

# Georgia

## *Ecological Services Field Offices*



photo: USFWS



photo: The University of Georgia



photo: USFWS



photo: John and Karen Hollingsworth ©

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### Photos (top to bottom)

*Robust redhorse conservation efforts.*

*Endangered wood stork nesting.*

*Recreation in coastal swamp ecosystems.*

*Endangered red cockaded woodpecker management.*

### Station Facts

- Established: 1977.
- FY 98 budget: \$1 million.
- Staff: 15 (located in Brunswick and in satellite offices in Athens, Ft. Benning, Darien, Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge and Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge).

### Services Provided To

- Private citizens.
- Federal and state agencies.
- Local governments and community groups.
- Other Service divisions.

### Station Goals

- The Georgia ES Offices are working with landowners, industry, and state and Federal agencies to assure a balance between environmentally sustainable development and natural resource protection. This includes working cooperatively with private landowners to restore and enhance sensitive habitats on private property, participating in wetlands regulation opportunities and participating in watershed and community planning efforts.
- The Georgia ES Offices are responsible for assuring that sensitive species and their habitats are provided the full protection of the law. This includes working with federally funded or permitted projects to eliminate or minimize adverse impacts, and applying the more proactive opportunities within

the Endangered Species Act to work with private landowners for the protection and enhancement of endangered species habitat (i.e., Habitat Conservation Agreements, Safe Harbor Agreements, etc.)

- The Georgia ES Offices work with state and Federal agencies to assure that Georgia's natural resources are not adversely impacted by unacceptable levels of pollutants and contaminants.

### Activity Highlights

- Build partnerships in Murray and Whitfield counties to protect and restore the integrity of the Conasauga River. Partners include the Limestone Valley Resource Conservation and Development Council, Georgia Soil and Water Conservation District, Georgia Wildlife Resources Division, and Conasauga River Valley Alliance.
- Work with Georgia Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia Power, and University of Georgia to prevent the robust redhorse sucker from being listed as an endangered species. This is one of the rarest riverine fish species in the nation. The proactive efforts of the partners to restore habitats and populations along the Oconee River in Baldwin, Washington, Wilkinson and Laurens counties and at the Fish Technology Center in Meriwether County are showing signs of success.
- Work with Georgia Environmental Protection Division on the clean-up of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Superfund Sites in Clark, Dougherty (3), Glynn (4), Houston, Peach (2), Polk (3), Richmond, Tift, and Walker counties.
- Partnerships with local landowners in southwestern Georgia focusing on restoring longleaf pine communities.

## Georgia Ecological Services Field Offices

- Build partnerships with landowners and local communities along the lower Altamaha River to protect and restore the valuable wetland resources of the area.

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### Questions and Answers

*What is the Service doing about the pollution in our fish?*

The Service provides technical assistance to the Environmental Protection Agency regarding the clean-up of hazardous waste sites in an effort to reduce the exposure of fish and wildlife to contaminants.

The Service also works to replace contaminated habitat, which cannot be completely cleaned, with clean habitat in another location. This provides clean areas for fish and wildlife to feed and spawn in, and thus helps reduce the exposure of fish and wildlife to contaminated habitats.

The Service also conducts investigations to understand the nature of the pollution, and to assess whether the pollution is having an adverse impact on fish and wildlife.

*Why is the Service interested in pollution problems?*

Many of the contaminants that are harmful to humans are more harmful to wildlife, because animals have more prolonged or higher exposures to pollutants than humans. Some species, such as the bald eagle and peregrine falcon, were nearly eliminated from our society because of pollution problems. Therefore, to help protect fish and wildlife, the Service strives to understand the nature of the pollution, and to assess whether the pollution is having an adverse impact on our resources.

*How is the Fish and Wildlife Service working with Georgia Department of Transportation to facilitate road construction in Georgia?*

The State of Georgia is rich in natural resources. The coolwater streams of northern Georgia, the slow moving rivers of southern Georgia, the extensive freshwater wetlands of southeastern Georgia, and the coastal estuaries and barrier islands from Savannah to St. Mary's represent a natural resource of significant beauty and productivity. Georgia is also one of the fastest growing states in the nation. Of particular note in Georgia, is the Governor's Road Improvement Project (GRIP) which is designed to provide the infrastructure to support Georgia's rapid growth.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to working with GADOT and the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA), the Federal funding agency, to assure that future delays in road construction are minimized and that natural resource and endangered species issues receive full consideration during project design. To that end, the Service, GADOT, FHWA, and other appropriate regulatory and resource agencies (Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and National Marine Fisheries Service) have jointly developed a planning process (known as the Local Coordination Procedures) for coordinating projects during early planning efforts, to assure that natural resource issues are given full consideration early in the planning process.

*Why is the Fish and Wildlife Service involved in my application to the Corps for a wetland fill permit?*

Many fish and wildlife resources are wetland or water-dependent, including recreational and interjurisdictional fisheries, endangered and threatened species, and migratory birds.

In the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Congress requires that any department or agency of the U.S., or any public or private agency under Federal permit or license consult with the Service whenever they propose or authorize impoundment, diversion, channel deepening, or other modification of a stream or other body of water. The purpose of this consultation was to prevent loss or damage to wildlife resources and provide for development and improvement of these resources in connection with such water resource development.

*Why is the red-cockaded woodpecker endangered when I have seen them all over central and northern Georgia?*

The red-cockaded woodpecker is a small bird that is often confused with two more common species of woodpeckers that inhabit hardwood and pine hardwood forests (especially in central and north Georgia). Most likely, the bird more commonly seen and mistaken for the red-cockaded woodpecker is a "downy woodpecker" or a "red-shafted flicker." The easiest way to distinguish between these species is the habitat you are in. The red-cockaded woodpecker is almost always found in large mature pine forests with open and grassy (almost park-like) mid- and under-story. The other woodpeckers are more commonly seen in typical hardwood or mixed pine/hardwood uplands with a heavy mid- and under-story.