



# The REDHEAD



## Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

Spring 2020

A Special Committee of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Vol. 14 No. 2

### RHWO NEWS

### A Note from the Chair

#### Red-headed Woodpecker Roost Cameras 2019-20

Spring 2020

In the late fall of 2019 we placed three cameras on trees at Cedar Creek ESR near Red-headed Woodpecker (RHWO) roost cavities. These cameras were factory focused at 3 feet to be able to document what happened over the winter months at cavities RHWOs used as winter roosts. On April 22 we retrieved the memory cards from these cameras and have just started to go through the nearly 15,000 images and videos. Roost cavities are very busy places. Along with the RHWOs, pictures so far show that Red Squirrels, Gray Squirrels, Fox Squirrels, Flying Squirrels, and White Footed Mice want to

As I write this I hope everyone is well and safe, but also getting out and enjoying spring in nature during this challenging time of Covid 19 pandemic. The important need for safe social distancing and staying at home is limiting our ability to gather data on Red-headed Woodpeckers. However, we are still continuing what research we can do within the resources that are available and also meet approved guidelines. Cedar Creek ESR has very recently approved our project to continue limited research activities during the 2020 season.

Dr. Elena West and a small research team will continue to monitor nests and track individual RHWOs as much as possible. All volunteer activities have been cancelled at Cedar Creek for an indefinite time period. Our volunteers have been an important part of making this project a success. We will let you know if restrictions change. Meanwhile we will continue to move forward as much as possible. Anyone can report to us observations of Red-headed woodpeckers seen anywhere in the state.

Along with all else, raising funds for the research and activities we are doing this summer is a bit behind, so if you can help with a gift it would be most appreciated.

