



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **New Season of SFWMD, Audubon Bird-Watching Tours is Aloft** *Hundreds of species were documented in Everglades restoration areas in 2012*



*Local photographers snapped shots of dozens of birds at bird-watching and Christmas Bird Count trips to Stormwater Treatment Areas 1 East and 5. From left, peregrine falcon, roseate spoonbill, palm warbler. Credits: Ken Corregan, SFWMD and Richard Hodgkins. (Click on the pictures for larger versions.)*

**West Palm Beach, FL** — Hundreds of bird watchers had the opportunity in 2012 to observe endangered Everglades snail kites, roseate spoonbills and a vast array of Florida wading birds in wetlands built by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to improve Everglades water quality.

This year, the District is once again partnering with the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society and the Audubon Society of the Everglades to continue these highly popular tours and bird counts in wetlands, known as Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs), in Palm Beach and Hendry counties.

#### **STA- 1 East in Palm Beach County**

Since first taking flight in January 2012, 15 guided bird-watching tours at STA-1 East have drawn about 300 people. Hosted by the Audubon Society of the Everglades, in partnership with the District, participants have identified 115 species of birds so far at the site just west of Wellington.

With cameras and long-range viewing scopes, bird watchers typically caravan across 9 miles of the internal levees that separate the water-cleaning cells of the wetland. Frequent stops at choice locations offer excellent views of wildlife in the expanse of water and the STA's specialized plants that take up phosphorus before it enters the Everglades.

For 2013, Audubon of the Everglades plans to host about 20 trips to STA-1 East, including the first Saturday of each month. Tour dates and related outings are posted on the [Audubon of the Everglades website](#).

The STA-1 East tour program was modeled after the popular partnership with the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society, which has served 6,300 bird watchers and photographers from across the globe at STA-5 in Hendry County to date.

### **STA-5 in Hendry County**

Continuing the tradition of world renowned bird watching at STA-5, the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society hosted 25 trips with 863 participants in 2012. The group also documented the 200th confirmed bird species – the American goldfinch – at the site since tours began there in 2005. The northern flicker was the 201st.

During the 113th Christmas Bird Count in December, Audubon teams in STA-5 and the surrounding area documented a diverse array of 111 species, including American coot, fulvous whistling duck, blue-winged teal, endangered Everglades snail kite, crested caracara and tropical kingbird. A total of around 85,500 individual birds were counted over the course of the day.

The more than 6,000-acre constructed wetland, just south of Clewiston, is one of 489 sites on The Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail. Sponsored by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), the sites are selected for their prolific bird watching or bird education and wildlife-viewing opportunities. Audubon volunteers, in cooperation with the District, have led 163 individual tours at this site to date.

Throughout South Florida, the District provides recreational access to its public lands while continuing to manage them to support environmental restoration, water supply, water quality and flood control missions. At present, the District owns approximately 621,000 acres of land that are open to the public. Many of these properties are in their natural state or have enhancements such as picnic tables, informational kiosks, primitive campsites and hiking trails.

For more information on recreational opportunities throughout the District's 16-county region, visit [www.sfwmd.gov/recreation](http://www.sfwmd.gov/recreation).

### **Recreation at STA-1 East**

*The treatment wetland offers a public access point for hiking, bicycling, bird watching and nature photography.*

*Also featured are an information kiosk, directional signs, paved parking and a composting toilet.*

*The recreation area is open from sunrise to sunset on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays.*

**More Information:**

- [STA-5 Bird-Watching Tour Schedule](#)
- [STA-1 East Bird-Watching Tour Information](#)
- [Christmas Bird Count Results Database](#)

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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.*