

A Guide to Wildlife

at

The Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park



This book is dedicated to the volunteers, animals, staff, and guests who come to the Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park.

Vicky Iozzia started writing this in 2005.

It is dedicated to:

Marla Chancey, who first encouraged me to write it.

Kim Tennille, who brought it back to life.

JD Mendenhall, whose vast knowledge amazes me.

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All proceeds from this book will go to the Friends of Homosassa Springs Wildlife Park to be spent to make our terrific Park even better.

The animal population at the Park changes from time to time. Park animals are not purchased; they live at the Park because they cannot live in the wild. An animal highlighted in this book might not be a current resident when you are at the Park.

2017

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Mammal - Bear

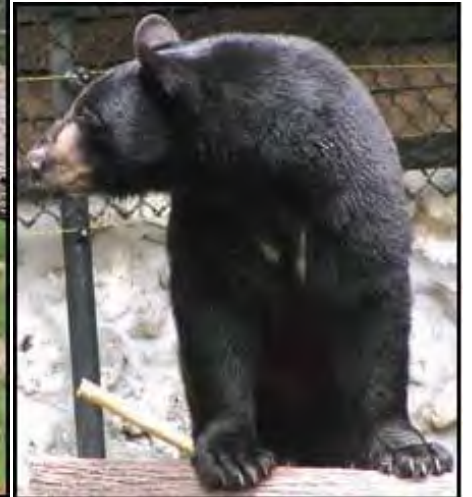
Florida Black

Bear

Ursus americanus floridanus

Has a brown muzzle, some have a white blaze on their chest.

Habitat: Lives in forested areas with vegetation, and in thick swamps. Range is Florida, Alabama & Georgia.



Size: 4 to 6 feet long, height to shoulder 3 feet. Average weight 180 to 250 lbs. Females weigh less than males.

Life Span: 12 to 15 years in the wild. In captivity, males 15 to 30 years.

Food: Carpenter ants, termites, carrion, honey, berries, insects, nuts, fruits, hearts of palmettos and cabbage palms, acorns, armadillos, wild hogs, deer, small mammals, birds' eggs, honeycombs. May eat 11 to 18 pounds of food in a day.

Reproduction: Bears reach sexual maturity at 5 to 6 years old. Mate early in summer. Females with cubs mate every second year. Mother's milk is ten times as rich as cow's milk. Approximately 7 month gestation period. One to three cubs are born at a time. Cubs weigh 4 to 7 pounds at birth. In 2 years they may weigh 100 pounds. Cubs leave mother at 18 months. When mating, they fight viciously. There is no lasting bond between mating bears. Females are called sows, males called boars.

Behaviors: Nocturnal, solitary. Climb trees.

Other Information: No documented human deaths in Florida as a result of a bear attack.

Mammal - Feline

Florida Panther

Endangered Species

Puma concolor coryi



Also known as a mountain lion, puma, catamount cougar, and silver lion. Florida Panther is a subspecies of the Puma. Generally smaller, darker than other Puma species (Mountain Lion, cougar). Has a broad, flat nose, arched nostrils, and the fur is short and stiff.



Habitat: They live in dens, in crevices, under fallen trees, and palmettos. They need a large area in which to hunt.

They walk 15 to 20 miles/day for food. Their home range is 275 square miles. Range is South Florida.

Size: Adult males are up to 150 pounds, females up to 100 pounds. Mature males are 6.6 feet, from nose to tail; females 6 feet.

Life Span: 12 years in the wild, 17 to 22 years in captivity.

Food: They eat wild hogs, deer, armadillos, birds, raccoons, rabbits. They can break the neck of an animal with a single bite to the spinal cord, cover the remains with leaves, and come back the next day to finish. They eat 35 to 50 deer-size animals/year. They will even eat alligators.

Reproduction: Females start breeding at 2 and a half years old, males at 3 years. Babies have blue eyes, which change to yellowish brown. Gestation is 90 to 95 days. Babies are born with spotted fur for camouflage. They mate in the winter. Up to 3 kittens are born. They are weaned at two months, and stay with their mother for 2 years. Babies are called "kits", cubs, or kittens.

Other Information: The Florida Panther is the official state mammal.

Mammal - Feline

Bobcat

Felis rufus

They got their name from their short tail. They have retractable claws like housecats, triangular ears, and black spots on reddish, buff, or gray color. Often confused with a lynx. Bobcat has a longer tail than the lynx. They put their back feet in the same place the front feet were when running.

Habitat: Live in swamps, forests, deserts, mountains, agricultural areas, dens in rock crevices, hollow logs. So well camouflaged that it is rarely seen. Range is Southern Canada, and the United States except for the Midwest, and Mexico.

Size: About 2 feet tall. 25 to 42 inches long. Average 13 to 24 pounds, can weigh as much as 40 pounds.

Life Span: 12 to 13 years average.

Food: Eat small animals, poultry, young deer, rodents, rabbits, Reptiles, fish, birds, insects, chickens, hogs, turkey. Have fewer teeth and a shorter jaw than other cats, but teeth are very sharp. Can eat only 30 pounds of meat, and will cover up the leftovers to save for later.

Reproduction: Solitary animals. They come together only to breed, November to January. Gestation is 60 days. 2 to 3 young to a litter, reared solely by the mother. Kittens may be preyed upon by foxes, coyotes, owls, or male bobcats. Kittens have blue eyes, but they change to brown as they mature. Kittens leave mother in autumn. Excellent swimmers, climbers, hunters, good eyesight.



Mammal – Canid

Red Wolf

Endangered

Canis Rufus

This wolf is smaller than a gray wolf, larger than the coyote, and their fur has a reddish color. They are related to the fox, coyote, and domestic dog.

Habitat: Red wolves had inhabited the Southeastern part of the United States. Now their population in the wild is limited to North Carolina in the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge.

Size: They weigh from 50 to 80 pounds, about four feet long from the tip of the nose to tip of the tail, and about 26 inches shoulder height.

Life Span: Six to seven years in the wild, up to 15 years in captivity.

Food: They are carnivores. They eat white-tailed deer, raccoons, rabbits, and rodents.

Reproduction: They mate once a year in February, and give birth in April or May. They make a den in a hollowed out log.

Other Information: They are social animals, living in packs in the wild. They are the first animal to have become extinct in the wild, and have been reintroduced into the wild. There are approximately 200 red wolves in the world. They are protected by the Endangered Species Act.



Mammal – Canid

Gray Fox

Urocyon conereoargenteus

Also called a “tree fox”. The only member of the Canid family to climb trees. Coarse, silver-gray fur on back, reddish on sides and underside. Blackish tip on tail. Salt-and-pepper coat with buff undercoat. Black stripe down center of tail. Shorter legs than red fox.



Habitat: Live in tree holes, makes dens in woodpiles, fallen trees, culverts, under mobile homes, in hollow logs, in thickets, forests & swamps. Range is in most of the United States, Mexico. Throughout Florida, except for the Keys.

Size: Two to two and a half feet long, tail four to twelve inches, weighs 7 to 13 pounds.

Life Span: About 6 years in the wild, 12 in captivity.

Food: Eat small mammals, birds, Reptiles, insects, plants, fruit, cat food, mice, eggs, squirrels. Stash food when it is abundant. Eat 4% of his weight/day to stay healthy.

Reproduction: Sexual maturity is at one year. Mate from January to February. Gestation is 60 to 63 days. Give birth to from 2 to 7 cubs. Average litter is 3 to 4 cubs. Father gets food for family. Cubs play at 3 to 4 weeks. Leave home at 6 months old.

Behaviors: Solitary. Leap from branch to branch of tree. Some pair for life. Most active during early hours of darkness and early morning hours. Have a musky odor.

Mammal – Canid

Red Fox

Vulpes vulpes

Face long. Red-orange fur, black nose and paws, white-tipped tail. They also are silver and black color-phases. Lower body parts black. Long legged. Claws blunt, straight, and not retractable.

Habitat: Lives underground in dens, prairies, farmlands. Digs or uses burrows of other animals. Found throughout Florida except in the Northern Panhandle. Can be found throughout the continental United States from Alaska to Florida, and Mexico.



Size: 5 to 15 pounds.

Life Span: Average 3 years in the wild, 10 to 12 in captivity.

Food: Eats fruits, rodents, rabbits, birds. Makes believe it is asleep to catch a rabbit.

Reproduction: Male exudes a musky odor from his glands at the base of his tail. They bark at each other. Gestation is 51 to 53 days. 1 to 13 pups are born. Both parents raise pups. They reuse their dens. Pups play at one month, are nursed for 2 months, leave home at 6 months.

Other Information: They were brought over by hunting clubs a hundred years ago from Europe. They take over dens of rabbits. Excellent senses of vision, smell, and touch.

Mammal – Mesopredator

Eastern Striped Skunk

Mephitis mephitis

Has short, stocky legs and sharp, canine teeth. It is slow moving, seldom climbs. It can swim short distances. Hearing and eyesight are poor. It is nocturnal. Its name comes from Latin, meaning “poisonous vapor.”



Habitat: Lives in burrows, under buildings, in forests. Range is in 48 states, Canada; in Florida, including the Keys.

Size: 2 to 10 pounds for males, 13 to 18 inches. Females slightly smaller. Tail 7 to 10 inches.

Life Span: 7 years in the wild, 8 to 10 in captivity.

Food: Carnivores, eating fish, insects, mice, young birds, fruit, eggs, crickets, grasshoppers, grubs, earthworms, roots, fungi, nuts.

Reproduction: Males sometimes fight for females. Breed Feb to March. Gestation is 59 to 77 days. Female gives birth two months after mating to 4 or more blind, hairless kittens. Young share communal dens. Young leave mother at 6 weeks and will mate at 11 months.

Other Information: They can spray up to 12 feet away. They are resistant to snake venom. Laws were enacted to require honest labeling. Great horned and barred owls prey on them. The great horned owl is immune to their spray. They survive even in New York City.

Mammal –
Mesopredator
Virginia
Opossum

Didelphis virginiana



Has a cone-shaped head, pink, pointed nose, naked black ears

with white tips, prominent whiskers. Has a grasping, hairless tail. Have 50 teeth, more than any other mammal. It has a marsupial pouch.

Habitat: In tree stumps, hollow logs, in gopher tortoise holes, near streams or swamps. Range is the Eastern United States. Statewide in Florida.

Size: 15 to 20" long, tail 9 to 29" long. Weighs 9 to 13 pounds.

Life Span: Usually two years, but can live to seven years or more

Food: Eats fruits, nuts, seeds, vegetables, eggs, worms, fish, insects, mice, frogs, birds, grains, amphibians, Reptiles, small mammals, and venomous snakes.

Reproduction: Babies do not develop in their mother's womb. They are birthed at an early age and develop in the pouch of the mother. Newborns are born 12 to 14 days after conception. There may be two litters yearly. 20 newborns could fit on a teaspoon. 200 would weigh one ounce. Babies hang onto mother's teat for 2 to 3 months. When the babies are about the size of a mouse, they hang on to hair on their mother's back.

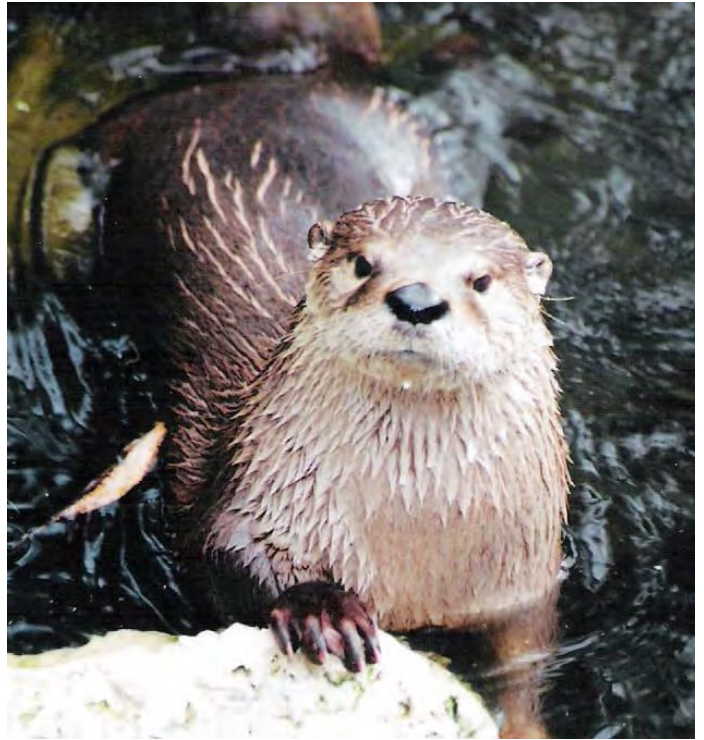
Behaviors: They are nocturnal and solitary. They climb trees. They "play possum", looking dead, to protect themselves. Owls, bobcats, hawks, panthers, dogs, and cars endanger their lives.

Other Information: It is immune to snake venom.

Mammal – Mesopredator - North American River Otter

Lutra canadensis

Short, stocky legs, and long, sharp canine teeth. All four feet webbed for swimming. Claws are used for handling prey, scratching, self-defense, and coat grooming. Claws cannot be retracted. Rear feet used for propulsion when swimming, front feet



are held up to chest. Tail used as a rudder. Front feet have toes, and rear feet are webbed. Tails are muscular. Can stay under water for 3 to 4 minutes. Move in the water with a smooth motion.

Habitat: Found in freshwater, brackish water and salt marshes. Use other animals' dens. Range in the United States and Canada, to Alaska.

Size: 3 to 4 feet long, 12 to 30 pounds, can grow to 4.5 feet long

Life Span: 25 years in captivity, 15 in the wild.

Food: Carnivores. Eat fish, shellfish, crayfish, frogs, crabs, snails, insects, water birds

Reproduction: Sexual maturity is 2 to 4 years. Breed in January. Gestation period is 2 months. 2 to 3 blind and helpless pups are born in late spring. Young grow slowly, staying with their mother for close to a year. Father leaves before the babies are born. Mother takes care of babies.

Behaviors: Wrestle, tumble, slide around in water. Can swim 3 to 4 mph underwater, 6 mph on surface. Intelligent and playful.

Other Information: They can detect movement with their whiskers. Sleep half of their lives. Were eliminated in 11 states, rare in 13, plentiful in Florida. Being reintroduced in Nebraska, New York and Indiana.

Mammal – Mesopredator

Raccoon

(Park “Visitor”, Not Resident)

Procyon lotor

These brown furry mammals have a bandit-like “mask”, with brown around the bottom and sides of their eyes, and a striped tail. Their paws enable them to have excellent fine motor skills.

Habitat: Found in forests, in urban and rural areas.

Size: About a foot tall, 24 to 36 inches long, weigh 14 to 23 pounds.

Life Span: From 2 to 3 years, longer if in captivity.

Food: They are omnivores. They will eat almost anything: fruits, vegetables, crayfish, frogs, mice. They forage in garbage cans in places inhabited by people.

Reproduction: They mate from January to March. They mate with multiple partners. Gestation is 54 to 70 days. Two to five “kits” are born. Female does all care with kits. They leave their mother in the fall.

Other Information: Raccoons are nocturnal. They can also carry rabies. If they are found in residential neighborhoods, residents should call Fish and Wildlife.



Mammal – Squirrel

Sherman's Fox Squirrel

Sciurus niger

Rusty tan body and tail. Dark head and white on nose and ears. Also called monkey fox squirrel.

Habitat: Nest in dry, sandy uplands statewide. Range is throughout Florida except the Keys.



Size: 24 inches long, including 12 inch tail, weight 2 to two and a half pounds.

Life Span: 16 years in the wild, 20 in captivity

Food: Eat seeds from pine and cypress cones, palm fruits, acorns, buds, nuts, insects, seeds of the longleaf pine. Have strong incisors to open pine cones, strong, flat molars for crumbling seeds. Sometimes carnivorous. Eat bird eggs.

Reproduction: 2 to 4 per litter, up to two litters per year.

Other Information: They spend a lot of time on the ground instead of in trees. Protected in Florida. May not be trapped or killed. Vanished from New England states, due to loss of pine and oak forests.

Mammal – Squirrel

Eastern Gray Squirrel

Sciurus carolinensis

They are gray, with some tan fur, and long, bushy tails.

Habitat: Found in parks, woods, farmlands, suburbs, and cities throughout Eastern US.

Size: 9 to 11 inches long. Tail is 7 to 10 inches long. Weight between 14 and 21 ounces.



Life Span: Up to 12 years in the wild and 20 in captivity.

Food: Capture and hide food. Eat nuts, berries, nuts, tree bark, and fungi.

Reproduction: They make a nest in the tree using twigs and leaves. The nest is called a drey. Sometimes make nest in attics. They can have up to two litters per year. This depends on how plentiful food is. They give birth in February and June. Litter size is anywhere from one to eight babies. Young leave the nest at twelve weeks.

