

USACE Natural Resource Management

Non-migratory Birds



Audubon's Crested Caracara

FAST FACTS

REASONS FOR CURRENT STATUS: The Audubon's Crested Caracara was listed as a federally threatened species in 1987. The caracara is a resident, non-migratory species that occurs in Florida as well as the southwestern United States and Central America. Factors contributing to listing included perceived population decline, the geographic isolation of the Florida population, the destruction and modification of dry prairie habitat for agriculture and residential development. According to the USFWS the species was also listed because existing regulatory mechanisms did not adequately prevent the destruction or modification of the caracaras habitat, which is mainly located on private land. Critical habitat for this species has not been designated.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION: Technically a falcon, the caracara resembles a hawk with its sharp beak and talons and behaves like a member of the vulture family. Studies by the USFWS and others note that the Audubon's Crested Caracaras appear to benefit from prescribed burning, plowing, and mowing. Activities such as these may aid in the observation and capture of prey as vegetative cover is reduced.

HABITAT NEEDS:

- The caracara prefers habitats that contain short-stature vegetation with a low density of trees that can be used for nesting. Historically, caracaras inhabited native dry or wet prairies containing scattered cabbage palms, their preferred nesting tree.
- Encroachment of woody shrubs and trees into open dry prairies, pastures and similar habitats have resulted in reduction in habitat suitability.
- Regular mowing, burning, and high density grazing may aid in maintaining low vegetative structure, which is a habitat characteristic of the caracaras.

Height: About the size of an osprey, the Audubon's Crested Caracara is a large raptor species that can reach a body length of 19-25 inches. (*Florida Fish and Wildlife*)

Color: The caracara has a dark brown-black belly, wings, back, and crown; and a white lower belly, head, and throat. The caracara also has a bluish-gray to light bluish dark yellow to white bill, red cere (facial skin) and a white tail with dark crossbars. (*Florida Fish and Wildlife*)

Information and photos from All About Birds, USFWS, Audubon Society

Natural Resource Management (NRM)

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USACE ROLE: Increased habitat protection is an important conservation strategy for the caracara. Cooperative efforts between land management agencies and private landowners is a necessary strategy as the USFWS notes that over 80% of the active caracara nests in south-central Florida are on privately owned cattle ranches.

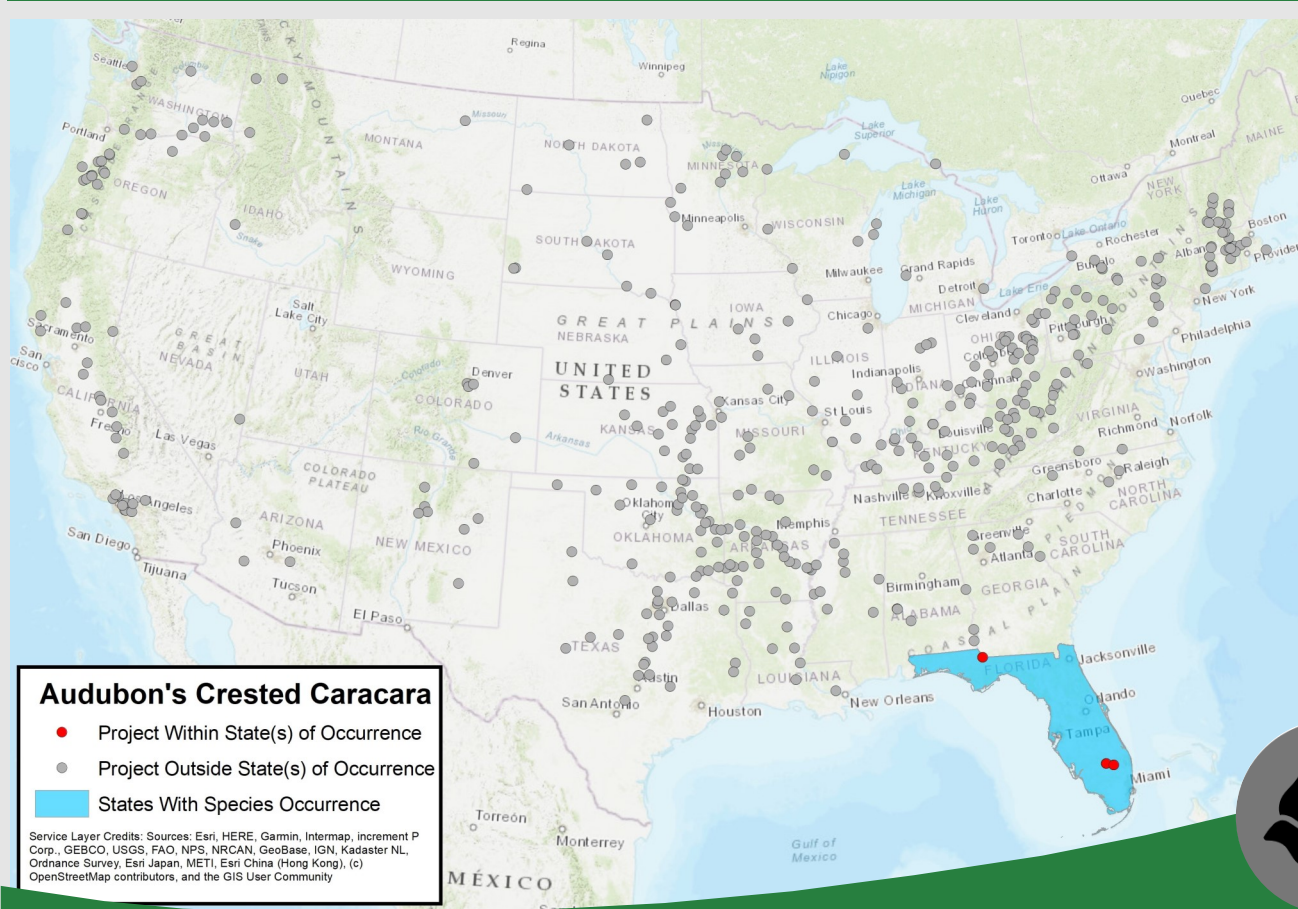
According to the Engineering and Research Development Center's Threatened & Endangered Species Team (ERDC TEST), the USACE has spent \$10,314,333 on efforts related to the Audubon's Crested Caracaras since 2005. Efforts have spanned across USACE business lines including Environmental Stewardship, Environmental Restoration, Planning and Program Management, and Regulatory.



Map: Provided by Birds of the World, this map depicts the year-round range of the Audubon's Crested Caracaras.

WHAT IS USACE DOING:

1 South Atlantic Division's Central and Southern Florida Project have reported occasional inventoried occurrence of the Audubon's Crested Caracara. Funding through USACE's Environmental Stewardship Program has been used to conduct both contracted and in-house inventory, survey, and monitoring work.



Audubon's Crested Caracara

- Project Within State(s) of Occurrence
- Project Outside State(s) of Occurrence
- States With Species Occurrence

Service Layer Credits: Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Source: Map provided by Ashleigh Boss, ORISE fellow, Institute for Water Resources

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