

PERDIDO KEY STATE PARK

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Barrier islands protect the Florida mainland from the harsh effects of storms and provide habitat for shorebirds and other coastal animals. Perdido Key is a 247-acre barrier island near Pensacola on the Gulf of Mexico. White sand beaches and rolling dunes covered with sea oats make this park a favorite destination.



Vegetation plays a critical part in dune creation and stabilization. Spiderwort (purple flower; pictured at left) is a drought tolerant native plant that is key to dune formation. In a partnership between the Park Service, community volunteers and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), native dune plant species are propagated and grown in DEP greenhouses then planted on dunes in both state and federal areas. To keep up with the demand for native species production and provide for “hands on” learning at our local

schools, DEP constructed three greenhouse facilities located on school campuses in Escambia (Hallmark Elementary and West Florida Tech) and Santa Rosa Counties (Central High School). In a partnership with Escambia County, the greenhouse at West Florida Tech will specialize in propagation of plants for the creation and restoration of habitat corridors for the endangered Perdido Key Beach Mouse.

Perdido Key Beach Mouse burrows are located in the secondary dunes at the base of a shrub, clump of grass, or other vegetated cover. The burrow itself consists of an entrance tube, a nest cavity, and an escape tube which is closed off but near the surface of the sand. If an intruder, such as a snake or crab, enters a beach mouse burrow, mice make a hasty retreat out the escape tube.



It primarily feeds on the seeds of bluestem, cactus, sand spurs and sea oats, but occasionally will eat insects. The mouse is a nocturnal animal (active at night), spending most of its' daylight hours in a burrow. Unlike many species, beach mice are monogamous, with mated pairs tending to remain together for life. A typical beach mouse pair averages 3-4

offspring per litter and has roughly 3 litters per year. In contrast to its inland relatives, the Perdido Key Beach Mouse steers clear of people, buildings and trash, instead preferring to meander among the dunes near its' burrow.

