

# 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.

Great white herons are a white color-phase of great blue herons and are only found in the Florida Keys. 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 sanctuary regulations please contact the sanctuary office at 305/743-2437.

### Sanctuary Regulations in Refuges

- No fishing allowed in Sanctuary Preservation Areas.
- Do not touch coral or anchor on coral.
- Do not discharge waste water
- Use dive flag when snorkeling or diving.
- Use mooring buoys when available.

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.



USFWS, Brown Pelican

### 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.

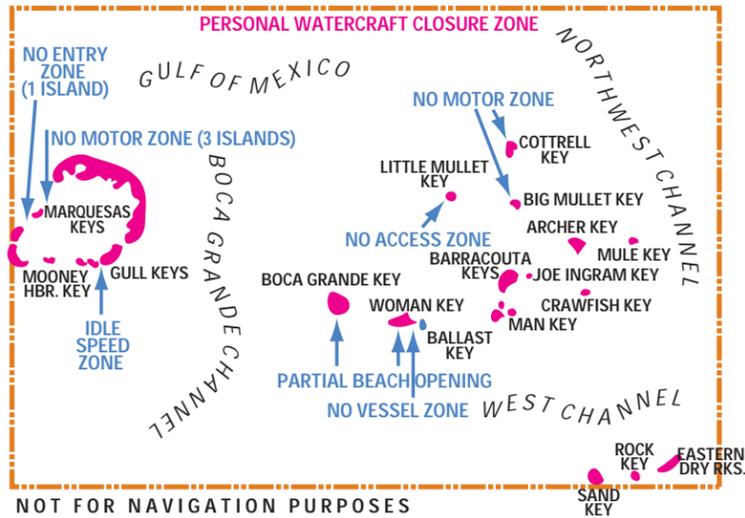
Boating in the backcountry is challenging due to very shallow water depths. If you should run aground, please do not try to power-off the area since this results in extreme damage to the environment. Instead, trim up the motor and try to walk the boat to deeper water. You might have to wait for a high-tide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

Refuge Information/Visitor Center.....	872 0774
Refuge Headquarters.....	872 2239
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.....	743 2437
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.....	289 2320
U.S. Coast Guard Key West.....	292 8727
cell phone.....	*CG
Monroe County Sheriff.....	872 3311
Marine Mammal Stranding Hotline.....	743 9102
Injured or dead sea turtles.....	743 5376
Injured or sick birds	
Key West.....	294 1441
Big Pine Key.....	872 1982
Marathon.....	743 8382
Tavernier.....	305/852 4486
Monroe County Animal Control	
Big Pine Key.....	872 3412
Marathon.....	743 3779

National Key Deer Refuge  
28950 Watson Boulevard  
Big Pine Key, Florida 33043  
Headquarters: 305/872 2239  
Fax: 305/872 3675  
Visitor Center: 305-872-0774  
Fax: 305/872 2154  
E-mail: keydeer@fws.gov

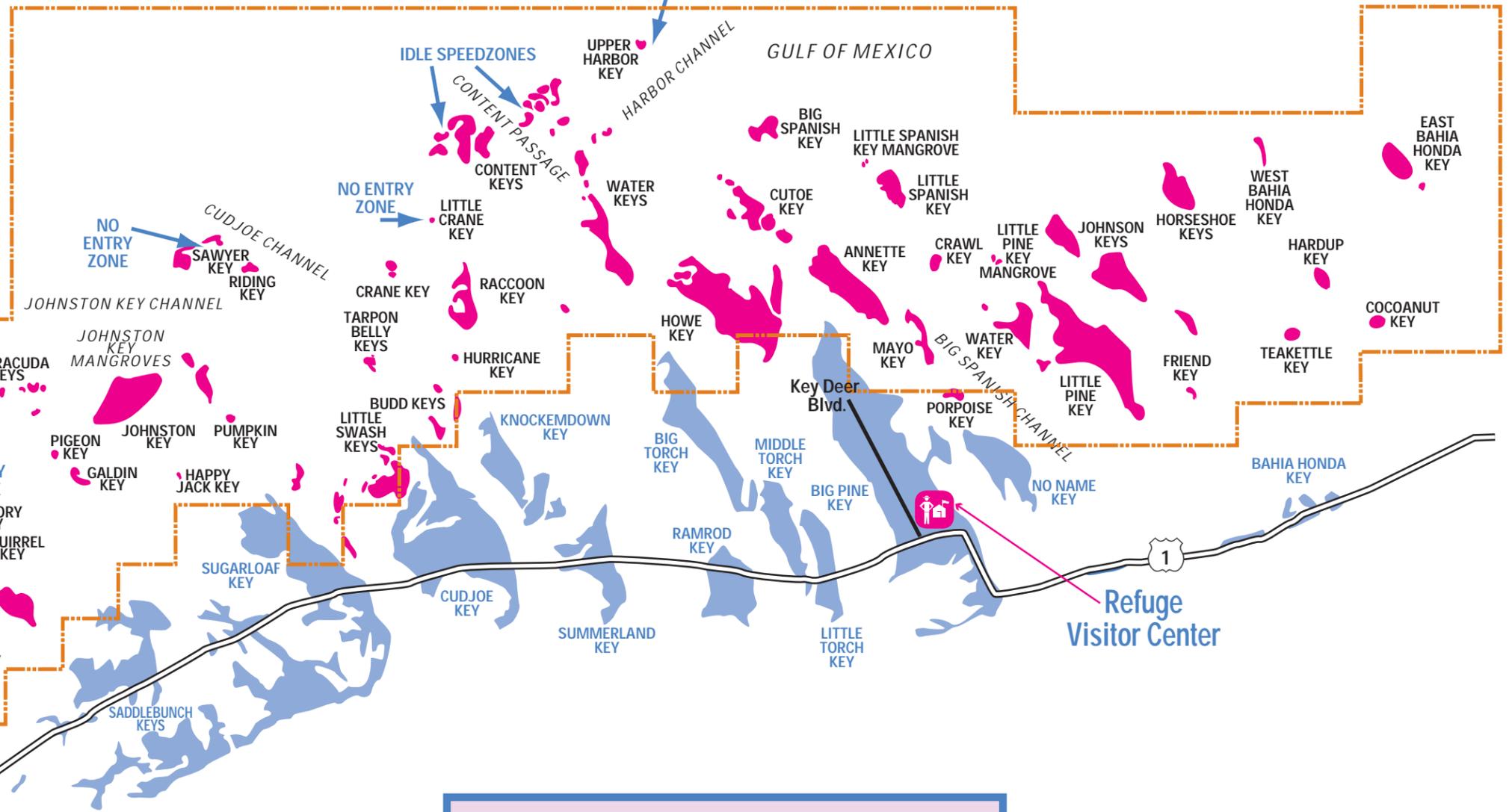
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary  
P.O. Box 500368  
Marathon, Florida 33050  
305/743 2437  
Fax: 305/743 2357

