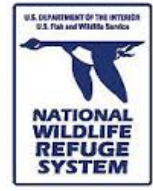


Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Florida Keys National
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Info Bulletin



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Visiting the Blue Hole on Big Pine Key in National Key Deer Refuge; Resolutions for a New Year-

New Year's Resolutions--Help us help the residents of Blue Hole in National Key Deer Refuge- please spread the word- Blue Hole is a wonderful place to get outside and appreciate nature, but there are some things you just can't do there. For the safety of people, and so that we can provide protections for the wildlife from human disturbance, some activities are illegal, here are several and the reasons why:

- 1) Please do not ever feed the alligators. It is critically important for them to never associate people with food. When they lose their natural fear of people, they can become a danger. A nuisance alligator is not relocated, it is euthanized, it is unfortunately that simple.
- 2) Please do not disturb wildlife- Blue Hole is their home, they need their space to rest and feed, or raise their young without disturbance. For this reason it is illegal to use aerial drones or submerged drones to film the alligators and other wildlife. No motorized toy boats, or other motorized floating/submersible vessels are allowed. No swimming, snorkeling, diving or fishing is allowed. Please do not walk beyond the area closed signs. While your individual actions might seem insignificant, there are thousands of visitors each year and the cumulative impact is significant.
- 3) Practice ethical wildlife photography and viewing. Keep your distance. Use binoculars or telephoto lens to get close. While it is legal to play a particular bird sound to attract a bird, please use only on a limited basis as these recordings can often attract predators or disturb the bird from its normal activities. In short, if you see the bird is focused on you, and not doing its normal behavior, you are too close, please back off and allow them their space.
- 4) Please don't feed the Key deer or other wildlife. This is not only important here at Blue Hole, but throughout the National Key Deer Refuge. Feeding causes Key deer to lose their natural caution around people. The food itself can be harmful; they are wild animals and they have plenty of natural food. Giving food alters their behavior; while most of us love and adore them, there are a few bad characters who mean them harm. When they trust people, it can put them in harm's way. Feeding stations at a residence or feeding from roadways cause them to hang out or cross hazardous roadways. We lose more than a 100 Key deer each year to road mortality, while not all of this can be attributed directly to being fed, we know the practice certainly causes them to hang out alongside and near roads. Help Key deer remain wild and healthy, please don't feed them.

We hate having to put up individual signs that say don't do this or that. There are so many specifics and it takes away from the natural beauty of the area. We do ask visitors and residents to consider that there are thousands and thousands of visitors to Blue Hole every year, and that it may not appear that your individual actions would have much impact, when multiplied by thousands of individuals, wildlife disturbance can have real and critical impacts to the creatures that live there. Please join us in helping to educate people about

sharing the outdoors with nature and helping to do our best to protect wildlife from disturbance. Together we can make a huge difference!

Pretty much all of the rules and regulations described above apply in all areas of the Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges. For more information, please contact Park Ranger Kristie Killam at Kristie_killam@fws.gov, and follow Refuge updates on our website and Facebook page:

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/National_Key_Deer_Refuge/

<https://www.facebook.com/floridakeysrefuges>

The National Wildlife Refuge System protects wildlife and wildlife habitat on more than 150 million acres of land and water from the Caribbean to the Pacific, Maine to Alaska. Refuges also improve human health, provide outdoor recreation, and support local economies. *Visit our home page at <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>.*

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/>.

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