

Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Florida Keys National  
Wildlife Refuge Complex  
28950 Watson Blvd.  
Big Pine Key, FL 33043

# Info Bulletin



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** Contact: Ashleigh Blackford, 772-532-2978, [ashleigh\\_blackford@fws.gov](mailto:ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov)  
April, 29, 2020 Or Kristie Killam, 305-304-9625, [kristie\\_killam@fws.gov](mailto:kristie_killam@fws.gov)

Key deer fawning season has started! Your actions can help make a difference in a young Key deer's life. Please do not approach a fawn if you are lucky enough to see one. Mother deer commonly leave their fawns alone for periods of time after birth, sometimes for several hours. This is a strategy to protect the youngster from predators at a time when they are not able to keep up with their mother. Unfortunately, this is a time when people are most likely to find a fawn by itself and think that it's been orphaned or abandoned and inadvertently harm the young fawn in an effort to help. Because Key deer are protected under the Endangered Species Act, it is actually against the law for a person to intervene in these situations. Please use the FWC Key deer/Wildlife hotline (888-404-3922, x7) to report fawns you think might have been orphaned or abandoned. Wildlife officers will respond to your inquiry. We suggest you observe any fawn for a day before reporting, to allow time for mother and fawn to reunite. If indeed it is confirmed that the fawn has been abandoned or orphaned, there are mechanisms in place, and some fawns may be re-homed it at a Florida zoo or wildlife sanctuary.

Fawning season peaks in the summer, with some fawns born as late as Oct-Nov. This period shortly after birth is critical to the survival of a young fawn because it is still bonding and imprinting with its mother. Movement or disturbance of the fawn at this time can disrupt this important process. It may take several days to develop a maternal bond and for the baby to imprint on the mother, and during this time they need quiet time to learn to recognize each other and for the baby to learn to nurse, away from distractions. Young fawns do not have that natural fear of people and they may walk right up to you, either with or without their mother. Please resist the urge to touch, pet or feed. If you encounter a fawn it is best to walk away to allow the mother time to locate her baby and give the young fawn undisturbed time to develop this important bond with its mother. The mother will spend the next several months teaching her fawn where to find food, water, and places to rest undisturbed. It is best that the young deer looks to his mother and other Key deer for guidance, their ability to learn these things will affect their capacity to survive.

During this sensitive time please continue to observe posted speed limits or even drive a little slower when deer are observed. Young deer could be following close behind their mother.

For more information, please contact Ashleigh Blackford at 772-532-2978 or Kristie Killam at 305-304-9625 and follow Refuge updates on our website and Facebook page:  
[http://www.fws.gov/refuge/National\\_Key\\_Deer\\_Refuge/About\\_the\\_Complex.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/National_Key_Deer_Refuge/About_the_Complex.html)  
<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/>.*

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