

## Wood Stork



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wood\\_Stork\\_2.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wood_Stork_2.jpg)

The wood stork is one of North America's biggest birds, and along with its bald head, can be recognized by its thick curved bill and white feathers trimmed in black. Scientists think that there may have been 150,000 wood storks before people began to build large towns and cities near the huge wetlands of the southern United States. Wood storks used to live in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama but now most of them live in south and central Florida, in refuges, parks, and sanctuaries.

During William Bartram's time in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many beautiful Florida birds were killed for their feathers, which were very popular for decorating women's hats. The wood stork, however, doesn't have these beautiful breeding feathers, so it survived this huge hunt. But when people started moving into southern Florida, draining the wetlands where wood storks did their fishing and cutting down the cypress trees that they needed for nesting, wood storks

began to disappear. Without enough to eat, and without places to nest, wood storks could not raise their young. The wood stork breeding population declined from about 20,000 pairs in the 1930's to approximately 5,000 pairs in the late 1970s.

However, wood storks seem to be making a comeback. They have been protected as an Endangered Species since 1984, which means that they cannot be hunted, and that some of their habitat is protected. Also, restoration of the Everglades is allowing the fish that the wood stork needs for food and the cypress trees it needs for nesting to return. In 2009, the Everglades population of mating pairs was up to 12,000 – which means that there were about 24,000 wood storks getting ready to lay eggs and raise more wood storks!

### Questions

1. What have you learned about the wood stork?
2. Do you think the wood stork needs to be "rescued"? Why or why not?
3. How would you represent what you have learned about the wood stork in an art work?