

# Habitat Use by Wildlife in Agricultural and Ranching Areas in the Pantanal and Everglades

Dr. Júlio Cesar de Souza and  
Dr. Elise V. Pearlstine





# Wildlife

- 260 species of fish
- 35 species of amphibians
- 167 species of reptiles
- 650 species of birds
- 95 species of mammals



# Wildlife and Habitat



- Waterfowl and migratory birds are found in wetlands and associated habitat
- Woodlands provide food and nesting habitat for many birds
- Aquatic species include many fish as well as the giant otter and other mammals, reptiles and amphibians
- Large predators range throughout, including jaguar, puma, ocelot and oncilla
- Cattle are found on upland habitat along with marsh and brocket deer

giant otter



# Cattle Ranching

- On the Pantanal there are over 4.4 million heads of cattle with 2.8 million in the lower marsh
- In the Aquidauana region management is mostly low intensity
- In many farms, the cattle remain in the area year round with no food supplements except minerals and vaccinations



# Habitat Features

- Wooded Areas
- Aquatic Habitat
- Corridors and Trails
- Edges
- Pastureland



# Woodlands and Forests

- Protection of rivers and springs through reduced siltation and erosion
- Supports natural communities including birds
- Moderates climate and provides shelter



# Marshes and Wetlands

- Waterfowl
- Wading birds
- Aquatic species
- Fish
- Plant communities
- Critical to the region and the wildlife





# Threats to the Natural System

- Agriculture, mining, and development in surrounding areas
- Agricultural intensification within the Pantanal
- Loss of woodlands and forests
- Altered hydrology
- Unmanaged ecotourism
- Pollutants
- New and improved roads



# Everglades Agricultural Area

- Between Lake Okeechobee and natural/ managed wetlands of the greater Everglades
- In existence since 1950s
- 280,000 ha or 2800 sq km
- Mainly sugarcane, also rice, vegetables and sod
- Highly managed, very little native vegetation
- Relatively low road density, private property



# Wildlife

- 22 species of fish
- 13 species of amphibian
- 24 species of reptile
- 164 species of bird
- 19 species of mammal





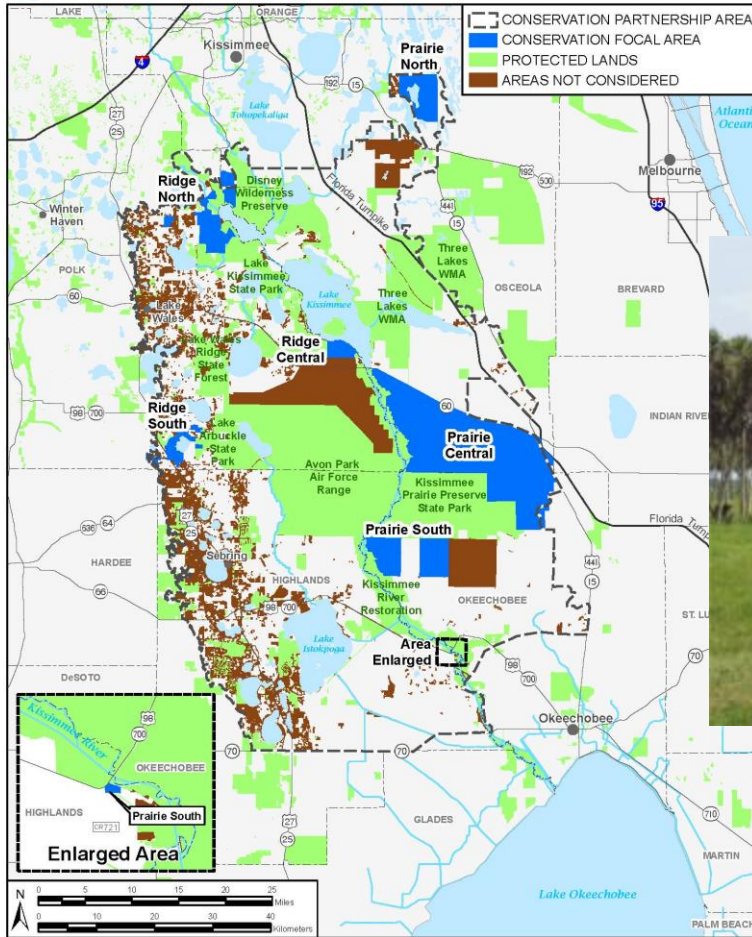
# Lake Okeechobee Headwaters

- Ranching
- Matrix of cattle ranches, seasonally wet grasslands and longleaf pine savannahs
- Endangered and threatened species
- Water quality and storage issues upstream from Lake Okeechobee
- Large restoration project using partnerships and conservation





**Everglades Headwaters Conservation Partnership**  
**National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area**



# Habitat Features

- Flooded fields or isolated wetlands
- Upland vegetation including wooded habitat or sugarcane
- Habitat structure such as perches and nesting sites
- Uncultivated areas and edges
- Roads and corridors
- Fields or pastures



# Uncultivated Areas and Edges

- Important refugia for birds such as common yellowthroat during harvest and disturbance in the EAA
- Brushy growth on edges provides nesting for small egrets and herons
- Management important for other needs such as water quality, doesn't always match wildlife needs





# Trees and Wooded Habitat in Agriculture

- Perches for wintering raptors, nesting for crested caracara in cattle ranches
- Dispersal and daytime roost for barn owls from the nest box program in the area
- Affects raptor community composition
- Nesting structure for larger waterbirds such as cormorants, anhingas



# Wetlands, Flooded Fields, Retention Ponds, Filter Marshes

- Preserved natural marshes integral to larger landscape of the Everglades
- Managed wetlands or flooded fields support migratory or dispersing waterbirds such as ducks, wading birds, shorebirds, terns and gulls including wood stork and roseate spoonbill
- Wetlands of all kinds can provide migratory and breeding waterfowl habitat for species such as mottled ducks in prairie wetlands around Lake Okeechobee, STAs and flooded agricultural fields



# Relevance to Other Managed Lands

- Importance of wooded/vegetated edges and non-farmed habitat
- Wetlands, whether created or maintained, support many wildlife species
- Management may not always be compatible with wildlife needs
- Importance of these areas within the agricultural landscape
- Importance of these areas, and others, within the framework of restoration



# Relevance to the Natural System

- Flooded areas store and clean water
- Flooded and fallow fields may supplement habitat for shorebirds, wood stork, and other wading birds
- Flooded fields may provide breeding habitat for mottled duck, whistling-ducks, night-herons and other species
- Wooded and brushy areas support migratory upland bird species and wintering raptors from within and outside Florida



# Questions?

