

The REDHEAD



Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

Spring 2017

A Special Committee of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Vol. 11 No. 2

RHWO NEWS

Introducing the RhWR Research Team

The Redheaded Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) has hired a team of avian researchers to continue the studies that we began in 2008. This summer we will embark on a very aggressive and high tech series of projects. In addition to our usual monitoring of red-headed woodpecker (RHWO) nests and using a camera to collect data on nesting; color banding nearly all adult RHWO's at Cedar Creek Ecosystems Science Reserve (CCESR); and photographing RHWO's catching insects and trying to identify the insect species that we've done in recent years, we will be expanding the data collected to include taking blood samples for later analysis. We also plan to attach radios to monitor their location and attach geolocators to determine where they go during the winter period if they leave CCESR.

To assist us this summer to do this advanced research, we have hired Elena West, who will be defending her research



this summer at the University of Wisconsin – Madison as part of her PhD requirements. Her PhD advisors are Dr. Bill Karasov and Dr. Zach Peery and her research is entitled “*Research and analysis on the impact of human-derived food*

sources on the foraging behavior and ecology of Steller's Jays in California protected areas.” She has received several grants and awards and has published five peer reviewed papers and given several presentations to professional societies. She has spent over 10 years monitoring bird behavior and has banded over 700 birds. She has used radio telemetry to analyze bird movement. She has also used stable isotope ecology, molecular ecology and ecoimmunological assays in her studies. She has used several software packages to analyze data collected.

Soon-to-be Dr. Elena West will be directing our research

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A Note from the Chair

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Spring 2017

As I write these notes for our Spring newsletter, it is 45°F outside, with a low of 39°F scheduled for tonight. So remind me again, why do we live here? Oh yes... it's to keep the riffraff out of our state.

Well, spring will come. A sure sign are the hundreds of yellow-rumped warblers I have seen the past few days -- sadly, grounded by our cold wet weather. On a more positive note, on Saturday, April 22nd we held our annual RHWO training session at Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve where 35 individuals signed up to help with our spring survey of nest trees, and to participate in a number of new citizen science observation projects that include identifying food adults bring to juveniles, location of roosting cavities (as opposed to nesting cavities), time spent in the cavity, etc. In addition, this year, with the help of our new research coordinator Elena West, we will be tagging birds with different computerized location devices so that we can determine where birds spend their winter months and how far juvenile disperse from their birthing place at Cedar Creek. So, lots of exciting work going on.

Of course we will continue our advocacy work with Sherburne and the Minnesota River Valley National Wildlife Refuges, Big Woods State Park, the Belwin Conservancy and selected golf courses, helping them develop good savanna habitat for our woodpecker friends. We will also, **finally**, have an opportunity to visit Camp Ripley National Guard Headquarters and do some cursory surveying of their abundant RHWO population that we know is present there. And we will hold our annual RHWO Celebration Day sometime in the middle of June. So, stay tuned. There is a lot going on and we continue to need your support for our work.

Chet Meyers, Chair

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this summer and if funding can be obtained beyond this summer, she may continue these studies at least another year, maybe two. She will be collaborating with Dr. Henry Streby of the University of Toledo who will be doing comparable research in Ohio on RHWO's. She will also be directing several Citizen Science projects. In addition to Elena, our research team will be joined this summer by

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Note From the Editor

We have begun one of the most interesting summers for the Redheaded Woodpecker Recovery. Some exciting research will be conducted this summer. We will be doing several Citizen Science projects. If you would like to help with this work, please contact Chet Meyers at chetmeyers@visi.com or 612 374-5581. If you do volunteer you will need to receive some training to work at Cedar Creek by CCSR personnel or by experienced RhWR personnel.

When you are out birding or not and you see a red-headed woodpecker (RHWO), please record it on eBird and fill out the extended form. We are using eBird to monitor RHWO's. We have been able to track them as they return this spring. And if it is near your home or an area that you frequent, please return in June to see if you can find a nest. Again record that siting on eBird.

While we will be busy working at CCSR this summer, we have not forgotten the rest of our Midwestern area. We are hoping to reconfirm the clusters that we have identified and hopefully find some more with your help.

Jerry Bahls, Editor

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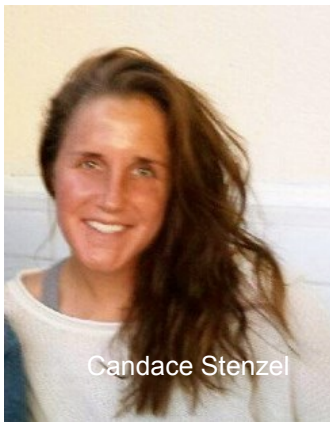
The goal was to study saki behavioral and vocal responses to aerial vs terrestrial predators. After receiving her BS degree, she spent two years interning at both zoos and ornithological research organizations. One of her intern organizations was Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, located along the Appalachian Trail. Her typical tasks were counting migratory raptors, conducting raptor surveys, creating raptor movement maps on GIS, and assisting with long term studies of the American kestrel reproductive ecology by monitoring nestboxes, banding and documenting kestrel nestling's growth. Another research organization she interned at was the Point Blue Conservation Science located outside of the San Francisco Bay area. Her research included locating and monitoring nests of 7 different songbird species, mapping their territories, relocating individual birds by their color bands and banding and measuring nestlings. She was an active member of The Wildlife Society at UW-Stevens Point and participated in their Saw-Whet Owl Research Project where she gained hands-on experience in using mist-nets to capture, band, sex, weigh, and age saw-whet owls.

