

CONSERVATION FACT SHEET



Creating a Florida Wetland Habitat and Wildlife Refuge

Zoo Miami has three lakes that were created when the zoo was originally constructed. This project intends to transform these manmade lakes into lush, diverse, protected wildlife refuges for many imperiled and protected species that frequent Zoo Miami grounds.

Many of the natural wetlands in Miami-Dade County have been destroyed through development. The imperiled and protected species that rely on these habitats have fewer areas suitable for them to inhabit. Many migratory birds from the Caribbean, Central and South America depend on these areas as stopping points before heading on long legs of their journeys or recharging after they have newly arrived. Therefore, the loss of such habitats has effects that extend far beyond our county, state or even hemisphere.

Zoo Miami has received funding from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) for the first stage in transforming these bodies of water. The monies from this grant will go towards removal of some invasive shoreline plants and the establishment of natives like bald cypress, pond apple, and giant reed along their shores. Zoo Miami is also seeking to obtain permits to translocate some other native floating, shoreline and submerged plants to increase the lakes' biodiversity, wading bird habitat and protected nursery areas for fish. The Eagle Scouts and Zoo Miami cooperated to build and place 4 bald eagle/osprey nesting platforms near the lakeshores to encourage habitation of these frequent visitors. To help complete the lakes' transformations, native fish need to be stocked in the lakes to create reliable food sources for shorebirds and birds of prey, suitable nesting substrate on shorelines and basking areas for turtles need to be placed, and more appropriate aquatic plants need to be purchased.