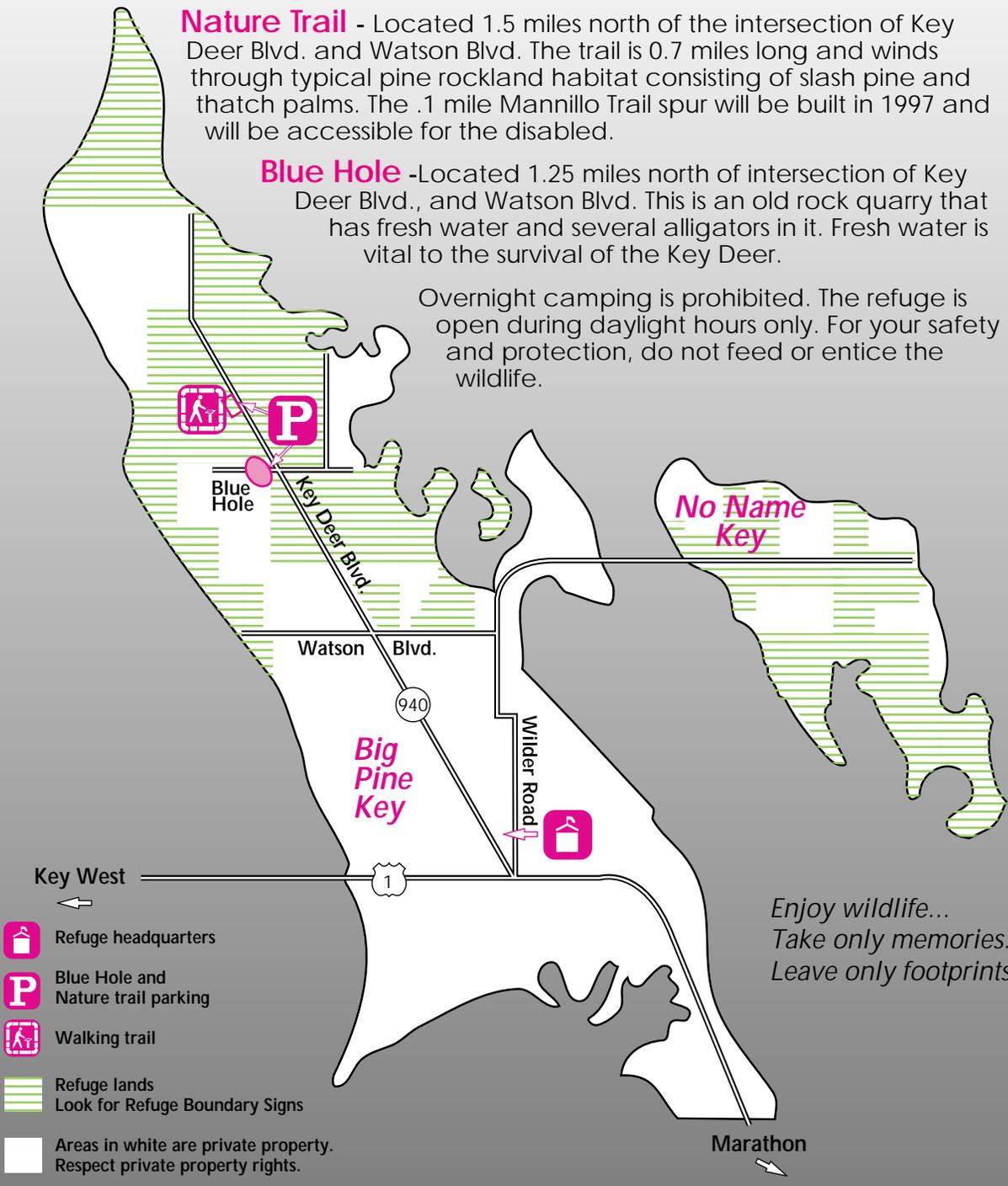


For your safety and theirs, do not feed or entice wildlife.

Nature Trail - Located 1.5 miles north of the intersection of Key Deer Blvd. and Watson Blvd. The trail is 0.7 miles long and winds through typical pine rockland habitat consisting of slash pine and thatch palms. The .1 mile Mannillo Trail spur will be built in 1997 and will be accessible for the disabled.