Other Information: One of few animals who can descend from a tree head first. If they are being watched while hiding their food, they may fake burying it and take it away in their mouth. They communicate using varied sounds.

Mammal – Deer

Whitetail Deer

Odocoileus virginianus

Has white on the underside of tail. Excellent senses of smell and hearing.

Habitat: Live in forests or fields. Are solitary, or live in herds of 6. Range is United States, Canada, Mexico, Central and South America.



Size: They can weigh as much as 225 pounds, but in Florida they are significantly smaller. 3 to 3 ½ feet to shoulder. 4.5 to 6.75 feet long. Female is slightly smaller than male.

Life Span: Ten years in the wild, 20 in captivity.

Food: They eat shrubs, bushes, tree bark, acorns, nuts, fruits, grains, flowers, leaves, grasses.

Reproduction: The female reaches sexual maturity at one year, the male at two years. They mate in early fall, and one or two fawns are born in the summer. Young remain with their mother from one to two years. Gestation is 8 months.

Other Information: Males grow a new set of antlers every year. Deer cause more human deaths than any other animal in the United States due to auto crashes. Most popular game animals. Their predators are dogs, coyotes, wolves, bobcats, panthers.

Mammal – Deer

Florida Key

Deer

Endangered

*Odocoileus virginianus
clavium*



Also called “toy deer.”

Smallest deer in North America. Subspecies of the Virginia white-tailed deer.

Habitat: In forests, hardwood hammocks, fresh and saltwater wetlands, mangrove forests. Range is Big Pine and No Name Keys, National Key Deer Refuge, Big Pine Key.

Size: 45 (females) to 55 (males) pounds. 24” to 28” at shoulder height.

Life Span: 8 to 9 years.

Food: They eat mangrove trees, grasses, shrubs, moon vine, and native plants.

Reproduction: Sexual maturity is at three years old. Most often one fawn per doe per season. They breed in the fall and winter. Gestation is 6 to 7 months.

Behaviors: Good swimmers. Trusting and gentle.

Mammal- Sirenia

West Indian

Manatee

Endangered

Trichechus manatus



Gray, with thick, wrinkled skin, stiff whiskers on the upper lip. 3

to 4 nails on each of the two front flippers. Bones on flippers similar to human hand. Body tapers into tail. Closest ancestor is the elephant. Can stay submerged 15 to 30 minutes. No incisors or canine teeth. Molars are replaced by new ones when they are ground down, called marching teeth. New teeth are growing all the time, pushing others forward. They emit squeaks and squeals to communicate.

Habitat: Found in slow-moving rivers, estuaries, and saltwater bays, canals, in fresh, brackish, and salt water. They live in subtropical and tropical waters. Range is the Southeastern United States as far as Texas. Found in the West Indies, South America, and Brazil in coastal areas. Many move to warm Florida coastal waters, especially near springs and power plant discharges during the winter.

Size: Average 9.8 feet long, 800 to 2500 pounds.

Life Span: 30 to 50 years in captivity.

When the temperature goes below 68 degrees, they head for warmer waters. Their greatest threat comes from humans. They can be killed and scarred by the propellers of boats, by ingesting fish hooks and monofilament line, and by entanglement in crab trap lines. Manatees are sometimes killed by red tide (marine organisms which create toxins which the manatees ingest when eating or breathing.)

Food: Eat 10% to 15% of body weight each day. Primarily vegetarians. They eat aquatic vegetation. In the Wildlife Park they are fed romaine lettuce, cabbage, kale, bok choy, and coastal hay.

Reproduction: Sexual maturity is 4 to 8 years. Gestation is 13 months. Calves weigh 60 to 80

pounds. Twins are rare. Mother gives birth under water, bringing the calf to the surface on her back for its first breath. Babies nibble on plants at one month. Mother raises and teaches calf.

Other Information: When the temperature goes below 68 degrees, they head for warmer waters. Often injured by careless human activities such as speeding boats. Manatees are identified by scientists by the patterns of scars on their backs. They can swim 15 miles/hour over short distances, but usually swim 6 miles/hour. They can develop respiratory problems from overexposure to red tide. They are under protection by Florida State Law. Protected by the Endangered Species Act of 1972, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. They were mistaken for mermaids as early as Columbus' explorations. Agencies we frequently work with in regards to manatee protection and research: The following government agencies are responsible for manatee management: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Park Service.

Mammal – Exotic

Hippopotamus

Hippopotamus amphibious

Huge, Gray, bulky body, large head. Eyes are small, set high on the skull, nostrils can be closed. Each limb has four digits.



Habitat: Rivers and lakes. Range is Central Africa

Size: 11 feet long, shoulder height 4.5 to 5 feet. Males can weigh 3,500 to 7,000 pounds. Females can weigh 3000 lbs.

Life Span: 30 to 40 years in the wild. 40 to 50 plus years in captivity. Record is 62 years in captivity.

Food: Primarily Vegetarians, they eat 40 to 50 pounds of food per day

Reproduction: They reach sexual maturity at 5 to 6 years. Gestation is 8 months. Baby weighs from 60 to 110 pounds at birth. One calf is usually born. It can swim immediately, and nurses under water. Female hippos babysit each other's babies.

Behaviors: Males are solitary. Females band together in herds. They spend their day in the water or mud, and come onto land to feed at night.

Other Information: Fish nibble algae from their skin and teeth. Their skin is 2 inches thick.

The story of Lu at our Park is unique. He came to the Park in the 1960's, when it was a privately owned Park. When it became a State Park, only native Floridian animals were to be kept. The people in the community got a petition with many signatures and sent it to the Governor, who was Lawton Chiles. Lu was made an Honorary Citizen of Florida so that he could remain at the Park.

Bird – Pelican

Brown Pelican

Pelecanus occidentalis

Mostly dark, white to pale yellow neck, black feet and legs. Breeding adult, hind neck dark chestnut, yellow patch appears at base of fore neck. Long beak. Pouch is an expandable bag of skin from the tip of the bill to the throat, which could hold up to 3 1/2 gallons of water.



Habitat: Lives in estuaries, bays, islands, along coastal areas. Range is coastal areas on East and West US coasts, Central America, and NW South America.

Size: 51 inches, 9 pounds, 6 foot wing-span, 18 inch bill.

Life Span: Up to 30 years or more.

Food: Scoops up fish with pouch. Dives gathers water and fish then drains out water, leaving fish to swallow.

Reproduction: Nest on islands, mangroves, in low trees. Usually lays 3 eggs. Incubation 28 to 30 days. Both parents care for young. Young feed for 9 weeks by probing beak into parent's throat.

Other Information: Generally stays closer to the water than the white pelican. Dives from 60 to 70 feet in the air. Has air sacs beneath the skin to cushion the blow of diving. Arrives for handouts at docks. It is illegal to feed pelicans in Florida.

Bird – Pelican

American White Pelican

Elanus erythrorhynchos

Can be confused with wood stork or whooping crane in flight. Large bill, short legs. Good swimmers and flyers. Heavy-bodied, white with black wing tips, bright orange bill with pouch. Orange feet.



Habitat: Lives in fresh water lakes, marshes, coastal lagoons. Migrates Southern US to Northwest US as well as Northern Canada.

Size: 50 to 65 inches. Wings can spread out to nearly 10 feet.

Life Span: 12 to 14 years in the wild.

Food: Does not dive for food but dip their bills into the water while swimming. They eat fish and crustaceans. Young insert their head and bill into the parent's mouth to get partially digested fish. Hunt for food in groups, herding fish together and scooping up the prey, sometimes by driving fish to the shore. While swimming, they splash the water with their wings and grab the fish.

Reproduction: During mating season, develop a rubber-like growth on top of beak (both sexes). See photo below. Nests in a depression on the ground near lakes, ponds, shallow marine waters. Usually lay 2 to 3 eggs. Incubation 36 days.

Bird – Anhinga

Anhinga

Anhinga anhinga

Also called a snakebird and water turkey. Has a black body. Males have silver on their upper wings, females have tan. They have snakelike necks, and long, sharp, pointed bills used to spear fish. Sinks low in water; only head and neck are visible when swimming.

Habitat: Primarily found in freshwater swamps, marshes, lakes & rivers. Range is the southern United States to Argentina.

Size: 35 to 45 inches. Females larger than males.

Life Span: 11—12 years

Food: Frogs, baby alligators, fish, aquatic insects, amphibians, snakes.

Reproduction: Breed at two years old. Females bring twigs, males make platform nest. Usually 3 to 4 eggs, pale, chalky, bluish-green. Hatch in 25 to 28 days. Both parents share family duties.

Other Information: They hold their wings outstretched and open to dry after swimming. They are distinguished from cormorant by sharply pointed bill.



Bird – Cormorant

Double-Crested Cormorant

Phalacrocorax auritus



Named because of the small tufts of feathers on head during breeding season. Up curled feathers at either side of head. Deep, rich, dark feathers, turquoise blue eyes. Sexes appear similar. All black, with orange on face.

Deep, rich, dark feathers, turquoise blue eyes. Sexes appear similar. All black, with orange on face.

Habitat: Lives near body of water, fresh or salt.

Range is North America, Cuba, the Great Lakes, and Florida.

Size: 29 to 36 inches, 52 inch wing span, 3.7 pounds

Life Span: Average 6.1 years, longest 17 years and 9 months.

Food: Mainly fish, amphibians, crustaceans, crawfish, some Reptiles, and mollusks. Dives and swims under water, grasps prey.

Reproduction: Starts breeding at three years. Nests built by both sexes, with sticks and debris. Chicks are naked when hatched. Nests are reused and rebuilt year after year. Usually lays 3 to 4 pale, bluish eggs. Incubation is 24 to 25 days. Parents regurgitate to feed their young. Young can fly at 7 weeks. The immature bird has a dark brown to light brown belly.

Behaviors: Holds out wings to dry. Often confused with Anhinga but has curved bill. They run to gain speed to fly. They fly in V formations, with a crooked neck when flying. Feathers are not waterproof.

Bird – Heron

Great Blue Heron

Ardea Herodias

Florida's largest and most widespread heron. Gray-blue; white head, black stripe extends above eye. Prominent, dagger-like bill, larger than egret. Flies with neck folded.



Habitat: Needs trees for nesting, shallow water to stalk prey. Lives in fresh and salt-water marshes, swamps, rivers and lake edges. Range is North and Central America, and the Caribbean.

Size: 42 to 52 inches from tail to head. 70 inch wing-span.

Life Span: Maximum 23 years.

Food: Wades into shallow water to catch prey. Eats fish, amphibians, snakes, small mammals, crustaceans, leeches, insects, frogs, and birds.

Reproduction: Makes a flimsy platform nest of twigs and vegetation or mounds on ground. Often there are several nests in one tree. In Florida eggs may be laid anytime from mid-September to late May but pairs in south Florida typically initiate nesting much earlier (January to March) than pairs farther north. Usually lays 3 to 4 eggs, pale blue or olive. Incubation is 28 days. Young leave nest at 60 days.

Other Information: They migrate as far South as Mexico and the Caribbean in the fall. The difference between the Great Blue Heron and the Great Egret is that the Heron is larger, has a thicker bill, and gray legs.

Bird – Heron

Little Blue Heron

Egretta caerulea

Slate blue body with a maroon head and neck. Legs are dark, slender. Long gray bill with black tip. Immature herons have white plumage with light green or yellowish legs until their second year. Bird extends neck when disturbed.

Habitat: Freshwater ponds, marshes, small lakes, wet meadows. Range is Gulf States in United States, Central America, Caribbean, and South America.

Size: 25 to 29 inches high with 40 inch wing-span.

Life Span: Up to 7 years.

Food: Small fish, amphibians, insects, other aquatic animals.

Reproduction: Nest of twigs three to fifteen feet above the water or ground. They can build a floating nest. They nest in colonies, in trees, or shrubs. Breed in the first or second year of life. Young fly at one month old.

Other Information: Looks like snowy egret or cattle egret.



Bird – Heron

Green Heron

Butorides virescens

Cap is greenish black. Wings are green. Brown in cheeks, neck, and breast. Legs dull yellow or orange. Spear-like bill. Wading bird.

Habitat: Found in fresh water or salt water areas, in marshes, swamps, mangroves, and near shores and rivers.

Found year around in Florida and South to Central America.

Size: Smallest of the herons, 18 to 22 inches tall.

Food: Eat small fish, Reptiles, amphibians, crustaceans, spiders, leeches, insects, mollusks. Have been known to “fish”, placing an object such as a twig or insect on water to lure prey to surface.

Reproduction: Breed during first or second year. Nest is a flimsy one which is re-used and reinforced yearly. They nest singly or in small colonies. Usually lays 4 to 5 pale greenish or bluish green eggs. Incubation period is 19 to 21 days. Young’s first flight is 21 to 23 days.

Other Information: Young are good swimmers.

Their neck extends in an “s” curve when they are disturbed. Mating plumage is brighter green.



Bird – Heron
Black-Crowned
Night Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax



These stocky birds are small, with light Gray wings and a long, pointed bill. Adult birds have black bill, and young have yellow and black bills. Their wings are wide and their legs are short.

Habitat: Found in wetlands: marshes, rivers, lakes, canals, and in most of North America, in Central and South America.

Size: 22 to 28 inches long, wing-span 45 to 47 inches, weight 25 to 36 ounces.

Life Span: Oldest on record is 21 years.

Food: Feed at nighttime, stabbing their prey with their sharp bills. They eat worms, insects, turtles, birds, rodents, eggs, lizards, snakes, plant materials.

Reproduction: The male starts to build a nest, then finds a female. They nest in colonies. One brood per year, with 3 to 5 eggs. Incubation is 29 to 34 days.

Bird – Heron

Yellow-Crowned Night Heron

Nyctanassa violacea

Yellow legs, short neck. Tucks the neck close to the body in flight. Sexes similar. Red eyes, white stripe below eye. Buffy white crown and back. Black bill.

Habitat: In swamps and marshes. Range is Eastern United States, to South America.



Size: 21 inches to 26 inches long, wing-span 44 inches.

Life Span: 10 to 17 years in captivity, 3 to 10 years in the wild.

Food: Hunt at night. Stand for long periods of time waiting for prey. Eat crustaceans, mollusks, aquatic insects, and small fish.

Reproduction: Breed in colonies from March to May. Nest is a platform of sticks in trees. Lay 3 to 5 pale blue-green eggs. Incubation period is 24 to 26 days. First flight at 42 to 49 days.

Bird – Heron

Great Egret

Ardea alba

Tall, slender bird with a yellow bill. Wading bird with spear-like bill, long toes. Feet and legs are black.

Habitat: Lives in open, salt, brackish, and fresh water in swamps, lakes, rivers, forests. Range is United States and Mexico.



Size: 37 to 41 inches tall with a 51 inch wing-span.

Life Span: Up to 22 years.

Food: Leans forward when feeding. Eat aquatic animals, small mammals, snakes, insects, and amphibians. Walks slowly and strikes at prey.

Reproduction: Mates at 3 years old. Make a flimsy nest of sticks, twigs, and weeds, from 8 to 40 feet above the ground. Usually lays 3 to 4 eggs, pale bluish green. Incubation is 23 to 24 days. First flight is at 6 weeks old. Mate with one mate each season.

Other Information: Was almost hunted to extinction in 20th century for its feathers.

Bird – Heron

Snowy Egret

Egretta thula

Medium-sized white bird with black bill. Upper bill turns yellow during mating season. Curved plumes in breeding season. Black legs and yellow feet.

Habitat: In marshes, swamps, ponds, lakes, shallow coastal areas. Occasionally found in dry fields. Range is most of US, Mexico, and South America.

Size: 20 to 27 inches long, wing-span 41 inches, weight up to 13 pounds.

Life Span: Have lived over 16 years in captivity.

Food: Eat fish, shrimp, crayfish, fiddler crabs, snakes, snails, insects, small lizards, young frogs, and aquatic vegetation. They use one foot to stir up the bottom, bringing the prey to the surface. They also hover and drop to catch prey.

Reproduction: Nest in mixed colonies around fresh and salt water habitats. Build flat nests on the ground. The male gets the twigs, and the female makes the nest. She lays 3 to 4 green-blue eggs. Incubated by both adults for 21 days. Young leave nest at 20 to 25 days old.

Other Information: Many were killed for the plumes to use in women's hats. Presently a "Species of Special Concern" as designated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (June, 2006).



Bird – Stork

Wood Stork

Endangered

Mycteria Americana

Dark, featherless head, dark bill and neck. Tail and flight feathers are white and black.



Habitat: In wetlands. Range is Southern US Central and South America.

Size: 3 feet tall, wing-span 5 feet.

Life Span: Approximately 10 years.

Food: May fly up to 80 miles a day for food. Eats fish and other aquatic animals. Hunts prey by feel. Stands with bill open, and when the fish touches the bill, the bill snaps shut.

Reproduction: Nests high in tree tops. Females lay 2 to 5 eggs. 28 to 32 days incubation period. First flight 8 to 9 weeks.

