KEY DEER
Odocoileus virginianus clavium

Order: Cervidae
Family: Cervidae
FNAI Ranks: G5T1/S1
U.S. Status: Endangered
FL Status: Endangered

Description: A small deer reaching a height of 25 - 30 in. (635 - 762 mm). Average weight is 79 lbs. (36 kg) for males and 64 lbs. (29 kg) for females. Hair on dorsum (upper side) varies from red-brown to gray; underside is white. Top of the snout is black. Males more than two years old have antlers that are shed each spring and replaced by late summer.

Similar Species: Mainland form is generally larger, but adult size overlaps slightly with Key deer. Skull characteristics are diagnostic; Key deer skull is proportionally broader.

Habitat: A variety of habitats in close proximity to fresh water. Pine/palm community (pine rockland) and tropical hardwood forests are used most frequently. Buttonwood and mangrove swamps provide a small but essential portion of the Key deer's annual habitat needs. Recently burned areas provide nutrient-rich forage.

Seasonal Occurrence: Active year-round; some seasonal habitat use has been observed. Will leave small islands during the dry season.

Florida Distribution: Florida Keys from Spanish Harbor Bridge to Boca Chica.

Range-wide Distribution: Lower Florida Keys. Other subspecies occur throughout most of North America.

Conservation Status: Population is stable or increasing slightly despite an increase in mortality due to collisions with vehicles. The Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge portion of Big Pine Key is the stronghold for this subspecies.

Protection and Management: Burn pine rockland community regularly to maintain high-quality forage.

References: Brown 1997, Humphrey (ed.) 1992, Lazell 1989, Whitaker 1996.

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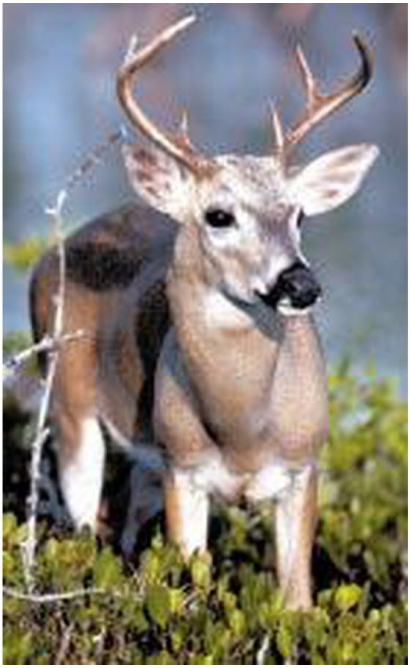

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