

November 15, 2011 - Florida Keys - Tom MacKenzie: Refuge Boundary Signs. National Key Deer Refuge Visitor Center, 175 Key Deer Blvd, Big Pine Key Plaza, Big Pine Key, FL 33043, Phone: 305/872-0774, Fax: 305/872-2154 <http://nationakeydeer.gov>, keydeer@fws.gov, Contacts: James Bell 305-872-0774,

EXPLORE YOUR LOCAL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The winter season is approaching and now is a good time to explore your local National Wildlife Refuge. The weather is cool and dry and you won't be swarmed by bugs. There are some interesting places you can visit at National Key Deer Refuge. Take a hike down on our Long Beach Trail as it winds through a shady hammock and beach community. Enjoy a leisurely stroll into the pinelands on the 2/3 mile Jack Watson Nature Trail. If you are interested in a shorter walk, visit the disabled accessible Fred Mannillo Trail. There are several benches where you can sit and listen to the sounds associated with the wetland and pineland habitats. Stop by the Blue Hole and view a myriad of wildlife. Wildlife includes fish snapping at the dragonflies, turtles gliding by, an alligator sunning on the rocks, in April green herons nesting in the trees along the shoreline, or a Key deer stopping by for a drink. The refuge has many fire roads you can hike or bike. Almost all of the lands of National Key Deer Refuge are open for public access during daylight hours. However, there are a few restricted areas necessary to protect the wildlife and habitat resources. While you are out exploring the refuge you may run across two standard U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service signs.

The National Wildlife Refuge Boundary Sign marks the boundaries of National Wildlife Refuges. The statement "unauthorized entry prohibited" is quite often misunderstood by the public. Visitors are authorized to access National Key Deer refuge lands on refuge roads, fire roads, and trails for wildlife-dependent activities such as hiking, fishing, photography, environmental education, interpretation, and wildlife and wildlands observation. Almost all of National Key Deer Refuge is open to public access, ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset. If you have any questions, please stop by the visitor center or call the visitor center at 305-872-0774.

The "Area Beyond this sign Closed" sign is used to inform visitors that an area is closed to all public entry. This closure is to protect you and/or sensitive habitat.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 fish and wildlife management offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.

NOTE: You can view US Fish and Wildlife Service releases or subscribe to receive them - - via e-mail - - at the Service's Southeast Regional home page at <http://southeast.fws.gov> Our national home page is located at: <http://www.fws.gov>



Sun Motors - Go Carts Watched go-cart racing between a father and son tourist team today at Sun Motors Marathon Florida Keys. I want to go go-carting myself badly, but I need an excuse to invite some member of my unsuspecting family to come with me. I wonder how slow one can go before the person you invite to race you goes ballistic? Yes, I know this is a Journal advertiser, but I like go-cart racing.