

VOICES OF THE EARTH

Key Deer Coloring Page Package

Young Friends of the Everglades © 2020 Kristen Farquhar

Gosh. Am I really talking to yoooOOO? I can hardly believe it. It must be magic. My mom and dad told me magic brought me here. Maybe magic brought you to Florida, too! My name is Tonya, and I am a Key deer.

We live in the lower keys of south Florida. (Keys are tiny islands.) There are not many of my kind alive today — we are very *Endangered*. My parents told me a really neat story that will help you understand why we are so different from other deer. But before I tell you, look at a map of North America and find Florida....

Thousands of years ago, when we were all one big family, Central and South America were connected to Florida. Then came the Ice Age that moved and changed the earth's surface with its big chunks of ice called *glaciers*. After a long time, the *glaciers* melted. Some of this melted ice created what is now known as the Gulf of Mexico, and it is what separated Florida from Central and South America!! All the animals and plants separated too. For this reason, many of us still have relatives over there. That means that you can probably find the same Florida plant or animal *species* in Central and South America. But there are some of us that can be found *no other place except Florida!*

That's me! As we grew, we changed. Humans call this *evolution*. We call it *Living*

In Harmony With the Land. Because we grew so differently from our former relatives, Key deer, and many other plants and animals in Florida, are called *subspecies*. We are the tiniest deer in North America. By growing small, we saved on our small supply of fresh water and food, and by the way — both are really hard to find now. It's scary! And we need wild-free spaces to live.

Our home is so crowded. We have to watch out for dogs! and cats! cars! and people! When we are babies, we are so small that dogs and cats and even nice people are a great danger to us! People try to feed and touch us all the time. I guess they don't understand that when they do those things, they take away our free spirit. Without that we won't be the same, and we won't survive as a species.

Gosh, I don't want to talk about that anymore. I feel really good about you, and so do my flower relatives. I'll bet it's because you understand and care for ALL OF CREATION! We'll be one big family again — The Rainbow Family! Let's call today the beginning of a brand new age. Let's call it — The New Age of Awareness! and it begins with YOU! Hooray for YOU! Bye! Bye!