

## Protected Animal Species Common to Florida's Freshwater Swamps

There are a variety of ecosystems in the FDOT District IV region that have characteristics that are desirable to certain species. This fact sheet covers species found in what is known as freshwater swamps. Saltwater swamps (mangrove communities) are addressed in the "Environmental Concerns in Coastal Areas" Fact Sheet. Three examples of freshwater swamps are Cypress wetland communities, mixed hardwood swamps, and river swamps. These communities will likely occur within FDOT District IV. Some of the wildlife that inhabit these areas are protected under Federal and State laws (i.e., "listed species"). It is important to always consider the area that could be impacted by construction and the habitat it might provide for listed species. Freshwater Swamp Habitat is one of the ecosystems that provides shelter, food and nesting areas for some listed species. Construction or maintenance projects that will occur in areas typically inhabited by these species are reviewed during design to ensure that impacts to listed species will be minimized. This sometimes results in special construction requirements to avoid potential harm to the listed species. These measures typically can be found in the notes and/or permits issued by agencies such as the South Florida and St. John's River Water Management District



(SFWMD and SJRWMD), the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Provided construction occurs according to the notes and permit conditions, it is not likely that direct impacts to protected wildlife will occur. However, if you believe a protected species is on your site and could potentially be impacted by construction activities, cease construction impacts in the immediate area and contact FDOT. *Do not try to catch, remove or scare away protected species.* These actions may be ineffective as the animals may return shortly thereafter, and may also be in violation of State and Federal law. The FDOT will instead work to have the animal relocated or provide other means to avoid impacts. This will help to avoid potential liability, and keep construction activities on schedule. If you believe a protected animal has been injured or killed by construction activity, cease activities in the area and contact FDOT. Reporting in this manner minimizes liability and the appearance of wrongdoing. The following is information about the most commonly encountered listed species when working in or near a Freshwater Swamp Habitat. For more information on identifying these species, consult the FWC website:

[http://www.myfwc.com/WILDLIFEHABITATS/imperiledSpp\\_index.htm](http://www.myfwc.com/WILDLIFEHABITATS/imperiledSpp_index.htm).

Freshwater swamp habitats are found throughout Florida and occupy low-lying areas. Swamps are typically found along drainage ditches, ponds, and lakes. River swamps possess extremely diverse vegetation and are highly productive. Mixed hardwood swamps, as well as Cypress wetland communities are typically seasonally flooded and consist of vegetation such as; Bald cypress, Pond cypress, Red maple and several ferns. Below is a table listing the species commonly found in Freshwater Swamp Habitat and the FDOT District IV counties in which they are usually found. Following the table is a brief description of each animal.

Type	Species	Latin Name	County
Birds	Little Blue Heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>	Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River
	Snail Kite	<i>Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus</i>	Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River
	Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River
	Tricolored Heron	<i>Egretta tricolor</i>	Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River
	White Ibis	<i>Eudocimus albus</i>	Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River
	Wood Stork	<i>Mycteria americana</i>	Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River
Reptiles	American Alligator	<i>Alligator mississippiensis</i>	Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River
Mammals	Florida Black Bear	<i>Ursus americanus floridanus</i>	Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River
	Florida Panther	<i>Puma concolor coryi</i>	Broward, Palm Beach, Martin



### Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*)

This medium-sized heron has a purplish head and a slate-blue body and legs. Immature birds are mostly white with slate-gray tips on the wings. They feed in shallow freshwater, brackish and saltwater habitats. The Little blue heron is



listed as a Species of Special Concern and generally lives in Florida year-round.

**Snail Kites** (*Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus*)

Snail kites are medium sized hawks commonly found in South Florida. They have broad, rounded wings with a wing span of up to four feet and a tail appearing to be squared-off. The snail kite is known for the hook-shaped beak that allows it to easily extract snails and freshwater crab from their shells. The lack of available Apple Snails has contributed to the decline of the Snail Kite population. This species is listed as Endangered at the Federal and State level.



**Snowy Egret** (*Egretta thula*)

This egret is a medium-sized, white wading bird. The bill is black with a bright-yellow, fleshy base and the legs are black, ending in bright yellow feet. These birds are sometimes confused with juvenile Little blue herons. Snowy egrets nest in willows and mangroves, especially on islands that are separated by large bodies of water. They are present during all of the seasons in Florida, but are generally less common in the winter. The Snowy egret is listed as a Species of Special Concern in Florida.



**Tricolored Heron** (*Egretta tricolor*)

This medium-sized heron has a slender neck and a body that appears two-toned. The upper part is dark slate which contrasts with the white rump, breast and under tail. They mostly nest in mangrove islands and feed in marshes, swamps, creeks, and along the edges of rivers and lakes. Tricolored herons are permanent residents in the Florida and are listed as a Species of Special Concern by the State.



**White Ibis** (*Eudocimus albus*)

This species of ibis has a distinctive long, curving bill. Adults are white with black tips on the wings, and juveniles are dark brown with white patches on the back and breast. They are found in a variety of habitats including freshwater wetlands, marshes, salt flats and forested wetlands. The White ibis is listed as a Species of Special Concern in Florida.

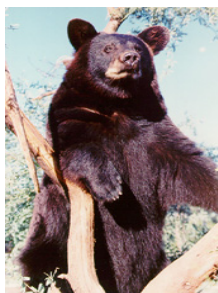


**Wood Stork** (*Mycteria americana*)

This is a very large, white wading bird with black on the wings and a short black tail. Wood Storks nest in mangroves, marshes, cypress stands and hardwood swamps. The Wood stork is listed as Endangered Federally and in Florida.

**American Alligator** (*Alligator mississippiensis*)

The alligator is mostly black with a large, rounded snout. Juveniles have yellow bands across the back and tail. Unlike the crocodile, there are no prominently visible lower teeth when the mouth is closed. Alligators live in most freshwater areas, and will occasionally wander into brackish water. Due to the fact that the alligator closely resembles the crocodile, it remains listed as Threatened Federally and as a Species of Special Concern in Florida.



**Florida Black Bear** (*Ursus americanus floridanus*)

This large mammal is listed as Threatened in almost every county in the state of Florida. The bear has a shiny black coat and a brown muzzle. The tail is short and the ears are round. Male bears can weigh up to approximately 250 pounds. Black bears rely on a variety of forested communities to maintain a diet that varies with the season.

**Florida Panther** (*Puma concolor coryi*)

A typical Florida panther can weigh from 70-150 pounds. They are dark buff to tawny above, and light buff to white below. The muzzle is black and white and the tip of the tail is black. A typical panther track shows four clawless toe pads around a three-lobed heel pad. Panthers require extensive blocks of mostly forested communities as well as wetlands. They are year-round residents in South Florida and are listed as Endangered at the Federal and State level.



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Other protected species Fact Sheets also available include: Freshwater Marshes, Pine Flatwoods and Dry Prairie and Coastal Areas

