

Comments – America’s Great Outdoors Listening Session – June 21, 2011

Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge

Audubon is calling on Department of the Interior to move ahead with plans to establish the **Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge**, located north of Lake Okeechobee in the Kissimmee River watershed. The conservation of this critical wildlife area will allow future generations to the ability to enjoy the natural diversity of wildlife that populates the area, while recovering water in the Lake Okeechobee watershed for use by people and the environment. Outdoor recreation opportunities should be available for citizens to further connect with this important part of the Everglades ecosystem.

With the creation of the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge, numerous endangered, threatened and iconic Florida animals will have a chance to recover and thrive, including:

Florida Burrowing Owl	Audubon’s Crested Caracara	Florida Grasshopper Sparrow
Florida Sandhill Crane	Florida’s Mottle Duck	Florida Scrub Jay
Bald Eagle	Swallow-tailed Kite	Everglades Snail Kite
Limpkin	Short-tailed Hawk	Bachman’s Sparrow
Red-cockaded Woodpeckers	Brown-headed Nuthatches	Wood Stork
Florida Panther	Florida Black Bear	Round-tailed Muskrat
Indigo Snake	Eastern Diamond Rattlesnake	Amphiumas
Large-mouth Bass	Migrant and wintering grassland birds	Wading Birds, shore birds, and waterfowl

Florida is fortunate to have longstanding family ranches with landowners, many of whom have done a great job of taking care of our state’s wilderness. These species still use the area proposed for the Everglades Headwater National Wildlife Refuge because ranchers, including the Adams and Latt Maxcy ranches, have taken care of their land and water that wildlife is already a refuge for. Audubon hopes the Department of Interior can continue this legacy of quality land stewardship by establishing this critical wildlife refuge at the head of the Northern Everglades ecosystem.

Along with wildlife habitat, the Everglades Headwater refuge provides an opportunity to better manage water for the Everglades. Lands in the refuge can be used reclaim historic wetlands and reduce pollution.

You can help Audubon advocate on behalf of this critical wildlife area by signing up for our free **Restore eNewsletter: Audubon’s Everglades Conservation Network** – visit: <http://www.AudubonofFlorida.org/signup> and learn ways you can help save Florida’s environment. Your input will be needed in the coming weeks as the formal refuge boundaries take shape.