Other Information: Excellent flyers. They “perform” dives, rolls, and turns.

Bird – Flamingo

American Flamingo

(aka) Greater Flamingo

Phoenicopterus ruber

Large pink birds with black wing tips. Very long necks and legs, with short, webbed feet. Bare faces, a bent bill. Their pink or reddish color comes from the rich sources of carotenoid pigments (like the pigments of carrots) in the algae and small crustaceans that the birds eat.

Habitat: In shallow fresh water, salt lakes, and lagoons. Range is incidental to the Southern United States, native to Cuba, Bahamas, and South America.

Size: Weight approximately 4 pounds. From tips of bill to tail, 3 to 4 feet long. Wing-span 3.3 to 5 feet. Neck can be 3 feet plus.

Life Span: 20 to 30 years in the wild, up to 50 years in captivity.

Food: They eat plankton, small invertebrates, crustaceans, mollusks, algae.

Reproduction: They nest colonially on mud platforms. They are monogamous. They lay 1 to 2 eggs and share

family feeding duties. Eggs are 3 to 3.5 inches, and weigh 4 to 4.9 ounces. Incubation is 28 to 32 days. Young can swim 3 to 4 hours after birth, fly at 75 to 78 days old.

Other Information: They are excellent swimmers. They were being hunted as food for humans until laws were passed to protect them.



Bird – Ibis

White Ibis

Eudocimus albus

Stout bodied wading bird. Long legs, long, pointy bill that curves downward, long, broad wings. Adults are pure white except for black wing tips. Feet turn scarlet during mating season. Second photo is immature white ibis.



Habitat: Open, wet country. Range is along Atlantic from Virginia to Florida, along Gulf coast to Texas, Mexico, and Central America.

Size: 22 to 27 inches.

Food: Eats insects, crustaceans, fish and amphibians. Reptiles, crayfish, mud crabs, frogs, in shallow or salt or fresh water.

Reproduction: Nests on ground or in trees, but not always near the water. Usually lays 2 to 5 eggs. Young have downy coats of brown feathers for the first year.

Other Information: Mascot for the University of Miami's football team, the Hurricanes. Often travels and feeds in groups. Found on golf courses, lawns, etc. Florida Wildlife Commission classifies this bird as a Species of special concern.

Bird – Spoonbill

Roseate Spoonbill

Ajaia ajaja

Pink bird with white neck and back. Orange tail. Yellow legs and feet. Immature birds are entirely white. Yellowish bill. Medium to large wading bird. Bill is spoon-shaped.

Habitat: In swamps, marshes, ponds, rivers, lagoons, mangroves. Range is throughout Florida, in Mexico, the Caribbean, and South America.

Size: 30 to 34 inches. Wing-span 53 inches

Life Span: Can live up to 50 years.



Food: Eat fish, crustaceans, insects, mollusks, slugs, and vegetable matter. To eat, use sensitive bill rather than eyesight. Swing bill from side to side to feel food. Young insert bills into parent's throat to get food.

Reproduction: Ritual courtship displays. Uses bill as a clapper to attract mate. Nest in colonies, in bulky nests of leaves and trees, 10 feet high off the ground. Usually lay 2 to 3 eggs, spotted and blotched with brown. Parents take turns sitting on the eggs. Incubation 23 to 24 days. First flight in 7 to 8 weeks. Parents regurgitate food for the chicks to eat. Chicks leave the nest at 3 to 4 weeks.

Other Information: Hunted almost to extinction in 19th and 20th century for feathers. In 1939 there were only 30 spoonbills in Florida.

Bird – Crane

Sandhill Crane

Grus Canadensis

Long neck, long legs, prominent red forehead, flies with neck outstretched.

Habitat: Live in open country and low-lying pastures, freshwater marshes, prairies, and ponds. Live in the Gulf States from Florida to Texas, north to the Ohio valley also in Western US, Canada, and Mexico.

Size: 34 to 48 inches long, up to 90 inch wing-span

Life Span: 18 year maximum

Food: Eats both plants and animals. Digs with the bill. Penetrates the ground for several inches. Eats snails, crayfish, worms, mice, birds, frogs, snakes, insects, acorns, roots, seeds, fruits.

Reproduction: Mate for life. Attentive parents help the chicks forage food until they are quite developed.

Females lay 2 spotted eggs in large mounds of grass

and uprooted plants. Very successful breeders.

Abundant migration flocks in mid-west US.

Behaviors: Perform “courtship dance,” bowing, bouncing into the air, and throwing wings out, with synchronized calls. Young bond readily to humans.

Other Information: There are two populations in Florida. The permanent is the Florida Sandhill crane, and there is also a migratory population.



Bird – Crane

Whooping Crane

Endangered Species

Grus americana

Mostly white, with black wingtips. Dark legs, yellow bill. Long legged, long necked. Head has areas of bare skin. The bill is straight.

Habitat: Found in plains, marshes, coastal lagoons, brackish marshes, grasslands. In Canada, Texas. Migratory flocks in Chassahowitzka National Refuge and North Florida. Experimental Nonmigratory flock in Kissimmee Prairie.

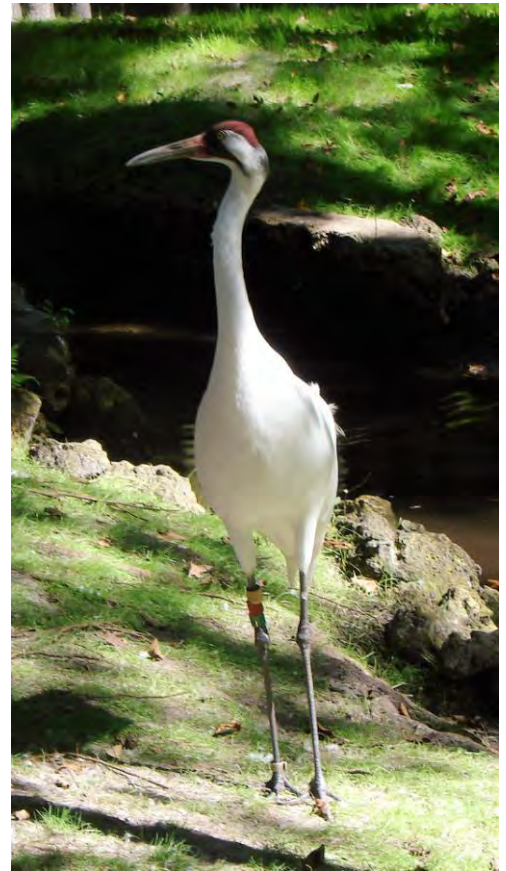
Size: 49 to 56 inches, 7 to 7.5 foot wing-span. Tallest bird in North America. Male weighs 16 pounds, females 14 pounds.

Life Span: 20 to 25 years.

Food: They eat animal and vegetable matter, crabs, shrimp, crayfish, worms, clams, acorns, fish, roots, berries.

Reproduction: Nest on the ground. Breeding is preceded by courtship dance, with both sexes participating. Nest consists of piles of grass. Usually one egg, incubation 33 days. First flight 3 months. Parents share responsibility of raising chicks. Pairs mate for life. Bird will take a new partner if original dies. Captive breed new hatchlings were trained to migrate with help of ultra light aircraft from the Necedah National Wildlife refuge in Wisconsin.

Other Information: Endangered species. One of the rarest birds on earth. Loss of habitat due to drainage for agriculture, hunting, egg collecting. There were 400 cranes in the entire world in 2000. Flock increased to near 500 in 2006, largely due to human “parents” and training to migrate behind “ultra light” aircraft.



Bird – Duck

Mallard Duck

Exotic

Anas platyrhynchos

Most recognizable ducks in North America. Males have green heads, white neck bands, and rust-colored breasts. Females are brown.

Habitat: In fresh water, also in saltwater canals and brackish marshes. Range is throughout the US, Canada, Mexico.

Size: 20 to 26 inches tall, wing-span 32 to 37 inches, 35 to 46 ounces.

Life Span: Maximum 23 years.

Food: This duck feeds on the surface of the water. It eats aquatic vegetation, corn, wheat, barley, wild rice, mollusks, insects, tadpoles, snails, fish eggs, and frogs.

Reproduction: They have a courtship display to attract each other. The nest is concealed in tall grass. 6 to 18 greenish eggs laid, each one day apart. Incubation is 26 days. One brood per season. Young stay with adults until fully grown (the next season). Sexual maturity at one year. Occasionally mates with other ducks. Subspecies of the Mottle Duck or Florida Duck. Does not migrate. One of the few non-migratory ducks in Florida.



Bird - Whistling Duck - Fulvous Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna bicolor

Related to geese more than ducks. Long legs and necks. Sexes similar. Head, chest, and body are rich, tawny brown. Wings darker brown.

Habitat: Lives in freshwater marshes, lakes, flooded agricultural fields. Range is Florida, Central and South America, Asia, and Africa.

Size: 20 inches long, 21 to 34

Life Span: Estimated 20 years.



Food: They are mostly nocturnal feeders. They eat aquatic vegetation, rice, and seeds of marsh plants.

Reproduction: They breed from March to August. They nest on the ground in dense vegetation or float their nest on the water.

Female lays 13 eggs average, white and unstained. Incubation is 24 to 26 days. Both parents sit on nest. Young birds fly from 55 to 63 days old. Mated pair stays bonded for many years.

Other Information: Female will lay eggs into nests of other fulvous whistling ducks, and ducks of other species. Call; does not quack.

Squeals "Pe-Chee".

Bird – Whistling Duck

Black-Bellied

Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna autumnalis

Pink bill, white and black on wings, brown neck and chest. Long neck and legs, short tail. Immature ducks are less bright in color.



Habitat: In fields, ponds, mangroves, rivers, and parks. In Southern US, and in South and Central America.

Size: 18 to 20 inches, weight 23-36 ounces,

Life Span: Maximum 8.2 years.

Food: Mainly plants, including corn, rice, wheat. Also eat insects: spiders, snails. Forage at night.

Reproduction: Nest in hollow trees. They don't make a nest. Also nest on the ground. Lay 9 to 18 eggs, one to two broods per year, Incubation 25 to 30 days, hatchlings covered with black and yellow down, almost independent.

Other Information: They are noisy and they do whistle.

Bird – Perching Duck

Wood Duck

Aix sponsa

They have flat bills, front webbed toes. Male has distinctive colorful head with orange ring around his eyes; white throat, partial neck ring and chin strap all connected. Female is brownish-gray with a darker crown and broad white eye ring that tapers to a point in back.



Habitat: On the edges of forests, in ponds, swamps, rivers throughout Florida. Range is US, Mexico, the Caribbean.

Size: 17 to 21 inches long, wing-span 29 inches, 1.5 pounds

Life Span: 3 to 4 years in the wild. The longest recorded lifespan is 15 years.

Food: Grasses, spiders, insects, seeds, minnows, frogs. Feed on surface of water.

Reproduction: Practices a courtship display. Nest in natural cavities in trees. Nest consists of wood chips and down, sometimes 50 feet from the ground. Usually lays 10 to 12 eggs, dull or creamy white. Young fly at 9 weeks old. Young are pushed out of the nest at 2 days old. Parents call chicks and they follow their parents to the water.

Bird – Moorhen

Common

Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus



Black head & neck, red forehead shield, red bill with yellow tip. Yellow legs, very long yellow feet. White line on side distinguishes it from the coot (see next page). Sexes similar.

Habitat: Prefer freshwater habitats in marshes and ponds. Found from Canada to Chile.

Size: 13 to 14 inches tall. Wing-span 21 to 24 inches. Weight 11 to 16 ounces.

Life Span: Can live as long as 3 years.

Food: They are omnivorous. They eat plants, seeds, mollusks, insects, and larvae.

Reproduction: Their nest is made of twigs, lined with leaves. Sometimes they make their nests on floating water plants. The female lays 6 to 10 white eggs with red spots. Incubation period is 19 to 22 days.

Other Information: Excellent swimmers.

They look like ducks when swimming. They lift their feet out in front of their bodies when swimming.

Bird – Moorhen

American Coot

Fulica Americana

They may look like a duck, but they are not ducks. They have white beaks, dark brown neck, and tan wing feathers. They do not have webbed feet like ducks.



Habitat: swamps and marshes, ponds, lakes, freshwater wetlands.

Size: Length 15 to 17 inches, wing-span 23 to 25 inches.

Life Span: Oldest on record is over 22 years old.

Food: Eat aquatic plants: duckweed, algae, and water lilies. They either dive or stick their heads under the water to forage. They also eat leaves of oak, elm, and cypress trees. Eat insects, snails, tadpoles, and salamanders.

Reproduction: They sometimes lay their eggs in the nests of other birds: gulls, teals. When they make their own nests, it looks like a shallow basket which floats on the water and is anchored. Lay 8 to 12 eggs, 1 to 2 broods per year. 23 to 25 day incubation, chicks are out and about within hours of hatching.

Other Information: Related to Sandhill cranes. They need to run and beat their wings to fly. They can gather in flocks of thousands. Because they live in the wetlands they may pick up toxins, so monitoring their health gives a picture of the health of their environment.

Bird – Stilt

Black-Necked Stilt

Himantopus mexicanus

Black face, neck and back. White throat and belly. Long neck, very long red or pink legs, (like stilts), straight, thin, black bill.



Habitat: In marshes, tidal flats, beaches, freshwater and saltwater wetlands, shallow lagoons, mangrove areas.

Size: 13 to 16 inches, weight 5 to 8 ounces.

Life Span: Approximately 20 years.

Food: Feeds in shallow water, by wading. Eat snails, insects, worms, water beetles, grasshoppers, mussels, shrimp, minnows, and crayfish.

Reproduction: Nest in May on a mud flat or marsh. Makes nest with grass and available debris. Nest may weigh 2 to 3 pounds. Females sit on nests while males stand guard. Lay 3 to 4 buff-colored brown-spotted eggs. Incubation is 22 to 26 days.

Behaviors: Birds carry water in their feathers repeatedly, called “bellysoaking”, to keep nest cool.

Bird – Plover

Semipalmated Plover

Charadrius Semipalmatus

Black and white band around neck. Brown on top of head. Beak is orange with black tip. Orange legs. White chest. Tan wings and tail.



Habitat: Live on shorelines. Summers in Canada, winters in the Western and Southeast US, and Central and South America

Size: Small. 6-7 inches long, 1.5 Ounces

Life Span: 9 years maximum

Food: Eat insects. Search for prey by running, stopping, staring and pecking

Reproduction: Nest on the ground. Use rocks, shell, and vegetation to line nest. Lay 4 eggs.

Bird – Plover

Killdeer

Charadrius vociferus

Medium-size plover. White forehead, brown face. Brown wings and back. Band of dark brown around neck. Slender.

Habitat: Shorebird. Lives in open ground, such as golf courses and pastures.



Not always found by water. Lives in US year around, in extreme northern US and Canada during the summer, winters in Central America and Mexico. **Size:** 10 to 11 inches maximum.

Life Span: 10-11 years

Food: Eats insects, earthworms, snails, grasshoppers, beetles, frogs

Reproduction: Lays 4 to 6 eggs. Nests on the ground, adding rocks to the nest after laying eggs. Incubation 22 to 28 days. Chicks have full coat of feathers and soon walk out of the nest. Bird feigns injury to get predators away from the nest.

Other Information: They do a lot of walking. When they fly they flap their wings intermittently. Bobs head up and down. Vulnerable to pesticides and collisions with cars. Not endangered. Parents will dislocate their wing to distract predators and protect their nest and young. They will pop the wing back in when the danger is over.

Bird – Sandpiper Long Billed Dowitcher

Limnodromus scolopaceus

Looks very much like the short-billed dowitcher.
Juveniles are brownish Gray.



Habitat: Shorebird. There are breeding and non-breeding populations. They summer in the Northern US and Canada, and winter in the Southern US, Mexico, and Central America.

Size: Nine and a half to almost 12 inches long, wing-span 18 to 20 inches.

Life Span: Oldest known was 13 years.

Food: They eat insects and aquatic invertebrates. They poke with their long beaks to get food.

Reproduction: Nest is built on grass. Male and female sit on eggs. After chicks hatch, they leave almost immediately.

Bird – Sandpiper
Short-billed
Dowitcher

Limnodromus griseus



This bird has a long bill, but it is shorter than the long-billed dowitcher. Brown in color.

Habitat: Found in marshlands, beaches, other shorelines, along the US, Caribbean, and South American borders.

Size: 9 to 11 inches long, weight 3 to 4 ounces.

Life Span: Not known.

Food: Eats insects and aquatic invertebrates. Pokes with long bill.

Reproduction: Builds nest on the ground in wet area. 4 eggs. Chicks leave immediately.

Bird – Sandpiper

Ruddy

Turnstone

Arenaria interpres



Streaked black and white pattern around head. Orange legs, summer plumage of orange and brown. First photo shows summer plumage; second shows winter plumage.

Habitat: Lives in all types of marine shores from mud flats to surf-pounded rock. Migrate throughout Florida. Range is along coasts of Canada, California, Mexico, and South America.

