



*Volusia County Environmental Management
presents*

Fading Tracks

An educational brochure about
Volusia County's Endangered Species



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Florida Panther

Felis concolor coryi

INTRODUCTION

Listed on the Endangered Species Act in 1967. Due to habitat decline, the species is threatened. This animal is a subspecies of cougar that has adapted to the subtropical environment of Florida. It is estimated that there is less than 50 panthers left in Florida.



DESCRIPTION

The Florida Panther has short hair, a crooked tail, and a whorl of hair in the middle of their backs. White spots often appear on the fur from the presence of ticks. Normally the color of the coat varies from a rusty buff to a fawn gray. The under belly, chest, and muzzle is white. The crooked tail and the whorl on the backs of the panthers are a result from the expression of recessive genes through inbreeding.

BEHAVIORS

When hunting, the Panther travels great distances. They will generally zig-zag through a territory, scanning side areas for movement, avoiding open areas and hiding in cover. Panthers tend to be very nonsocial animals among other panthers.

TERRITORY

The Florida Panther tends to inhabit regions of upper, dry land and wetland areas. Panthers will often wade and swim in water to find suitable habitat. Panthers tend to avoid humans and environments where humans prevail.

DIET

The Florida Panther is a carnivore, which eats primarily white-tail deer, feral hogs, raccoons, armadillo, small alligators, and other small rodents and fowl. Deer and hog are the preferred sources of food. Panthers require about 3000 calories a day and pregnant panthers need an extra 8000 calories.

Florida Manatee

Trichechus manatus latirostris

INTRODUCTION

The Florida manatee is one of the most endangered marine mammals in the United States. All four species of sirenians are endangered or threatened. The manatee is also known as the sea cow.



DESCRIPTION

Manatees are grayish-brown in color although, organisms such as algae grow on the skin of these creatures and, help determine their coloration. The manatees have an unusual streamlined shape. They are full around the middle region and they narrow down to a paddle-shaped tail. Manatees also have sparse hair scattered over its torso region. Manatee's flippers have five digits that are covered with a thick layer of skin. The bone structure of manatees is similar to that of toothed whales, seals, and sea lions. The Florida Manatee can grow up to 13 feet in length although, the average length for these mammals is 10 feet. These massive organisms can weigh from 800 to 1200 pounds on the average although, large individuals have been recorded as weighing up to 3500 pounds. Female manatees are typically larger than the males.

BEHAVIORS

Manatees possess two small pectoral flippers, which are located on the upper body region. These flipper's functions are to help the manatee steer, to help bring food to the manatee's mouth, and for guiding its movement along a waterway's bottom. All manatees swim by moving their large paddle-like tail in an up-and-down motion through the water.

TERRITORY

Manatees live in slow-moving rivers, springs, and estuaries. Naturally, manatees can die if subject to cold weather as well as, diseases and parasites.

DIET

All manatees are herbivores. They primarily feed on submerged, emergent, floating, and shoreline vegetation. Within Florida alone, manatees feed on over 60 species of plants. These include water hyacinth, water hydrilla, mangrove leaves, turtle grass, and manatee grass. Manatees have a large flexible upper lip. Their lips provide guidance during the eating process by bringing vegetation into their mouths.

Florida Black Bear

Urus americanus floridanus

INTRODUCTION

There are an estimated 1,500 bears remaining in Florida today. The average home range for an adult female is about 11 square miles. An adult male's home range is approximately 66 square miles.



DESCRIPTION

The Florida Black bear is black with a brown muzzle. Sometimes they possess a white "blaze" on their chest.

BEHAVIORS

Females give birth to two cubs every other year. A mother and her cub will remain together for a year and a half.

TERRITORY

The Florida Black Bear requires large spans of habitat to find food, shelter, and water. Although, these habitats are being fragmented by development and roads which hinder the bear's abilities to locate resources that are needed. Underpasses are being created to reduce the number of collisions between bears and vehicles and to allow safe passageways for the bears and other wildlife.

DIET

The black bear is omnivorous. Its diet consists of 80% vegetable matter. The bear's preferred diet would consist of berries, acorns, insects, and palmetto hearts.

Scrub Jay

Aphelocoma coerulescens coerulescens

INTRODUCTION

When you experience Florida Scrub Jays close at hand you realize just how amazing this bird really is. Scrub Jays are very interactive with humans. Although, we do not encourage feeding them.



DESCRIPTION

Adult males and females cannot be distinguished by their plumage. Juveniles are very distinct from adults because, their heads are gray rather than blue. They begin to change to blue after five months.

BEHAVIORS

Scrub Jays, on the whole, mate for life. However, they may 'divorce' their partner if they become ill and therefore, unable to mate or protect their territory. Family groups consist of the breeding pair, the current year's offspring, and any previous year's offspring who remain to help the parents rear the newest young. All members of the family help the young to learn traits. Gangs of juveniles exist, as well. These gangs will return to natal territory on an evening and be able to get away with being in another family territory.

TERRITORY

Scrub Jays create family territories that they defend from other groups. Female offspring leave the family territory sooner than the males in order to find a suitable male with his own territory. Males remain with the family group longer probably because, it is harder for them to find unoccupied territories.

DIET

The principle diet of the Scrub Jay in the winter months are acorns produced by scrub oaks. In the summer insects are eaten together with fruits. Scrub Jays cache acorns that is, they bury each acorn in a different place and very astonishingly remember where they are to retrieve them at a later date. They cache 6 to 8000 acorns a season and, retrieve one-third of them.

Sea Turtles

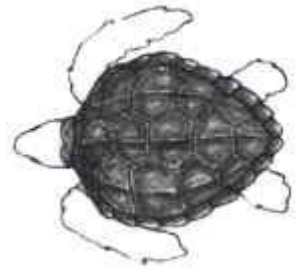
Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

Length: 60-100 inches Weight: 710-1,300 pounds

Distribution: Nests in tropics, wanders to temperate, even sub-Arctic waters

Diet: Jellyfish

The largest sea turtle. Black with white blotches, the shell lacks scales and is covered by a firm, rubbery skin with seven longitudinal ridges or keels.



Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*)

Length: 38-45 inches Weight: 250-400 pounds

Distribution: Subtropical areas, all oceans

Diet: Mollusks and crabs

A large reddish-brown sea turtle with a disproportionately large head. This is the most common sea turtle encountered in the southeastern United States. Frequently observed around wrecks, underwater structures and reefs. The most common variety on Volusia beaches.

Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempfi*)

Length: 23-26 inches Weight: 80-100 pounds

Distribution: Gulf of Mexico and North Atlantic

Diet: Crabs and mollusks

Smallest and most endangered of the sea turtles. The broadly oval-shaped shell is usually olive gray, but very young are charcoal. These are daytime nesters and have nested on Volusia's beaches.

Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)

Length: 28-36 inches Weight: 80-140 pounds

Distribution: Tropical oceans near coral or rocky reefs

Diet: Invertebrates, vegetation and sponges

Small to medium sea turtles with a very attractively colored shell of thick, overlapping scales . . . the source of "tortoise shell." Has distinct hawk-like beak.

Green (*Chelonia mydas*)

Length: 25-43 inches Weight: 250-400 pounds

Distribution: Tropical oceans except East Pacific Ocean

Diet: Sea grasses and seaweed

A medium to large brownish sea turtle with a radiating or mottled pattern of markings on the shell. The head is small in comparison to other sea turtles and the bottom edge of the lower jaw is serrated.