



# The REDHEAD



## Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

Fall 2014

A Special Committee of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Vol. 8 No. 4

### RHWO NEWS

#### New RHWO Banding Protocols at Cedar Creek

Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve (CCESR) and the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery have worked out a banding protocol. With the conclusion of this protocol, banding at CCESR will continue next year.

The Protocol -

1. All activities of the Cedar Creek Red-headed Woodpecker Project shall be consistent with the stated goals of the Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve: namely research, conservation, and education/outreach. Although primarily a research project, research activities must not jeopardize the conservation status of Cedar Creek's RHWO population, and opportunities for reasonable and compatible public education/outreach should be identified and pursued.
2. All research activities at Cedar Creek will follow standard research station protocols (see <http://www.cbs.umn.edu/explore/field-stations/cedarcreek/research/procedures>), including filing of an annual research plan, use and display of parking permits on all vehicles, use of daily sign-in logs, adherence to site access policies, avoidance of other research sites or activities or management activities (e.g. controlled burns), and annual archiving of data sets.
3. All research activities on RHWO must conform to stipulations specified by the UMN Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Individuals involved in nest-cavity monitoring or banding operations must follow the IACUC protocol. Most importantly, project individuals encountering severely injured birds must immediately and humanely euthanize such birds through cervical dislocation.
4. Capture of RHWO for banding purposes may be accomplished year round using Potter traps, mist nets, taped territorial calls, and other techniques as approved by USFWS and IACUC. Personnel involved in banding will follow approved protocols set forth in the USFWS banding permit and UMN IACUC, and shall submit banding records promptly to the USGS banding laboratory.

(Continued on page 3, Protocol 5)

### A Note from the Chair

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Fall 2014

The Redhead has kept you up on the work to reverse the decline and encourage recovery of the RhWR. While many efforts are devoted to research, we need to ask what more is possible to *create, preserve and restore habitat* for the RhWR.

Members like you are the key to success to help the RhWR. When you maintain or renew your membership in RhWR, you contribute to necessary research as well as improving the landscape for this iconic bird.

Recently, you might have received a phone call from a RhWR volunteer concerning the RhWR and changes in our membership policy. Many of you had stories and photos to share when called that tell us you support our work.

This newsletter is one way to share member information, answer questions and chart our progress, so please let us hear from you. Your ideas encourage all of us to help preserve the RhWR.

Because dues cover only 60% of the operating expenses of RhWR, starting in January 2015 the yearly membership fee will be \$20.00 per calendar year. The newsletter will continue to be sent to all dues paying members. For more information, see the membership box on page 2.

Your participation is always welcome at our events, including our annual open house at Cedar Creek (the second or third week in June). All monthly meetings are open and are usually held the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the 50<sup>th</sup> and France Lunds store Community Room. See our website or most recent newsletter, *The Redhead*, for details. **Note: Meetings are not held November-January.**

We are always in need of additional surveyors to help us find RHWO nests at Cedar Creek in May and June. If you are interested, call Chet Meyers at (612) 374-5581.

Thank you for your continued financial and volunteer support.

Chet Meyers

## Hiding Stored Nuts



In the above picture, a banded male RHWO, who has nested at Cedar Creek for at least the last 3 years, has a piece of bark in his beak. This picture was taken on Tuesday, October 14th. This woodpecker has been working for weeks storing acorns in crevices and tree holes for winter food. Now he is plugging up the holes with pieces of bark so other animals cannot get at his food supply. He will shape the piece of bark so it is just the right size and then take it to the hole and put it in, as he is doing in the picture below.

Siah St. Clair



## RhWR Contact Information

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## Change in Membership Dues

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) receives almost all its operating revenues from membership dues. For the past two months, we have been trying to contact all members, old and new. If you have not received a call or e-mail from us recently, here is information you need to know.

- 1) Beginning January 1, 2015 basic membership will be \$20.00 for the calendar year (verses July 1 – June 30).
- 2) Members who contribute more will receive other benefits along with the newsletter. Those contributing \$50.00 will also receive a handsome embroidered patch. Those contributing \$100.00 will receive the newsletter, a patch, and a personal tour of the Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve.
- 3) The newsletter will continue to be sent to dues paying members. We will honor a short grace period.

Send your membership applications to -

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis  
RhWR  
PO Box 3801  
Minneapolis, MN 55403-0801

Thank you for your continued support.

## Note From the Editor

The feature topic this month is - "Why have a banding protocol?" This question hopefully is self explanatory when the protocol is read. Last Spring there was a lengthy discussion on MNBird about banding. Hopefully this protocol will relieve some of the anxiety some birders have about banding. The RhWR has learned much about the RHWO behavior as a result of banding, so that we know who is where etc.

Jim Howitz has wrote (with pictures) about an awesome observation he made this last summer. This coming summer the RhWR hopes to have several trail cams in place to catch such events and others. The bull snake does help

in answering some of our questions, but not all of them. For example, what happens to the missing young? Do adults remove fecal sacks?

The proposed use of the trail cams may answer these questions, but trail cams can take an awfully lot of pictures! We will need someone to slog through them to pick out the gems. So keep an eye out for a volunteer activity you can participate in without being bitten by bugs!