Size: 8 to 10 inches long

Food: As their name suggests, turnstones often forage by turning over stones to get small animals, mollusks, crustaceans, and insects. Also digs holes in the sand to search for food.

Reproduction: Nests by making a depression in the ground. Usually 4 eggs, grayish yellow to dark greenish buff. Incubation 21-22 days. Young are taken care of by both parents.

Bird – Sandpiper

Willet

Tringa semipalmata

White breast. Black beak with yellow tip. Long black feathers on top of head. Black legs. Back is Gray.

Habitat: Found in estuaries, bays, and mudflats.

They live along shores of Florida, Caribbean and South America.

Size: 13-18 inches long, 33-35 inch wing-span, 6-11 ounces.

Life Span: Up to 23 years in captivity.

Food: They eat small fish, invertebrates.

Dive headfirst for food

Reproduction: They nest on the ground. They are monogamous. They nest in large colonies that can reach into the 10,000s. Lay 1-3 eggs, in a nest lined with feces. Incubation 21 to 29 days. Chicks fly after 28 days. Sexual maturity at 3 to 4 years old. They breed once a year.



Bird – Gull

Laughing Gull

Leucophaeus atricilla

Usually found in large groups. They “laugh” loudly. Black head, orange beak, white chest, gray and white wings, black tail.



Habitat: Shorebird. Summer in the Northeast, and live year around in the Southeastern US and along the Gulf of Mexico. Flock in large groups.

Size: 15 to 18 inches long, wing-span 36 to 47 inches, weight 7 to 13 ounces.

Life Span: Average lifespan in the wild is about 10 years.

Food: They eat insects, snails, fish, berries, and invertebrates.

Reproduction: Both parents build nest on the ground. Sometimes the male starts the nest before he finds a female. Males bring the nest material and the female builds the nest. 2 to 4 eggs, 1 brood/year. Incubation 22 to 27 days. Chicks leave after a couple of days.

Bird – Gull

Ring-Billed Gull

Larus delawarensis

White chest, wings gray on top and white on the bottom with dark tips, black band in the tip of their beak. Medium-sized gull.



Habitat: They are found in garbage dumps, parking lots, beaches, and fields, often in large groups. In US, Mexico, and Canada.

Size: 17 to 21 inches long, wing-span 50 inches.

Life Span: 3 to 10 years. Record is 23 years old.

Food: They are scavengers. Foods include fish, rodents, bird chicks, bird eggs, and insects.

Reproduction: Monogamous. Build nests mostly on the ground, by both genders. Female lays 2 to 4 eggs. Both male and female incubate the eggs. Chicks hatch in 31 days, and are fed by both parents. They leave the nest at about 5 weeks old.

Other Information: Their population is increasing. They are protected under the US Migratory Bird Treaty Act as migratory birds.

Bird – Gull

Herring Gull

Larus argentatus

They are large seagulls. They have a big, white chest, orange bill, Gray on top of their wings, and black feathers in the rear. Pink legs.



Habitat: They live along coasts and near bodies of water. Also near garbage dumps.

Size: 22 to 26 inches long, wing-span 53 to 58 inches.

Life Span: Average 30 years. Record is 49 years.

Food: Fish, insects, crayfish, worms, mussels, carrion, trash.

Reproduction: They have one brood per year. Both genders make the nest in soft soil, lining it with vegetation, found materials. Male feeds female during nesting time. Female lays one to three eggs. When chicks hatch, both parents feed them.

Other Information: They prefer to live around fresh water, but will live around salt water. They have special glands that excrete the salt. They pant to cool off.

Bird – Tern

Forsters Tern

Sterna forsteri



A white body, with gray wings and a long, forked tail. The beak is dark in winter, and orange in summer. Breeding adult has black feathers on the top of its head and red legs.

The photo shows summer plumage.

Habitat: Lives in salt water and fresh marshes. Range is most of the US, Mexico, Caribbean.

Size: About 15 inches long

Life Span: About 10 years

Food: Dives, head first, for food in the water. Catch insects in the air. Also eats marine invertebrates.

Reproduction: Female lays 3 to 4 spotted brown eggs. The nest is a platform, made of grass and lined with plant material.

Bird –Tern

Royal Tern

Thalasseus maximus

Large bird with an orange, pointy bill. Body is mostly white. Dark feathers on tips of wings. Has black “toupee” on top of head.



Habitat: Along beaches in Florida, Mexico,

Southern California, Northern South America, and Central America

Size: 17 to 19 inches long, 12 to 16 ounces

Life Span: 27-28 years maximum

Food: Eats fish and shrimp.

Dives headfirst into water to catch prey.

Reproduction: Young leave the nest within a day of hatching and congregate in a large colony.

Bird –Tern

Sandwich Tern

Thalasseus sandvicensis



Yellow tip on its black bill. Top of head is black.

Has white chest, gray wings.

Habitat: Found in bays, estuaries, and offshore far from land.

Size: 13 to 18 inches long, 33 to 35 inch wing-span, 6 to 11 ounces.

Life Span: Oldest was 23 years old.

Food: Eat small fish, invertebrates. Dives down, beak first, to catch fish.

Reproduction: Build nest on the ground. Chicks can walk, but stay in the nest.

Other Information: Population has increased in recent years.

Bird – Vulture

American Black Vulture

Coragyps atratus

(Visiting and resident bird)

Plumage is glossy black. Broad wings with white tips. Short tail, featherless gray head with wrinkled skin on the head and neck. Sexes similar.



Habitat: Prefers open areas. Found at garbage dumps, fishing docks, wildlife parks, etc. Range is from Virginia to South America.

Size: 22 to 27 inches. Wing-span 4.5 to 5 feet, weight 4 to 5 pounds.

Life Span: 30 years in captivity, less than 10 years in the wild.

Food: Eats carrion, eggs, decomposing material, young birds, and small mammals. Soars high in the air when searching for food on air currents.

Reproduction: They have one brood per season. They are monogamous. The female lays 2 to 3 eggs on the ground in a wooded area, in hollow logs, or in caves. Both parents incubate and feed young. Incubation period is 38 to 45 days. The young fly at three months, but stay with the parents' group for years.

Bird – Vulture

Turkey Vulture

Cathartes aura

Large birds with dark wings and a long wing-span. Wings are black on top and dark brown on the bottom. Red colored head does not have feathers. Bill is white. Tail is long.



Habitat: Found near landfills, roadsides, countryside. Nests on poles, dead trees, fence posts.

Size: 25 to 32 inches long, wing-span 66 to 70 inches, weigh around 70 ounces. Smaller than eagles.

Life Span: Can live 20 to 24 years.

Food: Carnivore. Eat dead animals: rodents, rabbits, other small mammals, other birds, Reptiles.

Reproduction: They do not build full nests, but will use a nest year after year. Nest in hollow logs, abandoned nests of other birds, such as hawks. Lay 1 to 3 white eggs with gray, blue, or green spots, one brood/year.

Other Information: Make hissing sound. Excellent sense of smell.

Bird – Eagle

Bald Eagle

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

White head and tail, dark brown body, yellow eyes, beak, and legs. National symbol of the United States since 1782. Young are 4-5 years old before they get full adult plumage, including white head.

Habitat: Generally around water, nest in pine or oak trees. Range is US and Canada. Some bald eagles migrate to Canada (2500 miles).

Size: Females 8 to 12 pounds, males 6 to 8 pounds. 34 to 43" long, 6 to 7 feet wing-span

Life Span: 30 years or more.

Food: They are carnivores. They prey on snails, insects, fish, mammals, turtles, Reptiles. The bulk of their diet is dead fish. They eat road kill. To catch flying birds, they turn upside down in mid-air and grab their prey by the breast.

Reproduction: They mate for life, but will replace a deceased mate. Eaglets weigh a half pound at hatching. Within 3 months they gain up to 12 pounds. They make the largest nests in North America within one mile of the water; some are 20 feet thick and 10 Feet across. Nests are built from to 10 to 150 feet high off the ground. Eagles will return to the same nest year after year. They do a spectacular courtship ritual; they grab each other's feet and do cartwheels with their wings in the air. One to four eggs are laid, and they are



incubated for 33 to 35 days. Both parents raise young. Young fly at 75 days old.

Other Information: Their eyes are 5 to 6 times more powerful than humans. They can spot a rabbit from the air a mile away. They have been removed from the Endangered Species Act. They are still protected by 1940 Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. 40% of eagle deaths are by vehicle accidents.

Bird – Eagle

Golden Eagle

Aquila chrysaetos

They are one of the largest raptors in North America. They are brown with gold on the back of the head and neck. Young have white patches of feathers on their tail and wings. Legs have feathers.

Habitat: In open spaces, near mountains and hills, in grasslands, woods, farmlands, and near streams and rivers. Found in Canada, Western and Northeastern US.

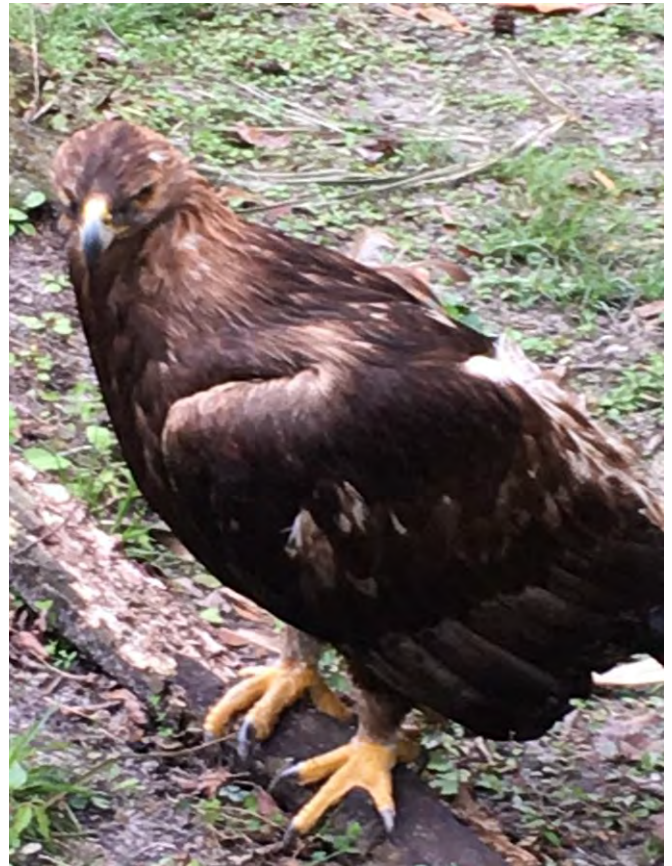
Size: 27 to 33 inches long, wing-span 72 to 86 inches.

Life Span: In the wild they have lived over 30 years.

Food: Although capable of killing large prey such as cranes, wild ungulates, and domestic livestock, the Golden Eagle primarily eats rabbits, hares, ground squirrels, and prairie dogs.

Reproduction: Both parents build nest, with bones, wire, grass, bark, leaves. They breed year around. The nest is up to six feet wide, and two feet high. They nest on cliffs, trees, in the ground, or on human structures.

Other Information: The national animal of many countries, including Mexico.



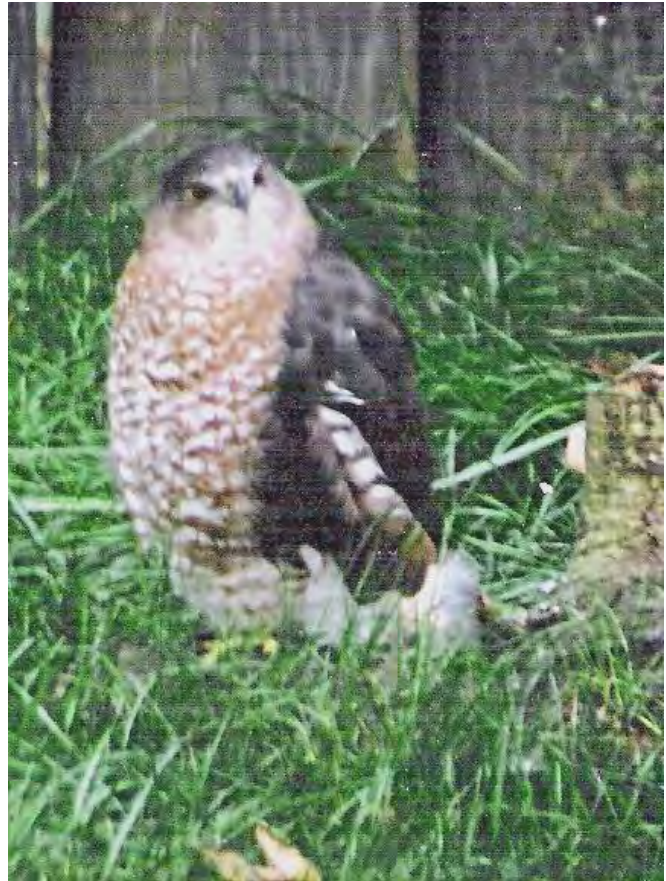
Bird – Hawk

Cooper's Hawk

Accipiter cooperii

Medium size bird. Short, rounded wings, long legs, Gray or brown on back, streaked underneath, large, long round tip on tail. Both sexes look similar, but females are much larger. Distinguished from sharp-shinned hawk by longer rounded tail, larger head and in adult, stronger contrast between back and crown.

Habitat: In woodlands, open areas. Range is throughout North America,



Size: 14 to 21 inches, 28 inch wing span.

Life Span: Longest reported is 20 years in captivity, 12 years in the wild.

Food: Largely songbirds and small mammals. Also eats snails, fish, insects, fish, and Reptiles. Flies low and surprises prey from hidden perch.

Reproduction: Nests made out of sticks and bark 10 to 60 feet high in trees. Usually 4 to 5 eggs, whitish, spotted with brown. Incubation is 24 days.

Bird – Hawk

Red Shouldered Hawk

Buteo lineatus

Head, neck, and back are dark brown. Feathers below the throat are barred with white and brown. Wings are reddish and dark brown. Tail is brownish black with white bands.

Habitat: Woodlands, near streams and swamps. Range is Eastern US, and Mexico.

Size: 17 to 24 inches tall, wing-span 32 to 50 inches

Life Span: Maximum 19 to 21 years.

Food: Sits still for long periods of time waiting for a meal to come by.

Eats frogs, snakes, crayfish, large insects, mice, shrews, small mammals, lizards, and birds.

Reproduction: Elaborate courtship ritual, including flying upside down. Makes nest of sticks, moss, and bark 20 to 60 feet high in trees. Usually lays 3 to 4 eggs, whitish with brown spots. Incubation is 28 days. Both sexes tend to young. Young fly at 5 to 6 weeks.

Other Information: Returns to same nesting area repeatedly.



Bird – Hawk

Red-Tailed Hawk

Buteo jamaicensis

Head, neck, back, and top of wings are dark brown. White and yellow bands across belly. Tail is reddish brown on upper surface, paler under surface. Plumage extremely variable.

Habitat: Found in mountains, deserts, forests, meadows. Range is North America.

Size: 46 to 58 inches from head to tail, 29 to 25 inch wing-span.

Life Span: 10 to 21 years.

Food: Has excellent eyesight. Mated pairs hunt together. They hover, waiting to descend. Eat 80% mammals, including rodents. Also eat birds, vertebrates, insects, carrion, rabbits, snakes, lizards, and Reptiles.

Reproduction: Makes bulky platform nest high in trees 15 to 120 feet high. Usually 2 to 3 eggs, white with brown spots. Incubation 28 days.

Other Information: Most commonly seen hawk.



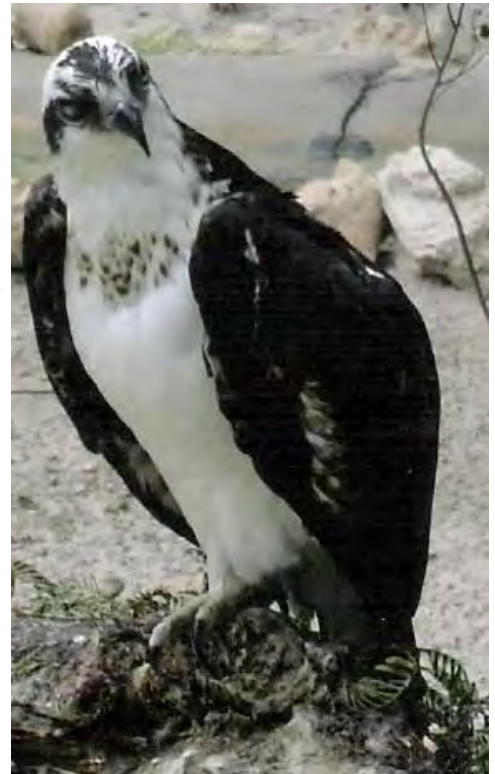
Bird – Hawk

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Commonly referred to as a “fish hawk”. Diurnal (active during the day). Has sharp claws and strong, hooked bill. Dark streaking through eye. Blackish red on top. Powerful wings, medium to long tails, excellent flyers. Head, throat, and undersides white. Tail dark brown. Female is bigger than male.

