

1990

## Red-cockaded Woodpecker Investigations

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PERFORMANCE REPORT

STATE: VIRGINIA

PROJECT TITLE: NONGAME AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE INVESTIGATIONS PROJECT NO: EW-2-2

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

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

PERIOD COVERED: July 1, 1989 - June 30, 1990

JOB XIV-A OBJECTIVE: Develop a management system from an economic viewpoint and compare with the management plan recommended for the protection of this species.

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

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

SUMMARY:

Prior to the onset of breeding season in 1990 there were 10 adult red-cockaded woodpeckers accounted for in Virginia comprising the population of five active sites. Four sites produced a total of 5 young generating a total of 15 birds as of June 15.

A sixth site active in previous years was abandoned prior to breeding season this year. It was the location of an alleged violation involving the cutting of cavity trees. Only one bird had been present for the last year and a half.

JOB XIV-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 long-term 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 active sites 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 management plan is still under review by the Game Department and the Fish and Wildlife Service and so has not received final approval.

JOB XIV-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. This procedure is particularly helpful in monitoring the dynamics of this species cavity excavation tendencies.

In addition to the marking technique, cavity excluder devices are still in place on all cavity trees present at the single red-cockaded site owned by the second landowner. The devices were installed immediately after breeding season in 1989 which was after the birds had abandoned the site due to cavity enlargement by pileated woodpeckers. Within a week after installation, the woodpeckers were using the cavities again, and this particular pair fledged one young from a cavity tree with an excluder this year.

JOB XIV-C - Define the essential habitat parameters for the red-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 - 1990

SITE #	TOPO QUAD	MAY SURVEY	YOUNG PROD.	JUNE TOTALS
1	Manry	0	0	0
2	Manry	2	1	3
3	Sebrell	2	0	2
4	Yale	2	2	4
5	Sussex	2	1	3
6	Manry	2	1	3
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1990 Totals		10	5	15

Cavity trees were not climbed to assess productivity again this year, but regular surveys were conducted during the breeding season to monitor results. At three of the sites surveys were conducted frequently enough to determine fledging dates for the young birds. Four young fledged from three sites between the dates of June 5th and June 9th inclusive. Fledgling time for the fifth young produced this year is unknown.

One of the sites producing young was the site where the cavity trees were fitted with cavity excluder devices last year after the woodpeckers had abandoned the trees. The birds apparently acclimated quite successfully to the presence of the foreign material around the cavity entrance. The Department was able to get excellent video footage at this site depicting adults foraging, as well as feeding a young bird at the cavity entrance.

Extensive timber harvesting was conducted in the vicinity of two active clan sites this year. One of the sites, which had been very productive in the past, failed to produce young this year. There was not even any evidence that the pair attempted to nest. The clan associated with the second area of timber harvesting did produce one young, but the group changed nest trees from the last year and excavated two new trees further away from the clearcut site. Both cutting sites destroyed a significant acreage of each of the clan's foraging habitat. It is unclear how much, if any, of the recent behavior of these two clans can be attributed to the habitat modifications they have been forced to endure, but there does seem to be a relationship.

As regards an assessment of the essential habitat parameters necessary for the red-cockaded woodpecker, a report has just been completed that provides 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>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>	\$10,400 total \$ 8,467 federal \$ 1,933 state
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