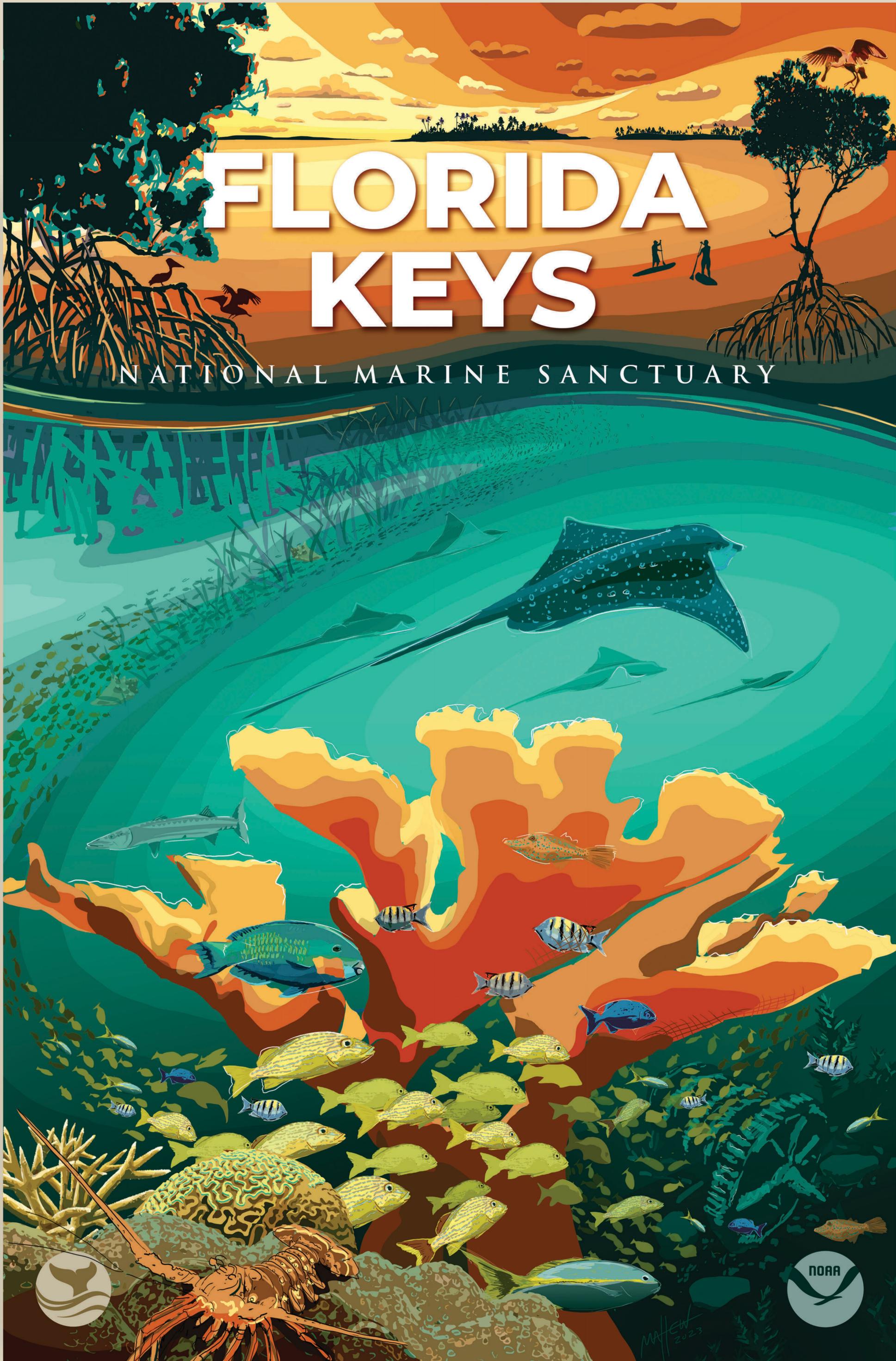


FLORIDA KEYS

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY



MAJEW 2023



Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary protects a coral reef ecosystem that is home to one of North America's most diverse communities of underwater plants and animals. Nearly 6,000 marine species inhabit the coral reefs, mangrove forests, seagrass meadows, and other habitats of the Florida Keys. The sanctuary protects these resources that support the region's tourism and fishing based economy. The ecosystem attracts tourists who enjoy diving, boating, and other forms of ocean recreation, and sustains valuable commercial and recreational fisheries. The sanctuary also helps preserve the nation's maritime history by protecting shipwrecks and other irreplaceable heritage resources.

