



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

# NEWS RELEASE

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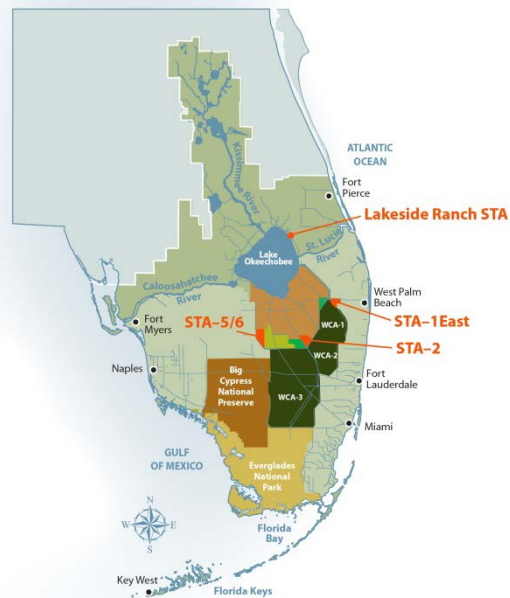
South Florida Water Management District

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## **SFWMD, Audubon Bird-Watching Tours Spread Wings Wider** *Hundreds of species are routinely documented in Everglades restoration wetlands*



*Local photographers snapped shots of dozens of birds at bird-watching and Christmas Bird Count trips to Stormwater Treatment Areas 1 East and 5/6, including a roseate spoonbill, a palm warbler and American flamingos. Credits: Ken Corregan, SFWMD and Richard Hodgkins. (Click on the pictures and map for larger versions.)*

**West Palm Beach, FL** — There was an iconic bald eagle, black skimmers, avocets and even a flock of American flamingos.

Soaked with rain, 33 outdoor enthusiasts spotted more than 50 species of birds during the recent inaugural South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)/ Audubon Society of the Everglades bird-watching tour at water-cleaning wetlands known as Stormwater Treatment Area 2 (STA-2). The expanse in southern Palm Beach County is one of the SFWMD's workhorses of restoration by cleaning water bound for the Everglades.

With a rare visit by the flamingo flock as an anticipated attraction, the next STA-2 tour is scheduled for March 22.

- Tour reservations can be made at the Audubon Society of the Everglades website, <http://www.auduboneverglades.org>, or by contacting the group at [asetripinfo@gmail.com](mailto:asetripinfo@gmail.com).

Earlier this month, STA-2 became the newest addition to the highly popular partnership between the SFWMD and local National Audubon Society chapters to offer bird-watching tours on public land in South Florida.

### **STA-5/6 in Hendry County**

A popular partnership with the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society that began in 2005 became the model for SFWMD bird-watching tours.

More than 8,000 bird watchers and photographers from across the globe have traveled to STA-5/6 in Hendry County for more than 200 tours to date.

The group has documented 203 confirmed bird species – the sandwich tern and chipping sparrow were 202 and 203, respectively.

The more than 6,000-acre constructed wetland, just south of Clewiston, is one of 489 sites on The Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail. Sponsored by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), the sites are selected for their prolific bird watching, bird education and wildlife-viewing opportunities.

### **STA- 1 East in Palm Beach County**

Since first taking flight in January 2012, about 600 people have taken part in 20 tours at STA-1 East, with 22 more during the current 2014-2015 season. Hosted by the Audubon Society of the Everglades, in partnership with the District, participants have identified more than 100 species of birds so far at the site just west of Wellington.

With cameras and long-range viewing scopes, bird watchers typically caravan across 9 miles of the internal levees that separate the water-cleaning cells of the wetland. Frequent stops at choice locations offer excellent views of wildlife in the expanse of water and the STA's specialized plants that take up phosphorus before it enters the Everglades.

#### **Recreation at STA-1 East**

*The treatment wetland offers a public access point for hiking, bicycling, bird watching and nature photography.*

*Also featured are an information kiosk, directional signs, paved parking and a composting toilet.*

*The recreation area is open from sunrise to sunset on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays.*

## **Lakeside Ranch STA**

Tours of the 2,600-acre Lakeside Ranch Stormwater Treatment Area took flight in 2013 with a partnership with Audubon of Martin County. About 200 people attended the first year of tours, and more than a dozen tours were held in 2014.

This treatment wetland uses aquatic vegetation to remove nutrients from stormwater runoff in the Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough basins before it reaches Lake Okeechobee.

## **Recreation**

Throughout South Florida, the District provides recreational access to its public lands while continuing to manage them to support environmental restoration, water supply, water quality and flood control missions.

At present, the District owns approximately 621,000 acres of land that are open to the public. Many of these properties are in their natural state or have enhancements such as picnic tables, informational kiosks, primitive campsites and hiking trails.

For more information on recreational opportunities throughout the District's 16-county region, visit [www.sfwmd.gov/recreation](http://www.sfwmd.gov/recreation).

## **More Information:**

- [STA-1 East Bird-Watching Tours](#)
- [STA-2 Bird-Watching Tours](#)
- [STA-5/6 Bird-Watching Tours](#)
- [Lakeside Ranch Bird-Watching Tours](#)

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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.*