

CORKSCREW SWAMP SANCTUARY WOOD STORK NESTING UPDATE

March 2018

Our fourth flight of the 2018 nesting season was conducted Monday March 5th (observers: Kelsie Buxbaum (Conservation Intern) & Jason Lauritsen (Director)). The majority of the nesting effort continues to be in one large, dispersed sub-colony in a north-northeast area of the cypress that surround Corkscrew's horseshoe marsh. There are two other sub-colonies with much smaller numbers of nests west of this large sub-colony, but all nests are far enough from Corkscrew's boardwalk that they will not be visible to visitors. This month we saw fewer birds than the estimated 400 active nests that were seen last month. We believe this is a result of the earliest nests fledging chicks, as a number of empty nests and full-sized fledglings were observed (there have also been many reports of groups of newly fledged storks flying in the area).



A full-sized Wood Stork fledgling observed near two empty stork nests within the Corkscrew colony, March 5, 2018.



Wood Stork fledglings observed on nests within the Corkscrew colony, March 5, 2018.



Wood Storks sitting on nests (upper left), nests with large chicks (right) and incubating eggs (bottom center) within the Corkscrew colony, March 5, 2018.

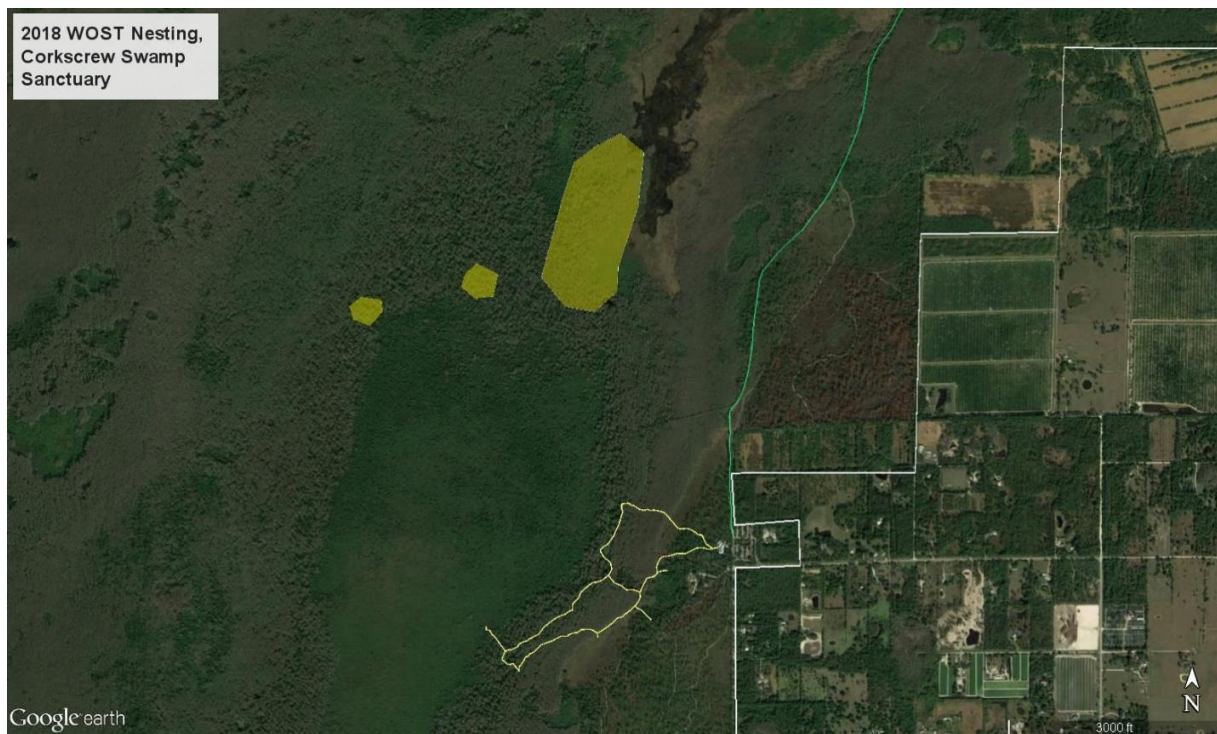
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In addition to the storks that have fledged and are near-fledging, we also observed nests with very small chicks and nests where we presumed adults were still incubating eggs (eggs were actually visible in at least one nest). The asynchronous timing of Wood Stork nesting is definitely apparent in this year's colony—even in adjacent nests. The continued success of this colony through the dry season will depend on our region's hydrology through the next few months. If we dry down too quickly adults may have a hard time meeting the chicks' energy demands and/or the nests may become vulnerable to predation by raccoons (like we believe happened last year). Conversely, heavy rainfall events or an early return of summer rains will disperse fish and make foraging difficult for adults and newly fledged chicks which could ultimately affect their fate (success/failure).



Wood Storks and Great Egrets nesting on Lenore Island, March 5, 2018.

Wood Stork nesting continues on Lenore Island (Caloosahatchee River) and at the BC29 site (west of SR-29, north of the Panther Refuge). Our next flight is scheduled for early April.



Approximate location of Wood Stork sub-colonies (yellow polygons) at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary during the 2018 nesting season.

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