



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Southeast Region

SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS

OCTOBER 2007 NEWSLETTER

▼ Home Page ▼ Behind the Scenes ▼ Bragging Rights ▼ Hats Off ▼ Photo Album ▼ Wage Grade ▼ Visitor Services



FWS and U.S. Forest Service staff transporting Puerto Rican Parrots to outdoor cages scattered throughout the Iguaca Aviary. Photo by Marisel López.

That new home feeling ...Iguaca Aviary move

Everyone who's had the pleasure of moving into a brand new home knows the anticipation and the final satisfaction that goes along with the experience. This is exactly what 87 Puerto Rican parrots must be going through as they settle into the new Iguaca Aviary now that the Rio Grande, Puerto Rico Ecological Services Field Office completed the long-awaited move.

August 23, 2007 was the big day selected for all the parrots to move but there was a lot to accomplish within a two-week timeframe. Hospital, nursery, kitchen and maintenance equipment were relocated, a new security system was installed, and flight cages were permanently prepared with vegetation and perches for parrots. Landscape murals were painted in indoor areas where parrots will take shelter in case of an emergency.

Just as some of the bulk of this work was being completed, Hurricane Dean threatened.. Suddenly moving had to be put on hold, so preparations for a potential hurricane strike could take place at the old aviary. In the past, hurricanes have caused serious damage to the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program. When Hurricane Hugo passed through Puerto Rico in September of 1989 it reduced the wild population from 47 to 23 individuals. Luckily, this time Puerto Rico was unscathed by Hurricane Dean and the move was completed as planned.

Once the big day arrived, all the birds were moved in four different vehicles. Only one or two pairs of birds were transported in each kennel. A total of four trips moved the entire captive population. This was done to avoid uneasy parrots from becoming jumpy and getting other birds panicky with frantic calls. A total of 27 people participated. The move was lead by the Caribbean Ecological Services' Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Office in Rio Grande with the assistance of staff from the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge, the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER) Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Team, U.S. Forest Service Law Enforcement and volunteers. Power failures, high humidity, and road isolation were some of the reasons why the captive breeding program needed to be relocated.

Submitted by Jafet Velez and Lilibeth Serrano, Ecological Services Office in the Caribbean

Behind the Scenes--



YCC group photo (LtoR): Kalen Thompson, Colton Dillion, Randi Jo Rieves, Shane Davis, Colten Adams, Cody Allen.. Photo by Matt Connor.

Blazing a new trail the old way

The last few months have been rewarding for me at the White River National Wildlife Refuge. I have been trained and certified to run heavy equipment, entrusted with running the summer Youth Conservation Corps, and had the opportunity to build a new hiking trail. All three of these activities have been new experiences and have taught me a lot.

Running heavy equipment is challenging but nothing compared to running a youth program of six teenagers for the summer. These are some of the things I learned from spending the summer with a group of teenagers. First, the radio in my work truck is able to reach decibel levels that I never knew to be possible. Did you know that if you turn the volume knob in a clockwise direction that it never stops

turning?

Some other things I learned this summer is the word “cool” has been replaced by “fire,” it is possible to break hand tools, and the correct ratio for buying paint and paint thinner is to buy three times as much paint thinner as you think you need for every paint job. I found this ratio to be accurate when trying to clean a gallon of spilled paint out of the back of my truck and off the “yet unbroken” hand tools that were swimming around in a proverbial bowl of kiosk brown soup.

When the Youth Conservation Corp group was not painting or cleaning up paint, they were working on building a trail to the largest tree in the state. One of the goals of the Youth Conservation Corps is for young people to gain experience using hand tools and traditional methods of construction. This meant using axes, rakes, and shovels to hand build a trail to the record cypress tree. I had to explain this many times over the summer as I was constantly asked “Why can’t we use a bulldozer to build the trail?”

The digging of the trail took many hours of working in 100-degree plus heat with mosquitoes and poison ivy. When we finally reached the end of the trail, we sat down to look at the tree and admire the stature of such a magnificent specimen. I thought about how the youngest employees at the refuge created access for the public to experience the oldest living organism on the refuge. I sat wondering what the rest of the group was thinking when one of them asked me a question I had never considered.

