

November 27, 2006

Ms. Cindy Schulz
South Florida Ecological Services Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, Florida 32960
Via FAX to (772) 562-4288

Re: Comments on the Five-year Review of the Snail Kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*)

Dear Ms. Schulz:

Audubon of Florida has grave concerns about the continuing decline of the state's Snail Kite population and asks that this be adequately reflected in the five-year review of the Snail Kite's endangered listing status.

Audubon has managed about 29,000 acres of Lake Okeechobee marsh as Wildlife Sanctuaries since their designation by the Governor and Cabinet in 1938. Unfortunately, Snail Kites have not bred effectively on Lake Okeechobee since 1996, despite this area's designation by the USFWS as critical habitat.¹

Nesting failure on Lake Okeechobee is part of the overall decline in statewide Snail Kite populations, dropping from 3577 in 1999 to 1610 in 2003².

With the kites' necessary habitat in crisis and Okeechobee and Everglades restoration only making slow progress, it is not only appropriate, but essential that these birds retain the protections warranted by their endangered status. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



David Anderson
Executive Director

¹ Pers. Comm., Dr. Paul Gray, Okeechobee Science Coordinator, Audubon of Florida

² Martin, J., W. Kitchens, and M. Speirs. 2003. *Snail Kite Demography: Annual Report 2003*. USGS, Florida Cooperative Research Unit, Prepared for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service South Florida Field Office, Vero Beach, FL 32961.