Key West National Wildlife Refuge



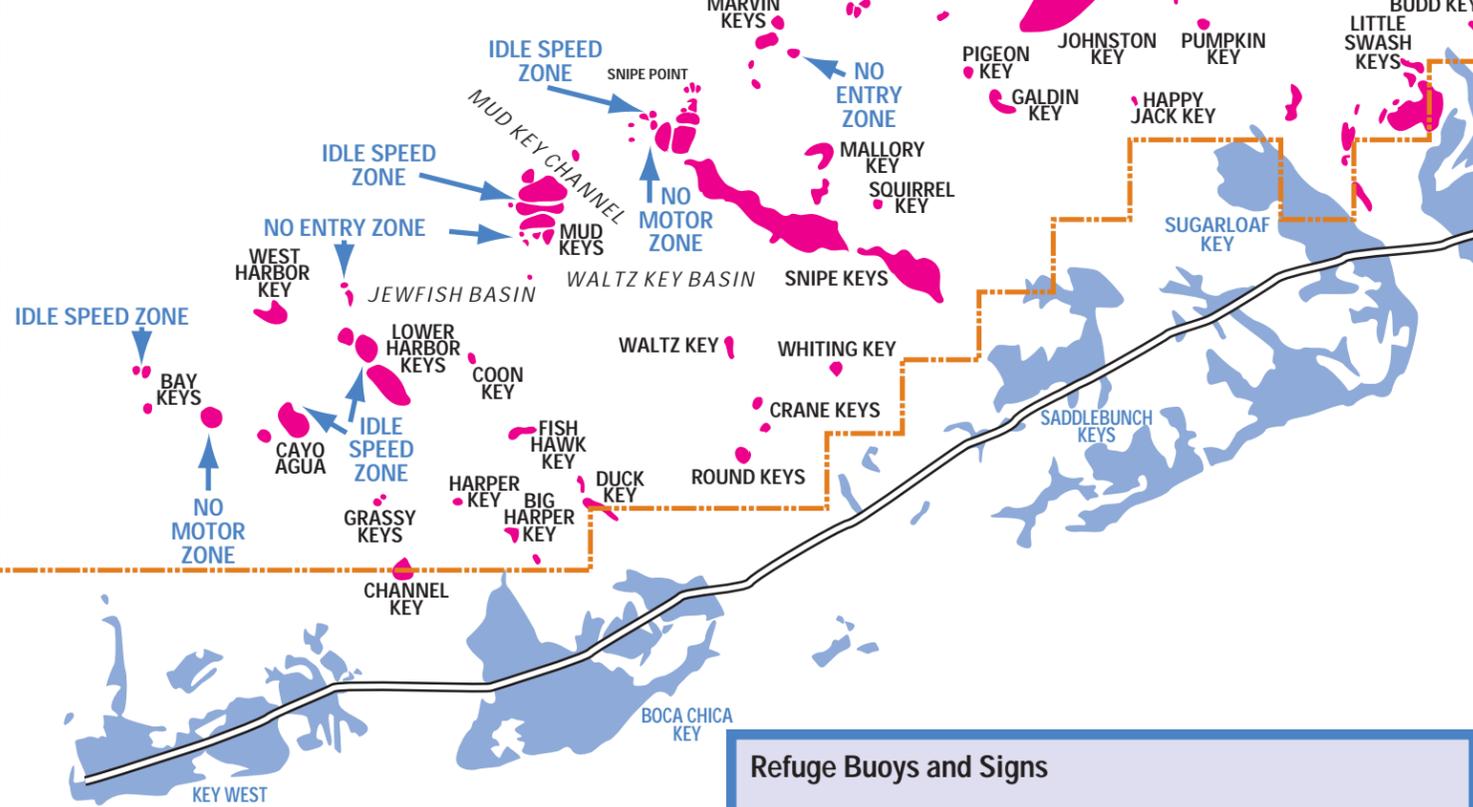
Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge

NOT FOR NAVIGATION PURPOSES



PERSONAL WATERCRAFT CLOSURE ZONE

GULF OF MEXICO



Refuge Buoys and Signs

- 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.

Personal Watercraft (PWC) Closure Zone

- 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.

Restricted Boat Access Buoys

- **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.