Habitat: Near large bodies of water: lakes, streams, rivers. Range is throughout Florida and the US, Mexico, and South America.



Size: 21 to 24 inches with 54 to 72 inch wing-span. Can weigh 4.5 pounds.

Life Span: Maximum of 25 years

Food: Feeds primarily on fish. Will toss fish into the air so it can carry it head first in flight holding it with its talons. Hovers and dives from the air to get fish. Can spot fish from 90 feet away.

Reproduction: Nests in trees, telephone poles. May return to the same nest year after year. Can make a nest of sticks, moss and grass from 5 to 200 feet off the ground. Usually lays 2 to 4 whitish eggs with reddish blotches. Eggs hatch from 34 to 40 days. First flight 8 to 10 weeks.

Other Information: In flight, can be confused with an eagle. The osprey has white on two sides, no white on tail. Mature eagle has white all around neck and head.

Bird – Hawk

Harris's Hawk

Parabuteo unicinctus

Dark hawk with dark brown, light brown, and white feathers. Wings are light brown with black tips, Body is dark brown. Tail is white and black. Juveniles are similar to adults. Most often seen in groups.

Habitat: Wetlands, grasslands, in forest, recently in suburban areas. Found in Mexico, South America.

Size: Both sexes are the same size. 18 to 23 inches long, wing-span 40 to 49 inches.

Life Span: They can live up to be between 12 and 15 years old.



Food: Eats small mammals, birds, squirrels, rats, rabbits, lizards, quail, and woodpeckers, large insects. They hunt in family groups with a cooperative hunting technique, and they share food.

Reproduction: Courtship ritual includes flying acrobatics. Nest in small trees. Nest may be used more than once. Female lays 3 to 4 eggs. Incubation is 33 to 36 days. Young leave the nest in about 40 days. They nest with two males mated to one female. They can have 2 to 3 broods per season.

Other Information: They are called “wolves of the sky”.

Bird - Hawk

Swallowtailed Kite

Elanoides forficatus

This hawk has a white body and white area under wing. Wings are black on top and pointy. Long tail.

Habitat: Found in forests, swamps, rivers. Migrates between South America and the Southeast US.

Size: From 19 to 25 inches long, wing-span 48 inches, weight 13 to 21 ounces.

Life Span: Longest lifespan is 6 years.

Food: Eats insects while in flight. . Can swoop down and pick insects out from trees.

Reproduction: Nest in tall trees. Lay 2 to 4 white eggs with brown markings. Lines nest with Spanish moss. Incubation is 28 days. It is 36 to 42 days until they leave the nest.



Bird – Hawk

Mississippi Kite

Ictinia mississippiensis

Gray bird of prey, with darker wings than chest and head. Male and female look alike except male is a little darker. Flies gracefully.

Habitat: Found in forests and woodlands.

Size: 12 to 15 inches long, wing-span 41 to 44 inches, weighs 8 to 13 ounces.

Life Span: Average of about 8 years.

Food: Eat insects captured while flying. Also eat frogs and lizards.

Reproduction: Nest is built near the top of trees. 1 to 3 eggs. Incubation is 30 days. Young are helpless when hatched, and they take flight at about 50 days old.



Bird – Owl

Barn Owl

Tyto alba

Dark eyes in a heart-shaped face, long legs, light color. The breast and face are white to cinnamon. It does not hoot but has a shrill call. It has the most acute hearing of all the owls.

Habitat: Throughout Florida. In open farmlands, grasslands, scrublands, suburbs. Roosts and nests in dark cavities in city and farm buildings, cliffs and trees.

Size: 16” tall with 44” wing span. Weighs 15-20 oz.

Life Span: Short lifespan of about 2 years.

Food: Eats mice, rats, fish, insects, bats, Reptiles.

Reproduction: Adds material to other birds’ nests. Nests in barns, buildings. Lays 3 to 4 white eggs. Eggs hatch in 32 to 34 days.

Behaviors: Flight is noiseless, due to specially shaped and rounded feathers, tips of wings, and tail. Call is a raspy, hissing screech.



Bird – Owl

Barred Owl

Strix varia

A chunky owl with dark eyes, barring (bands of color) on upper breast, dark streaking below. . Large, round head. Head, chest, neck, and rump are whitish and darkish brown, with bars running across the chest and streaks across the belly.

Habitat: In forests, woodlands, rivers, swamps. Range is Eastern US.

Size: 17 to 24 inches.

Life Span: 20 years or more.

Food: Eat rodents, small mammals, birds, amphibians, Reptiles, insects, crayfish, fish, spiders, smaller owls. Eat meat whole, spits out pellets containing undigested parts of the meal.

Reproduction: Mate in spring. Nest in tree cavities and in buildings, often in abandoned nests. Usually lay 4 white eggs. Incubation is 21 to 28 days. First flight in 6 weeks.

Other Information: Noiseless flight. Great Horned Owl is one of its predators. Call is rhythmic series of loud hoots; “Who-cooks-for-you”, “Who-cooks for-you”.



Bird – Owl

Eastern Screech Owl

Otus asio

Small owl. Yellow eyes, ear tufts. Male is smaller than female. Brown body. Come in two color phases: brown and Gray.

Habitat: Lives in woodlands, parks, swamps, marshes, suburbs. Cavity-nester. Range is in Florida, statewide, and East of the Rocky Mountains, from Southern Canada to Mexico.

Size: 9 inches

Life Span: 2 to 3 years

Food: Nocturnal feeder. Eats insects, mice, other small rodents, chipmunks, frogs, snakes, and fish.

Reproduction: They mate for life. Nests in tree cavities, birdhouses, old woodpecker holes. Does not add material to nest. Lays 3 to 5 eggs, white. Incubation 21 to 28 days. Male feeds female while she incubates eggs. They may occupy the same nest for years.

Other Information: They defend their nest fiercely. Call is a series of quavering whistles, descending in pitch or long single trill...all in same pitch.



Bird – Owl

Great Horned Owl

Bubo virginianus

Brown, white, gray and black markings that look like tree bark. Markings help camouflage. Large yellow eyes with black pupils. Can turn head 270 degrees. White throat, widely spaced, large, prominent ear tufts. Excellent eyesight.

Habitat: Lives in forests, thickets, scrub areas, plains, canyons, cliffs, deserts, swamps and prairies. Range is throughout North, Central and South America.

Size: 18 to 25 inches. Largest owls in Florida.

Life Span: Maximum 13 years in wild, 20 in captivity.

Food: Eats ducks, geese, skunks, fish, mammals, birds, insects, rats, squirrels, rabbits, cats, weasels, Great Blue Herons, ospreys, other owls and regurgitates undigested parts. Young are fed for an extended period of time while they learn to fly.

Reproduction: Uses old nest. Nests on ground and in trees. Usually lays 2 to 3 eggs. Incubation 26 to 30 days.

First flight is in 35 days.

Other Information: Called “cat owl.” Cannot move eyes side to side.



Bird - Owl

Burrowing Owl

Athene cunicularia

They are small birds who nest in holes. Sometimes use the homes of tortoises, skunks, or armadillos. Brown feathers, no ear tufts, short tail, spotted back, bars on front.

Habitat: In open areas such as golf courses, cemeteries, vacant lots, pastures. In North, South, Central America.

Size: Both male and female are the same size. 7.5 to 10 inches long, wing-span 21 inches, weight 5.3 oz.

Life Span: 6 to 8 years

Food: insects, birds, Reptiles, birds, small mammals. They catch food with their feet.

Reproduction: Lays 2 to 12 eggs. Chicks are helpless, born with eyes closed.

Other Information: Diurnal. Take mammal dung and puts in around its burrow. When the dung attracts dung beetles, the owl eats them.



Bird – Hawk

American kestrel

Falcon sparverius

Also called a “sparrow hawk”, or a “killy hawk”, the American Kestrel is the smallest falcon. It has black streaks in front of and behind its eyes. The male is bluish gray on its upper wings, and the female is reddish brown.

Habitat: Found throughout Florida in open pine woodlands, forest edges, and grasslands. There are two populations: year around residents, and also migratory.



Size: 10—11 inches long.

Life Span: 11 years in the wild. Maximum recorded is 17 years old.

Food: Eats small vertebrates, insects, bats, lizards, mice, small snakes and frogs, grasshoppers, crickets. Hovers and dives for prey.

Reproduction: Nest in cavities excavated by woodpeckers. Lay 3 to 7 eggs, from March to June, one brood per year. Eggs are pinkish with dark marks. Eggs hatch in 29 to 31 days. Male hunts, brings food back to nest.

Other Information: Numbers have decreased 80% in the last 60 years due to loss of habitat in resident population.

Bird – Caracara

Crested Caracara

Caracara cheriway

Medium size bird, with broad, long wings, and long tail. Dark brown with a black cap. Orange face, white throat, neck, and base of tail. Thick, Gray, hooked beak. White rump. Black belly. Black band at tip of tail.

Habitat: Found in prairies, savannas, and fertile lowlands. Range is South Florida to Argentina.

Size: 23 inches. Wing-span 50 inches.

Life Span: 22 years maximum

Food: Chiefly carrion but also eats insects, worms, grubs, lizards, mice, rodents, Reptiles, amphibians, and snakes. Often find prey on the ground. Accompanies and dominates vultures.

Reproduction: Lays 2 to 3 eggs, 28 days incubation. It is 30 to 60 days to first flight. They have one or two broods per year.

Other Information: National bird of Mexico. They are often depicted in Aztec and Inca art. Caracaras are members of the falcon family but looks like a hawk and eats like a scavenger.



Bird – Gamebird

Osceola Turkey

Meleagris gallopavo osceola

This subspecies of turkey is only found in Florida. It is named after the famous Indian Chief Osceola. It is smaller, darker, and has narrower feathers than other turkeys. The head and neck are naked. Males have iridescent feathers of red, green, copper, bronze and gold. Females are duller in color. They have a dewlap, a flap of flesh which hangs from its bill. The flesh bumps on their face are called caruncles.



Habitat: In pine and oak trees, palmettos, and hammocks and swamps. Range is Central and South Florida.

Size: 36 to 48 inches tall, 18.7 pounds on average.

Life Span: Unknown

Food: They eat vegetable matter, insects, twigs, nuts, fruits, seeds, spiders, snails, and acorns.

Reproduction: Their nest is well-hidden on the ground. Males use a gobble, drumming sound to attract females and to protect their territory. Usually 8 to 15 light colored eggs speckled with brownish coloring are laid. Incubation is 28 days. Age at first flight is at about one week old.

Bird – Gamebird

Northern Bob White Quail

Colinus virginianus

Small bird, round, with square tail. Brown, white, and tan contrasting feather pattern. The male is more colorful.

Habitat: in fields, grasslands, forests. Range is Eastern and Middle US to Mexico, Central America, and Caribbean.

Size: 8 to 10 inches long, wing-span 4 to 5 inches.

Life Span: Maximum of 6 years in the wild.

Food: They eat seeds, fruits, nuts, flowers, and insects. One of its favorite foods is all species ticks!

Reproduction: One to three broods per year. Nest is built in low vegetation, by male and female. 7 to 28 white eggs, incubation 22 to 24 days.



Bird – Songbird

Boat-Tailed Grackle

Quiscalus major

Male has a bluish-black iridescent color, with a long, full tail. Has purple gloss on head, back, rump, and tail. The female is pale brown.



Habitat: Diverse habitat range, including salt marshes, open areas on the coasts, near rivers, parks, farmland, and around water and dry places. Range is southeast US.

Size: Female 12 to 13 inches, male 16 to 17 inches.

Life Span: Can live 12.5 years.

Food: Eat insects, seeds, grains, crustaceans, fish, and nestlings. Visit bird feeders. Pick insects off of the backs of cattle.

Reproduction: Make a nest of twigs, sticks, and debris near water in bushes, in trees, or coarse vegetation. Nest is 12 feet up from the ground. Usually lay 3 eggs, light blue to bluish Gray. Incubation 13 to 14 days. First flight 20 to 23 days. They are polygamous. They do not bond as a pair. Males may mate with several females. Males do not build nests or feed the young.

Other Information: They live in large groups. They eat food from bird feeders. Extremely vocal, loud “caw, caw” sounds.

Bird – Songbird

Carolina Wren

Thryothorus ludovicianus

Mostly brown, with white line above eye, below beak.



Habitat: lives in forests, farms, swamps.

Size: About the size of a tea cup. 5 ½ inches long.

Life Span: 6 years average in the wild.

Food: Eat insects, larvae, fruit and berries. Forage in ground.

Reproduction: Monogamous. Male and female work together to construct nest, in branches, also in places like houses and mailboxes. Females lay 4 eggs. Incubation is 2 weeks. Parenting by male and female, for 2 weeks before the chicks fly off. May have more than 1 brood per year.

Other Information: Usually found in pairs. Known for their singing. They sing loudly, and often.

Bird – Songbird

Gray Cat Bird

Dumetella carolinensis



Medium size, mostly gray, dark top of head, dark tail, brown feathers under tail.

Habitat: forests, shrubs, abandoned farms. Range is Most of US except the West, Mexico, and Central America.

Size: 8 to 9 inches long, wing-span 8 to 12 inches, weight .8 to 2 ounces.

Life Span: Record is over 17 years.

Food: Insects: ants, grasshoppers, caterpillars, or berries.

Reproduction: Males bring materials; females build nests with twigs, straw, mud. Nests can be as low as 4 feet off the ground, or as high as 60 feet.

Other Information: Relatives of mockingbirds. Fly from branch to branch on trees. Sing up to 10 minutes at a time.

Bird – Songbird

Northern Mockingbird

Mimus polyglottos

Small heads, long, thin bill, short wings, tail is wide. Gray-brown color.

Habitat: In open lands, in towns, forests, parks.

Size: 8 to 10 inches long, wing-span 12 to 14 inches.

Life Span: Can live up to 8 years.

Food: Insects and fruit. Forage on ground.

Reproduction: Both male and females build multiple nests. Do not reuse nests. Both parents care for chicks. Females lay 2 to 6 eggs; have 2 to 3 broods per year. Incubation period is 12 to 13 days. Eggs are pale green with brown spots.

Other Information: Sing almost all the time. Copy the songs of other birds. Found in pairs.



Bird – Songbird

Northern Cardinal

Cardinalis cardinalis

Male has bright red body. Females are brown and red. Tuft of feathers on top. Orange beak. Black mask around eyes and beak. Immature males are colored like females.

Habitat: Range is Eastern US, Mexico, and Central America.

Size: 7 to 9 inches long.

Life Span: Average 3 years.

Food: Seeds and berries.

Reproduction: Monogamous. Females build nest in dense bushes and shrubs. Two broods per season. Female lays 3 to 4 eggs. Incubation is 12 to 13 days. Chicks must be fed 3 to 4 times an hour. Both parents take care of chicks. After 8 days, the chicks fly off.



Bird – Songbird

Tufted Titmouse

Baeolophus bicolor

Small gray bird with pointed tuft of feathers on top. Large eyes, short, pointy beak. Black feathers around beak. Silver on top. White on bottom of body.

Habitat: Found in forests and parks. Range is Northeast and Southeast US.



Size: 5.5 to 6 inches long, wing-span 8 to 10 inches.

Life Span: They live about 2 years.

Food: Store food. Take one seed per trip to hide them. Hammer seeds open with their beaks.

Reproduction: Nest in holes of trees and man made items such as boxes. Line nests with hair of other animals, such as squirrels, raccoons, mice. Lay 3 to 9 white, spotted eggs, 1 brood per year. Incubation period 12 to 14 days.

Other Information: Found in pairs. Nest in dead trees, so this is one reason it is important not to remove dead trees in the forest. Can hang upside down.

Bird – Exotic **Muscovy Duck**

Cairina moschata

Dark brown duck, with black legs. White patches on wings. Sometimes black. Stocky duck. Color can vary.



Habitat: live near wetlands. Range is Mexico, Central and South America, Texas, and Florida.

Size: Males are almost twice as large as females. They can weigh up to 15 pounds or more.

Life Span: 13 to 15 years, but can live as long as 20 years.

Food: aquatic and land plants' leaves, roots, stems, and seeds, small fish, Reptiles, insects.

Reproduction: Sexually mature at one year old. Males fight for choice of mate. Nest in tree cavities. Lay around 8 eggs.

Other Information: Intelligent and aggressive bird. Look like geese when they fly. They smell musky.

Reptile – Crocodylian

American Alligator

Alligator mississippiensis

Broad snout, dark colored. Elongated, armored, lizard-like body. Muscular, flat tail. Have 4 short legs. Young have bright, yellow stripes and blotches. Fourth tooth of lower jaw fits into upper jaw. Alligators are exothermic; they rely on external sources of heat to regulate their body temperature.



