



## RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER RANGE



### ABOUT THE RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER

The federally and state endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) (RCW) is a territorial, non-migratory species. RCWs live in family 'groups' often containing a breeding pair and one or more 'helpers' (offspring from previous years). Each bird requires a separate roosting cavity and the aggregate of cavity trees used by a RCW group is referred to as a cluster.

The RCW is approximately the size of the northern cardinal. RCWs are distinguished from other southeastern woodpeckers by their large white cheek patch and barred-back. Males are distinguished from females by the presence of a cockade (a small red patch of feathers on the head) which is usually not visible in the field. RCWs are the only North American woodpecker to excavate their nest and roost cavities exclusively in live pine trees. RCWs will excavate their cavities in most species of southern yellow pine including longleaf, loblolly, shortleaf, and slash pine, depending on availability and age. RCW cavities are approximately 1.5 inches in diameter and are surrounded by pine resin. The RCW chips 'resin wells' by exposing sapwood around the cavity entrance, thus creating a pine resin barrier for predator defense.

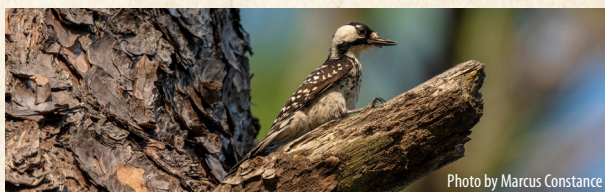
The RCW was once considered common throughout the longleaf pine ecosystem, which stretched from Virginia to Florida, west to Texas and north to Missouri before European settlement. Since the turn of the century, clear-cutting, fire-suppression, and land-clearing for urbanization and agriculture have resulted in a widespread population decline of the RCW throughout its range. This decline has been most pronounced on privately owned land, where many landowners have enacted land management practices which are incompatible with the habitat requirements of the RCW.

### LOUISIANA STATEWIDE RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER SAFE HARBOR PROGRAM

The Louisiana Statewide Red-cockaded Woodpecker Safe Harbor Program (SHP) is a program, developed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), to benefit conservation of the RCW through voluntary habitat improvements by private landowners.

A cooperating landowner will enter into a Safe Harbor Management Agreement (SHMA) with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries property. The SHMA is the document that, once approved by LDWF, also outlines a cooperating landowner's baseline number of RCW groups, voluntary RCW management activities and timetables for their implementation.

The baseline number, or number of RCW groups present on the property at the time of enrollment, is determined by a survey completed by qualified personnel experienced with RCW surveys. Baseline numbers are subject to approval by LDWF and the USFWS. The landowner is responsible for managing each baseline group's cluster as a timber stand comprising of a minimum of 10 acres, and the cluster boundaries must be at least 200 feet from any cavity tree. The landowner is also required to provide at least 3,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of basal area in pine trees ≥10 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) on a minimum of 75 acres for each baseline group in foraging habitat.

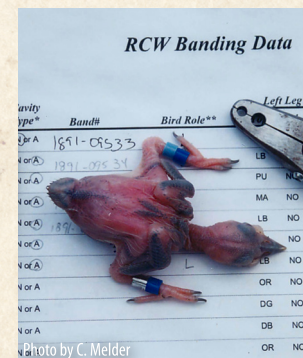


### RCW HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

The RCW requires pine trees that are at least 60-years old and infected with red heart fungus for cavity excavation. Adequate foraging habitat consists of pine or pine-hardwood over 30 years of age. Optimal RCW habitat characteristically has an open, grass-dominated herbaceous layer with little or no midstory.

### RCW MANAGEMENT

When signing a SHMA, landowners voluntarily agree to manage for RCW habitat by choosing one or more of five management options, each of which provides a net conservation benefit to the RCW. These management options are: forest management, hardwood removal, prescribed burning, RCW population management and RCW cavity management. LDWF will assist the landowner in developing a management plan for their property.



RCW Banding Data

| Parish | Band#      | Bird Role** | Left Leg B |
|--------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Or A   | 1851-09533 | LB          |            |
| Or A   | 1891-09534 | PU          | NO         |
| Or A   |            | MA          | NO         |
| Or A   |            | LB          | NO         |
| Or A   |            | LB          | NO         |
| Or A   |            | OR          | NO         |
| Or A   |            | DG          | NO         |
| Or A   |            | DB          | NO         |
| Or A   |            | OR          | NO         |

Photo by C. Melder

Photo by Marcus Constance

Photo courtesy of USFWS

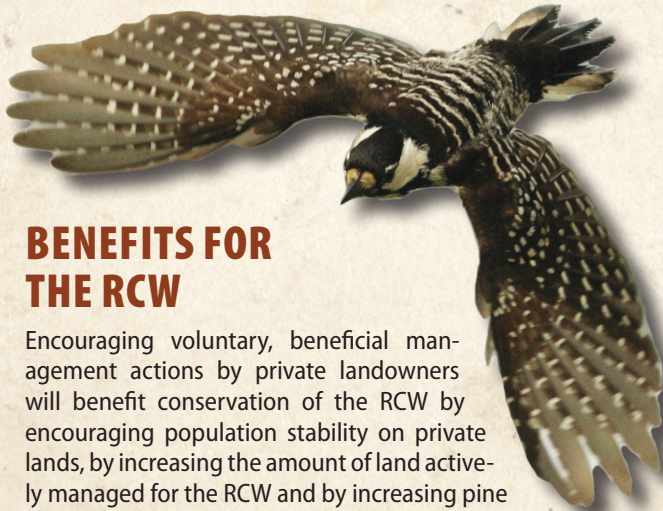


# WHY JOIN THE SAFE HARBOR PROGRAM?



## BENEFITS TO THE LANDOWNER

The SHP is open to any non-federal landowner and is completely voluntary. In exchange for entering into SHMAs, landowners will receive a Certificate of Inclusion which authorizes the incidental take (outside of the breeding season) of any RCW group or habitat that is above the landowner's baseline responsibilities (with a 60-day written notice to LDWF). Thus, upon entering into the program, the landowner is committing to managing for baseline groups, but shedding ESA responsibility for any additional, above-baseline groups, which may occur on their property in the future due to their beneficial habitat management. Since the SHP is completely voluntary, a SHMA can be terminated with a 60-day written notice to LDWF or transferred to successors of interest with a 30-day written notice



## BENEFITS FOR THE RCW

Encouraging voluntary, beneficial management actions by private landowners will benefit conservation of the RCW by encouraging population stability on private lands, by increasing the amount of land actively managed for the RCW and by increasing pine habitat connectivity.

Photo by Martjan Lammertink, USFS

**If you would like more  
information on how to enroll in  
the RCW Safe Harbor Program,  
please contact:**

**Louisiana Department of  
Wildlife & Fisheries  
RCW Safe Harbor Coordinator  
1995 Shreveport Hwy.  
Pineville, LA 71360  
318-487-5885**



**[www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/  
redcockaded-woodpecker](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/redcockaded-woodpecker)**

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Photo by Marcus Constance