



The REDHEAD



Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

Fall 2019

A Special Committee of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Vol. 13 No. 4

RHWO NEWS

Red-headed Woodpecker Nest Camera Project

One of the ongoing and perplexing questions about Red-headed Woodpecker (RHWO) breeding ecology at Cedar Creek is our continued observation of regular brood reduction in many nests each breeding season. Most nests that we have observed start out with 4-7 eggs but fledge only 2 to 3 nestlings. We have observed this pattern for several years, but it is unclear why it occurs. There are a number of possible explanations, some of which include incomplete incubation, food quality, differences in food availability between siblings, hatching asynchrony, and overproduction of offspring by parents as a "bet hedging" strategy.

In early 2019, the RHWO research committee decided that one way to learn what may be happening regarding brood reduction would be to have a camera in or just outside nest cavities to record nest events day and night. We experimented with various internal nest camera systems and these continue to be challenging to implement in the field. As an alternative, we placed a trail camera outside a nest cavity a few feet from the nest hole as a trial run this past summer. We watched carefully to see if the adults were upset with the presence of the camera, but they returned immediately after we left and ignored the camera. They even used it as a landing spot on occasion.



Hairy Woodpecker

9/8/2018 7:35 PM

While this camera was not made for photography of objects at short distances we were able to identify color bands and observe behavior. We now have thousands of pictures and videos of interesting RHWO activity and documentation of other woodpeckers and flying squirrels using the nest

Continued on page 2, Camera

A Note from the Chair

Fall 2019

We are learning more every day to help in the recovery of Red-headed Woodpeckers, and getting the word out to a large community of interested folks. Much was accomplished by our volunteers and researchers over this past 2019 breeding season. Lead researcher Dr. Elena West and research technicians Sarah Stewart and April Strzelczyk were able to place tracking devices on 31 adult and 15 juvenile RHWOs. 36 different nesting trees were monitored, often daily, and extensive data collected. The Education and Habitat team made over 400 contacts around the state regarding RHWOs. This includes tending tables at numerous events, training volunteers, conducting surveys, and interactions with land managers. A big thank you is well deserved by everyone who helped with time and funds.

While it seems that this year's season for Red-headed Woodpeckers is winding down, this looks like another year that many of the Cedar Creek Ecosystems Science Reserve RHWO population may stay for the winter. Adults and juveniles are still caching acorns and defending territories as I write this in late October. In hopes of documenting winter behavior of the RHWOs, we are planning to install two cameras outside roost cavities in the next few weeks. This may reveal more insights into what day and night life is like for RHWOs in a season where we know very little. Between the tracking devices and the cameras we should gain a view into another piece of the RHWO puzzle.

Please consider a donation or increased membership as we begin raising funds for 2020 to continue this important work to understand and help with the recovery of this beautiful and important woodpecker whose population is in serious decline. Help with our goal to reverse that decline and eventually increase RHWO population numbers.

Siah St. Clair, Steering Committee Chair



8/30/2018 8:38 AM

Note From the Editor

The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) has begun visioning meetings to plan for the next 20 years. During this time it is envisioned that positive results will be observed for the woodpecker's recovery. In order to accomplish this recovery, the organization has to have talented and dedicated volunteers. A list with a brief description of the task of the currently needed volunteers is on the back page of this newsletter. Please send a note to any of those listed in the Contact Information at the bottom of this page if you or someone you know has an interest in helping us in the near and long term with the recovery of this iconic bird. Clearly many of us will not be able to continue our efforts for the next 20 years. We need to recruit new volunteers to keep our organization healthy for the next 20 years.

The 2020 membership renewal information is listed in the next column as a reminder to renew your membership. Any membership checks received after October 1st will be applied to the 2020 membership. Also note that we will again be accepting donations of \$150 and more to name a bird receiving any of our electronic tracking devices. Current plans do not include gps pin-point devices but do include radio transmitters. We thank all who have contributed.

The Editor apologizes for the quality of the photos in this newsletter. As noted in the article the current camera's focus is not set properly to give clear focus. The article also notes the future cameras will be focused correctly. Getting this feature adds cost for the camera, but will give us the ability to better interpret what is occurring in the photo. These few photos shows the value having an "eye" on the nest holes for 24/7 can have for the understanding of the biology and survival of RHWOs. The cameras are currently programed to take photos at least every minute. This produces a very large number of photos that have to be viewed. This volume of photos will probably require a skilled reviewer to determine the value of each photo. Thus another opportunity for a couple of volunteers may be needed during the coming year.

Jerry Bahls, Editor

Membership Dues

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) receives almost all its operating revenues from membership dues.

- 1) Basic memberships are \$20.00/calendar year.
- 2) Those contributing \$50.00 or more will also receive a handsome embroidered patch along with the newsletter.
- 3) The newsletter will be published for members.

Send your membership applications and renewals to -

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

Thank you for your continued support.

Camera (Continued from page 1)

cavity after the nestlings fledged. One of the drawbacks of using this kind of trail camera is that many of the images are out of focus and fuzzy. We decided to experiment with use of more high-powered trail cameras, which we purchased this fall. These cameras were focused in the factory to 3 feet, which we believe will allow for the collection of improved images. We plan to place these cameras near RHWO roosts this winter to test their feasibility and we may order up to 8 more cameras for the nesting season in 2020.



RhWR Contact Information

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RhWR Fund Raiser

The Redheaded Woodpecker Recovery has a fund raiser to help us get the funds we need to continue our research efforts. **Jim Stengel** can be contacted by phone at **612 721-9083** or by email at **slheidiss@yahoo.com**. If you know of an organization or individual that will donate money for research, please contact Jim.

