

Help us Conserve and Protect Wood Storks

Wood storks are tall wading birds that stand about 3 to 4 feet tall, with a wingspan of about 5 feet. They have a black to gray, rough, and bald head with a thick, straight bill that hooks slightly at the end. Their bodies are white, except for black flight feathers on the back of their wings and tail. Wood storks have long, gray legs with orange feet that trail behind the body in flight.

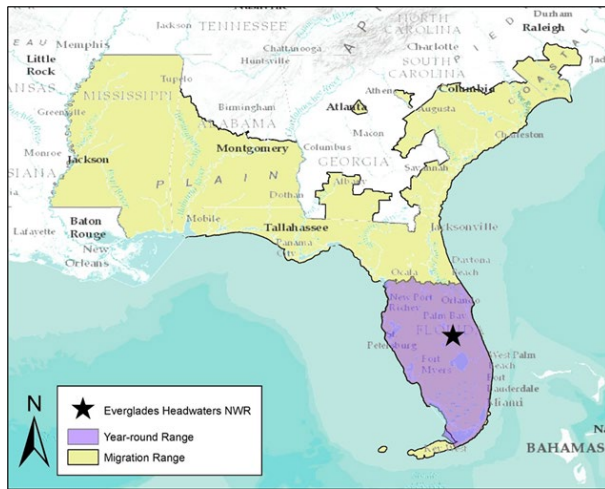


Wood stork, *Mycteria americana* (Photo by Susan Young)

Habitat and Behavior

Wood storks are found in central and south Florida year-round. Their migration range extends throughout Florida and Mississippi, as well as parts of Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina.

Wood storks roost and nest in groups in forested wetlands and swampy areas. They nest in trees that are standing in or surrounded by still water such as cypress stands, mangrove swamps, and other forested wetlands, preferably with an open tree canopy.



Wood Stork Range Map (USFWS)

Wood storks prefer to feed in areas with standing water up to about 1 foot deep in these habitats, but these opportunistic feeders can be seen feeding in drainage ditches in pastures and prairie habitats of Central Florida as well. Wood storks may occasionally forage in the refuge's ephemeral wetlands. They need fluctuating water levels to concentrate fish populations, especially during nesting season. They use their long bill to feel for fish in the shallow water, snap it shut when they find one, and swallow the fish whole.

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Conservation and Protection

Wood storks are federally listed as a threatened species and are protected throughout their range. The main threat to the wood stork is the loss of foraging and breeding habitat due to disruptions in natural water flow in their preferred habitats.



Wood Stork In Flight (Photo by David Brady USFWS)

Limiting disturbance to wood storks is crucial for their recovery.

You can help us protect wood storks by following the specific rules of the Refuge Wildlife Management Area or Unit you are visiting. See the links below for unit-specific rules and regulations.

Ways you can help wood storks include:

- properly dispose of fishing line
- do not feed wood storks
- follow speed limits on refuge roads
- stay on designated trails unless otherwise permitted
- follow the refuge unit's specific regulations for pets
- observe the refuge unit's established hours of operations

If you see a banded wood stork or nesting colony, please report it to Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) at storks@myfwc.com. To report violations or injured wildlife, please call the FWC Wildlife Alert Hotline at (888) 404-3922.

For More Information

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Saving the Wood Stork:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/dc59e167fad74ad8bb10cfcf456909ea>

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Wood Stork Species Profile:

<https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/profiles/birds/waterbirds/wood-stork/>

Links to Units of Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and State of Florida Wildlife Management Areas for unit-specific visitor rules and regulations:

Arbuckle Unit:

<https://ocean.floridamarine.org/HGMSearch/BrochureDetails.aspx?srctype=pfs&title=arbuckle>

Hatchineha Unit:

<https://ocean.floridamarine.org/HGMSearch/BrochureDetails.aspx?sb=Specific%20Area&srctype=pfs&title=Hatchineha%20Unit%20of%20the%20Everglades%20Headwaters>

Kissimmee Bend Unit:

<https://ocean.floridamarine.org/HGMSearch/BrochureDetails.aspx?sb=Specific%20Area&srctype=pfs&title=Kissimmee%20Bend%20Unit%20of%20the%20Everglades%20Headwaters>