

**Proposal submitted by the Department of the Interior
(October 16-17, 2002)**

**South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Sponsored Workshop
on
Avian Ecology**

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is the Department's principal agency with responsibilities for carrying out the Endangered Species Act (ESA). As reflected in the Service's Multi-Species Recovery Plan, an ecosystem level approach, incorporating sound science and maintaining coordination among the many affected parties involved in the Everglades restoration effort, is an essential strategy for facilitating compliance with the ESA and achieving one of the essential elements toward a restored Everglades: the recovery of threatened and endangered species in South Florida.

As federal and state agencies begin initiating numerous specific components of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (Plan), the Department of the Interior and the Fish and Wildlife Service request that the Task Force sponsor a workshop to explore the best available scientific information for the numerous federally-listed avian species, or key avian indicator species, and their habitat affected by the implementation of the Plan, or other future Everglades restoration projects. The workshop would request the presentation of information that considers the physical conditions, such as hydrology and water quality, affecting the various habitats of South Florida, including tree islands and marl and sawgrass prairies, for all federally-listed avian species and key indicator avian species that rely upon such habitat, including the wood stork, snail kite, Cape Sable seaside sparrow, and roseate spoon-bill. It is anticipated that the workshop would span several days in South Florida.

The Department of the Interior and the Service are requesting the workshop be conducted under the auspices of the Task Force because of the Task Force's broad membership and expertise among federal, state and tribal entities. The request is consistent with the Task Force's duties as set forth in the Water Resources Development Act of 1996. Additionally, Task Force sponsorship would ensure that workshop activities are conducted in a public forum. All interested parties would be invited to participate.

An important aim for the workshop is to ensure that as the Comprehensive Plan is implemented, the best available science concerning avian species is made available to the Service and other agencies, to inform their decision making. The Department of the Interior and the Service anticipate the workshop will improve interagency coordination on ESA issues during implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, and other future Everglades restoration projects. If this workshop is successful, the Department of the Interior and the Fish and Wildlife Service may recommend other similar workshops for other key classes of threatened and endangered species in South Florida.

