

# Imperiled Florida Animals & Plants Reference Sheet



**Habitat:** Warm coastal waters, inshore bays, and lagoons, typically near seagrass beds

**Diet:** Adults are herbivores and eat primarily seagrasses and algae. Juveniles are omnivores and eat a wide variety of plant and animal life such as crustaceans and seagrasses.

**Threats:** Entanglement, boat strikes, plastic ingestion, habitat loss from coastal development, and illegal harvest

**Fun Facts:** The green sea turtle is often not green in color but is instead named for its feeding behavior as an herbivore, which can cause the body fat to turn green in color! Scientists estimate that this turtle can live up to 100 years in the wild.



**Habitat:** Nest in mixed hardwood swamps, sloughs, mangrove swamps and cypress domes; forage in wetlands

**Diet:** They eat mostly fish. Although they are also known to eat frogs, crayfish, large insects and occasionally small alligators and mice.

**Threats:** Land development and loss of wetland habitat, human encroachment on their rookeries, poisoning by pesticides, and power line and automobile accidents.

**Fun Facts:** Wood storks are thought to be more closely related to new world vultures than to ibis or herons. They feed by sticking their open bill underwater and rapidly snapping it shut when they feel a prey item swim inside.



**Habitat:** Southwest Florida, usually in mixed swamp forests

**Diet:** Prey on medium sized animals such as deer, wild hog, raccoons, and even alligators.

**Threats:** The construction of new houses, hotels, and airports in Florida has left them with a small habitat. A limited habitat is especially a problem for this animal because it is territorial and has a home range averaging over 100 square miles. Since they move around a lot and road traffic through their habitats has increased, another major threat is car and truck fatalities.

**Fun Facts:** Florida Panthers can leap up to 15 feet. They are Florida's state animal.



**Habitat:** Warm water habitats such as coastal waters, springs, and rivers. They prefer calm waters.

**Diet:** Manatees are herbivores and eat primarily sea grasses, algae and freshwater vegetation.

**Threats:** Human caused habitat loss, fishing gear entanglements, and boat collisions.

**Fun Facts:** The manatee can stay completely submerged underwater for up to 15 minutes and can weigh up to 3,500 pounds.

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Atala Butterfly  
*Eumaeus atala*

**Habitat:** Shady hammocks and backyards that have both the host plant, coontie, and the nectar plants they prefer

**Diet:** Caterpillars prefer the native Florida coontie, but can feed on some other exotic cycads planted in gardens. The adults feed on nectar from many plants, including wild coffee, porterweed, and wildflowers such as beggarticks.

**Threats:** The main threat was the overharvesting of their host plant, coontie, for flour found in their roots. Now, habitats where coontie naturally grew have been developed or degraded. Pesticides are also a threat.

**Fun Facts:** Atalas were thought to be extinct until a small colony was discovered in 1959 in the Biscayne Bay area. Their range has now spread throughout south Florida with the help of gardeners planting coontie. You can buy coontie at native nurseries to create atala habitat in your own yard.



Loggerhead  
*Caretta caretta*

**Habitat:** A very wide habitat range from offshore open seas to inshore coastal habitats such as bays and lagoons

**Diet:** Loggerheads are carnivores and eat mainly crustaceans such as conch, lobsters, and crab.

**Threats:** Entanglement, boat strikes, plastic ingestion, habitat loss from coastal development, and illegal harvest

**Fun Facts:** Loggerheads are named for their large heads, which support a very strong jaw! The jaw of a Loggerhead can crack through a conch shell in 1-2 bites!



Everglade Snail Kite  
*Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus*

**Habitat:** Nests and forages year round in south Florida freshwater wetlands

**Diet:** They feed almost exclusively on the apple snail. When apple snails are extremely scarce, they may eat small turtles, rodents, crabs, or smaller snails.

**Threats:** Their main threat is habitat degradation to Florida wetlands. Changes in water levels and water pollution has caused a population decline of their main food source and in turn the decline of the snail kite population.

**Fun Facts:** This endangered bird has red eyes that act like polarized sunglasses to spot the apple snail underwater. They eat up to 10,000 snails per year.



Giant Airplant  
*Tillandsia utriculata*

**Habitat:** Hardwood hammocks, cypress swamps, and pine forests. They attach to trees only for structural support while their curved leaves collect water and dead plant material from the air to be used as nutrients.

**Threats:** Their main threat is the introduction of the Mexican bromeliad weevil, whose larvae eat and kill the plant. Poachers and habitat destruction are also threats.

**Fun Facts:** The giant airplant can grow up to 6 feet tall when blooming and is carnivorous. There are 16 native bromeliads in Florida, 10 of which are imperiled.

