



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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**SFWMD Reports Improved 2013 Wading Bird Breeding Season**  
*Wading birds are an important "indicator species" of overall environmental health*



(Click [here](#) to view the 2013 South Florida Wading Bird report.)

**West Palm Beach, FL** — Federally endangered wood storks, white ibis and great egrets led a moderate improvement in overall wading bird nesting efforts in 2013, according to the 2013 South Florida Wading Bird Report released by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD).

“Along with being icons of Florida’s Everglades, wading birds represent key indicators of ecosystem health,” said SFWMD Executive Director Blake Guillory. “The construction projects we have underway will help achieve restoration targets that focus on cleaning water and improving wildlife habitat.”

An estimated 48,291 wading bird nests were documented throughout South Florida in 2013. This represents 57 percent above the average for the past three years and is similar to the average of the past eight years. Highlights of the report include:

- Wood stork nests increased by 97 percent over the three-year average.
- White ibis nests increased by 90 percent over the three-year average.

- Notable: Great egret nests increased by 46 percent over the three-year average.

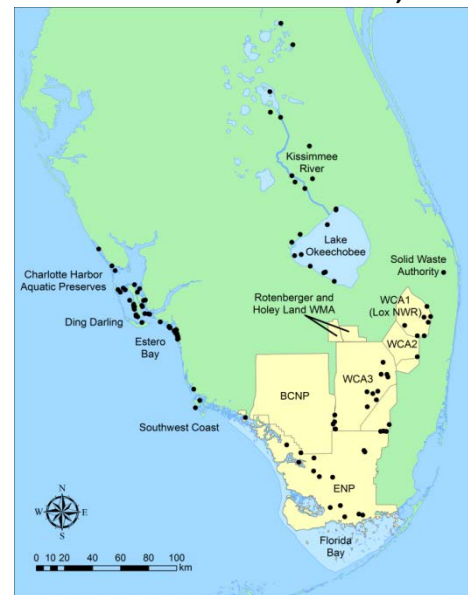
Scientists attributed the increase in nesting for these species to multiple years with above-average rainfall, which promoted the production of prey for the birds. Further, rapid drying leading into March 2013 helped concentrate prey for feeding.

Nesting numbers also increased in the Water Conservation Areas and the mainland area of Everglades National Park. An estimated 35,580 nests were documented in these areas, representing 74 percent of all nests in South Florida. This is a moderate improvement over the 24,191 nests in 2012 but similar to the 10-year average of 34,732 nests.

Other findings in the report include:

- Everglades National Park has become more attractive to nesting wading birds in recent years.
- The Lake Okeechobee marsh had the fourth highest nesting numbers in 33 years.
- Snowy egrets and tricolored and blue herons experienced steep declines in 2013.
- For six of the past seven years, wood storks failed to breed in the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary.

**Locations of wading bird colonies with ≥50 nests in South Florida, 2013**



**(Click on the map for larger version.)**

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### **About the South Florida Water Management District**

*The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.*