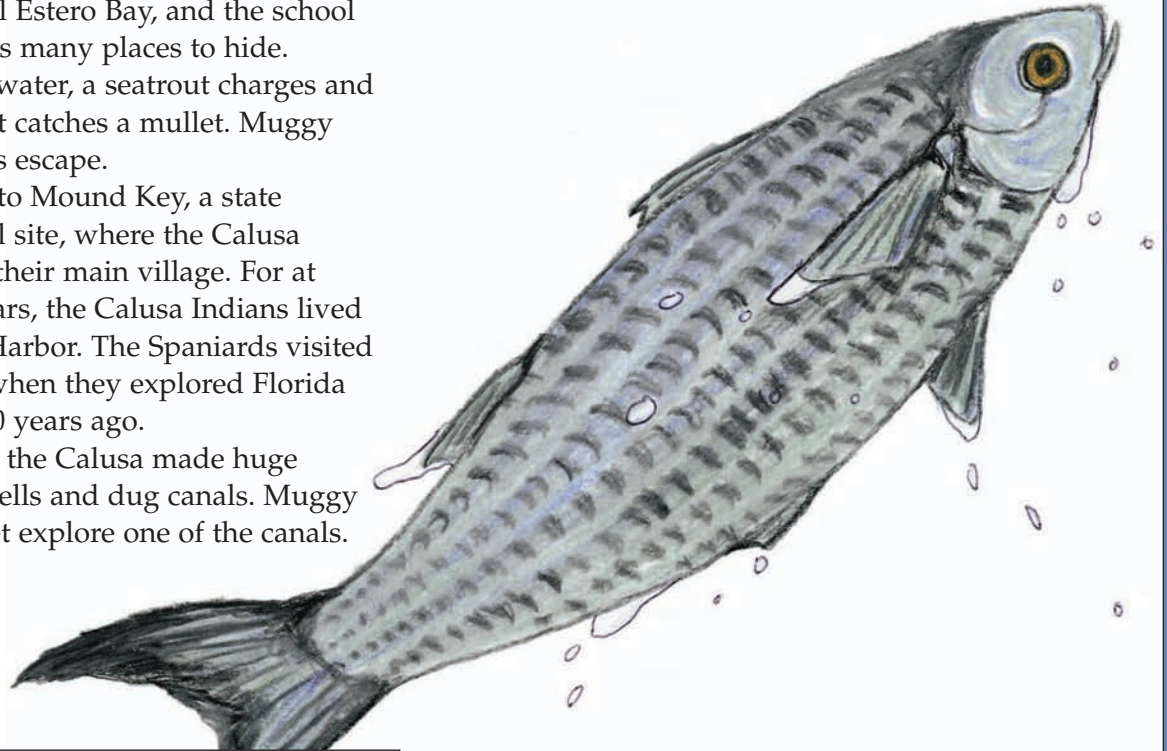


## Section 8: Mound Key Archaeological State Park

Large seagrass meadows and many mangroves fill Estero Bay, and the school of mullet finds many places to hide. From deeper water, a seatrout charges and chases, until it catches a mullet. Muggy and the others escape.

They swim to Mound Key, a state archaeological site, where the Calusa Indians built their main village. For at least 2,000 years, the Calusa Indians lived in Charlotte Harbor. The Spaniards visited Mound Key when they explored Florida more than 500 years ago.

On this key, the Calusa made huge mounds of shells and dug canals. Muggy and the mullet explore one of the canals.



### INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY

by Lisa Figueroa, Taylor Ranch School, Sarasota

Florida has lost about 60,000 acres, or 8 percent, of its estuaries to dredge-and-fill activities. Like digging in the sand, dredging displaces large amounts of sand to create channels for boats. Dredged in the 1960s, the Intracoastal Waterway is a channel 9 to 12 feet deep that allows boats to travel fast without going into the open water of the Gulf of Mexico. If you don't spend a lot of time boating, you may not realize that boats can hurt manatee. Manatee cannot hear low-frequency noises, such as boat motors, and they cannot move quickly out of a boat's path. Many die from propeller injuries, while others survive with huge gashes on their bodies. Pollution from boating and trash from careless people can also hurt plants and animals in the estuary.

Mangroves grow in it. Fiddler crabs crawl along the roots, and spiders spin webs through the branches. Muggy can hear a prairie warbler trilling its notes. Then a snook charges up the canal. The school of mullet scatter. Some wiggle between the mangrove roots. Muggy and the other mullet turn back to the bay. They race through the canal, and the snook chases them.

Muggy and two other mullet zip into the bay. A bald eagle swoops toward them and snatches one mullet in its talons. The snook grabs the other. The third is Muggy. He searches through the seagrass for the rest of the school, but he can't find them. After a while, he jumps into the air. He does not jump like a dolphin, which dives head first and curves its body. Muggy holds his body stiff. Instead of his nose, his belly hits the water first, and he looks like someone making a belly flop.

Mullet in the mangroves and in the seagrass hear Muggy jump. They glide toward the sound. Now Muggy is in a school of fish again.