



Globally Important Bird Areas



Fort Stewart, Georgia

Ornithological Highlight: One of the largest populations of Red-cockaded Woodpecker

Location: just west of Savannah

- *Southeastern Coastal Plain* (NABCI Bird Conservation Region #27)
- *South Atlantic Coastal Plain* (PIF Physiographic Area #03)

Size: 280,000 acres

Habitats: Longleaf pine - wiregrass sandhills, longleaf pine - slash pine flatwoods; oldfields; cypress ponds; gum ponds; riverine bottomland hardwoods; military and game management openings

Land use: military training; hunting, fishing, wildlife observation

Site description: Uplands historically were dominated by longleaf pine-wiregrass-saw-palmetto flatwoods, much of which still remains. Prior to acquisition by the Army, land use was dominated by cattle grazing, naval stores production, timber production, and small family farms. Wetlands comprise approximately 100,000 acres.

Birds: There were 215 active Red-cockaded Woodpecker clusters during the 2000 breeding season. Common breeding birds include Brown-headed Nuthatch, Wood Thrush, Loggerhead Shrike, Yellow-throated Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler, Northern Parula, and Bachman's Sparrow. Less common but important breeders include Bald Eagle, Swallow-tailed Kite, Common Ground-dove, Swainson's Warbler, and Kentucky Warbler. Henslow's Sparrow winters on the installation in small numbers.

Conservation issues: About 130,000 acres of the installation are suitable, or potentially suitable for the woodpecker. The goal is to burn a third of the installation per year with most burns conducted in the growing season, but this goal has not been met in recent years because of the severe drought. There is extensive use of artificial cavities for Red-cockaded Woodpecker; 757 have been installed since 1994; 389 were active at last count. Red-cockaded Woodpeckers are recruited into unoccupied stands using artificial cavities, which are generally placed within half a mile of an existing active cluster. In 1994 there were 100 Red-cockaded Woodpecker nests on the installation, and by 2000 there were 170. Much of the success in increasing the population size has been due to these artificial cavities, combined with prescribed burning, timber thinning, and augmentation of adult bachelor males with hatching year females.

Visitor information: Fort Stewart is an open installation but an access pass is required. There is a fee. Areas may be closed for military training exercises. Best time to visit is fall through spring. Call the Pass and Permit Office at 912-767-5032 for more access information.