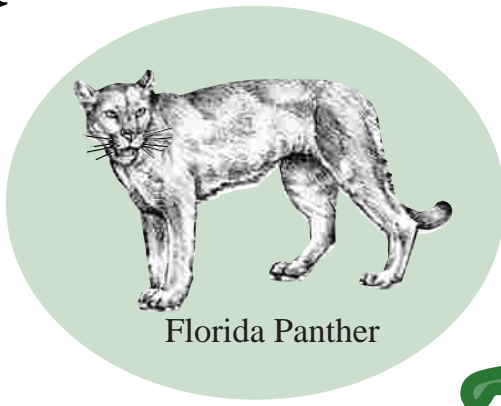


Myakka Island

Historically, Florida's two largest mammals roamed the entire state. Now their existence is threatened by the loss of large wilderness areas. Each Florida panther requires a 70 to 200 square-mile territory. The range of an adult bear varies from 11 to 54 square miles, and it's estimated that at least 750 square miles is necessary to support a bear population that can persist over time.

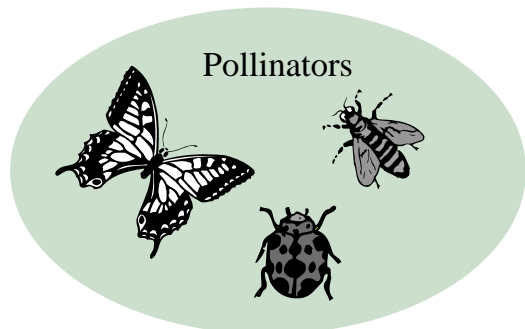
Not even the entire Myakka Watershed, at nearly 600 square miles, is large enough to support a population of bears or panthers. Their survival depends on the success of a system of wildlife corridors linked to other islands of wilderness throughout the state.



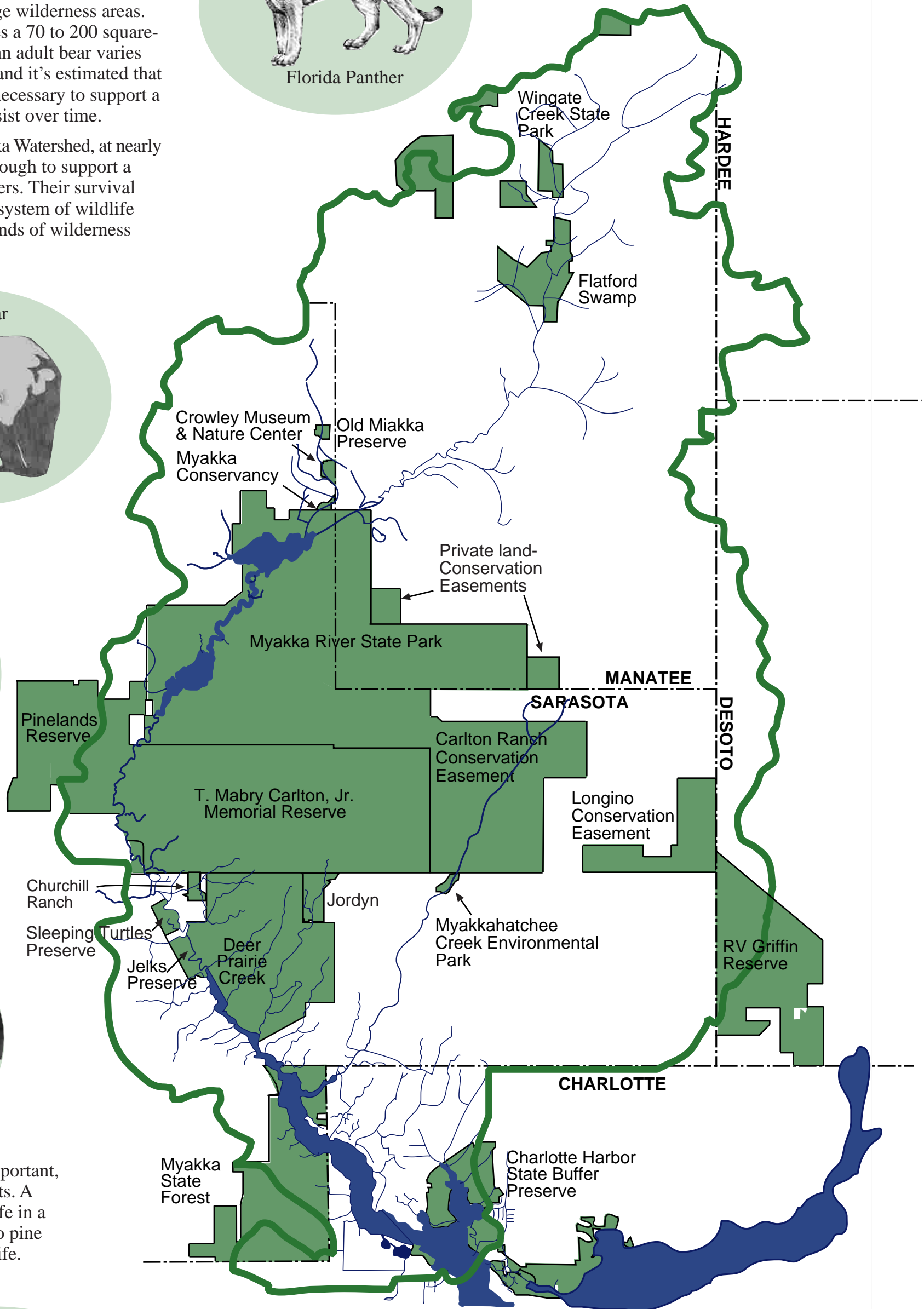
Quality of Habitat Counts: In order to nest this endangered bird requires grassy prairie that has burned within two years.