Jesse Beck is a Wisconsin native and received his Bachelor of Science degree in Biogeoscience from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He currently has a Nature's Valley Trust Shorebird Internship and is working with a small team along the coast of South Africa's Western Cape focusing on conservation of breeding shorebirds near Piettenberg Bay, especially the White-Fronted Plover. Before this he was an Avian Point Count Technician conducting surveys in seven units of Stephens State Forest south of Des Moines, IA. He was responsible for identifying and recording locations of all eastern birds by sight and sound.



Before that he was a Volunteer Research Assistant onsite at the Tambopata Research Center working on the Tambopata Macaw Project (Proyecto Guacamayo) in Tambopata National Reserve, Peru. The Macaw Project is a long-term project established to understand and conserve the six macaw species that occur in Tambopata National Reserve. During his three months with the project, he was expected to

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Candace Stenzel

two Ornithological Research Technicians - Candace Stenzel and Jesse Beck.

Candace Stenzel grew up in the Twin Cities area and received her Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and will be receiving her Master of Science degree in Biology in May 2017 from Winthrop University. This past summer, she was in the Peruvian Amazon studying saki monkeys for her Master's Thesis.

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conduct various surveys, climb up to 37 meters to retrieve macaw nestlings, hike across rough and muddy terrain while carrying heavy equipment, enter data and give presentations to tourists. Surveys included avian point counts, transects, nest observations and monitor claylicks.

As can be seen from their experience, we have assembled a very skilled team to carry on our research this summer. Please join us in welcoming them to our research team.

Jerry Bahls

RHOWO Nest Cavity Portal Making Process 2017

The Red Headed Woodpecker Recovery Project has been working throughout the winter to develop a significantly expanded research plan for the Red Headed Woodpecker nesting cluster at Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve in East

Bethel. One of the primary goals is to place tracking devices on nestling Red Headed Woodpeckers to determine where they go after leaving the nest.

To accomplish this goal a minimally intrusive method is required to gain access to the young woodpeckers while they are still in the nest. Dr. Karen Weibe, in a study of Flickers in Canada, cut portals into Flicker nest trees to access young birds for banding and attaching tracking gear. The technique was very successful in her study and we have decided to use the same process to cut a portal into the side of the nest cavity just large enough to reach in and remove a young bird and quickly replace it after putting devices on it.



In mid April we received all the permissions required to accomplish this work, and we began cutting the portals as quickly as possible, to try to have as many in place before the woodpeckers returned from migration. We need portals in about 10-12 active nests to meet our goals.

The process to cut the portals is a bit involved. We first have to locate previously active nest cavities in trees where the cavity is low enough for our 24 foot ladder to reach. Most nest trees are dead with few branches so the ladder is placed so little weight will be placed on the tree. After climbing to the nest cavity a weighted string is put into the cavity to determine how deep it is, and which direction from the nest hole the cavity has been excavated. After determining which side of the tree the cavity is closest to, a 5 inch square is drawn on the outside of the tree on that side with the bottom of the square just above the bottom of the cavity.

Once the tree/ladder climbing volunteer is safely connected by harness to the tree, tools are raised and lowered by rope from helpers on the ground. A hole is drilled into the corner of the drawn square closest to the top of the nest hole, then a reciprocating saw is used to cut the portal out. The hole is cut at an angle so the resulting "plug" will be placed back in the hole similar to the top of a pumpkin. Thin weather stripping is used around the edge of the plug to make sure it fits tight. Clips are then attached to the tree to hold the plug in place. Researchers should be able to move the clips, remove the plug, and have immediate access to the young woodpeckers to attach research materials and gather data about each nestling.



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As of this writing we have 9 portals completed, and plan to complete several more in the next week or so.

Siah St. Clair

Summer Issue Topic?

Send your observations and references to Jerry Bahls (rhwracm@comcast.net) by July 15th. Also send any photos or information to be featured in the newsletter. Have you been experimenting trying to attract re-headed woodpeckers? Let us know about your work!

Next RhWR Meetings

The RhWR meets on the 3rd Wednesday each month at 7:00 pm at the Lund's Store 1 block west of 50th & France in Edina. The next meeting will be **May 17th**. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please encourage your friends to attend also. Check our website (www.RedheadRecovery.org) for current information.

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery
Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis
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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