

T-81 “Red-cockaded Woodpecker Demographic Monitoring and Management at Alexander State Forest Wildlife Management Area”

The major goals of this study were to 1) monitor RCW population trends at ASF WMA through demographic monitoring of adult and nestling RCWs, 2) provision artificial insert and/or drilled RCW cavities to insure that each RCW has a minimum of 1 suitable cavity in which to roost, 3) install recruitment clusters as appropriate, 4) consult with LDAF staff to insure that forest management at ASF WMA benefits the RCW, brown-headed nuthatch and other cavity nesting species, and 5) assist with the development of the 10-year forest plan for ASF. LDWF staff will work with LDAF to re-establish longleaf pine in occupied RCW habitat. The forest management plan will also provide recommendations for snag retention, control hardwood midstory within cluster sites via mechanical and chemical treatments, prepare RCW cavity trees in cluster sites for prescribed burning (rake fuel away from each tree), assist LDAF staff conducting prescribed burning to improve existing and future RCW nesting and foraging habitat, develop herbicide treatments to improve forest structure between RCW cluster sites, and monitor and assist in the implementation of the RCW SHMA LDAF has entered into with LDWF.

LDWF conducted demographic monitoring, including color banding of juvenile RCWs at ASF WMA from April through August 2011 and April through August 2012. Nest checks were conducted every 7 to 10 days and juvenile RCWs were banded between age day 5 and day 10 with a USFWS aluminum band, as well as, a unique color band combination. LDWF purchased artificial RCW cavity insert supplies in 2011 and 2012 to install artificial RCW cavities at ASF WMA. During 2011, a total of 2 artificial RCW cavity inserts were installed. 2 new inserts were installed in 2 RCW cluster sites. During 2012, a total of 3 artificial RCW cavity inserts were installed. 3 new inserts were installed in 1 RCW cluster site. LDWF staff provided technical assistance to LDAF staff conducting prescribed burns within RCW cluster sites and associated foraging habitat. LDWF staff assisted with raking fuel away from the base of RCW cavity trees prior to prescribed burning of RCW cluster sites. During 2011, LDWF staff conducted midstory and understory removals via mowing within all 13 active cluster sites and 2 inactive recruitment cluster sites. LDWF staff selectively applied herbicide to several RCW cluster sites during late September 2011. During 2012, LDWF staff conducted midstory and understory removals via mowing within all 13 active cluster sites and 1 inactive recruitment cluster site.

During the 2011 nesting season, a total of 10 nests were detected in 13 active cluster sites at ASF WMA. Eight of the 10 nests detected hatched at least 1 young and a total of 17 nestlings were banded of which 7 were observed as having fledged. A total of 30 adult RCWs were observed yielding an average pre-breeding group size of 2.31 for ASF WMA. During the 2012 nesting season, a total of 9 nests were detected in 13 active cluster sites at ASF WMA. Eight of the 9 nests detected hatched at least 1 young and a total of 20 nestlings were banded of which 12 were observed as having fledged. A total of 34 adult RCWs were observed yielding an average pre-breeding group size of 2.62 for ASF WMA.

(Abstract excerpted from: “Red-cockaded Woodpecker Demographic Monitoring and Management at Alexander State Forest Wildlife Management Area” Final Report; Baka; Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana; 6 pp.)

