

Key Deer



<http://www.keysdirectory.com/keydeer/>

The Key Deer was put on the Endangered Species list in 1967. It lives only in the Florida Keys, mostly on No Name Key and Big Pine Key, although it used to live on all of the Keys. Male Key Deer are about 3 feet tall at the shoulder, and weigh about 80 pounds. Does are little more than 2 feet tall at the shoulder, and weigh around 65 pounds. New-born Key Deer weigh only 2-4 pounds.

In 1957, the National Key Deer Refuge was established to protect Key Deer. This refuge serves to protect many other Florida Keys endangered and threatened species. The Key deer population may have been as few as 27 individuals in 1957. Hunting Key Deer was banned in 1939, but poaching and habitat

loss meant that they became nearly extinct by the 1950s. Since they have been protected, their population has risen to about 800.

Even when William Bartram was travelling in Florida in the 18th century, the population of Key deer was probably not very large – only about 600 to 700 individuals. If he did see one, he would note its small size, and its reddish-brown to grey-brown coloring. He would see that Key Deer eat many different kinds of plants, so they can move around different kinds of habitats, such as the pine rocklands, hardwood hammocks, mangroves, and wetlands of the Keys. They can even swim between the islands. Key Deer would have been very shy of people in Bartram's day, but living close to humans as they do now, they have lost this natural fear.

Currently, Key Deer eat in yards and along roadsides where the plants they like to eat grow. Roadside accidents are a large cause of Key Deer population decline. The Florida Keys are becoming more populated with humans, causing Key Deer to lose their habitat and encounter more deadly vehicles. Their reproduction rate is low – only one fawn per year is born to each doe. The more adults that are kept alive, the more young Key Deer will be born and raised to keep their population up.

Questions

1. What have you learned about the Key Deer?
2. Do you think the Key Deer needs to be "rescued"? Why or why not?
3. How would you represent what you have learned about the Key Deer in an art work?