

THE ARMY PROTECTS MORE THAN 150 ENDANGERED SPECIES AROUND THE WORLD. SOMETIMES PROTECTING THESE CREATURES CREATES BIG CHALLENGE WHEN IT COMES TO PRESERVING THEIR HABITAT VS. MILITARY TRAINING. BUT AT FT BRAGG, NC ARMY LEADERS AND ENVIRONMENTALIST FOUND A WAY TO WORK TOGETHER AND GET BOTH JOBS DONE. ENVIRONMENTAL CORRESPONDENT JAVIER HERNANDEZ EXPLAINS.

FOR MORE THAN A DECADE CONTROVERSY HAS SURROUNDED THE ARMY'S EFFORTS TO PROTECT THE RED COCKADED WOODPECKER AND ITS HABITAT

“FIRE MISSION!”

AND THE IMPACT THOSE EFFORTS HAVE ON TRAINING.

“RAM!”

“IT LIMITS SOME OF THE REALISM OF THE TRAINING (CUT), MAKING US TRY TO ADAPT TO AN ENVIRONMENT WE NORMALLY WOULDN'T WANT TO OCCUPY IN.” CPT MARK BARLOW, A BAT 1/377 FA (AIRBORNE)

CAPTAIN BARLOW WOULD LIKE HIS SOLDIERS OUT IN THE WOOD LINE BUT THE WOODPECKERS HAVE ALREADY CLAIMED THAT AREA.

“HE'S RESTRICTED TO WHAT HE CAN DO IN AND AROUND A RCW COLONY.

HE CAN TRANSITION THROUGH IT, HE CAN SPEND UP TO TWO HOURS IN THAT AREA, AND ALSO TRANSITION WITHIN 50 FEET OF THE ACTIVE CAVITY TREE.” – BILL EDWARDS, INSTALLATION RANGE OFFICER

THE WOODPECKERS ONLY BURROW IN THE LONG LEAF PINE TREE. A CENTURY AGO FORESTS OF LONG LEAFS STRETCHED FROM TEXAS TO VIRGINIA, BUT URBAN DEVELOPMENT CONSUMED THEM. ON UNDEVELOPED LAND LIKE FORT BRAGG AND OTHER MILITARY RESERVATIONS, THE BIRDS AND THE LONG LEAF THRIVE.

AS A FEDERAL AGENCY THE ARMY IS REQUIRED BY LAW TO PROTECT THE R-C-W AND ITS HABITAT. ENVIRONMENTALISTS SAY, IT SIMPLY THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

“WE CARE ABOUT THE WOODPECKER BECAUSE IT’S AN INDICATOR OF HOW THE ECOSYSTEM IS DOING.” TERRY OWENS, U.S. FOREST DEPARTMENT

IN OTHER WORDS THE AMOUNT OF LIFE THAT AN AREA CAN SUSTAIN IS A REFLECTION OF HOW HEALTHY THAT AREA IS. AND BESIDES WITH GOOD PLANNING COMMANDERS CAN STILL GET THEIR SOLDIERS THE TRAINING THEY NEED.

“FT BRAGG RANGE MAPS HAVE THE AREAS DESIGNATED THAT WE CAN NOT GO INTO, SO DURING THE PLANING PROCESS WE CAN MAKE SURE WE’RE GOING TO TRAIN IN AREAS THAT WE KNOW WE CAN GET THE MAXIMUM USE OF THE TERRAIN.” – CPT BARLOW

BY PROTECTING THE WOODPECKERS THE ARMY ENSURES FORT BRAGG REMAINS HEALTHY AND AVAILABLE FOR FUTURE SOLDIERS TO TRAIN ON, JAVIER HERNANDEZ FORT BRAGG, NORTH CAROLINA.