Siah St. Clair, Steering Committee Chair

*Continued on page 2, Animals*



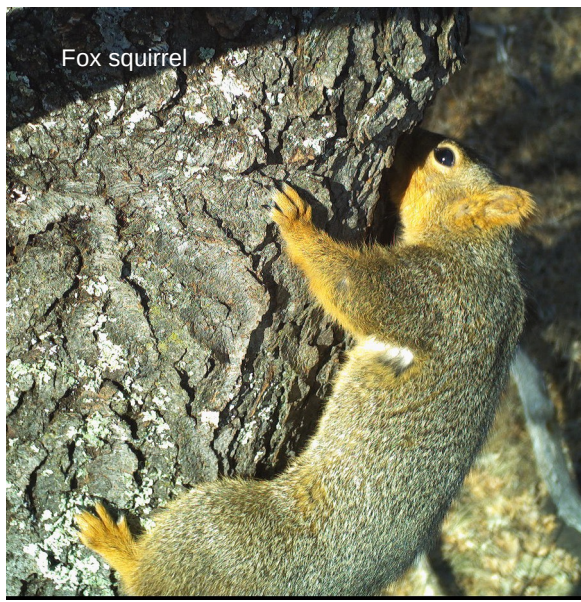
Winter 2019-20



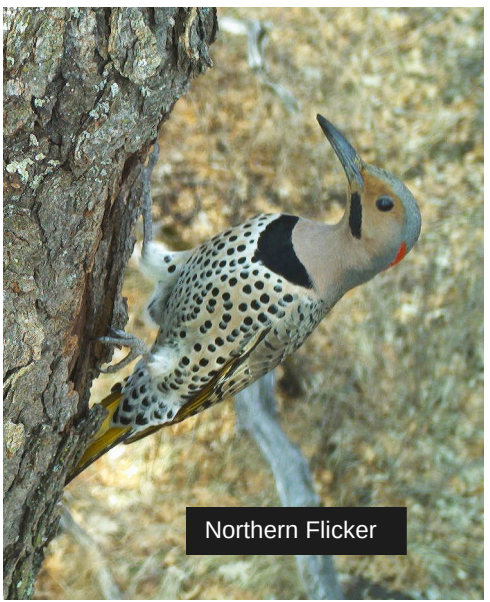
Retrieving/caching acorn



Red Squirrel



Fox squirrel

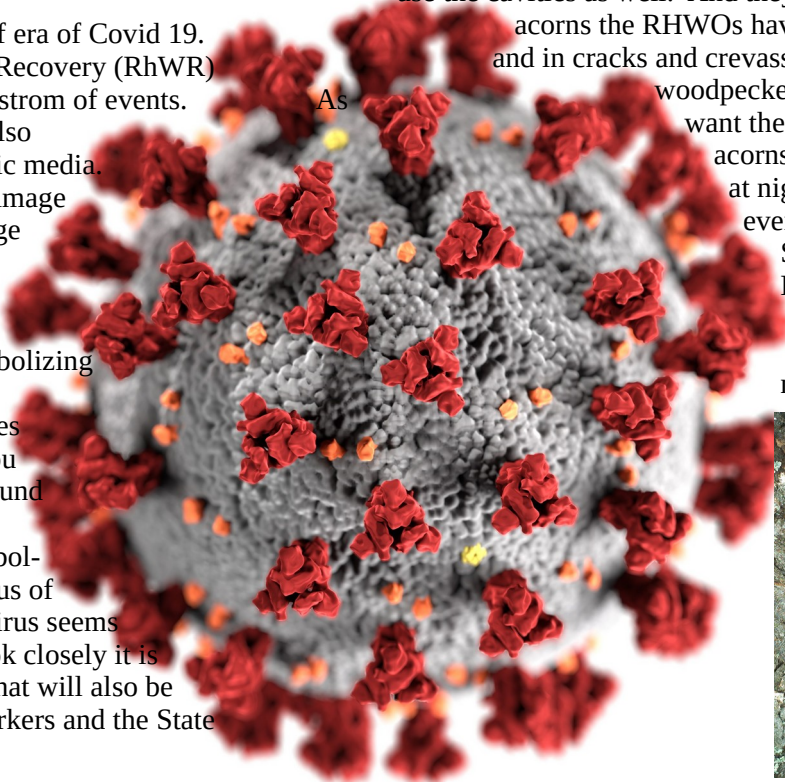


Northern Flicker

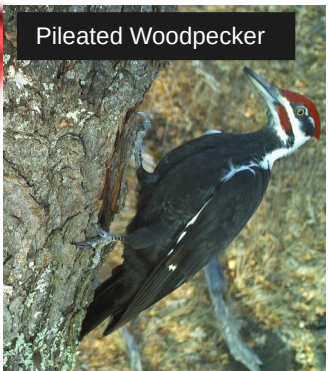
# Note From the Editor

Animals, *Continues from page 1*

Welcome to the hopefully brief era of Covid 19. The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) has been swept up in this maelstrom of events. As you all are doing, the RhWR also is communicating via electronic media. The Editor has reproduced an image of the corona virus on each page to symbolize the impact it has had on everyone. The size represents our adaption to this impact with the first page symbolizing the first few weeks of our confinement and the next two pages showing our adaption to it. You will notice we are working around it and each day we are getting better at it. The last page symbolizes the end of our current status of social distancing. While the virus seems to have disappeared, if you look closely it is still there. Can you find it? That will also be the task for our health care workers and the State so that we all are kept safe.



use the cavities as well. And they all are stealing the acorns the RHWOs have cached under the bark and in cracks and crevasses of the tree. Other woodpeckers and nuthatches also want the cavities and the hidden acorns. The action takes place at night and during the day, every day, without let up. So far, one Red-tailed Hawk has shown up at a cavity looking for a meal. Stay tuned for more of what we learn.



Pileated Woodpecker

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



## BEA'S BENCH, TREMPELEAU REFUGE

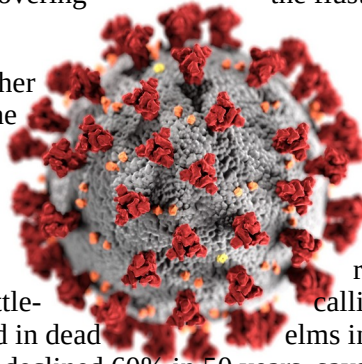
I first met Bea Stellpflug in 1980 at Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge, and she laughed at how her daughters told her to stay away from the dangerous-looking guy who lurked around the bushes and bulrushes. Forty years later, I practice citizen-science from the bench placed at the refuge in memory of Bea, watching one of her favorite birds, the redheaded woodpecker. The sun rises behind me, and the light of friendship bolsters me during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I was indeed suspicious-looking: a long-haired, tangle-bearded long-distance bicyclist who worked very part-time and spent whole days just listening to birds. Bea drove a pickup, wore glasses with rims nearly as big as her smile. She loved country music and casinos, and her husband owned an independent tire and equipment business on their home farm in the town of Trempealeau. Bea had six kids. I minimized my footprint, fathering none. I was totally counter-culture, mistrusting capitalism.

