

# Species Fact Sheets

**Order:** Ciconiiformes  
**Scientific Name:** *Mycteria americana*

**Family:** Ciconiidae  
**Common Name:** Wood Stork

**AZA Management:**  Green  Yellow  Red  None



## NATURAL HISTORY:

**Geographic Range:** Europe  Asia  North America  Neotropical   
 Africa  Australia  Other  The South American population is considered a distinct population separate from the Southeastern United States population.

**Habitat:** Forest  Desert  Grassland  Coastal   
 Riverine  Montane  Other  Wetlands, disturbed human areas, agricultural areas.

**Circadian Cycle:** Diurnal  Crepuscular  Nocturnal  Other  [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Cold Tolerance:** To 70° F  To 60° F  To 50° F  To 40° F   
 To 30° F  To 20° F  Other  [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Heat Tolerance:** To 30° F  To 50° F  To 70° F  To 90° F   
 To 110° F  Other  Can be found in areas with temps reaching 100+ degrees.

**Diet:** Frugivore  Carnivore  Piscivore  Insectivore   
 Nectivore  Omnivore  Folivore  Other (Add Below)

**Captive Dietary Needs:**  
 Carnivorous feeding on small-medium fish, crayfish, and bird of prey

**Life Expectancy in the Wild:** Males: 11-12 years Females: 11-12 years

**Life Expectancy in Captivity:** Males: Up to 30 years Females: Up to 30 years

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## BREEDING INFORMATION:

**Age at Sexual Maturity:** Males: Approximately 3 years of age. Adult plumage at 4 years Females: Approximately 3 years of age. Adult plumage at 4 years.

**Courtship Displays:** Wood storks pair in the colony. Courtship begins with a male staking out a nesting site and then aggressively defending against all others. The female will approach with her bill held open and very slowly. She is also almost horizontal with her wings spread. The male will repel her at first but will show acceptance by fiddling with nest sticks and sawing his head and preening. An acceptable match is signaled by both birds raising their heads up and down with their bills open. While copulating the male clatters his bill against the female's bill making a drumstick-like clapping sound. Also the flesh color of the storks's feet in both sexes becomes bright pink and extends up the lower leg, a sign of reproductive readiness.

**Nest Site Description:** Nests are grouped close together with other storks or wading birds typically at the top of the nesting trees. Storks prefer sites surrounded by water, but will nest on sites that edge the water.

**Clutch Size, Egg Description:** 2-5 white eggs. Average production is 2 chicks per nest. Sometimes in good years all 4 chicks will reach fledging but this is rare.

**Incubation Period:** 27-32 days

**Fledging Period:** Chicks fledge between 7-8 weeks of age.

**Parental Care:** Both parents attend to the chicks through fledging. One single chick requires at minimum 200lbs of fish to reach fledging.

**Chick Development:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

## CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

**Social Structure in the Wild:** Wood storks feed in groups, roost in groups and nest in colonies. They are very social birds, but can be found foraging individually.

**Social Structure in Captivity:** Wood storks are very social and are more comfortable in colony groups with other wood storks as well as other wading birds.

**Minimum Group Size:** 2-6

**Maximum Group Size:** Since they nest in colonies of thousands, as long as the enclosure provides enough space, they can be housed in large colonies.

**Compatible in Mixed Species Exhibits:** Yes **Comments:** Extremely comfortable with other wading birds.

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**Optimal Habitat Size:** Large enough to nest at least 6ft off the ground and include a large shallow pool or ephemeral wetland.

**Management Challenges:** Most wood storks come into captivity via rehabilitation and because of this fact can be extremely flighty to the point of damaging themselves. They are calmer in groups with enough space to get reasonably well away from human disturbance.

### ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Wood storks are endangered in the Southeastern United States. It is very difficult to get permission to keep a wood stork from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina through a rehab facility due to the permitting required. Wood storks in Mississippi and Texas are not considered Endangered and as such are easier to collect from the wild and through rehab facilities. When looking to acquire a wood stork, Texas is the place to start and then if that fails move on to the endangered range states.

Wood storks use tactolocation to hunt for fish, crustaceans, and other prey. Storks wade through the water with their bills open, and when their sensitive lower mandible comes into contact with prey, their bill snaps shut. A snapping reflex is used to close their bills in as little as 1/40th of a second (Coulter et al. 1999). Storks sweep their bills back and forth through the water and pump their feet up and down to startle prey. This feeding strategy requires high concentrations of prey in water that is shallow enough (less than 50 cm or 20 in.) (Coulter et al. 1999) for storks to wade through it. Storks can feed in the dark and in water that is murky since they do not rely on visual cues to locate prey. Tactolocation also allows storks to feed in large aggregations that stir up sediment into the water. (Murphy et al. 2005).

### REFERENCES:

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Coulter, M.C., J. A. Rodgers, J.C. Ogden and F.C. Depkin. 1999. Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*). The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: Accessed on October 14, 2011 at <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/409>

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