One of the YCC workers looked up and asked, “What happens if this tree falls down tomorrow? Will we have to build a trail to the next largest tree?”

I laughed out loud and said I had never honestly considered this happening. The rest of the group seemed concerned that this could happen and started to think of ways to strengthen the tree to keep it standing forever. As the group brainstormed, I told them that I was not concerned by the tree dying. I pointed to a decaying tree and asked the group to describe what they saw. “A dead tree,” was the immediate response. I told them this was correct; however, there is probably more life in the “dead” tree than in one of similar size that was “alive.”

We discussed what a cross section of a tree looks like and talked about the growth rings and the inner and outer layers. I talked about how most of the tree is dead wood with only the outer layers having living tissue. The center of the tree is comprised of tissue that has died and a new layer (ring) of living tissue grows the next year on top of that. A large tree has only a few centimeters of living tissue surrounding it with the center of the tree being made of dead tissue, or as we call it, “wood.”

The mosquitoes decided to cut our break short so we gathered up the pieces of our shattered hand tools and started walking back to the truck. One of the YCC enrollees said they hoped the tree would at least last for about 30 years. When I asked why I was shocked by the response. "So I can show my child the trail I built with my own two hands."

The summer has ended, and the YCC enrollees are back in school. There are still remnants of brown paint in my truck and I am pretty sure my truck speakers will never be the same. However, the trail is still winding through the forest and the largest tree in the state still stands. For how long I do not know, but I hope long enough for this generation to pass the broken shovel handle to the next so they can do their part in building and maintaining this special refuge.

Submitted by Matt Connor, White River National Wildlife Refuge, Saint Charles, Arkansas

Bragging Rights --



Working hard to make work easy

Pallid sturgeon monitoring just got a little easier thanks to modern technology. On August 16, Service Biologist Paul Hartfield and Mississippi State University graduate student Trey Dunn installed two monitoring devices on the Atchafalaya River Bridge near Simmesport, Louisiana. Dr. Hal Schramm, Mississippi State University extension professor and Service biologist Sabrina Chandler also assisted with the project. The receivers, installed inside PVC pipes and attached to bridge pilings, will record pallid sturgeons implanted with transmitters each time they pass the receivers. Biologists will upload data from the receivers monthly. Projects similar to this one have taken place in the Middle Mississippi River and, thanks to Paul and partners, monitoring devices will soon be on bridges throughout the Atchafalaya and Lower Mississippi Rivers. One more photo in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Sabrina Chandler, Jackson, Mississippi, Ecological Services Field Office

"Captain" Hal Schramm kept a tight ship. Photo by Sabrina Chandler.

New solar powered wheels at Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge

Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge recently received a donation of a solar powered ATV, from BP, the largest producer of oil and natural gas in the nation.

This solar powered ATV has 30 horsepower, can produce more than 170-foot-pounds of torque, zero emissions, and runs virtually without sound. BP has plans to donate 50 solar powered buggies throughout the nation. To date they have donated 15 of the 50.



Ted Rentmeister accepts vehicle donation from BP. Photo by Durwin Carter.

"Now we will be able to more effectively do our job without leaving a mark on the environment,"

says Refuge Manager Ted Rentmeister. “BP’s slogan is Beyond Petroleum. Their donation helps us better serve the American public, and BP is practicing what they preach.”

Submitted by Durwin Carter, Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Moss Point, Mississippi



Mill Creek daylight culvert. Photo by Christopher Metcalf.

New fish passage approach for daylighting culverts

“Let there be light and they will come” was the motto for restoring endangered Okaloosa darter habitat on Mill Creek in Niceville, Florida. A stream restoration project was designed and constructed by the Panama City Fisheries Resources Office (Fish Passage and Partners for Fish and Wildlife Programs) and the Three Rivers Resource Conservation and Development Council. As part of the project, a 13-foot by 196-foot-long arched bottomless culvert that spans the natural channel width was installed to allow fairway play on Eglin Air Force Base Falcon Golf Course. The existing undersized 3-foot diameter culvert caused a barrier to fish passage. With the new culvert, four 36-inch diameter skylight riser pipes with plexiglass lids were installed 40 feet apart to allow natural lighting of the culvert, thereby providing clear upstream access and vegetation growth. Immediately following installation, several fish species were noticed moving through the culvert. A monitoring study will be used to determine if the darters are passing through the site.

