

## S15LK Day Paddles - Lower Keys

## Munson Island Paddle Information Sheet

**Description:** There is so much to explore in this area – try to plan for a full day paddle! The Newfound Harbor Keys are mostly uninhabited but include a Boy Scout camp on Cook Island and a fancy resort called Little Palm Island on the west end of Munson Island. You are allowed to patronize the restaurant even if you aren't staying in one of the pricey cabanas! There are coral heads about a half mile offshore of Cook & Munson Islands and on the backside of Big Munson, there is a lagoon to explore. Also, due north of Big Munson across the Newfound Harbor Channel is a small group of islands, the smallest of which is a local hangout called Picnic Key that is fun to visit. North of the launch site is Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve, a shallow estuary that is home to many creatures such as sharks, stingrays and horseshoe crabs.

**Skill Level:** Intermediate

**Distance/Approximate Time:** 6.6 Miles/3.5 Hours

**Launch Site:** Big Pine Key - Long Beach Drive Paddle Launch

**Special Considerations:** If you plan on snorkeling at the coral heads, the area right off Big Munson's south shore is the Newfound Harbor Sanctuary Protected Area that has mooring balls to tie up to. You should know how to re-enter your kayak from the water before attempting to snorkel. Always use a dive flag and it is a good idea to have one person in your group stay in their kayak as a safety lookout. Be careful if using an anchor of not damaging the coral heads.

### Skill Level Definitions

**Beginner:** New to paddling and may need tips and or instructions about paddling strokes, safety procedures, and entering/exiting kayaks. Comfortable on short trips of 1 to 3 miles on protected waters, when wind does not exceed 5 mph.

**Novice:** Paddlers acquainted with basic paddle strokes and can manage kayak handling independently in winds not exceeding 10 mph on protected waters. Comfortable on trips up to 6 miles.

**Intermediate:** Paddlers with experience in basic strokes and some experience on different venues, including some open water. Comfortable on trip distances of 6 to 10 miles, winds not exceeding 15 mph.

**Advanced:** Seasoned paddlers who possess skills and experience to paddle all venues and conditions. Experienced in self-rescues. Should be comfortable paddling more than 10 miles in a day.

**NOTE:** Great care has been taken to ensure this guides accuracy, but weather, tides, and water conditions can change rapidly and create hazardous conditions. These maps are for visual reference only, please consult NOAA Charts for navigation. Paddlers should have all proper safety equipment and check conditions before departure. All paddlers should always wear PFDs while on the water, and leave a float plan. There are inherent dangers in any paddle sport. There are special hazards along the Florida coast due to shifting tides, changing wind and weather, shallow waters, and treacherous bottoms with soft mud, rocks, and oyster bars. It is up to each paddler to be aware of these dangers, to accept and be prepared for the risks involved, and to be certain they have the skills to safely paddle in these conditions.