HABITAT— Live in fresh water swamps, lakes, brackish and salt water marshes throughout Florida. Range Southeastern US as far west as Texas, and as far north as North Carolina.

SIZE— Males can grow from 11 to 14 feet, 450 to 550 pounds. The Florida record for weight is 1,043 pounds. Females typically grow up to 10 feet and to 160 pounds. Longest recorded Alligator in Florida was 14foot 3 ½ inches male. (Florida Wildlife Commission)

LIFE SPAN - In captivity can live more than 50 years, up to 100. In the wild, they live 30 to 50 years.

FOOD — They will eat fish, turtles, birds, dead animals, other alligators, insects, crabs, snakes, mammals. They do a “death roll” to break apart food and eat it. They typically eat little to nothing in the colder winter months.

REPRODUCTION— Reach sexual maturity at 6-7ft. It takes a female 10-15 years to reach that length. The female makes a nest of vegetation. The courtship includes bellowing and head-slapping by the males. Alligators lay an average of 32-46 eggs. Incubation period is 65 days. Eggs incubate from the heat of the composting vegetation. Eggs 86 degrees or below are female, and eggs above 86 degrees are male. When they hatch the mother carries them gently in her mouth to the water. The young stay together for a while before they go off on their own. The stripes and splotches of a young gator disappear and the animal darkens as they age.

OTHER INFORMATION— Alligators dig “gator holes” in the ground during a drought. Water accumulates in the hole, providing for other animals and helping them to survive. Between 1870 and 1970, 10 million alligators were killed for skins. It is illegal to tease, harass, molest, capture, or feed alligators in Florida.

Reptile – Crocodylian

American Crocodile

Status: State – Endangered,
Federal - Threatened

Crocodylus acutus



Elongated, armored, lizard-like body, muscular flat tail. Long snout with nostrils at the end.

Snout sharp and bony. Skin has rows of bony plates called scutes, which act as solar panels. Adults are Gray-green on their backs, with pale undersides.

Habitat: Preferred habitat is saltwater estuaries. Range is coastal areas in Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, and Northwest South America.

Size: 14 to 19 feet in length. Adults may reach over 900 pounds.

Life Span: Average 45 years.

Food: They eat crabs, birds, turtles, snakes, mammals, other crocodiles, rats, and mice.

Reproduction: Courtship begins in late winter; nesting is in late spring and summer. They build nests in the form of mounds or holes. Like alligators, egg incubation temperature determines the sex of the offspring.

Other Information: American crocodiles are a species in recovery. Today, nesting has increased to more than 100 annually, and it is estimated that there are between 1,500 and 2,000 crocodiles in the state, not including hatchlings. The crocodile is still state listed as endangered, but its federal listed has been recently downgraded to threatened, due to the progress of the crocodile's recovery. It is illegal to feed, tease, harass, molest, capture, or kill a crocodile. National Wildlife Refuge has been set up in the Florida Keys to protect the species. There was a crocodile named "Jake" in the park. He lived his years after being removed from Lake Tarpon in the 1950's.

Reptile -
Nonvenomous
Snake – Racer
Black Racer

Coluber constrictor



Black on top, gray or black on the bottom. Similar to black rat and indigo snake. Though slimmer and generally smaller with a duller sheen to its scales, it is often mistaken for an Eastern Indigo Snake

Habitat: They adapt to varied habitats: forests, fields, wetlands, residential areas. From Maine to the Florida Keys, eastern and central US.

Size: They can be up to 60 inches.

Life Span: 10 years

Food: Insects, snakes, birds, rodents, amphibians, lizards.

Reproduction: Mate in springtime, up to 36 eggs, in early summer, eggs hatch in late summer or early fall.

Other Information: They will flee when they feel threatened but if cornered will defend themselves. They are most active in daytime and in warm weather. They are common snakes in Florida.

Reptile –
Nonvenemous
Snake- Racer -
Eastern Indigo Snake

Status: Threatened Fully Protected
 by both state and federal law

Drymarchon corais couperi

Also called Blue Bill snake, Blue Gopher Snake, Couper's Snake.

Shiny, bluish black, or reddish brown color skin.



Habitat: In sandy soils. Goes into burrows of gopher tortoises. Lives in Florida, Texas.

Size: 60 to 103 inches. Heaviest and longest of all non-venomous snakes. Maximum to 9.2 feet long.

Life Span: 17 years average, up to 25 years

Food: Eats small mammals and other snakes, (even Cottonmouths and Rattlesnakes), birds, frogs, fish

Reproduction: Lay 5 to 12 eggs in underground burrows. Eggs hatch in three months. 1 foot long babies grow to adult size in 2 to 3 years.

Other Information: When cornered, hisses and vibrates tail. Threatened with extinction due to overharvesting for pet trade and loss of habitat. Received its name from the way its skin appears to be a deep bluish color in certain sunlight. Often confused with the black racer.

Reptile-
Nonvenomous
Snake – Rat Snake
Eastern Corn
Snake
(Red Rat Snake)



Pantherophis guttatus

Orange and Brown with black borders around the design on their body. Belly looks like a checkerboard, in black and white. Round pupils. Juveniles are more brownish in color.

Habitat: In forests, farms, swamps, and residential areas. They live throughout Florida, and in Southeast US.

Size: 18 to 44 inches.

Life Span: Up to 22 years in captivity.

Food: They eat lizards, frogs, birds, and rodents.

Reproduction: They breed from April to June. Up to 40 eggs are laid in the summer. Hatchlings appear from July to September.

Other Information: They are active at night. They can climb trees well. They received the name “corn snake” because they would go to the farmers’ corn cribs. They would eat the rats and mice that came there for the corn. They are constrictors.

Reptile – Nonvenomous Snake – Rat Snake Eastern Rat Snake

Elaphe obsoleta quadrivittata

There are different colors of rat snakes; Gray, Red, Black, Yellow, Albino, gulf hammock. Rat snakes are large, powerful, non-venomous snakes.



Yellow Rat Snake

Habitat: Live in woodlands, farmlands, swamps, hardwood hammocks, marshes, prairies. Range varies throughout Eastern half of US.

Life Span: 12 years average. Live up to 32 years in captivity.

Food: Eat frogs, birds, rodents, lizards, small mammals, birds and their eggs. Hunt for prey around barns and unused buildings. Powerful constrictor. Suffocates prey, and then turns it to eat it head first. **Reproduction:** Lays 5 to 27 eggs from April to July. Newborns hatch from July to September.

Behaviors: Useful in controlling rats and mice. Good climbers. When cornered will fight. Moves head back, ready to strike. Active at night.

Reptile – Nonvenomous Snake –King Snake Eastern King Snake



Lampropeltis getula

They are shiny, smooth snakes with yellow or white bands. The width of the bands varies in the different habitats where they live.

Habitat: In forests, swamps, hammocks, farms, suburban areas. They have the largest range of any North American snake. Found in Southeastern United States as far North as New Jersey.

Size: 36 to 48 inches long

Life Span: They can live 15 to 20 years.

Food: They are constrictors. They eat other snakes (including rattlesnakes and other venomous snakes, since they are immune to the venom), birds, rodents, lizards, and turtle eggs.

Reproduction: They mate in springtime. Males bite the necks of females while they mate. 3 to 24 eggs are laid in decaying logs. Eggs hatch in August or September.

Other Information: They are most active during the day.

**Reptile – Nonvenomous
Snake – King Snake
Florida King Snake**

Lampropeltis getula floridana



Tongue is forked and protrudes through the mouth. The eyes have transparent scales and no eyelids. It is shiny black with white chain links. Quick, jerky movements scare its predators. Birds of prey feed on its young. It curls up and wraps around when scared.

Habitat: In woodlands, grasslands, fields, scrublands, deserts, swamps. It must stay near the water. Range is in the Southern half of the United States.

Size: Usually 30 to 82 inches.

Life Span: Up to 20 years in captivity.

Food: Eats rodents, birds, lizards, snakes, Reptile eggs, frogs. It is a constrictor. It coils around and suffocates its prey.

Reproduction: Lay 3 to 24 eggs. Incubation 2 to 3 months. Produce eggs that hatch outside the body.

Other Information: Feeds on other snakes, even venomous ones.

**Reptile – Nonvenomous
Snake – King Snake
Scarlet King Snake**

Lampropeltis getula floridana

Color pattern is yellow/black/red. Looks like the Eastern coral snake. Resembles coral snake except snout is red instead of black. Nervous and hard to feed, and are difficult to maintain in captivity.

Habitat: Found in woodlands, grasslands, fields, and deserts. Range is all of Florida.

Size: Maximum to 2 feet.

Life Span: 10 to 15 years.

Food: Eats rodents, snakes, lizards, fish, insects, earthworms, and frogs.

Reproduction: Lays 3 to 24 eggs. Incubation 2 to 3 months.



**Reptile – Nonvenomous
Snake – Pine Snake
Florida Pine Snake**

Pituophis melanoleucus mugitus

Large, thick, tan colored snakes with large blotches and a lighter background. Darker brown in the Florida panhandle. Small head, pointed snout, gray belly.



Habitat: Live in dry habitats, in open canopies, and dry, sandy soil. Spend most of the time underground. Range is Southeast US.

Size: Maximum to 7 feet.

Life Span: 15 years or more.

Food: Catch small mammals, lizards, Reptile eggs, and birds and then takes them into its underground den.

Reproduction: Large, white eggs are laid from June to August. They hatch in September and October. Incubation 63 to 67 days. Hatchlings are 15 to 24 inches.

Other Information: Species of special concern in Florida. Will inflate and hiss loudly when threatened.

Reptile – Nonvenomous Snake

Hognose Snake

Southern

Hognose Snake

Heterodon simus



Stout-bodied, alternating brown, tan, yellow blotches. Distinctive upturned nose. Has been confused with pygmy rattlesnake. A dusky pygmy rattlesnake has a blunt, rounded snout, catlike vertical slit in eye, and a pit on the side of the head between the eye and nostril. The hognose snake has an upturned scale at the tip of the snout, pupil is round, and there is no pit on the side of the head between the eye and nostril.

Habitat: Dry, sandy woods and fields, Range: Uncommon to rare, but occasionally found throughout northern Florida south to Lake Okeechobee. Outside of Florida, it is found from southern Mississippi east to North Carolina.

Life Span: 3 to 5 years

Food: Upturned nose is good for digging out toads, which is its major prey. Also eats frogs, lizards, and sometimes small rodents.

Reproduction: Lay 6 to 14 eggs. Breed from April to August. Eggs hatch in 55 to 60 days. Hatchlings are 6 to 7 inches long.

Behaviors: When alarmed, hisses, puffs up like a cobra, and jerks about. Strike with closed mouth. Will also roll over and make believe it is dead until the predator leaves.

**Reptile –
Nonvenomous
Snake – King
Snake
Eastern
Hognose
Snake**



Heterodon platirhinos

They have wide bodies and an upturned snout. Color ranges from reddish, yellow, tan, Gray, or brown.

Habitat: Live in fields or forests.

Size: They can grow up to four feet long.

Life Span:

Food: They eat frogs, birds and their eggs, lizards, insects, smaller snakes, and carrion.

Reproduction: They mate in April and May. 8 to 40 eggs are laid in June or July. The eggs hatch in about 60 days, and are not cared for by the adult.

Other Information: They are active in the daytime. If threatened, they will rear up and hiss, and they will also play dead. They rarely bite.

Reptile – Nonvenomous Snake – Ribbon Snake

Eastern Ribbon Snake

Thamnophis sauritus

Snake has a slender body and a long tail. It has three prominent yellow stripes along a reddish background. The underside is yellow or pale green. The eyes have round pupils.



Habitat: Lives in dry grasslands, streams, lakes, marshes, hardwood forests. Range is from New England to Florida.

Size: 18 to 38 inches, maximum to 3.5 feet

Life Span: Probably several years, if they survive the first year.

Food: Eats frogs, toads, salamanders, and fish.

Reproduction: They mate from April to May. Give birth to live young, born in July or August. Young are 9 inches long, and take 2 to 3 years to mature.

Behaviors: Good swimmers and climbers. When frightened they seek safety in the water or if caught or handled they often secrete a foul smelling fluid from their anal glands.

Reptile – Nonvenomous

Snake – Water Snake

Florida Water

Snake



Nerodia fasciata pictiventris

Also called the Florida Black or Brown-Banded Watersnake. Thick body with crossbands of yellow, brown, or red. Belly is yellow.

Habitat: In freshwater, shallow waters of swamps, marshes, ponds, lakes, streams, rivers. Range is throughout Florida, except the Keys.

Size: Maximum to 5 feet

Life Span: 10 years

Food: Consumes fish, frogs, rodents, invertebrates, crawfish, and salamanders either alive or dead.

Reproduction: Gives birth to live young. 20 to 30 babies, but can be as many as 50.

Other Information: Often mistaken for water moccasin (cottonmouth). When scared, it emits a foul musky smell. How to tell the difference between a water snake and a water moccasin: The water snake had a slender body and head, with a round pupil in the eye. If observed swimming in the water it will swim with its body submerged and just its head and small portion of its neck sticking out of the water. The water moccasin is thick bodied, with a thick head, with a dark band on the face or stripe on the eye, with a vertical pupil. It swims with its body on the surface of the water.

Reptile –
Nonvenomous
Snake –
Water Snake
Florida Banded
Water Snake



Nerodia fasciata pictiventris

They are a non-venomous snake, which have alternating light and dark bands. These bands may be various shades of gray, tan, or red.

Their Bellies are yellow. They may lose the banding as they age.

Habitat: Found in freshwater areas: ponds, lakes, rivers, swamps. Found throughout Florida, excluding the Florida Keys.

Size: Ranges from 24 to 42 inches. Record is 62.5 inches. Adults weigh about two pounds.

Life Span: They can live between 10 and 15 years.

Food: They eat rodents, frogs, small fish, tadpoles, and crayfish.

Reproduction: Mate in the spring and give birth at the end of summer, 25 or more babies.

Other Information: This snake is rarely seen. It may be mistaken for a cottonmouth. If threatened, they will bite and emit a musky smell. They are more active in the night. They would rather flee than fight.

Reptile – Venomous Snake – Rattlesnake Dusky Pygmy Rattlesnake

Sistrurus miliarius barbouri

Short, thick-bodied snake. Markings include a dark line through each eye; a series of dark, roughly circular spots running down the center of the back; a thin reddish-orange stripe along the mid-body line and dark spots on its white belly.



Habitat: Lives in flatwoods, terrain where lakes and marshes abound. Common throughout Florida. Range is Southeastern United States.

Size: Maximum 2 ½ feet long, maximum 18 inches long

Life Span: Up to 20 years.

Food: Frogs, lizards, small mammals, other snakes, mice, insects, spiders, centipedes, nesting birds. Sits and waits for prey. Can be immobile for 2 to 3 weeks waiting for prey.

Reproduction: Mate in September and January. Copulation takes several hours. The female stores sperm until April. Female gives birth to live young in August. Newborns stay with mother for a few days, or until they shed.

Other Information: No human fatalities recorded in Florida. Good swimmers. Most common venomous snake in residential areas.

Reptile – Venomous Snake - Rattlesnake

Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake

Crotalus adamanteus

Wide head, well differentiated neck, small eyes, and 2 pits on snout for sensing temperature. Body is solid. Tail is short. Adds a button to its rattle with each shed. Brown, blackish gray. Two bright colorful lines on each side of face. Dark brown or black diamonds, outlined in yellow.

Habitat: Pine or oak forests, low forests of dwarf palm trees, farmland and woodlands, vacant lots, abandoned fields. Range is in Southeastern US. Found in Florida Keys.

Size: Largest rattlesnake. Can reach 3 to 6 feet long, 4 to 10 pounds. Largest rattlesnake ever recorded in Florida was an 8 ft giant weighing in at 10 pounds.

Life Span: 25 years

Food: Eats birds, rabbits, lizards, squirrels, rats, mice, shrews. Can lie coiled for a day, or a week, waiting for prey. Strikes (at 175 mph!), and fangs inject venom.

Reproduction: Gives birth to from 9 to 15 young. Gestation is 90 days, 7” to 15” at birth. Young leave after they’ve shed their first skin.

Behaviors: Most misunderstood snake in North America. Nocturnal. When threatened, coils up. Will stand its ground and then back away. If it can’t escape it raises its head and shakes its rattle.-

Other Information: Hunted for hide, meat, venom, and to put on exhibition. Prey on crop-destroying rodents. Becoming rare due to habitat destruction. They provide the service of keeping the rat population down. If you ever encounter one, freeze and slowly back away. Do not put yourself in harm’s way by trying to kill or catch this snake.



Reptile – Venomous Snake – Rattlesnake

Timber Rattlesnake

Crotalus horridus



Color is pale grayish-brown to pink, with a pattern of black V-shaped cross bands and a russet stripe down the centerline of the back. A broad, dark stripe angles back from the eye and the tail is velvety black.

