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Wood Stork Mortality from Hurricane Hugo

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WOOD STORK MORTALITY FROM HURRICANE HUGO

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Hurricane Hugo, with sustained surface winds of 140 km/h, and gusts to 173 km/h, hit Charleston County, South Carolina at 0001 h on 22 September 1989. On 29 September I surveyed the Atlantic Ocean beach on Sullivan's Island for storm-killed birds. I searched 1 h along a 1-km stretch of beach. The distance was determined by pacing. I found 8 Wood Storks (*Mycteria americana*). Other birds found were 3 White Ibises (*Eudocimus albus*), 1 Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), and 2 Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*). All the birds were imbedded in a line of tidal debris that extended from the mean high tide line 25-30 m inland, at an average depth of 1 m. All birds were easily visible at the seaward edge of the debris, and I did not attempt to search in the wrack for hidden specimens. Because of the extent and depth of the debris, more birds may have been obscured. As the hurricane hit the coast in the middle of the night, it is probable that the Wood Storks and others were killed while they were roosting. The findings of this report are unusual because of the relatively large numbers of Wood Storks found dead in a limited area.