Blue Hole - Located 1.25 miles north of intersection of Key Deer Blvd., and Watson Blvd. This is an old rock quarry that has fresh water and several alligators in it. Fresh water is vital to the survival of the Key Deer.

Overnight camping is prohibited. The refuge is open during daylight hours only. For your safety and protection, do not feed or entice the wildlife.



The FACTS On key Deer



40th Anniversary
Year—1997!

*Enjoy wildlife...
Take only memories...
Leave only footprints...*



National
Key Deer
Refuge

The Key deer (*Odocoileus virginianus clavium*)

is a subspecies of the Virginia white-tailed deer. These deer inhabit Big Pine Key and various surrounding keys. The **Key deer** is smallest of all white-tailed deer. They are not found anywhere else in the world.



Due to uncontrolled hunting and habitat destruction, their numbers were estimated less than 50 animals in the 1940's. With the establishment of National Key Deer Refuge in 1957 and intensive law enforcement efforts, the population has since increased and has now stabilized. The present population is approximately 300 deer with two-thirds of this population located on Big Pine Key.



The shoulder height of **Key deer** is between 24-32 inches. Does weigh 45 to 65 pounds while bucks weigh 55 to 80. Rutting season activities begin in September, peaking in early October and decreasing gradually through November and December. Some breeding may occur as late as February. The gestation period is 204 days with fawns born April through June. At birth fawns weigh 2 to 4 pounds. Antlers on mature bucks are dropped February through March, and regrowth begins almost immediately so that by June, bucks with 2-inch stubs are seen. Antler growth is completed by August, and velvet is rubbed and kicked off in early September.



They feed on native plants such as red, black and white mangroves, thatch palm berries and over 160 other species of plants. **Key deer** can tolerate small amounts of salt in their water and they will drink brackish water, but fresh water is essential for their survival. They must also have suitable habitat to ensure their future existence.

No records exist documenting the origin of the deer in the keys. It is believed that the deer migrated to the keys from the mainland many thousands of years ago, across a long land bridge. As the Wisconsin Glacier melted, the sea rose dividing the land bridge into small islands now known as the Florida Keys.



The earliest mention of **Key deer** is found in the memoirs of Fontaneda, a shipwrecked Spaniard held captive by the local Indians in the 1550's. Records suggest that the deer were found around Key West and were used for food by residents and ship crews alike. Although early records indicated sporadic wider distribution of Key deer throughout the lower keys, current data indicates they occupy a range from Johnson Keys to Sugarloaf Keys.



Feeding **or enticing Key deer** is harmful for the following reasons:

- (1) Deer that are accustomed to being hand fed lose their natural fear of humans and become easy targets for would-be poachers.
- (2) Public feeding attracts deer to roads and highways where they are killed each year by passing motorists.
- (3) Supplementing the natural diet of the Key deer with the completely unnatural foods used in public feeding may have adverse effects on the deer's behavior, reproductive capability, and even its physical appearance.
- (4) Public feeding is usually centered in areas of high human concentrations such as subdivisions. These developments expose the deer to human-related accidents such as entanglement in wire or other debris, accidental drowning in canals and harassment and attacks by dogs.

- (5) Deer tend to concentrate in large numbers around public feeding areas and are more susceptible to contagious diseases, fighting or other density related mortalities.

Federal law prohibits the disturbance and feeding of **Key deer** and other endangered or threatened species and the disturbance and feeding of any wildlife on a National Wildlife Refuge. State regulations implemented by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission make feeding **Key deer** a misdemeanor offense. **The least obtrusive way to observe wildlife, including the Key deer, is to remain fully within your vehicle. In order to avoid disturbing animals, do not approach on foot, extend your arms towards them, or attempt to call them to you. Wildlife refuges are havens for wild animals: do not treat wildlife or expect them to behave as pets.**

This sign indicates the boundary of the Refuge. The Refuge Manager has authorized this area open **during daylight hours** to public access for wildlife—dependent activities such as environmental education, wildlife and wildlands observation, and personal photography. Please stay on trails. Respect private property.



This sign indicates that there is no public access permitted in the area beyond this sign. Access is prohibited to protect wildlife and habitat and/or to protect visitors.



For additional information, contact:
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