

Moody Forest Preserve Interim Report prepared for Georgia Ornithological Society

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TNC in Georgia has made significant strides in restoring habitat and clearing the impact of the Category 4 hurricane at Moody Forest. Helene caused the loss of 27 Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCW) trees due to substantial damage to old-growth longleaf pine. Jumping into action, conservationists installed 19 new artificial cavities within weeks of the hurricane to replace those lost to the storm. Ecological

monitoring showed that all 11 breeding pairs of RCWs at Moody persisted, despite the damage. Of these pairs, 81% had successful breeding nests in 2025, resulting in 20 chicks hatched and nine banded. Notably, this is the only natural area consisting of state and private property with known breeding RCWs in southeast Georgia.



Red-cockaded Woodpecker in the Moody Forest Natural Area, June 2025.

Rejuvenating Ecosystems

TNC in Georgia conducts one of the most significant prescribed fire operations among national chapters, treating tens of thousands of acres annually to rejuvenate forests and foster healthier ecosystems for plants and animals. In 2025, 12 burns were completed in the Moody Natural Area, accounting for 1,037 acres. The burn area represents 33% of the forest's burnable acres and includes areas treated with salvage logging. Through carefully prescribed fire, TNC is creating conditions that countless native species need to thrive while reducing wildfire risk.

Clearing the Way

One year after the storm, nearly 50 acres of the Moody Natural Area have been cleared of debris and downed trees. By using a salvage harvest operation, TNC conservationists can complete the clearing work at a reduced cost. With 80 acres – and counting - of the woodland cleared by salvage harvest, replanting plans are now underway in the most heavily impacted areas. The historic storm wreaked havoc across TNC's southern preserves, and thanks to steadfast partners, 22 miles of roads and firebreaks have been cleared. Clearing storm debris in the area remains critical for habitat restoration and for helping reduce the risk of destructive fires.

Looking Ahead

The awarded 2025 Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grant will be used as leverage to secure a grant through the USDA Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP). As a cost-share component, the funds will be used to increase forest restoration in the natural area. Remaining funds may be directed toward fire crew contracts and support, as well as reforestation efforts. TNC is excited to provide a final report by the end of June 2026.