

IDENTIFICATION: Wood storks (*Mycteria americana*) are large wading birds approximately 3 ½ feet in height with a wingspan of over 5 feet. They are distinguished by a dark unfeathered head and neck, a white body, a black tail and wing tips. Like most other wading birds, wood storks feed on small fish in shallow freshwater wetlands. They use tall cypresses near the water for colonial nest sites. They occasionally visit Alabama’s swamps to forage, but no longer are known to nest in the state. In Alabama, they are most commonly seen in and around “catfish ponds” of the west central black belt region.



They were originally listed as an endangered species on 2-28-1984 but their status was [changed to threatened](#) on 6-30-2014. The reclassification was approved because the number of nesting pairs averaged more than 6,000 for at least the three previous years. Delisting could occur if productivity criteria established in the [recovery plan](#) are met. One of the criteria is the number of nesting pairs remains above 10,000 for at least five consecutive years.

FORESTRY CONSIDERATIONS: Forestry operations in Alabama complying with Alabama’s Best Management Practices for Forestry should not affect wood storks. If nesting should resume here, appropriate care should be given to protect the nest sites and the tall cypresses the storks favor.



DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTY: Wood storks have been sighted in Autauga, Baldwin, Barbour, Bullock, Chilton, Choctaw, Clarke, Colbert, Conecuh, Covington, Crenshaw, Dallas, Elmore, Escambia, Geneva, Greene, Hale, Henry, Houston, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Lowndes, Macon, Madison, Marengo, Mobile, Monroe, Montgomery, Morgan, Perry, Russell, Shelby, Sumter, Washington and Wilcox counties.

Photo Credit: U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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This information has been provided by the Alabama Forestry Commission.
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