

WILDLIFE ALERT NEWSLETTER 2017

Issue 7 | 2nd Quarter

WOOD STORK

The wood stork is a large, long-legged wading bird that is a member of the stork family (*Ciconiidae*). It is distantly related to herons, egrets, and ibises (Order: *Ciconiiformes*). However, recent genetic studies suggest storks are more closely related to the new world vultures (Family: *Carthartidae*). The wood stork is our only native stork that occurs in the United States and is listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

Wood storks can grow to almost 4 feet in length with a wing span of over 5 feet! The plumage is white except for iridescent or glimmering black feathers along the entire wing and tail. The head and upper neck of adult storks do not have feathers, but are covered with a rough, scaly skin that is gray-colored. The legs and bill are a black tone but the toes have a pink hue. Unlike herons, storks fly and soar with the neck and legs extended.

Wood storks in north Florida begin courtship and nesting in April. They are very social in nesting habits and are often seen nesting in large colonies of 100-500 nests. The males gather twigs for constructing nests primarily built in trees that stand in water. The females lay a single clutch of two to five eggs per season, with the young fledging in about two months.



FAST FACTS:

Type: Bird

Group Name: Colony or flock

Diet: Carnivore

Average life span in the wild: 11 to 18 years

Size: Body – 33 to 45 inches, wingspan – 4.9 to 5.8 feet

Weight: 4.5 to 5.8 pounds



Above from right to left: Mating Pair of Wood Storks; FAST FACTS about Wood Storks; Wood stork looking over its chicks.

Frequently Asked Questions and Facts

Q: Why are wood storks listed and endangered by the USFWS and FWC?

A: Precipitous declines in stork range and populations occurred during the first half of the 1900s because of the stork's specialized foraging attribute and the loss of wetlands used for foraging.

**FACT:**

Wood storks feed mostly on fish in shallow water. Storks have a very specialized tactile foraging behavior whereby they move their partially-opened bill through the water in a side-to-side motion, often using their feet to rake or scare up aquatic prey. Once the bill detects a fish, the bill is snapped shut in as little as 25 milliseconds.

FACT: It is illegal to harass, feed, or take these magnificent birds. If you know of anyone breaking the law, please contact us at (888) 404-3922 or text Tip@MyFWC.com.

2017 1ST QUARTER (JANUARY, FEBRUARY, & MARCH) STATS

The Wildlife Alert hotline received **450** violation report calls, emails, and texts. We paid out **\$3,950** in rewards for the tips that ended in arrest. Keep those tips coming!

Thank you to the citizens who are helping conserve Florida's wildlife and natural resources!

CASES MADE THIS QUARTER:

The following are just a few of the violation tips received by the FWC regions last quarter. There are so many different types of violations in Florida because the variety of communities that comprise our ecosystem.

NE Region: WMA regulation violation; illegal possession of tarpon and snook; illegal stone crab harvest; and over the bag limit of snook.

NC Region: Two incidents of taking game by illegal method; stopnetting, expired fishing license, littering; two violations of the migratory bird act; over the limit of red drum; and taking turkey within 100 yards of a feeding station.

NW Region: Taking snapper in the closed season; illegal possession of gopher tortoise; and illegal possession of American alligator

S Region: Illegal attempt to molest gopher tortoise and its burrow; undersized sheepshead

SW Region: No saltwater retail license; illegal harvest of gag grouper out of season; major violation pertaining to the harvest of sea trout; and illegal excavation of an archaeological site.

BREAKING UPDATE!!!

The Wildlife Alert board members recently had a meeting and raised the reward amounts, doubling most of them.

Level 1 = \$100

Level 2 = \$300

Level 3 = \$500

Level 4 = \$600

WILDLIFE VIEWING FOR THE SPRING

April: Indigo buntings, Mississippi kites, eastern kingbirds, grosbeaks, warblers, tanagers, orioles and thrushes begin returning to North America; bobwhite quail and wild turkey hens begin nesting; long-tailed weasels, minks, and river otters will be born April through May; watch for hummingbirds; pitcher plants bloom; bobcat kittens are born; manatees are moving back out to coastal waterways; American alligators begin moving about seeking new territories and mates.



May: Bald eagles begin migrating north; Red-cockaded woodpeckers are breeding; courtship of American alligators begins; peak flight for Schaus' swallowtail butterfly in the Keys; least terns nest on the beach; green sea turtles begin nesting; peak of coyote denning season; bats give birth; American lotus bloom; and alligator snapping turtles nest.



June: The height of the gopher tortoise nesting season; southern flying squirrels are nesting; peak month for wildfires; cicadas emerge; tarflowers boom; sea turtles continue to nest on the beaches; eighteen-month old black bears are separating from their mothers; black sea urchins spawn; and Indigo snakes lay their eggs.



Remember it only takes a short phone call or a quick text message to make a big difference!

- Wildlife Alert



Contact Us

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Cellular:*FWC or #FWC