*Continued on page 3, Editor*

## Observed New RHWO Predator

I had spent most of the day on July 16, 2014 trying to count how many fledglings were produced by the various Red-headed Woodpecker pairs at the Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve (CCESR). I had only about 45 minutes before I needed to leave for home, but I thought that I might have enough time to find a brood that could be close to the gate where I would be leaving. I happened to see an adult RHWO and a fledgling as I was driving, and so I stopped. I had glimpsed a fledgling there the previous day, and was unsure if any babies were still in the nest. The adult flew toward the nest tree and I thought that I could see something sticking out of the nest hole. I thought that it would be a nestling looking out or an adult tipping into the hole to feed a nestling. I looked through my binoculars and what I saw is in the photo. A bullsnake was looking out of the nest hole, which was 16 feet up in a live northern pin oak. I was puzzled as to how the snake could get so high up in the tree. I hoped that the snake would exit the hole before I had to leave. The snake continued to look out of the nest hole for about twenty minutes, and then slowly descended using any available branches for support. When the snake was about seven feet from the ground, its rear end lost contact with the tree and it fell to the ground. I took several pictures of the snake as it descended (none of them good). I could not see a bulge in the snake, so I doubted that it had swallowed a baby. Brittney Larson had seen three babies in the nest, so I knew that the snake could have swallowed at most three babies. I saw two fledglings near the nest while watching the snake, and so was sure that the snake could have swallowed at most one baby.

On July 26, I saw all three babies with the adults. Evidently, the snake reached the nest hole after the babies fledged, or its presence near the hole induced any baby who had not yet fledged to do so. Bullsnakes typically forage on the ground or in tunnels for rodents, but do take bird eggs and nestlings. At Cedar Creek I have seen them depredate a Brown Thrasher nest and a chickadee nest in a stump only one foot high. I have seen them in dead stumps, but never higher than six feet off the ground. I do not know why the snake would be so far up in a tree. The babies likely were already gone. Even if a nestling had been looking out the hole and vocalizing, the snake likely could not have seen or heard it. Red-headed Woodpecker nestlings are untidy. We have not observed the adults practicing nest sanitation. The nestlings' excrement apparently just accumulates at the bottom of the nest. The babies evidently perch on the sides of the cavity after they are several days old rather than sitting on the bottom. Perhaps the snake detected the aroma from the wastes in the nest cavity and climbed the tree to investigate. Bullsnakes are large and active during the day and so we would likely have seen them in trees if they climbed them with any frequency. Again this year more than 80% of Red-headed Woodpecker pairs at Cedar Creek fledged at least one baby, so predation by snakes is likely rare. In any event, the final score that day was woodpeckers 3, snake 0.

- Jim Howitz



*Protocol 5, continued from page 1*

5. New and/or additional data gathering opportunities/ techniques/methods shall be approved by a member of the RWPR Oversight Committee before onset of the new data gathering technique. Activities not covered under the current IACUC protocol or banding permit may not be implemented until a revised protocol or permit has been issued.

*Editor (Continued from page 2)*

Since very few of you responded with comments about what the featured article should be next quarter, that question will be eliminated from the last page. I am still interested, but will not publish the solicitation. I will continue to ask for observations and references to articles that are of interest to you.

- Jerry Bahls, Editor

## Starlings and Red-headed Woodpeckers

In the Winter 2009 "The REDHEAD", there was a feature article about starlings. At that time it was stated that "Starlings are believed to be a competing species." The observation has been made by some in the RhWR that it appears that whenever starlings and red-headed woodpeckers (RHWO) compete directly, the RHWO will always win, but the RHWO will not be back the next year and consequently while winning the tactical battle they lose the strategic battle. This can be observed in many small towns across the Midwest. There are an over abundance of starlings and few, if any, RHWO's, who historically had been a main stay in these towns.

Now there is evidence that the starlings ARE a factor in the population decline of the RHWO. A paper (unpublished) presented by Dr Barbara Frei recently at the American Ornithology Union Conference gave evidence for this observation. The RhWR has been in contact with Dr. Frei and hope to have more details in future "The REDHEAD" issues.

## Winter Issue Topics?

Send your observations and references to Jerry Bahls (rhwracm@comcast.net) by January 15th. Also send any future topics to be featured in the newsletter. Have you been experimenting trying to attract RHWO's? Let us know about your work!

## Next RhWR Meetings

The RhWR usually meets on the 3rd Wednesday each month at 7:00 pm at the Lund's Store 1 block west of 50th & France in Edina. We take Nov. through Jan. off. The next meeting will be Feb. 18, 2015. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please encourage your friends to attend also. Check our website at [www.RedheadRecovery.org](http://www.RedheadRecovery.org) for current information.

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery  
Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis  
PO Box 3801  
Minneapolis MN 55403-0801

# Save that Snag!

Place  
Stamp  
Here



## Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Program Membership Application

*I'd like to join!* Please add me as a member of the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) at the rate of \$20/year! Please send my membership information to the address below.

*I'd like to renew!* Renew my RhWR membership for \$20/year.

*Yes, I'd like to join Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis also!* Please add me as a member of the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (\$20) and the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis (\$12) at the rate of \$32/year. Please send my membership information and *Kingfisher* to the address below.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**Send this application and make check payable to:**

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis  
RhWR  
PO Box 3801  
Minneapolis, MN 55403-0801