



## Globally Important Bird Areas



### *Fort Benning, Georgia*

**Ornithological Highlight:** One of the most important sites for Red-cockaded Woodpecker

**Location:** just east of Columbus

- *Southeastern Coastal Plain* (NABCI Bird Conservation Region #27)
- *South Atlantic Coastal Plain, Southern Piedmont* (PIF Physiographic Area #03, 11)

**Ownership:** U.S. Army

**Size:** 180,000 acres

**Habitats:** mixed pine forest; old-growth upland forest

**Land use:** military training; wildlife conservation

**Site description:** This army installation lies near the fall line between the Piedmont and the Coastal Plain. Most is covered by mixed pine forest, in which the dominant tree is loblolly pine (about 70%) with lesser numbers of longleaf and shortleaf pine, and an understory of sweetgum, dogwood, *Andropogon*, *Ilex*, and wax myrtle. Originally longleaf pine dominated the forest, but after timbering it was replanted to loblolly.

**Birds:** There are 197 active colonies of Red-cockaded Woodpecker on the installation. Other pinewoods species such as Brown-headed Nuthatch are also common, and Bachman's Sparrow also breeds there.

**Conservation issues:** About 94,000 acres are suitable Red-cockaded Woodpecker habitat and are managed for the bird; about 25,000-30,000 acres are burned annually. Artificial nest cavities are in use and the population is carefully monitored. The number of woodpeckers has been steadily increasing; it has grown from about 170 clusters in the past 5 years. The population there has been named one of the 15 recovery populations in the recovery plan for the bird. The Nature Conservancy was involved in the initial phases of the management program and is at present doing a vegetation map of the facility, as well as working on an integrated natural resources plan.

**Visitor information:** The post is open to visitors, though some areas are restricted, due to military activities. Best time to visit is fall through spring.