Submitted by Christopher Metcalf, Panama City, Florida, Fisheries Resources Office

Feral hogs put damper on sea turtle nesting season at St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge

St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge has almost 10 miles of Gulf Coast beaches that host nesting sea turtles each summer. This year 46 nests were laid by loggerhead sea turtles. In spite of efforts by our staff and USDA Wildlife Services personnel, 23 nests were lost to feral hog depredation. This is the worst loss the refuge has experienced in many years. No depredation has been noted since Wildlife Services' last round of feral hog control and the remaining nests are hatching with good success. To make up for reduced pre-season control, the refuge plans to apply for a grant to help control feral hogs. Increased control should reduce the depredation problem.



Loggerhead sea turtle hatchling. Photo by Thom Lewis.



Hog depredation of sea turtle nest. Photo by Thom Lewis.

Submitted by Thom Lewis, St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, Apalachicola, Florida

Georgia Field Office staff visits Unicoi State Park

The staff members of the Georgia Ecological Services Field Office recently enjoyed their annual office retreat. This year, the crew travelled to the mountains looking for a reprieve from the September heat. All 22 staff members participated in the visit to Unicoi State Park near Helen, Georgia. During the work session, the staff addressed such meaty issues as how to integrate strategic habitat conservation and connecting people with nature into the field office's strategic plan. They also took time to relax and enjoy each other and the wonderful outdoors. More photos in [Photo Album](#).



Athens, Georgia Ecological Services Field Office staff. Photo by Richard Warner

Submitted by Sandy Tucker, Georgia Ecological Services Field Office



The renovated headquarters building. Photo by Kenneth Litzenberger.

Renovations completed for Delta and Breton National Wildlife Refuges' headquarters

Two years after Hurricane Katrina's devastation, the headquarters building of Delta and Breton refuges in Venice, Louisiana, is repaired. During the hurricane, the concrete building remained structurally intact but lost an air-conditioning unit off the roof, and the lower storage floor was inundated by 12 feet of salt water. Mold ruined all interior surfaces. A new kiosk and outdoor visitor orientation area will be a feature of the renovated site. Docks and boat slips also have been replaced. The facility includes bunk rooms for staff visiting the two remote refuges which are only accessible by boat.



Docks and boat slips were replaced. Photo by Kenneth Litzenberger.

Submitted by Byron Fortier, Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex, Lacombe, Louisiana



Tracks from a red wolf adult and a pup. Photo by Thom Lewis.

Red wolves produce pups on St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge for third straight year

St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge discovered puppy tracks with adult-sized red wolf tracks confirming this year's litter. Radio tracking data suggested that the female denned to give birth to the litter in late April. A juvenile male, known as number 1548, and at least two pups have been heard howling on the refuge. This is the first time in the 18-year history of the project that red wolves on St. Vincent Island have produced litters in three consecutive years.

St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge is an "Island Propagation Site" for the Red Wolf Recovery program. The goal of the program on St. Vincent Island is to safely propagate red wolves while maintaining ecological balance and visitor access on St. Vincent Island. Red wolves produced on St. Vincent Island are removed before they are two years old and shipped to eastern North Carolina to help augment the wild population.

