

# The Army Reaches Out

by Bert Bivings

**E**ducating the public about their mission is an important responsibility for all government agencies. It is especially important for the armed services. They need to inform people about how military lands are managed because of the necessary public access restrictions and the importance of conserving vital wildlife habitats on military lands.

The U.S. Army Forces Command, based in Fort McPhearson, Georgia, conducts training on about 2 million acres (0.8 million hectares) across the nation. It also has aggressive and effective programs to manage habitat for the recovery of federally listed species and other wildlife.

Because conservation efforts on Army training lands are largely unknown to the public, Forces Command launched a computer-based program in 1999 to teach elementary school students about endangered species management on Army installations. The program targets third grade students at schools that are close to Army posts. It is also available by request to any school that would like to increase its awareness of threatened and endangered species and what can be done to protect them.

Entitled "Wildlife Success Stories and Wildlife in Trouble," the program was a collaborative effort involving Dr. Billy Higginbotham, an extension wildlife specialist at Texas A&M University; Dr. Bert Bivings, a wildlife biologist at Forces Command; and the many biologists who work at Forces Command installations. The program package includes a read-only memory compact disk (CD ROM) and teacher workbook. Forces Command also has two self-contained, mobile units that provide four personal computers and a large visual display to



*Force Command's educational program features the desert tortoise and other species.*

*U.S. Army photo*

illustrate key conservation messages. Dr. Higginbotham developed the original program for Texas in 1993, while Dr. Bivings and installation biologists adapted the text to address species important to Forces Command lands.

The Wildlife Stories program is both educational and entertaining. It features six species that are threatened or endangered and six others that illustrate wildlife management successes. Threatened and endangered species include the golden-cheeked warbler (*Dendroica chrysoparia*), black-capped vireo (*Vireo atricapillus*), red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*), and desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*). The success stories feature the white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*), wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopave*), wood duck (*Aix sponsa*), and

two species that are approaching removal from the threatened and endangered species list, the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and green-back cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*).

By providing elementary students with facts about threatened and endangered species, Forces Command hopes to enhance understanding of the importance of wildlife management on Army installations across the United States. For more information or copies of this program, contact Bivings by e-mail at [bivingsb@forscom.army.mil](mailto:bivingsb@forscom.army.mil) or call (404) 464-7659. For details on how to modify this program for your particular region, contact Dr. Higginbotham by e-mail at [b-higginbotham@tamu.edu](mailto:b-higginbotham@tamu.edu) or call (903) 834-6191.

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