
This is a comprehensive treatise on an endangered species that covers both the species’ biology and its conservation and recovery. Organized in textbook fashion, the volume includes a review of the most important aspects of Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Picoides borealis) ecology and conservation. The 12 chapters cover this species’ taxonomy, morphology, distribution, cooperative breeding system, foraging ecology, habitat requirements, habitat management, reasons for endangered species status, and prospects for the future. Overall I found the book to be well organized, clearly worded, and written in a style that is both readable and informative. The tables and figures are simple, pertinent, and easy to comprehend. Although there are three authors, the writing styles are seamlessly interwoven so as not to detract from the readability of the book. All three authors are highly regarded in the field of Red-cockaded Woodpecker biology and management, and their collective insights add immeasurably to the book.

The Red-cockaded Woodpecker is particularly fascinating because it is a cooperative breeder that places its nest cavities in live trees, in an ecosystem that burns several times per decade. Social behavior and population biology are well described so that the reader gains an appreciation of how cooperative breeding, a vital, overarching aspect of the species’ ecology, impacts its distribution and long-term probability of persistence. The authors emphasize the importance of fire in maintaining the ecosystems on which the bird depends, and devote an entire chapter to this important concept. The subject of cavity trees occupies a separate chapter, which is understandable given that the availability of cavities is a crucial habitat requirement. The main management themes of the book include protecting cavities, ensuring the availability of trees suitable for cavity construction, controlling hardwood encroachment, preferably by prescribing fire; translocating birds in cases of the loss of a breeder and to create new groups, and managing timber.

Conservation efforts on behalf of this species have been equally fascinating, and they have entailed innovations that are well described in this book. One such innovation was the invention of artificial cavity construction (cavity inserts and drilled cavities that can be installed quickly and are readily accepted by the bird). Another was the novel approach of developing safe-harbor agreements with private landowners. Credit is given to the many hard-working, conscientious, and talented professionals that are endeavoring to protect this species and provide for its long-term viability. This book beautifully illustrates how research findings dealing with the ecology of a species can be instrumental in crafting and guiding management strategies for conservation efforts.

The book begins by describing the longleaf pine ecosystem with which the Red-cockaded Woodpecker is closely affiliated, and documenting the drastic decline of this habitat from its historical extent. This substantial reduction in preferred pine habitat resulted in a concomitant decline both in the numbers and distribution of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, culminating in its designation as a federal endangered species in 1968.

After describing in general terms the habitat of the species, the book continues with a concise description of the species’ taxonomy, evolution, and morphology. A well-organized discussion of the current and past distribution and population levels makes clear what problems the species has faced, such as the availability...
detailed, as well. Trees, are more susceptible to tire damage. When more than 300 cavity trees were killed. Vegetation and the populations. These, on the idea that establishment concerns with providing for high-quality foraging habitat. The evidence provided in the book supports the authors' long-term approach for conserving the species after it has recovered. By maintaining healthy pine ecosystems using a two-pronged strategy. This approach incorporates growing-season burns and appropriate timber management to maintain forests with a range of tree ages, including well-distributed old trees.

Because of its status as an endangered species, the Red-cockaded Woodpecker has a certain degree of protection. To comply with the regulations that implement the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, federal agencies and other interested landowners have developed various guidelines and management plans, with the stated objective of helping to ensure the long-term viability of the species. The authors had a daunting task explaining the legal subtleties of landowners' (public and private) efforts to comply with the ESA and the challenge facing the USFWS in developing a recovery plan. The section dealing with the history of management is replete with stories of court battles and legal maneuvering by various parties to either enhance or avoid the actions deemed necessary to protect this species. The evolution of the legal battles that were entwined with various management scenarios could have been confusing, but were handled in a well-designed, straightforward approach, which emphasized that the road to recovering this species has not been easy or without its pitfalls. Rarely has the public been exposed to such behind-the-scenes legal battles on a conservation issue. The authors are to be commended for carefully and, in my opinion, objectively laying out what has been done on private lands and by each of the public landowners, such as the Forest Service and military. The chapter on extinction, legal status, and history of management, along with the last chapter that addresses the uncertain future of the species, are the highlights of this book.

One of the few shortcomings of the book is the minimal discussion of population viability analysis and metapopulation theory as it applies to the long-term recoverability of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Regardless of this limitation, the book is written in a style designed for a wide audience, emphasizing the general public. Thanks to the clarity and thoroughness of the
various chapters, any interested person, even someone with no previous knowledge of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, can comfortably read all components of the book. This account will improve the general public’s appreciation of the magnitude of risks facing this endangered species, and the complexities engendered in efforts to conserve it. I believe this book would be a welcome addition to the library of anyone interested in the conservation and management of endangered species. As the authors so poignantly note in the last chapter, clearly this captivating species is facing an uncertain future.-KATHLEEN E. FRANZREB, Southern Appalachian Mountains Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Unit, USDA Southern Research Station, Department of Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. TN 37901-1071. e-mail: franzreb@utk.edu