

MIAMI BLUE

Cyclargus thomasi bethunebakeri

Order: Lepidoptera

Family: Lycaenidae

FNAI Ranks: G4T1/S1

U.S. Status: Endangered

FL Status: Endangered



Description: Small (20 to 28 mm) butterfly that is bright blue above. Undersides are grayish with white patches and markings. The outer edge of the hindwing has two eyespots on the underside. The upper eyespot is highlighted with orange on the inner side. The Miami blue has four dark spots near the base of the hindwing on the underside (Schweitzer et al. 2011). Above, female Miami blues have an orange spot near the hindwing outer angle that similar blues lack (Glassberg et al. 2000).

Similar Species: Nickerbean blue, Ceraunus blue, Cassius blue. The nickerbean blue is similar, but smaller and has only three dark spots on the underside at the base of the hindwing. Ceraunus blues have a very dull orange spot near the hindwing outer angle. Cassius blues lack bold black spots at hindwing leading margin. Above, female Miami blues have an orange spot near the hindwing outer angle that similar blues lack (Glassberg et al. 2000).

Habitat: Coastal beach berm and hammock edges.

Seasonal Occurrence: Most common March - May and September - October.

Florida Distribution: Now known only from Key West National Wildlife Refuge and Bahia Honda State Park.

Range-wide Distribution: This species is currently restricted to the lower Florida Keys within Bahia Honda State Park and Key West National Wildlife Refuge.

Conservation Status: The Miami blue has experienced drastic short- and long-term declines in both population size and area of occupancy in Florida due to habitat loss and fragmentation, extreme weather events, droughts, and potentially by invasive species. The immediate risk of extinction of this subspecies is very high without targeted organism reintroductions over a large geographic range. Research and current work are ongoing to ascertain best practices that are needed to sustain

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populations over time.

Protection and Management: Land managers need to continue to remove invasive exotic iguanas from Bahia Honda State Park. While it is not certain that the iguanas were the primary cause for the collapse of the population, their continued presence would make it less likely for a recovery of the Miami Blue at the park.

References: Glassberg et al. 2000, Saarinen and Daniels 2006, Saarinen 2009, Cannon et al. 2010, Schweitzer et al. 2011, Trager and Daniels 2011, Henry et al. 2015, Hill et al. 2022, Daniels 2023



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male © Geena M. Hill