

# Wildlife of Florida Fact Sheets: Introduction<sup>1</sup>

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**PURPOSE:** The Wildlife of Florida Factsheet series was created to provide the public with a quick and accurate introduction to Florida's wildlife, including both native and invasive species. We hope these factsheets inspire people to investigate wildlife in their own backyard and communities to understand the amazing biodiversity of wildlife in the state of Florida.

The information that follows is a key to the species factsheets. Starting with the scientific name, these terms describe various aspects of the species. These terms may help you identify the species as well as understand their role in Florida's ecosystems.

- **Scientific name:** is in binomial nomenclature, which is a formal system of naming species of living things in which each name is composed of two parts. The first part represents the genus and always starts with a capital letter. The second part represents the species and always starts with a lower case letter. Both genus and species names are always italicized. The binomial naming system is credited to Carl Linnaeus. Scientific names are important because common names are often imprecise, misleading, or different depending on the location.
- **Common names:** other common names used for the animal.
- **Habitat:** details about areas in which the animal can be found.
- **Physical Description:** the shape, size, color, and distinguishing features of the species.
- **Weight:** average weight of the animal in pounds (lb) or ounces (oz).
- **Reproductive Rate:** the average gestation period (time in the womb) or incubation period (time in egg) and the number of offspring produced.
- **Lifespan:** the average lifespan of an animal in the wild and/or captivity.
- **Dispersal & Home Range:** the average area used by an animal in square miles (mi<sup>2</sup>) and the movements of males, females, and juveniles.

## Did you know?

Learn an interesting fact about the animal!

## Breeding Legend

Breeding seasons include spring (Mar–May), summer (June–Aug), fall (Sept–Nov), and winter (Dec–Feb). Many species have peak breeding during several seasons.

## Habitat Legend

Habitats are classified into five land types common in Florida:

- **Grassland**—open areas dominated by grasses and short herbaceous plants. Includes wet and dry prairies and pastures.
- **Oak hammock**—areas dominated by dense oak and palm trees. Includes riparian forests.

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- Wetland—marshes and swamps that are filled with water all or part of the year and dominated by plants adapted to living in water.
- Flatwoods—areas dominated by pine trees and saw palmetto mixed with grassy plants.
- Scrub—areas dominated by short oaks, saw palmetto, and rosemary.

## Status Legend

The indicator indicates whether an animal is an imperiled species that is specially monitored and managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

At the federal level (USFWS), species can be listed as:

- Endangered (E)—any species that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
- Threatened (T)—any species that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
- For more information on USFWS endangered and threatened species visit <https://www.fws.gov/midwest/wolf/esastatus/e-vs-t.htm>

At the state level (FWC), species can be listed as:

- Threatened (T)—native Florida species that have had a large reduction ( $\geq 50\%$ ) in population over past 10 years; a reduction in their geographic range, or extreme fluctuations in occurrence, area occupied, population size or mature individuals; a small or restricted population size; or a 10% or greater probability of going extinct in the wild within 100 years. No person shall take, possess, transport, or sell any species of special concern or their nests or eggs except as authorized by permit.
- Species of Special Concern (C)—a temporary category for species about which we lack sufficient data/knowledge but that are suspected of needing protection. No person shall take, possess, transport, or sell any species of special concern or their nests or eggs except as authorized by permit.
- For more information on FWC threatened species and species of special concern visit <http://myfwc.com/media/4133167/floridas-imperiled-species-management-plan-2016-2026.pdf>

In addition, we have included species that are invasive or migratory.

Invasive (I)—Defining an invasive species can be difficult, because there are varying opinions. In general, however:

- They have a negative impact on environmental, economic, or public priorities (e.g., Burmese python)
- Most are non-native or not naturally found in the ecosystem (e.g., Brazilian peppertree).
- Most have a high capacity to reproduce and distribute within their new environment (e.g., feral swine)
- Sometimes a species is invasive in one part of the country, but not another (e.g., white-tailed deer in Northeast United States). (Other species are often called “conflict” species.)

Migratory (M)—an animal that moves relatively long distances, usually on a seasonal basis (e.g., snipe).

## Fast Facts

More quick facts about the animal.

## Biology & Behavior

General information about how the animal lives, what it eats, how it reproduces, and other interesting behavior.

## History

A description of key events in the existence of the species, such as early fossil records, discoveries, introductions, population increase and decreases, and more. Often associated with a timeline.

## Distribution

Where the animal was found historically and where it can be found today. If one is available, a map of the species distribution will be shown.

## Impacts, Threats, or Other Unique Topics

For invasive or conflict animals, their impacts on the ecosystem and/or other wildlife will be described. Other animals will have a unique topic about their biology and ecology in Florida.

## How You Can Help

Here you will find information on how you can help in your own backyard and communities!

Links to other available resources on the animal will appear here.

These factsheets will be available through the University of Florida’s electronic data information source, or EDIS, at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>. New wildlife factsheets will be

published regularly, so make sure to come back soon to learn more about Florida's wildlife!