

1991

Red-cockaded Woodpecker Investigations

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PERFORMANCE REPORT

STATE: VIRGINIA

PROJECT TITLE: NONGAME & ENDANGERED SPECIES INVESTIGATIONS PROJECT NO: EW-2-3

STUDY TITLE: RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER INVESTIGATIONS STUDY NO: XIII

JOB TITLE: DEVELOPMENT OF A LAND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER IN VIRGINIA JOB NO: A-C

DURATION: JULY 1, 1990 - JUNE 30 1991

JOB XIII-A
OBJECTIVE:

Develop a management system from an economic viewpoint and compare it with the management plan recommended for the protection of this species.

JOB XIII-B
OBJECTIVE:

Map and permanently label all cavity trees in active clan sites.

JOB XIII-C
OBJECTIVE:

Define the essential habitat parameters for the red-cockaded woodpecker in Virginia.

SUMMARY:

Prior to the onset of the 1991 breeding season, Virginia's breeding population was comprised of 11 adults at 4 sites. Three sites produced a total of 5 young generating a total of 16 birds as of June 5.

A fifth site that was active and produced two young in 1990 subsequently abandoned that colony area in the fall of 1990. No new cavities have been located to date for the displaced clan and the birds were not present on the existing site during this 1991 breeding season. Severe hardwood encroachment into the colony site is the suspected cause of abandonment.

JOB XIII-A: Develop a management system from an economic viewpoint

and compare the system with the management plan recommended for the protection of this species.

The Game Department, in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, proposed a management plan in January 1989 for the longterm protection and management of red-cockaded woodpeckers in Virginia. The plan (see Appendix A, 1989 Annual Report) was presented to the landowner of five of the six sites that were active at that time. In response to this action, the principal landowner subsequently submitted his own management plan prepared by a private consultant. At this time the consultant's plan is still under review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and so has not received final approval.

JOB XIII-B: Map and permanently label all cavity trees in active clan sites.

Following the procedure outlined in JOB NO. XIV-B of the 1989 Nongame Annual Report all cavity trees in active clan sites have been appropriately marked and mapped.

JOB XIII-C: Define the essential habitat parameters for the red-cockaded woodpecker in Virginia.

Surveys were conducted throughout the breeding season to ascertain population numbers and reproductive success. Results are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Red-cockaded Woodpecker Status and Productivity - 1991

Site Name	May Survey	Young Prod.	June Totals
Manry (Gray)	3	2	5
Manry (U.C.)	3	1	4
Sebrell	2	0	2
Yale	0	0	0
Sussex	3	2	5
1991 Totals	11	5	16

Cavity trees were not climbed to assess productivity again this year but regular surveys were conducted during the breeding season to monitor results. Fledging occurred on average one week earlier this year than in 1991. All birds fledged between the dates of May 24 and May 29 inclusive.

Although the site with cavity excluder devices is still active, the adult woodpeckers at this site excavated a new cavity

for a nest tree in 1991 and fledged one young. Hardwood encroachment appears to be a problem in the area of the older cavity trees.

The one active clan that produced no young this year exists at a site that was subjected to extensive timber harvesting in the nearby area during 1989. It is not clear what the cause is for reproductive failure in this clan but habitat modification may be a factor. In addition, since this clan has declined to 2 birds, it is possible that both individuals are of the same sex.

As for the colony site that was abandoned in late 1990, an intensive search will be undertaken this fall to attempt to relocate that clan. Given the extreme density of hardwoods in that colony site, it is likely that hardwood encroachment was a primary cause of abandonment. If the objectives of a longterm habitat management plan are agreed upon and executed in the coming year, habitat improvement would be the principal goal. It is hoped that habitat improvement at this particular site may entice the birds to return.

Regarding an assessment of the essential habitat parameters necessary for the red-cockaded woodpecker, a report was completed in 1990 that provided detailed information on habitat quality and its implications for the species in Virginia. This report is available under separate cover and is entitled, Habitat Quality and Seasonal Foraging Patterns of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker in Virginia.

<u>PREPARED BY:</u>	Dana Bradshaw Karen Terwilliger
<u>TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION:</u>	Continuing
<u>STATUS OF PROGRESS:</u>	On schedule
<u>SIGNIFICANT DEVIATIONS:</u>	None
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS:</u>	Continue study
<u>COST THIS SEGMENT:</u>	\$20,719 total \$15,873 federal \$ 4,846 state
<u>APPROVED BY:</u>	Bob Duncan Wildlife Div. Chief Jerry Sims PR Coordinator