



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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**SFWMD, FWC Let Woodpeckers Fly to Benefit Diversity of Wildlife**  
*The birds are known as a “keystone” species because their nests attract other wildlife*



(Click on the links to view a [photo gallery](#) and [video](#) of the release.)

**West Palm Beach, FL** — In an effort to boost diversity among South Florida’s wildlife, biologists on Thursday released 8 red-cockaded woodpeckers at the DuPuis Management Area as part of a partnership between the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to expand the population of these endangered birds.

“Ensuring biodiversity on natural lands is crucial to restoration efforts,” said SFWMD Governing Board member Melanie Peterson. “The health of these birds and the overall wildlife population helps indicate how restoration projects are improving South Florida’s ecosystems.”

Federally endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers and the nests they construct play a vital role in the web of life in southern pine forests. They are considered a “keystone” species by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) because the cavities they peck into pine trees are used by a variety of other animals, contributing to the richness of species in the pine forest.

According to the USFWS, at least 27 species such as insects, birds, snakes, lizards, squirrels and frogs have been documented using woodpecker cavities.

Biologists obtained the birds in Citrus County from the Citrus Wildlife Management Area, which contains a large population of red-cockaded woodpeckers. The

woodpeckers were carefully transported to South Florida by truck in special boxes and fed mealworms every hour.

Prior to the birds' arrival, District staff prepared new woodpecker homes in the DuPuis Management Area, a 22,000-acre natural area located on the border of Palm Beach and Martin counties. The property is open to public recreation throughout the year. DuPuis was part of the historic Everglades and features an ecologically diverse and significant vegetative community, along with abundant wildlife.

DuPuis once supported a red-cockaded woodpecker population, but the birds disappeared many years ago because of changes to their habitat. District staff has worked to improve the woodpecker habitat so that the area can now support a sustainable population. Efforts included prescribed burning, vegetation control and the installation of artificial cavity inserts in slash pine trees.

Each fall since 2006, the SFWMD and the FWC have released about 10 birds, typically 5 males and 5 females, in wild areas such as DuPuis and the nearby J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area. Presently, there are 20 to 30 birds in the DuPuis population.

For more information, please visit:

- [SFWMD Information Brief on the DuPuis Management Area](#)
- [FWC Information Brief on the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker](#)
- [USFWS Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Fact Sheet](#)

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### **About the South Florida Water Management District**

*The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving flood control, water quality, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.*