Habitat: In lowland areas such as swamps, canebrakes, flatwoods, river bottoms, hammocks, dead tree hollows. Range is from Alachua County in Florida to Texas and farther north in Eastern US

Size: Maximum to 6.5 feet. Averages 4 feet in length. Average weight 5 pounds, maximum to 10 pounds.

Life Span: 10 to 15 years.

Food: Eats gray squirrels, small mammals, and rats.

Reproduction: Like most pit-vipers young develop in eggs in the female's body. Mother gives birth to live young. 4 to 17 born at a time. Incubation is 2 months.

Other Information: Numbers have been reduced because of habitat destruction, and hunting for sport, for skin and meat. Preyed upon by hawks, owls, coyotes, raccoons.

Reptile – Venomous
Snake – Pit viper
Southern
Copperhead



Agkistrodon contortrix

Dark colored, heavy body. The juveniles have a yellow tip to tail which they wiggle like a worm to attract prey.

Habitat: Lives in swamps and rivers. Spend a lot of time in the water. Range is Southeastern United States, from Virginia to Texas. Range in Florida restricted to northwest portion of the state.

Size: Up to 52 inches long.

Food: Birds, carrion, small mammals, lizards, amphibians, insects, other snakes

Reproduction: Breed in April, May, September, and October. Up to 15 young. Gestation 105 to 150 days. Young are born alive.

Other Information: Nocturnal. Stands his ground or crawls slowly away. Vibrates tail when excited, throws head back, has white mouth wide open. Sometimes confused with rat snake. Venom causes destruction of red blood cells; prevents blood from coagulating. No deaths reported in Florida. Go dormant in cold weather.

**Reptile –
Venomous
Snake -
Pit viper
Cottonmouth
(Water
Moccasin)**



Agkistrodon piscivorus conanti

Large head, heavy, robust body, scales arranged in 25 rows around the body. Pit between the eyes and nostrils senses heat. Body has light olive green, dark brown, or black blotches. Head is of uniform color.

Habitat: Semi-aquatic. Live close to marshes, lakes, rivers, irrigation dikes, rice fields, and small mountain streams. Found from Virginia to the Florida Keys, West to Texas.

Life Span: 21 years maximum

Food: Fish, amphibians, carrion, salamanders, small mammals, lizards, baby alligators, water snakes. Bites prey, injects venom, and then lets it go. Follows trail and feeds when the prey is dead.

Reproduction: Give birth every two years. Gestation is 3 to 4 months. 1 to 15 babies, 7 to 13" long.

Other Information: Active day or night. Bask in sun to recover body temperature from being in the water. Normally don't bite unless bothered. Venom causes destruction of red blood cells, prevents blood from coagulating in the victim. Not considered endangered. King snakes are one of its predators. Can sense infrared heat rays, and can sense the difference from its prey and the object it is on.

Reptile - Venomous Snake – Coral Snake Eastern Coral Snake



Micrurus fulvius fulvius

Slender body, small eyes; black, yellow, and red bands. Black head. Body is smooth and shiny. Small mouth and fangs. Has a very potent neurotoxic venom. Resembles king snake. Not dangerous to humans unless handled. Color pattern is yellow, red, yellow, variations on yellow, red and black, with a black nose.

Habitat: Live in open forested areas, dry areas, occasionally in wetlands or marshes, and in subterranean dens. Come on the surface of the ground only early in the morning or late in the evening. Found statewide in Florida. Range is Southeastern US.

Size: Grows from 20 to 32 inches. Largest was 47" long.

Life Span: Maximum 20 years.

Food: Eats small snakes, lizards, birds, fish, frogs, large insects.

Reproduction: Nests in rotting logs and vegetation. Color attracts mates. Usually lays 2 to 13 elongated eggs. Eggs hatch in 60 to 90 days. Snakes are 7 to 9 inches at birth.

Behaviors: Diurnal. Spends most of its time buried under tree trunks. Live in urban areas. Bites are rare. Common snake in Florida, but rarely seen.

Other Information: Venom is used for serums and AIDS research. These three snakes look much alike: Scarlet Snake, Scarlet King Snake, and Coral Snake. The coral snake has a black nose. The scarlet King Snake and the Scarlet Snake have red noses.

Reptile – Lizard –
Skink
Five-Lined
Skink



Eumeces fasciatus

Black or dark brown, with short legs. It has five stripes that run the length of the body, but these stripes fade as it gets older, when it turns brown. The young and females have a blue tail. It is the most common lizard in Florida.

Habitat: Found in moist wooded areas with cover, such as abandoned buildings and tree stumps. Range is from Michigan to Florida.

Size: Up to eight inches long; males are slightly longer than females.

Life Span: High mortality when juveniles but with luck they can live up to six years.

Food: They eat insects (crickets, beetles, caterpillars, grasshoppers). They also eat spiders, earthworms, snails, slugs, other lizards, and small mice.

Reproduction: They mate in the spring. They nest under a log. Up to 12 eggs are laid, which hatch after 4 to 7 weeks. Females stay with the eggs protecting them until they are hatched, and she eats unhatched eggs. Babies are two inches long at birth.

Other Information: They are diurnal. Predators include raccoons, red foxes, snakes, hawks. They control pest populations. Juveniles have a blue tail. This is toxic to a domestic animal, like a cat, which might eat it.

Reptile – Anole

Green Anole

Anolis carolinensis

Green lizard. Male has orange throat fan. Changes color with temperature, humidity, and health.

Habitat: In trees, shrubs, walls, fences.

Size: 5 to 8 inches long. Females are smaller.

Life Span: They can live up to 7 years in captivity.

Food: They eat spiders and small insects.

Reproduction: They mate from March to October. Female can lay eggs every 2 weeks. Eggs take 5 to 7 weeks to hatch.

Other Information: Can change color from green to brown to gray. They have adhesive on their foot pads that enables them to crawl along walls.



Reptile – Anole
Cuban
Brown Anole
Invasive Exotic

Anolis Sagrei



Brown and gray, with patterning on back. Males have orange and yellow throat fan.

Habitat: Live in barren land, small towns, in suburban and urban areas, mostly on the ground. Range is increasing throughout Southeastern US.

Size: Between 5 and 8.5 inches long.

Life Span: Can live from 5 to 8 years.

Food: They eat insects, spiders and other invertebrates.

Reproduction: Females lay eggs in rotten wood at two week intervals.

Other Information: They present a threat to the native green anole. Defend territory. Shed skin several times a year. Kept as pets.

Reptile –Tortoise

Gopher Tortoise

Gopherus polyphemus



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Protected by an armored shell on its back, it has four limbs that are broad and flat, each with one or two claws. Hind limbs are flattened and rudder-like. Light tan to dark gray in color.

Habitat: Live in well-drained upland areas, in pine forests. Can share burrows with up to 300 different species of wildlife including the indigo snake, the diamondback rattlesnake, several species of frogs and toads, and many different types of invertebrates. Range is Florida and Southeastern states.

Size: Up to 14 inches long, can weigh up to 15 pounds.

Life Span: Can live up to 50 years.

Food: Primarily Vegetarian. Feed on grasses, plants, insects, leaves, beans, and cactus. Occasionally will chew bones for the added calcium.

Reproduction: 4 to 7 eggs are laid in nest dug near the burrow entrance. Young hatch in late summer to early fall.

Behaviors: They can dig up to 12 feet underground, and make burrows up to 47 feet in length. They communicate by head-bobbing and infrasound.

Other Information: In Florida, the gopher tortoise is listed as Threatened. Both the tortoise and its burrow are protected under state law. It is illegal to take, possess, transport, or sell gopher tortoises.

Reptile – Turtle

Ornate Box Turtle

Terrapene carolina



Narrow, domed shell. Shell has radiating bands of yellow. It has stripes on each side of its head. Bottom shell is hinged, so that it can close up tightly when afraid.

Habitat: Lives in woods, gardens, open fields, pinelands, and hammocks. Range is throughout the east coast of US, up as far as Massachusetts, and as far west as the Mississippi River, and North to the Great Lakes.

Size: About 6.5 inches.

Life Span: 30 to 40 years, some up to 100 years.

Food: Plants, insects, carrion

Reproduction: Fertilize and lay eggs at will. The female box turtles can store sperm for up to 6 years. 2 to 3 months incubation. Gender is determined by the temperature of the nest.

Other Information: Hibernates in winter in Northern range if it can't raise body temperature enough to maintain activity. Heart rate slows, digestion stops, and it cannot move or open its eyes. Often kept as pets.

Reptile – Turtle

Florida Snapping Turtle

Chelydra serpentina



Sharp, brown beak with no teeth. Has very strong jaws, a hard shell of bony plates, a long tail with 5 claws on each foot, a good sense of smell, and it can feel through the shell like humans can feel through fingernails.

Habitat: Lives in freshwater and brackish water ponds, streams, and canals. It spends most of its time under water. Range is throughout Florida.

Life Span: 30 to 40 years

Food: Eats fish, snails, worms, insects, grasses, leafy plants, flowers, fruit

Reproduction: Lays eggs and buries them in the soil. Mother does not incubate eggs. The eggs in the warmer section of the nest become females, and the ones in the cooler area become males.

Other Information: Nocturnal. They are slow on land. They emit a strong, unpleasant odor from their musk glands

Reptile – Turtle

Alligator

Snapping Turtle

Macrochelys temminckii

North America's largest freshwater turtle. Spiked shell. Strong jaws. Have eyes on the sides of the head.



Habitat: Found in rivers, lakes in Southeast US to Central Florida, as far North as Iowa.

Size: Males can weigh between 150 and 175 pounds. Males can be up to 26 inches long. The much smaller females top out at around 50 pounds (23 kilograms).

Life Span: Between 11 and 45 years in the wild, up to 70 years in captivity.

Food: Red tongue looks like a fishing lure worm. They wiggle their tongue to mimic worm's movements and fish are attracted. The turtle shuts its mouth to catch it.

Reproduction: They reach sexual maturity between 11 and 13 years. Females go on land to nest.

Other Information: Stay submerged and still most of the time. Seldom go to water's surface except to catch a breath. Seldom go on land, except females to lay eggs. Do not try to handle in the wild. Their jaws are very powerful. Adults have no predators in nature. They can stay submerged for up to 50 minutes before needing to take a breath. Referred to as the "dinosaur" of turtles. Threatened species, due to capture for exotic animal trade.

Reptile – Turtle

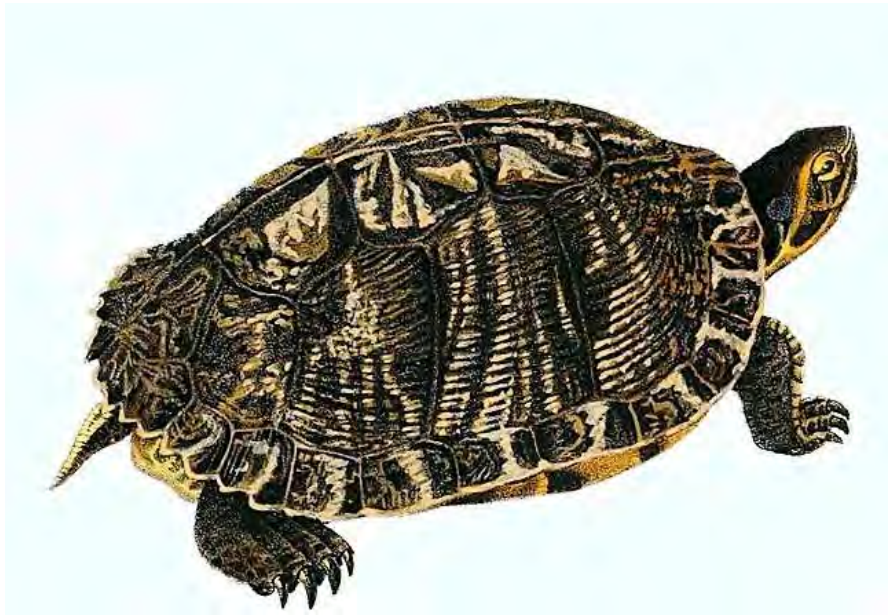
Peninsula

Cooter

Pseudemys peninsularia

The Peninsula Cooter can be distinguished from its close

relative, the Suwannee Cooter, by a pair of stripes on top of the head that look like "hairpins."



Habitat: Lives in slow moving streams, still bodies of water, lakes and marshes. Range is South Eastern US. Found in peninsular Florida.

Size: Maximum 16 inches.

Food: Mostly herbivorous, feed on aquatic vegetation.

Reproduction: Females dig nests in sand near water. Normally eggs will hatch in 60-90 days, the exception being winter when it may take up to five months for eggs to hatch.

Other Information: Often found basking in the sun on logs. One of the most common freshwater turtles found in Florida. Often covered with algae as they get larger. Basks in the sun to warm up, get vitamin D from the sun, and suppress algae growth.

Amphibian – Frog

Bullfrog

Rana catesbeiana



Strong, vocal croak. Has smooth, moist skin broad head. Usually green. Florida's bullfrogs tend to be very dark in color. They have an eardrum behind each eye. Males have a yellow throat; females have a tan throat. Strong sense of hearing. Can jump long distances. Often stay just below the water with eyes and nostrils above water.

Habitat: Found in open wetlands.

Size: 3 ½ to 8 inches long. Largest on record was 9.5 inches. They weigh about 17.5 ounces.

Life Span: 30 years maximum

Food: Voracious appetite. Eat anything that moves: small turtles, snakes, mice, lizards, other frogs, young alligators. They like to eat underwater.

Reproduction: Mate in June and July. Male mounts female and fertilizes eggs while she lays them on the surface of the water. Eggs hatch in 4 to 5 days. Female lays 3,000 to 25,000 eggs. Tadpoles stay as tadpoles, feeding on insects and spiders, for 2 to 3 summers. Then change to adult frog.

Behaviors: Inflates its body when disturbed. Active at night.

Amphibian-Frog

Southern Leopard Frog

Lithobates sphenoccephalus

They are greenish-tan to brown.
They have ridges on the sides
of their body. Pointed snout.
Back has large, brown spots.

Habitat: Found in forests, in
freshwater habitats, lakes,
canals, swamps. Found throughout Florida, except for Northern Keys.

Size: From 2 to 3.5 inches long.

Life Span: About 3 years.

Food: Insects, crayfish, earthworms, spiders. Tadpoles eat insect larvae and water fleas.

Reproduction: They breed from November to March. Eggs are laid and attach to vegetation.
Tadpoles hatch. Tadpoles become adults by late spring.

Other Information: They are nocturnal.



Amphibian - Frog

Green Tree Frog

Hyla cinerea

They have adhesive disks on their feet that make climbing trees easy. Usually bright green, but may also have hues of gray or yellow. They have a white or yellow stripe along the side of their body.



Habitat: They live in swamps, hammocks, lakes, streams, in Southeastern United States.

Size: 1 ¼ to 2 ¼ inches long. Males are smaller than females.

Life Span: From 2 to 5 years. In captivity they have lived up to 15 years.

Food: They are insectivores, eating flies, crickets, moths, ants, beetles.

Reproduction: Male frogs attract females with their call. Males breed with as many females as they can. They breed several times a year. Female lays up to 400 eggs. The eggs hatch in about 5 days. Tadpoles have metamorphosis in 28 to 44 days.

Other Information: In order to protect these frogs, people must be mindful of habitat destruction and pollution. Since they breathe through their skin, they are susceptible to changes in the environment.

Amphibian - Toad

Southern Toad

Bufo terrestris

They are brown, but can also be gray, black, or red. Dark spots on back. Line down back. Skin is dry and warty.

Habitat: Live in sandy soil, fields, hammocks, residential areas near water. Found in all Southeastern states, except Tennessee.



Size: From 1.6 to 2.9 inches long. Males are smaller than females.

Life Span: 10 or more years.

Food: Voracious eaters. Eat beetles, earwigs, ants, crickets, lightning bugs, cockroaches.

Reproduction: They breed from February to October. Attract mate with call. Females lay 2500 to 4000 eggs in lines. Eggs hatch in 2-4 days; tadpoles undergo metamorphosis after 30-55 days.

Other Information: When threatened, they inflate their bodies and extend their legs to attempt to look as big as possible.

Amphibian – Toad

Oak Toad

Anaxyrus quercicus

They are reddish brown, or dark brown, or gray. They have dark brown spots. Skin has warts, Underside of feet are orange. Yellow stripe down back.

Habitat: In forests, scrubs, wetlands, marshes, ponds. In Southeastern US. Found throughout Florida except in the lower Keys



Size: $\frac{3}{4}$ inch to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long. It is the smallest US toad.

Life Span: Average lifespan is 1.9 years.

Food: Insects

Reproduction: Breed in summer. Male attracts females with his call. 100-250 eggs are laid by the female, and they either float or stick to surfaces. Fertilization takes place externally. Tadpoles hatch in 2 months and undergo metamorphosis.

Other Information: Male toads have an ovary that can allow them to breed as females.

