

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas speaks about the impact the Everglades damage has had on South Florida wildlife*

Interviewer: How have the animals and the...

Marjory Stoneman Douglas: Well, the birds have decreased terribly. The birds have decreased enormously for a number of reasons. Probably because there are more dry lands, because the water has been let out in the wrong season. For instance, the water, the wood storks didn't nest at all the last two years because they put the high water down into the entrance to the Everglades National park where they used to breed at the wrong time, so they couldn't feed their young, the young would die, so they haven't nested. But the curious thing that has happened to the wood stork and the wonderful thing; they've gone over to Corkscrew. Do you know where Corkscrew is? Corkscrew is a part of an old cypress swamp that was never logged, and the Audubon society was able to buy it. So it is primitive cypress swamp, and the wood stork have gone over there. The water is high, but they can manage because they are eating the walking catfish. The walking catfish got into the corkscrew swamp, didn't hurt anything, and now the wood stork are breeding and feeding their young on walking catfish! They'll adapt if there is any possibility of it. They'll adapt if they can. And some of them fly all the way to Okeechobee, pick up fish and fly back again. But the walking catfish is such fun because we could really do without them. So we're very happy about that, and for some reason the roseate spoonbill are making a big comeback, and I don't know why, nobody has been able to tell me why. But many others have been almost lost because of the dryness, the smog, the pesticides, the acid rain, all kinds of things from mankind, from people, from cities.

Interviewer: Some species are able to adapt...

MSD: Yes.

Interviewer: And other species...

MSD: Yes. You see the birds that we have around here have adapted, like the blue jay, the cardinal, the kingbird. They adapt to local conditions. Well, their needs were not so difficult. And they breed in, they don't, they have individual nests, they don't breed in big rookeries as the wading birds do, which makes them much more vulnerable. All that sort of thing.

Because the rookery will attract snakes and rats and all kinds of predators, whereas an individual nest will only have local conditions. There might be rats in the local conditions, there might not be. There might be cats that would keep down the rats that might otherwise get the nestlings. In an area where there are roving cats, there are always more birds because the cats keep down the rats and the rats are the true enemy of the bird. The bird will climb up and get, eat the nestling, but a cat can't do that. These nests are on little boughs where the cats can't climb, and most of these fat city cats, they don't climb trees anyway, but they get the rats on the ground. People don't understand that about cats and birds. The rat is their in-between, and the cat is a great help about that.