Dated March 1, 2040

RhWR Records 9th Rise in RHWO Population

“The goal of Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) is to reverse the decline and encourage the recovery of Red-headed Woodpecker (RHWO) populations through the creation, preservation, and restoration of habitat, and with research, and public education.”

To achieve this goal as the headline in the year 2040 implies, careful planning and execution of a plan is required. The RhWR has begun visioning meetings to prepare the organization so that in 2040 this headline can be written. As we continue with the data collection and research on RHWOs at Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve we also need to consider the value of data collection with a wider geographic scope and how to reach out with the results of the research completed to date. We anticipate publishing research based Best Management Practices (BMP) in 2021 which will be used by public and private land managers that will have a positive impact on the recovery of RHWOs. While we plan to continue conducting research into the future, its direction will be determined by the results of the research currently occurring. During these first years emphasis primarily has been on raising funds to conduct much needed research. As we continue this project, it is expected that funds will also be necessary for outreach and dissemination of the BMP document.

The first RhWR Visioning meeting chaired by Siah St. Clair was held on September 24th with 11 interested people participating. The purpose of this first meeting was to give direction and feedback on efforts for short term and long term goals and planning for the RhWR. Background information from the Minnesota Breeding Bird Survey 2017 and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (*“Birds of North America 2017”*) was presented. Their opening comments on existing types of data on RHWOs and specific needs for additional data on RHWOs were noted. It was also noted that the RhWR has a respected history—through newspaper articles and our extensive significant partners. We have unique scientific data that will lead to a BMP document in 2021 and more publications addressing new information about RHWO biology and behavior.

The group then interacted on the four subjects of - *“What’s Working?”*, *“What isn’t working?”*, *“What’s Possible?”* and *“What’s Next?”*. The existing RhWR vision and a mission statement with draft goals to work with or use as a starting point were provided. Extensive lists of each subject were generated. A few comments for each are listed below –

What’s Working? – 1) Engaging various stakeholders; 2) Research at Cedar Creek; 3) Informing the public; 4) Volunteering in general

What isn’t working? – 1) Various comments about volunteer interactions; 2) Need to learn more about preferred RHWO habitats; 3) Understand relationship between outstate RHWO Pairs and Nesting RHWOs

Continued in next column, Planning

Education and Habitat

In addition to offering bird hikes at Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve (CCESR) the Habitat and Education Committee works closely with our seven Habitat Partner agencies to encourage the development and expansion of oak savanna habitat for our charismatic woodpecker. Those agencies include:

**Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve
Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge
St. Croix State Park
Camp Ripley National Guard Training Center
The Belwin Conservancy
Minnesota River Valley National Wildlife Refuge**

We will report on some of those agencies in future copies of *“The REDHEAD”*. But in this issue we want to highlight some good news from our work with **Nerstrand Big Wood State Park (NBWSP)** near Northfield, MN. We have worked with and surveyed NBWSP for ten years. In past surveys we have focused on the park campground where there regularly has been one successful nesting pair of RHWO. However, over the past few years the water table has come up in the park and flooded hundreds of acres of forest and the manager has left the dead trees intact. There are over five miles of trails through this flooded area. This spring, Keith Olstad and Chet Meyers walked a one-mile loop and found one pair of RHWO with a juvenile, another obvious pair of RHWO, and a lone single bird... that’s six birds in one fifth of flooded land. We are confident there are more birds in the four fifths area that we did not survey.

We will return in the spring of 2020 with six surveyors to cover all the flooded area trails. In addition to Keith and Chet’s survey, the campground hosts reported a successful pair with juvenile in the campground, for a total of eight RHWO. Finally the manager has put all our educational materials on the central bulletin board for visitors to see. If you live in the area and/or would like to help with our spring survey in June please contact Chet Meyers at <chetmeyers0@gmail.com>.

Chet Meyers

Planning (Continued from previous column)

What’s Possible? – 1) Expand membership; 2) Expanding the monitoring of data statewide; 3) Establish a flyway partnership to find banded RHWOs

What’s Next? – 1) Sustained baseline data collection at Cedar Creek; 2) Identify benefactors to fund a part-time position to organize an ongoing committee of donors; 3) Color-banding RHWOs outside of Cedar Creek

A discussion of the responses from the September 23rd meeting will be discussed at the Steering Committee meeting on November 20 at 7PM at the Brookdale Library. The committee will organize common and stand alone threads, and discuss next steps. Actions on some may be initiated right away, and others will take time to plan and develop before action can begin.

RhWR Volunteer Opportunities

The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) has a need for many volunteers now and through the fall. Here is a list of them in the order of priority and a very brief description of the duties -

Communications Representative on Steering Committee - Oversee website, newsletter and Facebook™ page and be communications advocate on Steering Committee

Newsletter Editor - Coordinate publication of newsletter
Webmaster - Manage the RhWR website

Lead Citizen Science Projects - Recruit and organize volunteers of RhWR citizen science projects

Do Citizen Science Projects (2020) - Monitor roost sites, Monitor mast (Please note requires CCESR training.)

Email rhwracm@comcast.net to sign up for any of these volunteer opportunities or to ask any questions.

Next RhWR Steering Committee Meeting

The RhWR Steering Committee usually meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm. The next meeting will be on November 20, 2019 at the Brookdale Library at 6125 Shingle Creek Pkwy in Brooklyn Center at 7:00 pm. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please encourage friends to attend also. For current information check our website at www.RedheadRecovery.org.

Important Dates

Steering Committee Meeting	Nov. 20, 2019
Research Team Meeting	Dec. 4, 2019
Cedar Creek CBC	Dec. 21, 2019
RhWR Visioning Task Force	TBA

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

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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 at right.

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

Yes, I'd like to contribute to Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis also! Please add me as a member of the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (\$20) and as a donor to Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis (suggested donation \$20). Please send my membership information to the address at right.

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