



# The REDHEAD

## Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery



Fall 2020

A Special Committee of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Vol. 14 No. 4

### RHOW NEWS

### A Note from the Chair

The 2020 red-headed Woodpecker (RHOW) field season at the Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve (CCESR) came to a close in September and despite a number of constraints due to the Coronavirus pandemic, it was a very productive season. A large number of RHOW that overwintered at CCESR this past winter also nested on site, so we (the research team) were able to hit the ground running in early May to begin nest monitoring, recapturing birds that were marked with GPS devices in 2019, and marking a new sample of birds with tracking devices. We were lucky to have two extraordinary field technicians, April Strzelczyk (joining us for a second year) and Kirsti Carr. Some highlights of our field work include:

- 57 RHOW nest trees monitored and a total of 68 nest attempts (first and second attempts combined)

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### Photo Reviews Needed

The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) this summer installed a total of 9 nest cameras to capture photos of activity outside of RHOW nests. A goal was to capture photos that possibly explain why there is a relatively low fledge rate per nest for RHOWs. Examples of photos taken by these cameras are shown on page 3 of this issue.

Since these cameras are operating 24/7 all year, a lot of photos are taken. All of these photos need to be examined and pared down so that our experts are not burdened with extraneous photos. Patterned after Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve's "Eyes on the Wild" (they have over 100 cameras observing the Reserve), they have enlisted help through Zooniverse (<https://www.zooniverse.org/about>) citizen scientists to look at all the photos to pare down the many photos that have nothing of interest. The RhWR will be announcing a similar project to help with our photos. Watch for an announcement very soon about how you can participate. When you see it, please spread the word to your friends and acquaintances.

**Fall 2020**

As I write this message migrating White-crowned, White-throated, and Fox Sparrows are at my feeders, but almost all the Red-headed Woodpeckers (RHOWs) have dispersed or migrated from the research area at Cedar Creek Ecosystems Science Reserve (CCESR) for the winter. With 24 RHOWs with GPS tracking devices leaving the site, there is a good chance that several or many may return in the spring, and that the devices may record where they traveled during the fall and winter. Some of the returning birds may be recaptured and tracking devices removed and data downloaded. Finding out where RHOWs travel and the routes they use during the winters when they leave CCESR has been one of the primary goals of the research.

Dr. Elena West and her team spent the final weeks of their field season collecting data on nest tree density, or tree hardness. The results from this study will help researchers understand the role of wood hardness in nest site selection and in limiting nesting opportunities. Ultimately, this information will be used to guide land managers and private land owners working on red-headed woodpecker habitat restoration efforts.

Nine RHOW nest cameras will continue to take videos through the winter. Researchers placed these cameras during the summer of 2020 and are working to develop a project accessible to the public so that community scientists can help classify the behaviors captured in the nearly 100,000 videos. Researchers hope that the cameras will record additional information on the presence and activities of other animal species that use RHOW nest cavities throughout the year.

Even though RHOWs are nearly not present in the research area right now work continues on processing and assessing the extensive data collected during this past season. The excellent, small, research team found more nests than have been recorded in past years. More is being learned and documented about

*Continued on page 2, Chair*

## Note From the Editor

Please stay safe while the Covid is resurging this fall and probably this winter. Let's hope that the virus is fully contained or an effective vaccine is available in early April to allow us to renew our work at helping the recovery of the RHWO.

We want to thank our research team for their very hard work this past summer. They had to work under very strict Covid 19 protocols to comply with University of Minnesota guidelines, which included living separately off site. We also want to thank the donors who helped provide the funds to house and reimburse extra transportation cost for our researchers. These extra expenses amounted to almost \$10,000. We also want to thank the University of Minnesota for allowing our team to continue their research at Cedar Creek Ecosystems Science Reserve.

We are again entering the membership renewal time for the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery. We use the membership fees for administrative expenses, for habitat and education and to fund our research. Please renew as soon as you can so that we can make plans for the coming year. We encourage you give more than the \$20 membership fee. We especially like the \$50 and \$100 checks.

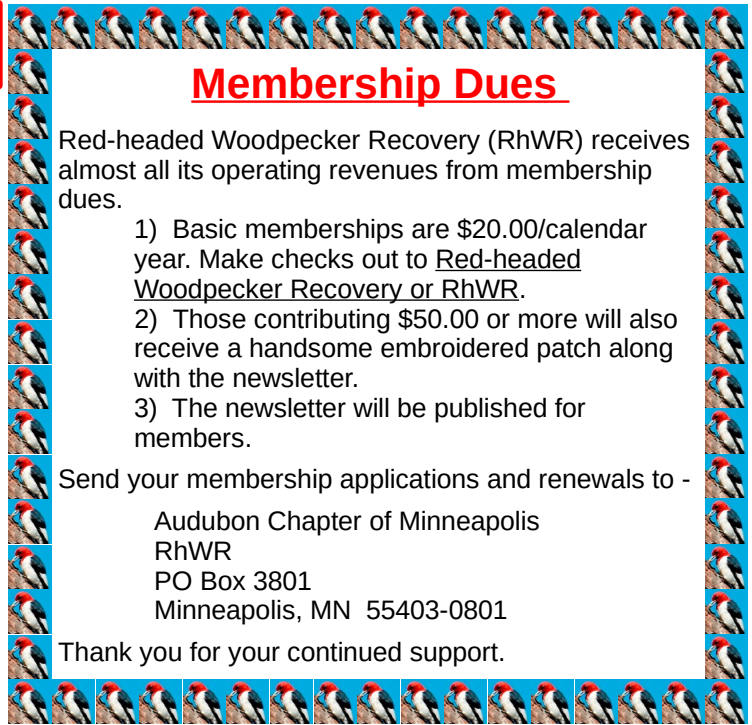
Again stay safe and plan to get out and look for RHWO nests this coming summer and send your sightings to us.