Amphibian – Salamander Tiger Salamander

Ambystoma tigrinum

Gray or black in color, with yellow stripes. Stocky legs.

Habitat: Live in burrows, near lakes, streams, and ponds. Range is most of the United States, in Southern Canada, and in eastern Mexico.

Size: Largest land-dwelling salamander on earth. Average 6 to 8 inches long, but can grow to 14 inches. Weigh around 4 ounces.

Life Span: Average 10 to 16 years in the wild.

Food: Feed at night. Eat frogs, worms, and insects.

Reproduction: Females

Other Information: Male sometimes impersonates a female in order to deposit sperm on top of another male's sperm.



Amphibian – Salamander Two-toed Amphiuma



Amphiuma means

Salamander with a thick, dark brown body. It has two toes on each limb. Adult skin is smooth. They do not have external gills.

Habitat: live in swamps, bayous, drainage ditches. Range is Southeastern US.

Size: From 15 to 30 inches long. Three species of amphiuma are differentiated by the number of toes they have. Two-toed is the largest of the three.

Life Span: longest recorded is 27 years.

Food: other salamanders, frogs, crayfish. Forage at night.

Reproduction: Males court females by swimming around them. Females lay around 200 eggs in a burrow near the edge of the water. Females incubate and guard eggs. Incubation time is 4 to 5 months.

Other Information: Powerful bite, but sometimes constrict prey. Go into burrows in the ground during the day. If the water dries up, the amphiuma will burrow into the mud until the next rain.

Reptile – Exotic

Cane Toad

(Giant Toad)



Bufo marinus

Cane toads are heavily built, have short legs and no webs between their toes. Adults have a rough warty skin. Their color is tan, dull green or black with a light underside.

Habitat: In forests or cleared land areas, on roadways with water nearby.

Size — 4 to 6 inches long or larger.

Life span— Up to 10 years

Food: Eat ants, beetles, earwigs, grasshoppers. It will eat insects and any other small creature it can catch, including other toads and frogs.

Reproduction: Males congregate and call for mates year round. Eggs are laid on rocks and vegetation in the water, and hatch between 2 to 7 days. They can lay 30,000 eggs at a time. Tadpoles turn to adult toads in 45 to 55 days.

Other Information: Cane toads are one of the worst invasive species in the world. They emit venom that can cause paralysis or death to predators, including pet dogs or cats. Males have an ovary that works if the testes are damaged.

**Amphibian – Exotic
Invasive
Cuban Tree Frog**

Osteopilus septentrionalis



Dark green to pale gray color. They can change color to match the environment. They have sticky pads on their toes. Non-native frog. Very invasive.

Habitat: Spend most of their time in trees in urban areas and along waterways. They prefer high humidity. Native range is in South and Central Florida.

Size: Approximately 5 inches (Largest tree frog in North America). Weighs about 2 ounces.

Life Span: About 5 to 10 years, 25 year maximum.

Food: Other frogs, including other Cuban tree frogs, insects, lizards, snakes, mice, hatchling birds, cockroaches, crickets, moths.

Reproduction: About 3000 eggs are laid in 2 long strips, in pools, ditches, and ponds. The tadpole stage lasts from 30 to 60 days.

Other Information: This frog has a destructive effect on the natural ecosystems of Florida. They prey on native tree frogs and cause the native population to decline. They are nocturnal. Mucus on their skin is toxic to humans, and can cause irritation to the eyes, nose, and throat.

Fish – Freshwater

Florida Gar



Lepisosteus platyrhincus

This fish has a wide, long snout. Scales look like bricks. Black spots all along body. The dorsal and anal fins are placed back on the body. Fish is dark green to brown, with a yellow belly.

Habitat: Live in areas of vegetation, in fresh and brackish waters. Live in streams, canals, and lakes with muddy or sandy bottoms. Live near abundant underwater vegetation. In Florida and North Georgia.

Size: 30 to 52 inches long. Record weight is 21 pounds

Life Span: Up to 20 or more years in the wild.

Food: Young eat zooplankton, insect larvae, and small fish. Adults eat fish and shrimp.

Reproduction: Sexual maturity is reached in 3 to 4 years for the female, and 2 years for the male. Female deposits eggs on vegetation from February to April. Males fertilize eggs and the parents swim off. One brood per year. Average 6000 offspring per brood.

Other Information: Eggs are toxic to humans, animals, and birds. Unpopular food. Adaptable to low water quality environments.

Fish – Freshwater

Large Mouth

Bass



Micropterus salmoides
floridanus

Also known as Black Bass. Popular sporting fish. Named because the lower jaw sticks out so far. Green colored. In sunfish family

Habitat: Originally in Southeast America. Now from Quebec to Mexico.

Size: Can be 10 to 20 pounds. Average 18 inches, but can grow to 24 or more inches.

Life Span: Average 6 years for male, 9 for female.

Food: Worms, crayfish, minnows, insects, baby alligators, frogs, snakes, salamanders, turtles, and ducklings.

Reproduction: Spawn between February and July. Males build nest in shallow water, then attract female. 2,000 to 145,000 eggs are laid. Males guard nest. Eggs hatch in 3 to 7 days. Young remain on bottom of nest for 5 to 7 days, after which they rise from nest.

Other Information: Have a strong fight when they are being caught on a line. Florida's official state freshwater fish. Can hold up to 5 sunfish in their mouths.

Fish – Freshwater

Bow fin



Amia calva

Descendent of ancient fish. It has an air bladder that enables it to breathe air. Dark body is long and thick. Rounded tail fin. They have a large mouth and sharp, strong teeth. Males have a dark spot on their tail fin.

Habitat: They live in swamps and rivers along the shores in the Southeastern US and in rivers: Mississippi, Great Lakes.

Size: From 10 to 19 pounds, up to thirty inches long.

Lifespan: up to 12 years.

Food: They eat fish and freshwater crayfish.

Reproduction: They mate in April and June. Male makes nest and mating takes place. Eggs hatch in 8 to 10 days. Young attach themselves to roots until they are about 9 days old, when they follow the male in a school. When they are about four inches long, the school disperses.

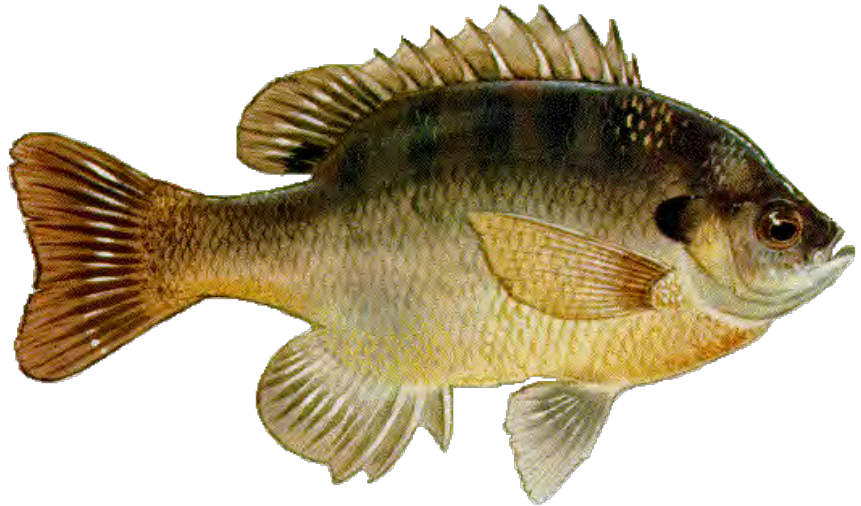
Other information: Related to gars.

Fish – Freshwater

Bluegill

Lepomis macrochirus

Freshwater fish. Also called Copper Nose, Perch, and Sunfish. Has a blue or black ear that is an extension of the gill. Name comes from the blue reflection around the edges of the fish.



Habitat: Found from Quebec to Mexico. Has been brought to different areas as a game fish.

Size: Maximum of 16 inches. Largest one caught was 4 pounds and 12 ounces.

Life Span: Unknown.

Food: Eat plankton when young; then eat flies. Eat small invertebrates and smaller fishes. They nibble their food, so they often take the bait off of fishermen's hooks.

Reproduction: Spawn in June. Shallow nests in water. Males have bold color during this time. They reproduce well. Both sexes defend their nest.

Other Information: State fish of Illinois. Excellent tasting fish. Eaten by Catfish, Largemouth Bass, and turtles. In 1960 the Emperor of Japan donated Bluegill to a research facility. They escaped and became an invasive species.

Fish – Saltwater

Black Drum

Pogonias cromis



Color of this fish varies with its habitat. In bays, it is a bronze color; in the Gulf, it is silvery. Teeth can crush oysters. “Barbels” on the underside of the jaw; high arched back. Largest member of the drum family.

Habitat: Inshore, common to bays and lagoons. Caught around bridges, piers, offshore.

Size: Up to 30 pounds.

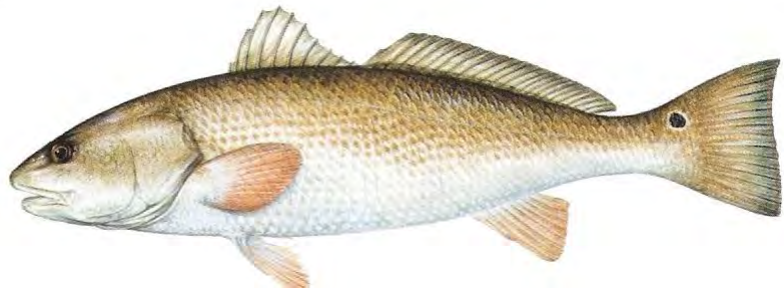
Life Span: 35 or more years

Food: Eat oysters, mussels, crabs, shrimp, occasionally and fish.

Reproduction: Spawns near shore in winter and early spring.

Other Information: Small drums are edible. Florida record catch is 93 pounds. World record is 113

Fish – Saltwater Red Drum (Red Fish)



Sciaenops ocellatus

Most commonly called a red fish. Also called bar bass, reef bass, saltwater bass, sea bass, and channel bass. Its mouth is horizontal and opens downward. It has large scales. The sides are grayish. Large black spot, or spots, just before tail. As fish grows larger it gets red all over.

Habitat: Found in both salt and brackish water. Found throughout Florida, at the edge of bays, inlets, shell beds. Juveniles are inshore and migrate out of estuaries.

Size: 27 inches, can weigh 8 pounds, recorded to 50 pounds, world record is 94 pounds 2 ounces in North Carolina. In Florida, common to 20 pounds.

Life Span: May live over 20 years.

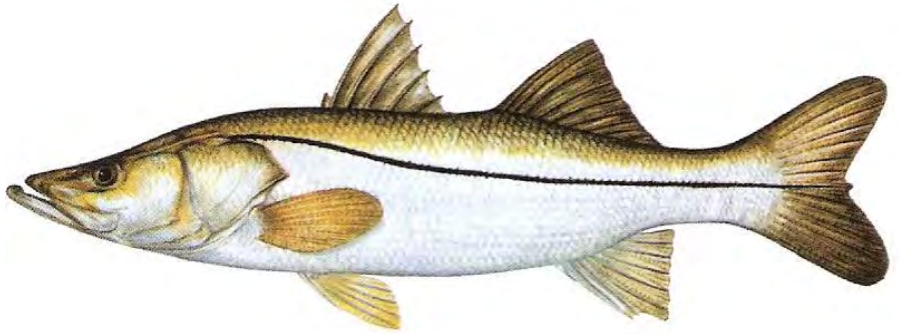
Food: Crustaceans, fish, mollusks.

Reproduction: Spawns from August to November.

Other Information: Good “eating” fish.

Fish - Saltwater

Common Snook



Centropomus undecimalis

Has defined line across length of body, high dorsal fins, sloping forehead, large mouth, protruding lower jaw, fins are yellow.

Habitat: Central to South Florida, along shallow coastal waters, in estuaries and lagoons, in brackish, fresh, or salt water.

Size: Average 5 to 8 pounds, can be up to 50 pounds. World record weight is 53 pounds, caught in Costa Rica. Florida record 44 pounds, 3 ounces. Females are larger than males. Maximum to 4 feet, 7 inches.

Life Span: Not known

Food: Carnivorous... eats small crustaceans and fish.

Reproduction: Spawns from June to July and August to October. They congregate in the mouths of rivers and canals to spawn.

Other Information: Game fish. Excellent food fish.

Fish - Saltwater

Crevalle Jack



Caranx hippos

Also called Cavalla, Horse Crevalle, Skipjack, and Toro. Light olive on back, gray on sides, yellow belly. Prominent black spot on gill cover.

Habitat: Found in constantly moving schools, visits fresh water rivers. Found in inshore waters and open seas. Can tolerate a wide range of salinity.

Size: Average 3 to 5 pounds, can reach 50 pounds or 3 feet long. World record is 58 pounds, 6 ounces, in Angola. Florida record is 51 pounds.

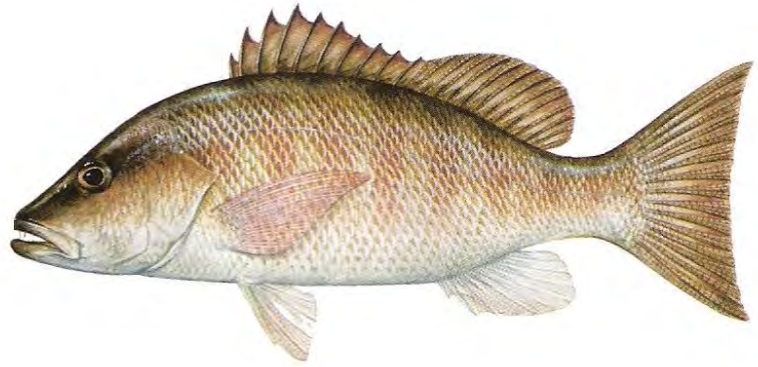
Life Span: 8 to 10 years

Food: Squid, shrimp, and fish. Schools circle bait fish in a feeding frenzy which can be seen from a distance.

Reproduction: Spawns offshore from March to September.

Fish - Saltwater
Gray Snapper
(Mangrove)

Lutjanus griseus



Very large marine fish. Jaws have large canine teeth. Dark brown or gray, with red or orange spots in rows on sides. 2 canine teeth in upper front jaw.

Habitat: Throughout Florida, around pilings, reefs, shell beds, in rivers.

Adults are found around coral and rocky reefs. Babies are found in tidal creeks around mangroves and grass beds.

Life Span: Can reach 24 years.

Size: Can be more than 2.5 feet. World record is 17 pounds.

Food: Eats crustaceans and small fish.

Reproduction: Spawns from July to August.

Other Information: Excellent fish for eating by people.

Fish – Saltwater

Hardhead Catfish



Arius felis

Long body, dorsal and anal fins are long, tail fin is rounded. Has four pairs of “barbells.”

Habitat: Migrates between salt and fresh waters. Caught from bridges, piers, inland

Size: Can be up to 12 pounds, average 4 pounds, up to 2 feet long.

Life Span: unknown.

Food: Will eat almost anything in the water.

Reproduction: Spawn in May and September. “Mouth brooding” species. Male carries eggs in his mouth for a month, during which he does not eat.

Other Information: Called a “tourist fish” because almost anyone can catch one. Edible by people.

Fish – Saltwater

Sheepshead

Archosargus probatocephalus



Silver in color, with 5 or 6 vertical bars on sides, prominent teeth, strong sharp spines around dorsal and anal fins.

Habitat: Throughout Florida, by oyster bars, pilings, sea walls, tidal creeks.

Size: Average 1 to 8 pounds. Florida record is 15 pounds 1 ounce. Larger when offshore.

Food: Mollusks, crustaceans, fiddler crabs, barnacles, shellfish. Use powerful sharp teeth to feed on mollusks.

Reproduction: Spawns near shore in late winter to early spring.

Fish – Saltwater
Striped (Black)
Mullet



Mugil cephalus

Blue/gray or green above, silver shading on sides, blunt nose, small mouth.

Habitat: Throughout Florida. Young found inshore. In shallow bays and fresh water rivers.

Size: Common to 3 pounds, up to 1.5 feet long. Can reach 12 pounds or more in aquariums.

Life Span: 4 to 16 years.

Food: Primarily vegetarian, occasional small worms.

Reproduction: Migrates in schools to spawn offshore.

Other Information: Caught by netting, vegetarian fish resists baits. Oily fish, best served “smoked.” There are three theories as to why they jump out of the water: to dislodge internal parasites, to communicate, or just because they like to.

Fish – Saltwater

Lady Fish



Bodianus rufus

Related to but smaller than Tarpon. Small, pointy head. No teeth.

Habitat: Found in Florida in bays and estuaries. Occasionally found in fresh water.

Size: Can grow to 3 feet long and 15 pounds in weight. Record caught in Florida is 4 pounds, 10 oz.

Life Span: 6 or more years.

Food: Small fish, crustaceans, and their own species. Swallow prey whole.

Reproduction: In Florida they spawn in fall.

Other Information: Strong fighters for fishermen.

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