



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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Raptor Recovering After Rescue in Everglades Water-Cleaning Wetland
Injured osprey was discovered during routine maintenance; taken to a wildlife facility



(VIDEO: [Raptor Rescue](#); Click on picture for larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL — Perched on a levee with an injured wing and alligators watching it from a canal below, the osprey could fly no more than two feet at a time.

South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) wildlife coordinator Brian Garrett had to act quickly to capture the injured raptor before the avian predator became reptile prey Thursday morning in western Palm Beach County.

With a well-timed grab at the edge of the canal, Garrett secured the adult bird. The large raptor, which appeared to be otherwise healthy, was transported from

Stormwater Treatment Area 2 to the Busch Wildlife Sanctuary in Jupiter. The bird was being treated there Friday for a broken left wing.

“It’s a good day when you can go out and rescue one,” said Garrett. As a biologist for 17 years at the District, Garrett’s wildlife surveys and knowledge assist water and land managers in protecting and restoring wildlife species such the endangered Everglade snail kite, gopher tortoises and manatees.

The injured osprey will be rehabilitated, although it is too early to tell whether it will fly again, according to the sanctuary’s Executive Director David Hitzig. It was also unknown what caused the wing fracture, but it could have been anything from a collision with a tree to a hard water landing, he said.

“It’s got a lot of spunk,” Hitzig said. “Hopefully, the bird can be released back into the wild when it’s healed.”

Sanctuary officials said the type of fracture the osprey suffered typically takes six to eight weeks to heal. The bird, whose gender has not yet been determined, would then be transferred to a flight enclosure to evaluate its potential to be released back into the wild.

Raptor rescues are uncommon by District staff on SFWMD-managed lands.

“It’s the first time I’ve ever had to rescue a raptor in the field,” Garrett said.

While the rescue was rare, ospreys are the most common raptors on District public lands because the species are piscivores, meaning they almost exclusively hunt and consume fish. Thus, the birds require nearby bodies of water that contain plenty of fish on which to forage.

The District manages nearly 1.5 million acres of public land, including 57,000 acres of Stormwater Treatment Areas. The primary job of these wetlands is to improve Everglades water quality, but they have also become a haven for wildlife, especially birds, because of their prime habitat and availability of food.

Populations of ospreys in North America have experienced a dramatic comeback since the use of the pesticide DDT was banned in the United States during 1972. There were fewer than 8,000 breeding pairs of ospreys in 1981. By 1994 the number of osprey had risen to 14,246 pairs.

For more information:

- [Busch Wildlife Sanctuary](#)

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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.