

Principal Media Contact: DT Townsend  
Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC  
803.952.7566  
[dt-lawrence.townsend@srs.gov](mailto:dt-lawrence.townsend@srs.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## SRNS Invites Students to Study Habitat for Endangered Species at SRS

AIKEN, S.C. – Nov. 23, 2016 – Fifty-nine middle school students from Jackson, S.C., recently visited the Savannah River Site (SRS) to experience how the habitats for endangered species are being protected and created on the 310 mile reservation.

“What normally takes a red-cockaded woodpecker years to create within the trunk of a longleaf pine tree is artificially created by cutting a rectangular hole and inserting a prefabricated wooden box that simulates a natural cavity within the tree,” said Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) Education Outreach Coordinator Kim Mitchell.

Homes for endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers are being created at SRS in 15 minutes within a large pine tree using only a chainsaw and hammer.

The Jackson Middle School (JMS) field trip to SRS was part of a new Project Based Learning (PBL) program initiated through a partnership between SRNS and the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center, which involves the USDA Forest Service-Savannah River. The program offers schools like JMS, the first accredited STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) magnet middle School in Aiken County, an in-depth study concerning endangered species.

The PBL project focused on an intensive study of the red-cockaded woodpecker and the Bachman’s sparrow, two birds of concern in the Southeast due to loss of habitat. The students were immersed in a study of these



*Jackson Middle School (JMS) students (from left) Brianna Gray, Nicholas Jackson, Jahir Bautista-Garcia and Trinity Freeman, along with JMS STEM Coordinator Kishni Neville, learn how nesting is created for endangered birds at SRS from Jennie Haskell, USDA Forest Service-Savannah River.*

# News from Savannah River Nuclear Solutions

SAVANNAH RIVER SITE • AIKEN • SC 29808

---

birds and the habitat best suited for their survival at SRS throughout two consecutive days of field studies, lab studies and eco-hikes.

The field trip began with a hike through the forest traveling down a path to reach a recently installed woodpecker insert. Jennie Haskell, a USDA Forest Service-Savannah River Forester, met the group and discussed how certain trees are selected and the technique used to install an insert.

“This SRNS STEP (Science and Technology Enrichment Program) class is exactly what we’re looking for as part of our Project Based Learning pilot program,” said Kishni Neville, JMS STEM Coordinator. “It’s hands-on and gets the kids physically involved, using all of their senses in a two-way form of communication and learning that’s been proven to be highly effective. It’s really driven home when they teach their fellow students during independent learning time at Jackson Middle.”

Ruth Patrick Science Center instructors Beth Eberhard and Suzanne Kneece led the hike and provided information on the plight of the endangered woodpeckers and threatened sparrows.

“What surprised me most was how few forests are left for these birds,” said AJ Barton, JMS sixth-grade student. “I can’t believe that people would cut down their habitats without caring about their natural environment. That’s why I love how SRS and SRNS are working to positively impact our communities.”

According to Haskell, environmental education builds a foundation in children, helping them to recognize the impact humans have on plants and animals, and the potential for extinction if endangered species are not protected.

“Thankfully, the hard work over the years, striving to create an expanded living environment for the red-cockaded woodpeckers has paid off,” said Haskell. “In 1986 there were three birds at SRS. Now we estimate a population of about 86 family groups.”

*Savannah River Nuclear Solutions is a Fluor-led company whose members are Fluor Federal Services, Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, including the Savannah River National Laboratory, located near Aiken, South Carolina.*

Visit us on the web at [www.savannahrivernuclearsolutions.com](http://www.savannahrivernuclearsolutions.com)

SRNS-2016-520