

NOTES ON THE DISCOVERY AND LOSS OF RED-COCKADED
WOODPECKERS IN TUSCALOOA COUNTY, ALABAMA

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Stevenson (1939:64) reported Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (Picoides borealis) as widely distributed in Walker and Tuscaloosa counties in west-central Alabama, including a nesting record at Jasper, Walker County. More recently, the species has been reported only in southern Tuscaloosa County on the 1967 Christmas Bird Count (Rogers 1968). Between 30 December 1977 and 6 February 1978, we spent six days searching in Tuscaloosa, Fayette, and Walker counties for evidence of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in the area. On 30 December 1977 we drove major roads within the area between Tuscaloosa and Carbon Hill. On this initial visit we discovered a Red-cockaded Woodpecker colony at the boundary of sections 13 and 14 in Township 18 S, Range 10 W, in Tuscaloosa County, southwest of Windham Springs. The location seems to be slightly west of the site indicated in Tuscaloosa County on Map 7 of Stevenson (1939:62). A thorough search of the area revealed six cavity trees and two Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. Although there were Virginia (Pinus virginiana), loblolly (P. taeda), and longleaf (P. palustris) pines in the area, only the loblolly pines were old enough or large enough for cavity excavation by this species and all cavity trees were loblolly pines.

On 10 January 1978 we made a low altitude (100-250 m above ground) aerial survey of forested lands north of Tuscaloosa in Tuscaloosa, Fayette, and Walker counties. We observed no habitat that really looked optimal for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, but did locate one cavity tree on a cliff along Blue Creek in the northeast quarter of section 22, Range 9 W, Township 18 S, southeast of Windham Springs, Tuscaloosa, County. Van Waggoner located that cavity tree from the ground on 10 March 1978 and found it to be a Virginia pine with 2 abandoned enlarged Red-cockaded Woodpecker cavities. Other areas of potential Red-cockaded Woodpecker habitat that were located from the air were systematically searched by walking transects at

about 100 m intervals on 15 and 29 January and 12 and 16 February 1978. We found no other sign of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in any of the three counties.

On 26 February 1983 we again visited the site of the active Red-cockaded Woodpecker colony southwest of Windham Springs. A large clearcut area then stood in the place of the mature forest that had included the active cavity trees. We spent three hours carefully searching for evidence of the birds or new cavity trees in adjacent forest areas, but found neither. There is still suitable habitat nearby, particularly along the steeper slopes and ridges, but we can only hope that the Red-cockaded Woodpecker still persists in the area.

Based on our surveys, areas within the three-county region that have the highest potential of still supporting Red-cockaded Woodpecker colonies are: (1) ridges along Blue Creek in sections 22-26 of Township 18 S, Range 9 W; (2) big pine areas along the dividing ridge from Wolf Den Hollow to Bethel Church in Township 16 S, Range 9 W and Township 16 S, Range 8 W; (3) ridges and some creek bottom areas along Big Yellow Creek in sections 5-7 in Township 17 S, Range 8 W; and (4) big pine areas in sections 9, 10, and 15 in Township 17 S, Range 9 W.

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Literature Cited

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LATE PIEDMONT RECORD FOR THE PALM WARBLER

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On 9 June 1984, we recorded a singing male Palm Warbler, Dendroica palmarum, where Tallapoosa County Route 34 crosses the South Fork of Sandy Creek (Township 21 N; Range 23 E, Section 14) southwest of Dadeville, AL. The Palm Warbler was singing while the count was being made. After the 3-minutes of listening, we called up the male into the open, where we observed it from about 4 m distance for several minutes as it sang again.

Imhof 1976, in the second edition of Alabama Birds, gives May 10 as the latest Piedmont record. This observation extends the spring date to June 9.

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BIRDLIFE AT THE DAUPHIN ISLAND AIRPORT FROM 18 JULY TO 17 AUGUST 1983

Tommy King and John R. Porch

INTRODUCTION

The Dauphin Island Airport is well known as an important birding area for marsh and shore birds along the Alabama coast. To our knowledge no literature (with the exception of individual checklists) has been published discussing birdlife at the airport. The purpose of this