Chair, *continued from page 1*

the daytime and nighttime experience of RHWOs than has ever been known before. With this information the process of managing habitat for nesting RHWOs will be greatly improved.

Expanding RHWO research statewide will possibly begin next year, and with it the potential to greatly expand the knowledge to improve the future of RHWOs. Thanks to all for your continued support for this important and beautiful bird.

Siah St. Clair, Steering Committee Chair



## Membership Dues

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

- 1) Basic memberships are \$20.00/calendar year. Make checks out to Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery or RhWR.
- 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.

## Thank You to Winona Bird Club

The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) has been encouraging Audubon Chapters and Bird Clubs to check their areas for nesting RHWOs. We've held training sessions at a few locations to encourage them to search for nest sites. We want to thank the Winona Bird Club for their work this past summer in the Trempealeau Refuge. They sent Dr. Elena West, RhWR principal researcher, a very detailed report on specific locations where RHWOs were seen or heard last summer. This is exactly the sort of help we were hoping for when we gave the training sessions. This is the type of information we need for the next phase of our RHWO research, which will be focused more in the whole state and possibly region.

If you would like to have a nest site training session given to your Chapter or Bird Club, please contact Jim Stengel at [slheidiss@yahoo.com](mailto:slheidiss@yahoo.com) or Jerry Bahls at [rhwracm@comcast.net](mailto:rhwracm@comcast.net).

## RhWR Contact Information

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Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

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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](mailto:slheidiss@yahoo.com). If you know of an organization or individual that will donate money for research, please contact Jim.

- 45 of the nests we monitored successfully fledged at least one bird.
- Most first nests had fledglings by the end of June while fledging stretched into August and early September for second nest attempts.
- We marked 24 adult RHWOs with GPS devices—nearly all of which appear to have left CCESR for the winter, which may be due to the lower than usual acorn count. The fact that so many adults appear to have migrated this year is an exciting prospect for their return to CCESR in the spring when we hope to recapture these birds to retrieve their movement data.

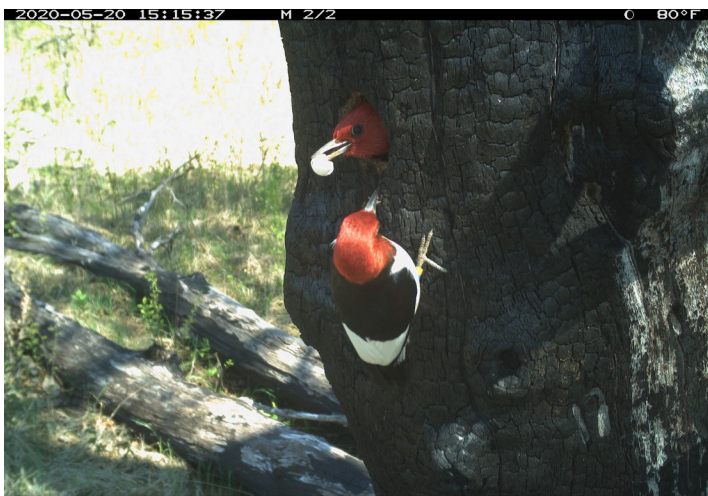
Another highlight of the 2020 field season is the installation of 9 nest cameras that have revealed some very interesting findings about how RHWOs and other animals use cavities. These cameras will continue to take videos of nest cavities during the fall, winter, and spring. We are working to develop a project accessible to the public so that volunteers can help classify the behaviors captured in these videos. Our hope is that the cameras will record additional information on the presence and activities of other animal species that use RHWO nest cavities throughout the year. Stay tuned.

We also completed a project to measure RHWO nest tree density; the results of which will help us understand the role of wood hardness in nest site selection and in limiting nesting opportunities. Ultimately, this information will be used to guide land managers and private land owners working on red-headed woodpecker habitat restoration efforts around the state.

We hope to be able to continue field work in spring 2021 as we move onto the next phase of our research.

Jim Howitz and Elena West

## Photos from trail cameras



Egg shell removal



In the bison enclosure



Raccoon investigating nest



Note camera frame structure

## RhWR Volunteer Opportunities

The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) has a need for many volunteers now and through the winter. 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) – **All projects at**

**CCESR are cancelled until further notice.** Watch for information to monitor nest camera photos at home.

Email rhwracm@comcast.net to sign up for any of these volunteer opportunities or to ask any questions. Send this info to your friends and bird lovers.

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

## Next RhWR Steering Committee Meeting

The RhWR Steering Committee usually meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm. The next *virtual* meeting will be on November 18, 2020 at 7:00 pm. If you would like to participate, please contact Siah St. Clair to be added to the call list. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please encourage friends to attend also. For information check our website at [www.RedheadRecovery.org](http://www.RedheadRecovery.org).

### Important Dates

Research Team Meeting	Nov. 5, 2020
ACM Board Meeting	Nov. 23, 2020
Steering Committee Meeting	Nov. 18, 2020

ALL meetings are *virtual* until further notice.

# Save that Snag!

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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.

*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