It's not just size that is important, but also the variety of habitats. A pinewoods treefrog begins life in a seasonal pond, then moves to pine flatwoods for the rest of its life.



Our dependence on the link between plants and their pollinators is a basic fact of life that is little understood. Wilderness islands may soon be the only places in our state where insects are not routinely eliminated.

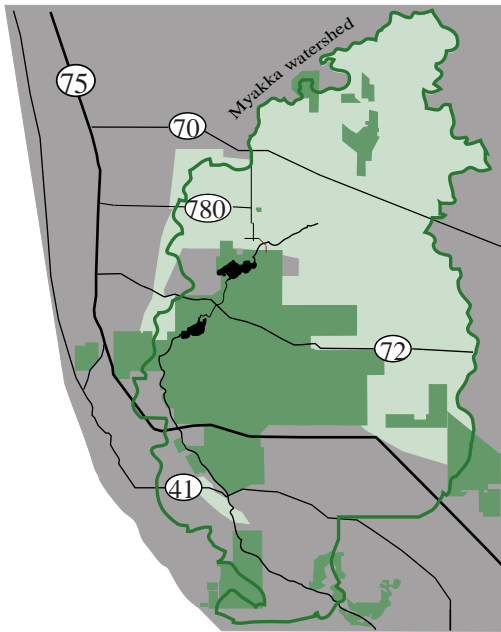


Legend

- Myakka River Watershed
- Conservation Lands

Myakka Island

When you think of an island, do you imagine a sunny, tropical paradise of palm trees waving in the breeze? A green oasis amidst barren surroundings? The Myakka Island is what remains of natural lands in the Myakka River watershed. It is the green wilderness threatened by a sea of progress.



Development Conservation Areas
Agriculture

Islands are unique and complex ecosystems that are extremely vulnerable to outside influences. Entire populations of plants and animals can be wiped out by minor disturbances. Natural areas that become islands face the same threats as real islands.

Fire in the Myakka Island

For thousands of years fires ignited by lightning skipped across pinelands, prairies and wetlands every spring and summer. The plants and animals that live in these habitats have evolved over time to depend on fire for their survival.

Now that people are scattered across the state, we no longer permit natural fires to burn uncontrolled. To continue to maintain healthy communities, land managers imitate natural lightning fires by setting fire to the landscape. This resource management technique is known as prescribed burning. Over 90 percent of the Myakka Island is fire dependent habitat.

Restoring the Myakka Island

Fire alone will not insure natural lands remain healthy. Before the state became so populated, wildlands were maintained by a system of natural processes, checks and balances. Now the effects of human interference must be counteracted.

For instance, areas where fire was excluded for decades have become so shrubby that they cannot be burned safely. Some type of mechanical treatment is necessary to reduce the amount of fuel and to restore the natural grassy landscape.

Ditches, dikes, and roads affect the natural flow of water to the river and the amount of time the uplands and marshlands remain wet. Irrigation of homesites and agricultural lands along the river also changes depth and timing of water levels in the river system, sometimes with disastrous results. Exotic, invasive plants and animals brought into the system by people not only disrupt nature's system of checks and balances but may also completely displace native species.

A Common Goal

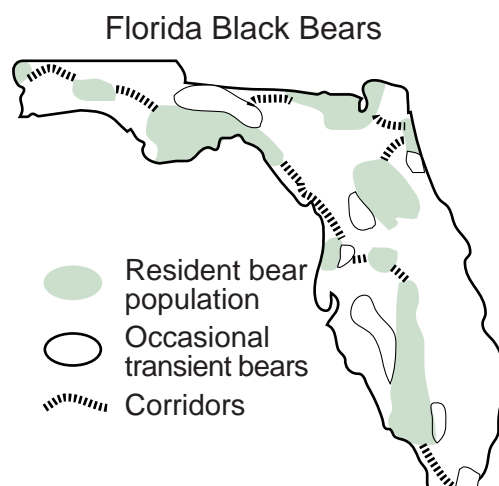
The land that makes up the Myakka Island belongs to many public and private owners. Each must work cooperatively as well as independently to maintain an intact ecosystem. The long-term survival of this wilderness depends upon the diligence, persistence, and pursuit of compatible goals by every land manager. Southwest Florida Water Management District, Florida State Parks, Sarasota County Resource Management, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program and other partners are all working together to restore Myakka Island.