Kentucky's Green River gets a touch of pink

The Green River in south central Kentucky is home to an important and diverse population of freshwater mussels. In July, Dr. Monte McGregor, the state malacologist for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR), and staff from the Frankfort, Kentucky Ecological Services Field Office (KFO) added a touch of pink to the assemblage by releasing over 1,000 endangered pink mucket (*Lampsilis abrupta*) juvenile mussels into the Green River. Leroy Koch, mussel biologist from the KFO, spearheaded the effort that led to the mussel release by creating a unique partnership among the KFO, KDFWR, and Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA). Under that partnership, biologists with TWRA agreed to collect adult pink muckets during the course of their normal mussel surveys in the Tennessee River. Upon locating adult pink muckets, TWRA would notify the KFO and KDFWR to arrange the transfer of the pink muckets to KDFWR's Center for Mollusk Conservation in Frankfort where they would be propagated for future releases.



Adult pink mucket mussels.. Photo by Kentucky Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

The July 2007 mussel release occurred on a large riffle owned by local Hart County physician James W. Middleton. Dr. Middleton was present during the release and supported the effort. Kentucky's watersheds are primarily owned by private individuals, and, without the support of environmentally friendly landowners like Dr. Middleton, protection and conservation of Kentucky's beautiful forests, prairies, and streams (including the habitat of pink mucket mussels) would not be possible.

Submitted by Katie Aldrich, Frankfort, Kentucky Ecological Services Field Office



Jeff Friend House FWS Photo.

Bon Secour quarters dedicated to local historian and conservationist

When Hurricane Ivan struck Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge in 2004, the storm severely damaged many of the refuge's trails, bridges, and buildings. One of the hardest hit structures was the Jeff Friend House which served as the first refuge headquarters and more recently as government quarters for staff and volunteers. Last year, construction began on a replacement for the residence thanks to a supplemental funding bill passed by Congress for Hurricane Ivan recovery. The Jeff Friend House originally stood along the north shore of Little Lagoon but was rebuilt on higher ground south of Bon Secour Bay, where it is much less vulnerable to storm surges from hurricanes.

Recently, Assistant Refuge Manager Ron Hollis dedicated the nearly completed quarters to Jeff Friend, the late son of Mr. and Mrs. Jack and Venetia Friend. The Friend Family lived in the original house and subsequently donated their property, which became part of the Perdue Unit of the refuge. Jack Friend is the author of *West wind, flood tide: the Battle of Mobile Bay*, a history of nearby Fort Morgan, and was one of the local residents that worked tirelessly for the establishment of the refuge in the late 1970s. Venetia Friend is also an avid birder and dedicated supporter of the refuge.



Jack and Venetia Friend stand next to a 200-year old mantel that was salvaged from the original house and is inscribed with a dedication to their late son, Jeff. FWS Photo.

Submitted by Jereme Phillips, Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, Gulf Shores, Alabama



Biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Conservation Fisheries, Inc., and the Cherokee National Forest releasing threatened spotfin chubs into the Tellico River NEP on August 16, 2007. Photo courtesy of Andrew Currie, FWS.

Cross-programming and public-private partnership returning threatened spotfin chubs to Tennessee waters

A collaborative effort among the Cookeville, Tennessee, and Asheville, North Carolina Ecological Services Field Offices, Dale Hollow and Wolf Creek National Fish Hatcheries, the Cherokee National Forest, Conservation Fisheries, Inc.(CFI), the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission has shown remarkable success in restoring a population of spotfin chubs, which are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, to the Tellico River in Tennessee. Propagation of spotfin chubs for restoration projects began at CFI in 1994, using breeding stock collected from the Little Tennessee River above Fontana Lake in Swain County, North Carolina. Early propagation of this fish took place solely at CFI's Knoxville, Tennessee, facility with some fish transferred to a facility at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, for grow-out.

The designation in 2002 of a Non-essential Experimental Population (NEP) in the Tellico River increased demand for captively propagated spotfin chubs, such that CFI found their grow-out capacity would be exceeded because these fish exhibit signs of stress when held at high densities. In December 2006, CFI transferred 960 spotfin chubs to Dale Hollow and Wolf Creek National Fish Hatcheries, where systems had been established for growing these fish out at densities no greater than one fish per two gallons of water. The first release of spotfin chubs grown out at Dale Hollow took place on August 16, 2007. We released 385 spotfin chubs ranging two to four inches in length. On September 17, we released 200 spotfin chubs grown out at Wolf Creek. Stocking these fish continued the efforts that began with the release of spotfin chubs into the Tellico River NEP in October 2002 and that resulted in the stocking of over 9,000 individuals by the end of 2006. Monitoring efforts in 2006 revealed the presence of young-of-year spotfin chubs on two separate occasions in the Tellico River, providing evidence that a viable population of spotfin chubs will be established in the Tellico River through this collaborative effort.