But Bea asked if I'd seen the "redheads" feeding on acorns after cars crushed them on the refuge's roads, and we became thick as thieves. We each volunteered on annual sandhill crane counts, watching through cold April dawns as cranes bugled alarm calls from increasing sites each spring, rebounding from a near extinction during the 1930s.

Bea died of a stroke in 2012, 74-years-young. Last May I happened upon warblers flashing their marvelous colors all around her bench, and I heard Bea's voice jump, seeing her eyes brighten again. "Blue-wing! Redstart! Blackburnian!" Sandhill cranes bugled explosively from a marsh, and I remembered the pair who had called the day I had chanced to meet Bea after she had finally returned to the refuge after a hip replacement. We crept across hummocks to view the cranes, and she stepped on a snake nest, fell hard on her hip, and there I was, only a bicycle for transport, years before cell phones. But Bea had bounced up, instantly recovering the fluster of happiness that expressed her love of nature.

Now a redhead called from an island opposite her redheads, chortling, "Quirr! Kikarik!" Later one in. It poked out its scarlet head and called. It second redhead, and I filled out a form for the Courtship behavior at a nest site. Bea would



When I bicycled in farm country decades ago, ditches. They created all-day commotions, "rattle-seeek" around campground-trees. They cavorted in dead in marshes. Now they're hard to find. They've declined 60% in 50 years, says the Redheaded Woodpecker Recovery Project.

The Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis formed the recovery project in 2006, determined to identify the causes and cures for the decline. They rely upon science just as coronavirus efforts do today. Volunteers go out at dawn to survey nest sites, and at dusk to find roost sites. They record distances between nests, how parents feed young, how young forage for themselves. They count acorns in oaks, trying to understand the role they play in redheads' lives.

Redheadrecovery.org describes the recovery project. It's centered at Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve in Anoka County, Minnesota. It's steadfastly uncovering the species' needs, and urges landowners to leave big dead trees standing and to regularly burn savannahs. It's discovered polyandrous red-heads, females reproducing with two males the same season. It uses isotope analysis to determine young birds' diets, cameras to research nest cavities, radio transmitters and geo-locator chips to track fledglings and to study why redheads migrate some winters and remain north others.

As "Bea's redheads" incubated eggs last June, two Trumpeter swans and five cygnets appeared in a nearby marsh. Proof that science works. Wisconsin reintroduced the species in 1989, and this marked the refuge's first successful brood. Bea would've have been "on eggs," driving from the trumpeters to the redhead nest, worrying over their fates. Mid-June, her redheads brought insects into the hole for chicks. Feedings continued through early July--long enough to suggest young fledged successfully. Bea would've smiled, "Next year I'll count them as they come out the hole."

I sat on her bench last week, and a lone redhead perched on last year's nest-tree. It called 14 consecutive "chrrs," received no response yet. I recorded the behavior, though coronavirus has cancelled most of the recovery project's activities--its training sessions, volunteer activities, teamwork in the field. I practiced social-distancing and seemed to watch the redhead alone. But anyone who's teamed with others to sustain the miracle of life knows I was blessed by good company.

*Richie Swanson is a novelist and short story writer, and president of the Winona Bird Club. This article is reprinted from the Wisconsin State Journal [https://madison.com/richie-swanson-the-view-from-beas-bench-at-trempeleau-refuge-is-still-grant/article\_e803b62d-f4d5-5eaa-8575-0568a11c86fc.html].*

# 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) – **All projects at CCSR are cancelled until further notice.**

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.

# 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 May 20, 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

<b>Cedar Creek Training</b>	<b>Cancelled</b>
Research Team Meeting	May 7, 2020
Steering Committee Meeting	May 20, 2020
ACM Board Meeting	May 25, 2020
ALL meetings are <i>virtual</i> until further notice.	

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 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