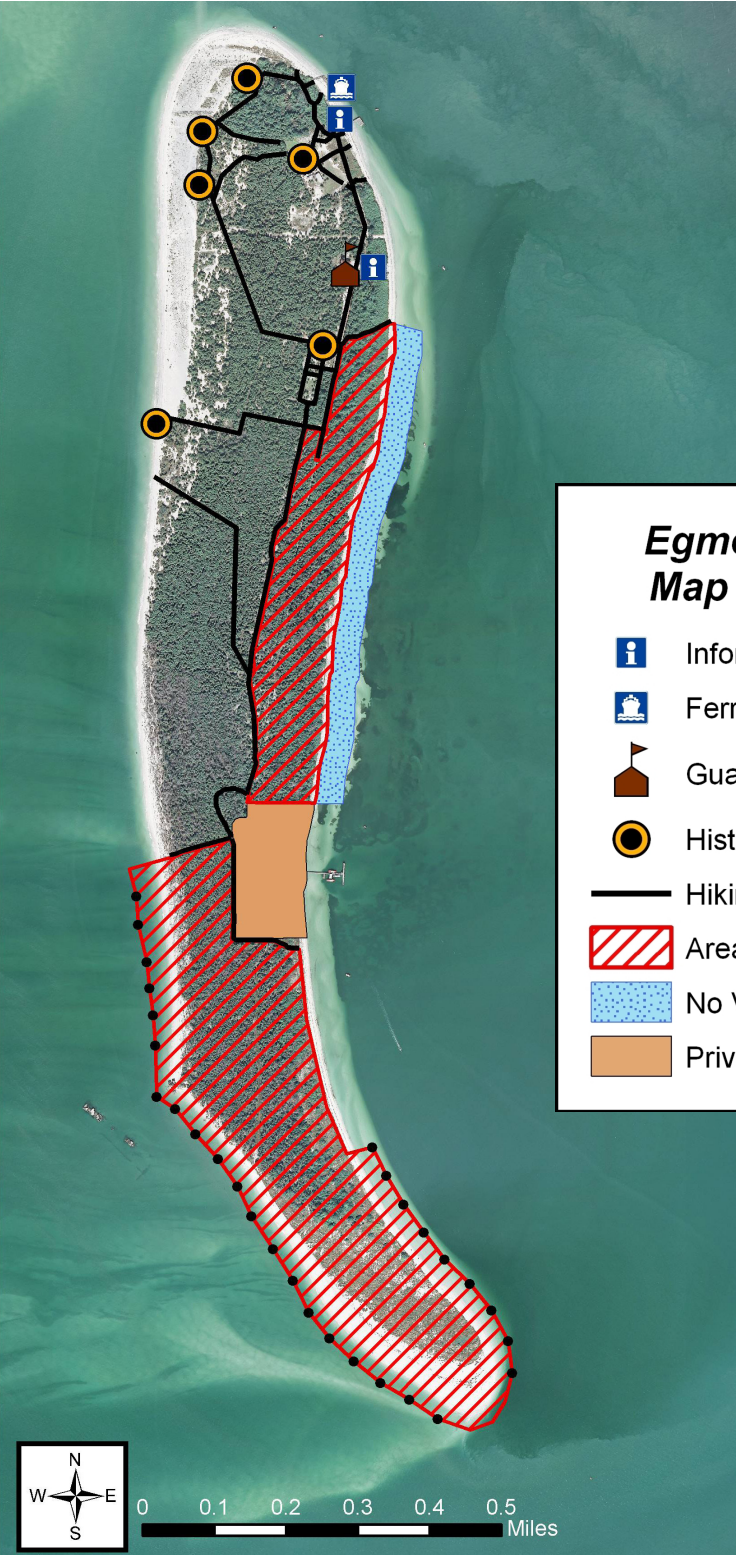


Gun-Battery McIntosh 1898

## Key Conservation Partners

- Florida Park Service
- National Audubon Society
- The Friends of Tampa Bay National Wildlife Refuges
- Egmont Key Alliance
- Tampa Bay Watch
- Eckerd College
- Pinellas County Environmental Fund
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Shell Marine Habitat Program
- St. Petersburg, Clearwater, and Manatee Audubon Societies
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission





# Egmont Key National Wildlife Refuge

The following activities are permitted:

- Swimming
- Snorkeling
- Fishing
- Collecting shells (no live specimens)
- Possession of firearms allowed in compliance with State Laws.

Do Not:

- Enter protected areas or bird sanctuaries
- Disturb/feed/take any wildlife and/or plants
- Take/collect any live shells and/or artifacts
- Secure vessels to any vegetation/structure
- Construct any structure (forts, shelters, tiki huts)
- Disturb by audio (person or wildlife)

**Egmont Key Regulations**  
*Open to public from sunrise to sunset.*

**The following items and activities are prohibited**

- Pets
- Littering
- Hunting
- Camping

- Open fires
- Intoxicants
- Glass
- Fireworks
- Nudity
- Metal detectors
- Probing equipment
- Metal shovels
- Kites
- Parasailing
- Kite surfing
- UAVS

A USFWS Permit is required to conduct any commercial operation or research activity.

**Tampa Bay National Wildlife Refuges**  
1502 SE Kings Bay Dr  
Crystal River, FL34429  
352/563 2088  
Websites:  
<http://www.fws.gov/egmontkey/>