Submitted by Geoff Call, Cookeville, Tennessee Ecological Services Field Office

Family Fishing Festival held at Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery

On September 22, 2006, the Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery in Suches, Georgia, held the sixth annual Family Fishing Festival. An estimated 600 people attended, with 250 youth registering for the free, fun-filled day of adventure. Rock Creek, which runs through hatchery property, was stocked with more than 2,500 beautiful rainbow trout especially for this event.

The Family Fishing Festival is held each year in celebration of National Hunting and Fishing Day. In addition to fishing events such as tying flies, casting, and catching fish, the youth participated in other outdoor activities, such as learning to shoot a bow and arrow, and shooting game at the "laser shoot". The youth participated in a scavenger hunt by visiting educational and environmental exhibit booths hosted by more than a dozen different individuals and agencies. By answering questions learned from each of the booths, the youth received a free t-shirt donated by local businesses. A local Trout Unlimited group provided a free lunch for everyone. The Friends of the Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery sponsored a "Pick Up Ducks" and gave away a lot of really neat prizes. More than 30 volunteers helped to make this a very successful event.



Trout Unlimited fly tying. Photo by Kelly Taylor.

Hats Off --



Griff Crews with Project Rubber Ducky after the dedication ceremony. Photo by Lisa Stone.

Griff Crews honored for disaster relief project

Griff Crews, the son of Tom Crews fire maintenance officer at Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in Manteo, North Carolina, received the Eagle Scout Award at a recent Court of Honor ceremony held at Mt Olivet United Methodist Church by Troop 165 of the Boy Scouts of America. The Eagle Scout Award is the highest honor bestowed in scouting. Crews' Eagle Scout Court of Honor was combined with the dedication of "Project Rubber Ducky", his Eagle Scout Service Project. This project involved raising funds for purchasing a covered utility trailer and supplies, working with area citizens and businesses for donations, and providing leadership to build a shower trailer to be used in disaster recovery efforts.

The shower trailer will be retained by Mt. Olivet United Methodist Church and the church will decide where the trailer is to be sent for aiding disaster victims. Scouts, troop leaders, parents, and church members helped build the trailer under Griff's leadership and supervision. Griff demonstrated outstanding leadership and service throughout the project from the early fund-raising steps until the shower trailer was completed. Griff opened the trailer and demonstrated all four shower units after the dedication ceremony.

Griff Crew's inspiration for the Rubber Ducky Project started with when his father, Tom Crews, and other Service staff responded to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Once Tom returned home, his family became actively involved with mission work in the Biloxi, Mississippi area through Mt Olivet United Methodist Church. The Crews' have made many trips to Biloxi and dedicated countless hours to hurricane relief since that time. It was the natural course of events that when the time came for Griff to select a project for his Eagle Scout award, he would follow his heart and design something for disaster relief-- hence the Rubber Ducky Project was born.

"Griff's project has raised the mark for Eagle Scout Projects," said Dennis Stewart, biologist at Alligator River and the scoutmaster for Troop 165.

Army recognizes Ralph Costa -- retiring Red-cockaded Woodpecker Coordinator

A red-cockaded woodpecker watching a string of tanks led to a breakthrough partnership recovering the endangered bird. Ralph Costa wanted to recover the species. The Army needed to train the 82nd Airborne Division. The woodpecker was caught in the middle.

At a gathering in August 2007 of all the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service leadership in the Southeast, the U.S. Army recognized the efforts of Ralph Costa, who is retiring as recovery coordinator for the red-cockaded woodpecker, once a controversial species for the military and the Service.

Across the range of this unique species, the Service is working with the Army and other landowners to replicate the successes at Ft. Bragg, which has met its red-cockaded woodpecker recovery goals five years early.

