

WOOD STORKS

SOME
OF
THE NEWS
FROM
HARBOR
ISLAND
NATURALLY

BY
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AUGUST
2009



ONCE THREATENED, THEY ARE ON THE WAY BACK

THE ONLY STORK NATIVE TO NORTH AMERICA

Wood Storks (*Mycteria americana*) are large, white and black waders with long necks. They live on fish and aquatic invertebrates.

They usually nest in cypress trees growing in standing water. Nests tend to be at the farthest tip of horizontal branches.

These storks are identified by their long legs, featherless heads, and prominent bills. Their plumage is white with black wing and tail edges.

Feeding in shallow water on minnows, snakes and small crabs they use their bills to perform a odd but



effective fishing technique. Opening its bill, the Stork waits for the touch of a

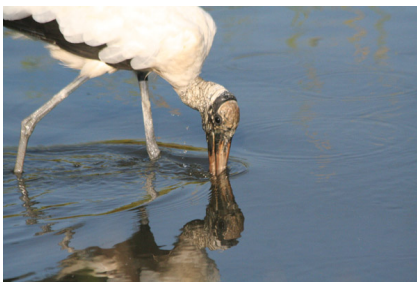
fish. Once it feels a fish, the stork snaps its bill shut in as little as 25 milliseconds.

Wood storks eat small fish, in large quantities. A nesting pair with two fledglings can consume 400 pounds of fish during a breeding season.

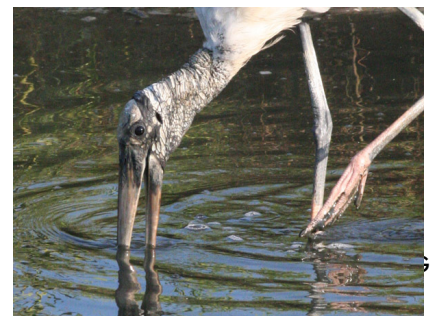
Wood storks cool themselves by urinating on their legs. The sun evaporates the urine, cooling them like sweat cools the human body.

In the 1970s less than 3,000 pairs of nesting wood storks were recorded. Today 10,000 nesting pairs have been counted. Experts believe the birds are still a threatened species, due to restricted and changing habitats. Nests in SC were first reported in 1981.

Sources: The Birder's Handbook by Paul Ehrlich; National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of North America 4th ed.



All photographs are by John Albert



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