

Land Management at DuPuis

Red Cockaded Woodpecker Management

DESCRIPTION: About the size of the common cardinal, the red-cockaded woodpecker is approximately 7 inches long (18 to 20 centimeters), with a wingspan of about 15 inches (35 to 38 centimeters). Its back is barred with black and white horizontal stripes. The red-cockaded woodpecker's most distinguishing feature is a black cap and nape that encircle large white cheek patches. Rarely visible, except perhaps during the breeding season and periods of territorial defense, the male has a small red streak on each side of its black cap called a cockade, hence its name. The red-cockaded woodpecker feeds primarily on beetles, ants, roaches, caterpillars, wood-boring insects, and spiders, and occasionally fruits and berries.

HABITAT: The red-cockaded woodpecker makes its home in mature pine forests. Longleaf pines (*Pinus palustris*) are most commonly preferred, but other species of southern pine are also acceptable. While other woodpeckers bore out cavities in dead trees where the wood is rotten and soft, the red-cockaded woodpecker is the only one which excavates cavities exclusively in living pine trees. The older pines favored by the red-cockaded woodpecker often suffer from a fungus called red heart disease which attacks the center of the trunk, causing the inner wood, the heartwood, to become soft. Cavities generally take from 1 to 3 years to excavate.

(**Source:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; for more information:

[Visit their web site information page on Red-cockaded Woodpecker.](#)