When Col. John Keenan, Director of Environmental Programs, Assistant Chief of Staff, Installations Management, Headquarters Department of the Army spoke at the awards dinner at the conference, he talked about how this small bird had such a huge impact on the Army.

"The Army has a training philosophy, to train as we fight, and fight as we train," said Keenan. "That philosophy is evident at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina." --- [Story and photos continued -- learn more](#)

Submitted by Tom MacKenzie, External Affairs, Atlanta, Georgia, and Colonel John Keenan, Department of the Army



Ralph Costa, red-cockaded woodpecker coordinator received 18 coins from the U.S. Army leadership honoring his service at an awards ceremony during the 2007 Southeast Regional Project Leaders meeting at Auburn University, Auburn, Ala. Aug. 2, 2007. Photo by Tom MacKenzie USFWS

Photo Album --

Working hard to make work easy -- photo



MSU graduate student Trey Dunn admires his work that will benefit Pallid Sturgeon in the Lower Mississippi River Drainage. Photo by Sabrina Chandler

Georgia Field Office staff visits Unicoi State Park -- more photos



Ben Dickerson and John Doresky in front; where's the rope and how do we make a polygon while blind-folded? FWS Photo.



Strant Colwell, Jim Bates, and Kathy Chapman pass the ball with a pipe puzzle. FWS Photo.



SCEP student Will Duncan being poked through the spiderweb puzzle. FWS Photo.



Lap sit gone kablunk! Janice Wilcox in the center. FWS Photo.



LaWanda Dixon. FWS Photo.

Army recognizes Ralph Costa -- retiring Red-cockaded Woodpecker Coordinator -- (more story and photos)

The mission of the 82nd is to have a 2,500-soldier brigade available 24/7, capable of having at least one battalion "wheels up" within 18 hours to anywhere in the world. Today, the brigades of the 82nd along with other units are on nearly constant training cycles in preparation for deployments to support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"In the early 1990s, management for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker was designed to protect these birds from man," Keenan said. "So the '1994 Guidelines for Management of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers on Army Lands' were developed to protect the red-cockaded woodpecker from the impacts of Army training."

But at Fort Bragg, the 82nd Airborne Division began reporting adverse impacts to training and an inability to fully "train-to-standard" because of restrictions necessary for protecting the red-cockaded woodpecker. Unit commanders and trainers were frustrated.

While red-cockaded woodpecker management produced outstanding habitat on training land, the restrictions to training were making maneuver training unrealistic and artificial.

As the Recovery Coordinator for the red-cockaded woodpecker, Costa spent many days on Army installations talking to soldiers, trainers and biologists. He attended training with an airborne unit to get a better understanding of training reality early in 1996 trekking the hills and swamps at Ft. Bragg.

"Ralph Costa observed training events, and studied maneuver activities and their effects on the land," said Keenan. "As a regulator, his interest in the Army's military mission was unprecedented."

"An important thing to know about Ralph is that he put the time in to learn what military training is, and what it is not, because it's not always blowing stuff up and killing people," said Stuart Cannon, Integrated Training Area manager, Forces Command, G-3, Ft. McPherson, Atlanta, Ga. "And that was the perception of a lot of people, that we just blew stuff up and killed people and knocked down trees with tanks and shot holes in trees."

Colonel (Retired) Ted Reid recalled one such training observation missions that had a major impact as they observed a tank platoon rumbling by an RCW cavity.

"We were standing on the side of a tank trail looking at a cavity tree, trying to cajole a woodpecker out of its' cavity when a tank company started coming by," said Reid. "We obviously had to get out of the way, but we kept watching. That's when a little woodpecker hops out, sits on a limb and watches each tank go by almost as if it were counting them, and then woodpecker hops back in his cavity. Ralph says... 'Obviously this bird was not at all impacted, he was just curious.'"

Just like in the Army, good training, good observation and a little risk-taking pays off.

