



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 pictures to view a [photo gallery](#).)

West Palm Beach, FL — In an effort to boost diversity among South Florida's wildlife, biologists last week released 10 red-cockaded woodpeckers at the DuPuis Management Area as part of a long-standing partnership between the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to build the population of these important birds.

"A healthy and diverse wildlife population is integral to the function of South Florida's ecosystems," said SFWMD Governing Board member Kevin Powers. "Abundant birds and other animals are also a good indication of restoration progress that benefits both the environment and residents."

Designated as a Species of Special Concern, 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 host 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 secured the birds from the Apalachicola National Forest in the Florida Panhandle, which features a large population of red-cockaded woodpeckers. The woodpeckers were gently transported to South Florida by truck in special boxes and fed mealworms every hour.

Prior to their 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 and 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 diligently to improve the woodpecker habitat to the point where the area can now support a sustainable population. This work has included prescribed burning, vegetation control and the installation of artificial cavity inserts in slash pine.

Each fall since 2006, the SFWMD and the FWC have released 10 birds, five males and five females, in wild areas such as DuPuis and the nearby J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area. Presently, there are 16 birds in the DuPuis population, including two that fledged this year. Since 2006, six birds have fledged from nests in DuPuis.

A bird that was introduced into DuPuis in 2007 was found as part of a breeding pair at Corbett this year, bringing the population in that wildlife management area to about 50. Biologists have also documented approximately 80 breeding pairs in the Big Cypress National Preserve.

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 water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.