

USACE Natural Resource Management

Non-migratory Birds



Wood Stork

FAST FACTS

REASONS FOR CURRENT STATUS: The Wood Stork is the only breeding stork in the United States. In 2014, the USFWS reclassified the breeding population of the Wood Stork from endangered (originally listed in 1984) to threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Additionally, the U.S. breeding population in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Mississippi, and South Carolina was established as a distinct population segment (DPS). Habitat loss and fragmentation continues to impact the species. Less significant factors known to affect nesting success include prolonged drought and flooding, raccoon predation on nests, and human disturbance of rookeries.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION: Wood Storks' primary diet consists of small fish from one to six inches long. This species captures their prey by a specialized technique known as grope-feeding or tacto-location. The stork feeds in water depths of six to ten inches, with their bill partly open. When a fish touches the bill it quickly snaps shut with an average response time of 25 milliseconds. (USFWS)

Water level management may be crucial at rookeries throughout the southeast United States. Flooding may be necessary to stimulate nesting and prevent predators from destroying nests. Periodic drying may be necessary to prevent trees from dying and to allow recruitment of new trees. (USFWS)

HABITAT NEEDS: Wood Storks are birds of freshwater and estuarine wetlands, primarily nesting in cypress or mangrove swamps. (USFWS)

- Wood Storks use thermals to soar as far as 80 miles from nesting to feeding areas. Feeding areas include freshwater marshes, narrow tidal creeks, or flooded tidal pools.
- Depressions in marshes or swamps where fish become concentrated during lower water levels are particularly attractive.

Height: Wood storks are large, long-legged wading birds, about 45 inches tall, with a wing-span of 60 to 65 inches. (USFWS)

Color: Plumage is white except for black primaries and secondary and a short black tail. The head and neck are largely unfeathered and dark gray in color. (USFWS)

Migration: Primarily non-migratory and considered a resident species; however, the Wood stork has a regular northward movement after

Photo Credit: All About Birds & USFWS.

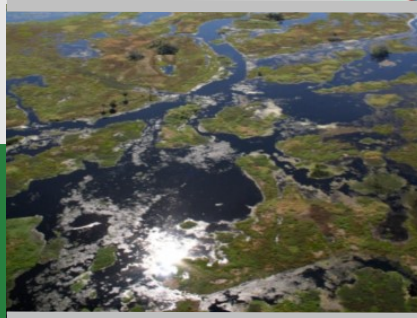
Natural Resource Management (NRM)

This fact sheet has been prepared as an unofficial publication of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). This online publication is produced to provide its readers information about best management practices related to special status species. Editorial views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Mention of specific vendors does not constitute endorsement by the Department of the Army or any element thereof.