In 1995, then Assistant Regional Director Sam Hamilton, a veteran in dealing with the Army over golden-cheeked warblers and black-capped vireos at Fort Hood, Texas, Dave Flemming, Ecological Services, Atlanta, and Ralph Costa met with an Army team. Their goal: try to find a solution to this national security requirement, the training of the 82nd Airborne Division, which was in apparent conflict with the Endangered Species Act and the Army's obligation to comply with Federal Law.

The Army biologists had provided Costa with a number of anecdotal examples that training soldiers did not significantly impact red-cockaded woodpeckers.

"We had anecdotal information that woodpeckers couldn't give a rats (behind) about training," said Cannon. "We had successful clusters (groups of nests) between the firing lines M-60 machine gun ranges, on tank gunnery ranges, right next to a major intersection out in the training ranges on the main supply route. But that's anecdotal. Ralph wanted to get the science."

"The Army offered fence-post-to-fence-post management if there were no training restrictions," said Keenan. "Ralph's genius was that he could see the power available IF common ground could be found."

"Ralph was willing to take a chance, to take some risk. And that was the biggest hurdle of the 1996 Army Guidelines," said Dr. Bert Bivens, FORSCOM Engineer Environmental Team Leader. "We broke a paradigm from protecting the woodpeckers by keeping the army away from them, to protecting woodpeckers by providing habitat."

Ralph devised the intermediate step, which he called supplemental recruitment clusters. This allowed some flexibility to remove training restrictions from the most critical areas for the trainers while establishing a scientific basis to justify this new paradigm and explore the potential to completely eliminate restrictions to training.

"Ralph doesn't just think outside the box, he doesn't acknowledge that there IS a box," said Cannon. "Everything is possible."

The results of Ralph's work have allowed the Army and the nation to have fully trained soldiers and expanding red-cockaded woodpecker populations.

"For his outstanding work, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Environment, Safety and Occupational Health, and former Garrison Commander at Ft Bragg, Mr. Addison Davis asked that I present Mr. Ralph Costa with the Commander's Award for Public Service," said Keenan.

Keenan also presented Costa with a framed collection of 18 coins commander's coins on behalf of the many Army Installations and others impacted by his work as an expression of their gratitude for his efforts and in appreciation of his selfless service.

The coins came from across the Army, including personal coins of The Secretary of the Army, The Honorable Pete Geren, the Chief of Staff, General George Casey, and Vice Chief of Staff, General Richard Cody. Costa also received recognition from many Army major commands, all eight Army installations occupied by the red-cockaded woodpecker and the National Military Fish and Wildlife Association.

"The success of this new paradigm is phenomenal and Ralph has been leading the charge on this effort from the front of the pack," said Keenan. "The Red Cockaded woodpecker population is past recovery requirements at Fort Bragg, near recovery at Fort Stewart, and growing on all other Army lands."

"The Army appreciates the great partnership that we have with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as we maintain a great environment on our bases," said Keenan, "And also that we can train to be ready to go when we are called upon to do the Nation's work."

For more information: <http://www.fws.gov/rcwrecovery/>

Submitted by Tom MacKenzie, External Affairs, Atlanta, Georgia, and Colonel John Keenan, Department of the Army



Susan Gibson, Acting Chief, DoD Southern Region, Environmental Office, Atlanta, Scott Belfit, wildlife biologist, Department of the Army, Col. John Keenan, Ralph Costa red-cockaded woodpecker recovery coordinator, Southeastern Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sam D. Hamilton, Bert Bivens, FORSCOM, Aug. 2, 2007 Auburn University, Ala. photo by Tom MacKenzie, USFWS



RCW mount - Photo by Tom MacKenzie Jan. 30, 2003 Ft. Stewart, GA



News media and red-cockaded woodpecker experts examine a cavity tree at Ft. Stewart during the January 27-31, 2003 Red-cockaded Woodpecker Symposium IV, the 4th 10-year gathering of RCW experts from around the country. Photo by Tom MacKenzie, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Visitor Services --

Volunteering from a volunteer's perspective



Dave Shuckstes. Photo by Patricia Lynch.

