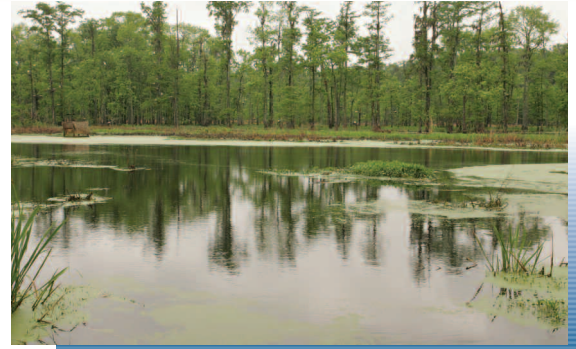




# Restoring a Nesting Habitat for an Endangered Bird



**I**n South Carolina, the largest nesting site of the endangered wood stork is being renovated to encourage continued breeding success of the bird. The wood stork, the only stork species and the largest wading bird that breeds in the United States, was listed as endangered in 1984. In the 1930s, there were as many as 20,000 nesting pairs in the United States, located primarily in Florida. That number dropped to about 2,500 by 1978. In 1981, the first successful wood stork nests (11) in South Carolina were documented. By 2004, the number of nesting pairs in the state had grown to 2,057. Invasive vegetation, however, threatens one of South Carolina's particularly important nesting areas.



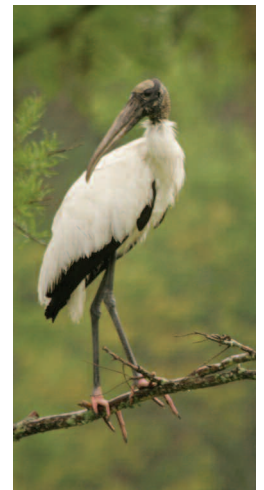
The native habitat of the wood stork can be found in South Carolina.

## Solution:

After having little success removing vegetation with mechanical methods, the landowner of the nesting site, an independent herbicide applicator, and Tom Murphy of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources used low-volume applications of aquatic herbicides to clear vegetation from the lake.

## Result:

After applying herbicides in 2000, 2003 and 2004, most of the undesirable vegetation is gone. Wood storks continue to nest at the lake, which is much clearer since herbicides were used to control invasive vegetation. Thanks in part to this particular nesting site, the number of wood stork nesting pairs in the United States has climbed to about 8,000. The species likely will soon be considered for reclassification to threatened status.



## Challenge:

Located on private property near Walterboro, S.C., a man-made lake was home to the largest documented nesting site of wood storks in the United States during 2004. Wood storks will only nest in trees above open water, which provides protection from predators such as raccoons. Invasive vegetation, including frog's bit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*), has infested the nesting site during the last several years. The thick mats of vegetation provide predators access to nesting storks, threatening wood stork nesting success.



Wood storks seek to protect their young by nesting high in the trees.



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