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Coastal mangroves and seagrasses are nurseries for many species of fish, invertebrates, and birds that inhabit Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. These calm, shallow waters are ideal for paddle sports, snorkeling, and fishing. The offshore coral reef features stony and soft corals, sponges, and other invertebrates, which create habitat for spiny lobster, urchins, and many species of reef fish, including predatory fish like sharks, rays, barracuda, and snapper. Divers and snorkelers may encounter historic shipwrecks and artifacts that tell the story of our past.



◀ DIVING & SNORKELING

Florida Keys is the dive capital of the world. Before you jump in, call a Blue Star dive operator to ensure a great adventure.

TARPON (*Megalops atlanticus*) ▶

Every spring, thousands of tarpon migrate through our waters from both the Atlantic and Gulf sides, attracting anglers from around the world. Book with a Blue Star fishing guide to support operators dedicated to responsible fishing practices.



◀ CARIBBEAN SPINY LOBSTER (*Panulirus argus*)

Spiny lobsters are closely related to crabs, shrimp, and other 10-legged crustaceans, with a tail that enables them to escape quickly by swimming backwards.



ELKHORN CORAL (*Acropora palmata*) ▶

A key species of North America's only coral barrier reef, this coral is home to many commercially important fish families.



◀ SHIPWRECK TRAIL

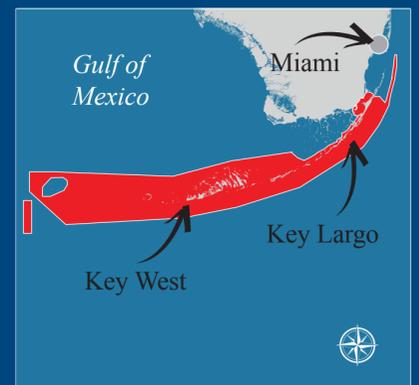
Interspersed within the natural environment, this trail of diveable historic shipwrecks represents three key periods of maritime history.



▶ GREAT WHITE HERON (*Ardea herodias*)

A white-colored morph of the great blue heron, it is found almost exclusively, yet abundantly, in the Keys.

LOCATION



QUICK FACTS

LOCATION

The water surrounding the archipelago formed by the Florida Keys

PROTECTED AREA

3,801 square miles

DESIGNATION

December 1975: Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary; January 1981: Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary; November 1990: Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

HABITATS

Coral reefs
Hardbottom
Mangrove-fringed shorelines & islands
Sand flats
Seagrass meadows

KEY SPECIES

Boulder corals (brain and star)
Eagle ray
Elkhorn and staghorn corals
Green sea turtle
Loggerhead sponge
Nurse shark
Spiny lobster
Tarpon
White heron
Yellowtail snapper

BELOW

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary has been at the forefront of coral restoration, including the introduction of in-water nurseries where corals are grown on "trees" and then outplanted at key locations on the reef. An unprecedented project called *Mission: Iconic Reefs* features restoration partners who raise corals with genetic diversity, seeking to find resilient strains that withstand the increasing effects of ocean acidification and climate change.



Photos: (lighthouse) Jack Fishman; (snorkeling) Matt McIntosh/NOAA; (tarpon) Will Benson; (lobster) Julie Bedford/NOAA; (elkhorn coral) Nick Zachar/NOAA; (shipwreck trail) Tane Casserley/NOAA; (great white heron) Kristie Killam; (background photo of coral restoration) XL Catlin/SeaView Survey

AMERICA'S UNDERWATER TREASURES

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 620,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. The network includes a system of 15 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments. For more information on the National Marine Sanctuary System, visit: sanctuaries.noaa.gov



○ National Marine Sanctuary
▲ Marine National Monument
■ Proposed National Marine Sanctuary
Scale varies in this perspective. Adapted from National Geographic Maps.