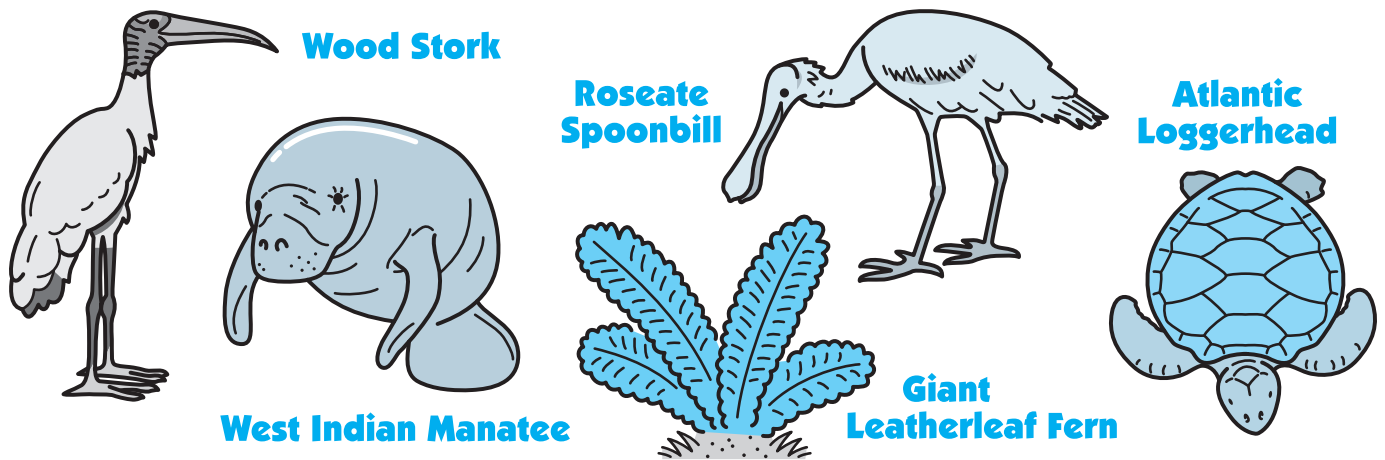


These are a few of the plants and animals in Florida that are listed as endangered or threatened. This means there are not many of them left. They are threatened by extinction. **Extinction** is when an entire type of animal or plant no longer exists — it has been lost forever.



Florida has more endangered and threatened animals and plants than any other state. In the Indian River Lagoon, 36 species are rare and endangered. The main reason is loss of habitat.

The natural habitat of many animals and plants is rapidly disappearing in Florida. Much of the loss happens when land is cleared for industry and houses.

Two important habitats in the Indian River Lagoon are declining. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection estimates that the lagoon has lost approximately 80 percent of its mangroves and 30 percent of its seagrass beds.

By learning more about the lagoon's habitats, how they are important and what affects them, we will be better equipped to protect them.

WHAT IF?

Directions: What would happen to manatees if different parts of their habitat were affected? Write down your ideas and then discuss them as a class.

What if people were always trying to approach manatees? (shelter)

What if the seagrass died because the water was cloudy? (food)

What if the water became polluted with **pesticides**, **herbicides** or other chemicals? (water)

What if there was no quiet place for manatees to rest or feed? (space)