Request for Assistance

Background

Roseate Spoonbills (*Platalea ajaja*) have a long history of struggling to survive in Florida. Prized during the era of plume hunting, their numbers plummeted during the 1800s. Over the past century, Florida's wetlands have suffered extensive degradation with an estimated loss of 85-90% of the wading birds (C&SF Restudy 1999). Monitoring of Roseate Spoonbills by Audubon of Florida over the past 50 years has shown that this species responds markedly to changes in hydrology and corresponding changes in prey abundance and availability (e.g., Powell et al. 1989, Lorenz et al. 2002). In contrast to Florida Bay, the number of nesting spoonbills in Tampa Bay has grown markedly in recent years. Whether these birds are moving from Florida Bay to Tampa Bay is unknown.

Based on this history, and ongoing efforts to restore Florida's wetlands, Audubon of Florida, with funding from USGS, Everglades National Park, the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund, and the Army Corps of Engineers, is initiating a collaborative project that will serve to monitor population dynamics as well as a measure for success of Everglades restoration efforts.

How you can help

Spoonbills have been banded in Florida using a combination of band types. An aluminum band from the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory is used on all banded birds. This band is aluminum (silver) in color and is typically placed on the Tarsus (just above the feet) (see illustration). In addition one or more colored bands may have been placed on the Tibia (above what appears to be the "knee") so that they may be observed when the bird is foraging in shallow water. These colored bands may be either colored aluminum with an alpha/numeric code, or plastic without an alpha/numeric code. The code is read vertically, or read horizontally from the bottom up, and is repeated around the band so that it may be read from different directions.

For example:

3
4 is read as 34, likewise

A
K would likewise be read as AK.

This band is read as 'K4'

Should you observe a banded spoonbill, please note the following:

1. ***The color of the band(s), and if possible what leg(s) it is on.***
2. ***If there is an alpha/numeric code, and the orientation of code (horizontal or vertical)***
3. ***The location of the sighting (be as specific as possible, and please include the county)***
4. ***Your background (biologist, birder, etc.) and how to contact you if you are willing to be contacted should we need further information.***

If you have an opportunity to photograph the bird and/or the habitat, this helps us to confirm the code if the photograph is of exceptional quality, and/or to learn more about plumage changes and habitats used.

Please report any sightings to Audubon of Florida at the: Tavernier Science Center, 115 Indian Mound Trail, Tavernier, FL (305) 852- 5318 or Coastal Islands Sanctuaries, 410 Ware Blvd, Suite 702, Tampa, FL 33619 (813) 623-6826. Sightings can also be reported online, as well as additional information on this project at: www.audubonofflorida.org