

Discover Beach Wildlife

"In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous." -Aristotle

The dynamic environment along the local coast provides an abundance of lifeforms the chance to coexist. From birds to shellfish to cactus, each has a vital role to play to keep this ecosystem in balance.

Look for these local plants and animals:

- (1) Horseshoe Crab (*Limulus polyphemus*)
 - Their shells may litter beaches around the coast, but you may not know that the blood of this crab is used to fight disease.
- (2) Sea Oats (*Uniola paniculata*)
 - The most abundant plant among the beach dunes. Sea Oats provide erosion control against the strong ocean winds.
- (3) Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)
 - Ideally suited for life along the coast, the Great Blue Heron can be found wading and hunting in shallow waters of the local marsh.
- (4) Black Mangrove (*Avicennia germinans*)
 - Found in coastal tidal water worldwide, the black mangrove supplies shelter and food for a variety of seashore wildlife.
- (5) Beach Dune Sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*)
 - An integral part to the beach landscape, the Beach Dune Sunflower provides year round color and an attractive food source for butterflies.
- (6) Tarpon (*Megalops atlanticus*)
 - Although a shallow water fish, the Tarpon is capable of reaching tremendous size. The largest recorded in Florida was 232 lbs.
- (7) Railroad Vine (*Ipomoea pes-caprae*)
 - This native vine uses its fast growing capability to hold together the sand dunes. Individual vines can grow to a length of 100'.
- (8) Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia* spp.)
 - You have to look real close to find this rare native species hidden in pockets along Florida's coast.