The fate of the Island is also dependent upon the activities and attitudes of its neighbors. A good neighbor understands, supports and tolerates occasional inconveniences like smoke, ash, and heavy equipment. Most people consider it a privilege to live next to natural areas, but they must realize there are also responsibilities.

Wilderness Islands

If a wilderness island must support all its plants and animals, the challenge isn't just having enough land to sustain each individual, but enough area to maintain viable populations of all the species that depend on each other for survival. A viable population is comprised of ample unrelated individuals necessary to perpetuate their kind.

Large predators like panther and black bear require more area than the size of any one island. A system of corridors to connect these islands will increase chances of survival of all our wild things.



Corridors must be established for long range survival of all Florida's wildlife.

Large contiguous lands such as Myakka Island are increasingly rare and vulnerable to Florida's rapid growth. Myakka Island is one of the last remaining large wilderness areas in southwest Florida acquired and managed in perpetuity as a natural ecosystem.

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Sarasota County Natural Resources
<http://www.scgov.net>

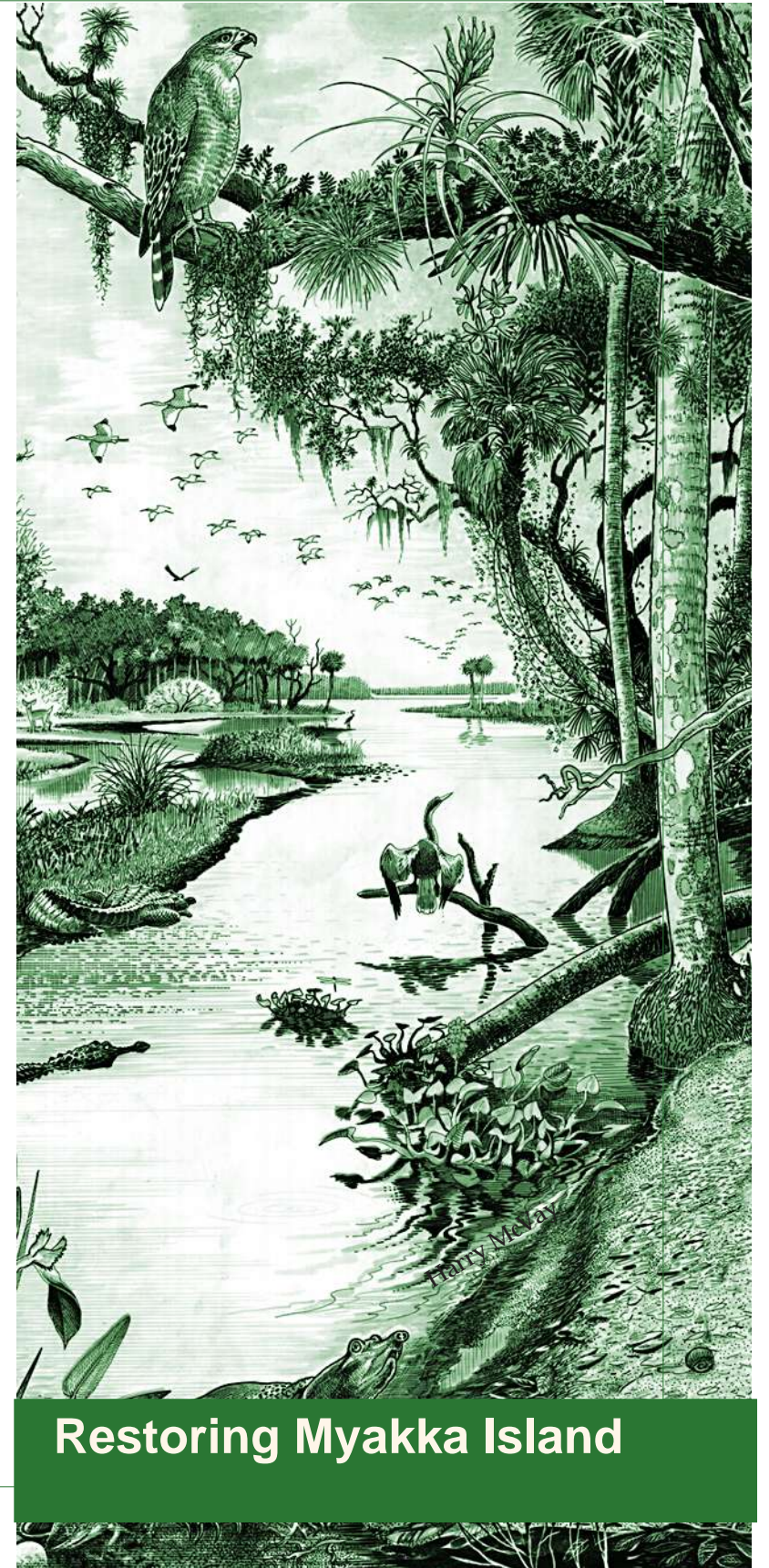


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www.CHNEP.org



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<http://www.MyakkaRiver.org>



Restoring Myakka Island