I chose to volunteer for the Sewee Center at the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge in Awendaw, South Carolina, after reading a very well-written article in the local paper describing the beneficial things performed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service personnel there, and asking for volunteers. However, I had no idea I would be called upon to perform such a wide variety of tasks.

My first assignment was as a receptionist at the Center facility on Hwy 17. After receiving my handbook and a short training session from “Ranger” Trish, (Patricia Lynch) I was ready to greet visitors and provide them with information, pamphlets, and maps, to help them enjoy the wonderful nature that exists here in the South Carolina Low Country. In addition to being the receptionist, I helped with a youth “Career Days” activity, worked on automating the office volunteer database, removed unsightly weeds from the “Red wolf” den, and cleaned and organized the Headquarters garage area.

Later, I helped the maintenance team at Cape Romain Wildlife Refuge where I enjoyed meeting and working with the maintenance staff. We would work on so many different activities either at the Cape Romain area or Bull’s Island.

Neil (another volunteer) and I worked on building storage areas and shelves, putting new drywall in the ceiling, rebuilding a Boston Whaler, cleaning out old storage areas, building guard rails around a rice “trunk” (dam), and repairing equipment. Where else can you get to ride an ATV around Bull’s Island to fetch tools and equipment? We solved water pumping problems, equipment malfunction problems and continually found “work-arounds” to keep things going at Bull’s. I helped an AmeriCorps Youth Group clean up miles of beach on Bulls Island, removing a dump truck load of garbage that from the Atlantic Ocean.

In between these assigned tasks, I was asked to help do some major construction projects as well. I became very adept at cutting and assembling major wood pieces for a kiosk at Bull’s Island and a pergola at the Center. Part of that challenge was working in 90-degree heat with little shade. Each day on the Islands was accentuated by the lovely boat rides in the early morning (quiet, peaceful, serene) and evenings (windy and bumpy). We would experience high and low tides where one low tide (due to wind and tides) made the refuge look like a wet lunar landscape.

One island adventure was to Lighthouse Island where we cut a wide path to the lighthouses by using “weed eaters.” I forgot my waders in my truck, and had to be carried by one of the rangers through the pluff mud to dry land.

I also experienced the amazing efforts of government employees and volunteers associated with protecting loggerhead sea turtles here in South Carolina. We would boat from McClellanville in the early hours and spend the day riding the beach on an ATV searching for “turtle crawls”, checking and marking nests and relocating nests if necessary. I marveled at the dedicated people who did this very tough task day after day.

My friends ask me why I work so hard, as a volunteer. Maybe it is the idea that you are doing something good, that someone has got to do it, that they need me, maybe it is the wonderful people I have met and work with All I know is that even though I come home dog-tired, I really enjoy the day.. I volunteered for the Sewee Center to keep my self active and use my physical and mental skills in my retirement years. I just had no idea that the activities would be so varied, interesting, and fun.

Submitted by Dave Shuckstes, volunteer at Cape Romain NWR, Awendaw, South Carolina

Wage Grade Profile --

Dennis Scarbrough: Natchitoches' man of many talents



Dennis Scarbrough (left) in the early 1990's when he came to work.
FWS Photo.

Dennis Scarbrough is an Automotive Mechanic at the Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery in Louisiana. Dennis has been with the Service since 1990 when he transferred from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries where he worked as a carpenter. Dennis wears many hats at the station and is currently serving as the Contracting Officer Representative for a major project rehabbing drain lines at the station.

"The reason I like coming to work every day is the variety of things I get to do on the hatchery," says Dennis.

Dennis operates all kinds of equipment, can build anything from the ground up, and helps administratively with SAMMS and maintenance records. He also assists with all aspects of fish culture including spawning, rearing, and delivering fish.

A life-long native of Louisiana, Dennis lives in Provenal, Louisiana, with his wife Renee where he enjoys hunting, taking care of his property, and spending time with his three grandchildren, Emily, Alyssa, and Daigen.



Dennis in 2007 with his new Kubota.
FWS Photo.

Submitted by Karen Kilpatrick, Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery, Louisiana