August 2020

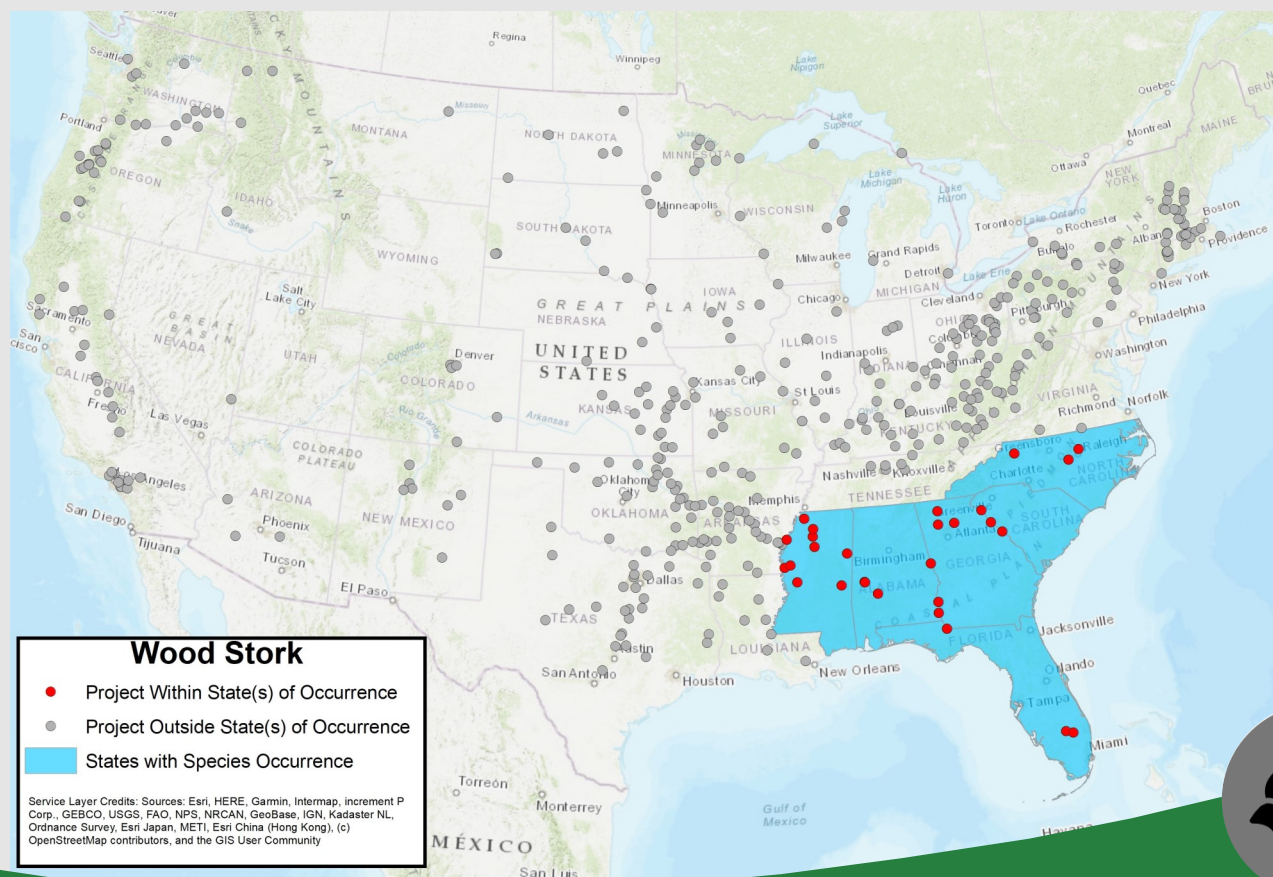
USACE ROLE: The 1992 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) authorized the Kissimmee River and the Kissimmee River Headwaters Revitalization Project. In 1994, a Project Cooperative Agreement between USACE and the local sponsor, the SFWMD, combined the two authorized projects into one project, the Kissimmee River, Florida Project. The purpose of the project is to provide the flows necessary to restore the Kissimmee River ecosystem. Through this project there is the potential to increase the spatial extent and quality of foraging habitat available to wood storks by returning the natural functions to the Kissimmee River basin.



Map & Photo Above: Kissimmee River Basin. Work on the Kissimmee River Headwaters Revitalization Project is still incomplete; however, responses by many ecosystem components are on trajectory to target values.

WHAT IS USACE DOING:

USACE's Jacksonville District and the Engineer Research Development Center (ERDC) support and fund research regarding wood stork reproduction in the Everglades in response to hydrologic changes associated with the current water control plan (e.g. Everglades Restoration Transition Plan) that guides operations in the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project. Approximately \$259,700 was made available in 2020 to support continuing research. USACE participates in study site selections, design, and work plan development along with participating in field data collection efforts. In the future, USACE will incorporate the data and analysis into a system-wide database that assesses and evaluates ecosystem restoration efforts in central and southern Florida. Scientific and technical information generated from the project will be utilized to evaluate project/restoration performance.



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

Non-migratory

