



The REDHEAD



Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

Spring 2009

A Special Committee of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Vol. 3 No. 2

Note From the Editor

I need your help in providing good content for "The RED-HEAD". I have nearly exhausted my files of pertinent articles that I feel needed to get published. Please send me articles that you have written or articles that you have read that contain new information about the red-headed woodpecker or their habitat. I'm looking for articles that explore things like the effect that the northern migration of the red-bellied woodpecker and its possible effect on the decline of the red-headed woodpecker. I've had a couple of comments from members that think that it is a factor in their decline. Before I publish anything like that I'd like to see something written by an authoritative source.

I've also had a question if you can tell the difference in the sexes? Is there a difference in their feather patterns that one can use to identify the male from the female. That might help us in determining if the male does any incubation or other chick rearing tasks.

I'm also looking for members trials on trying to determine what is "RHWO candy". Do your feeder comparisons and report the results to us.

I'd also like to receive your digital pictures, showing the RHWO doing its life functions, such as feeding with food in its bill, nesting, caching food, and performing mating and courting rituals.

Finally when you are out birding and come across a pair of RHWO's, please spend an hour or two observing them and take notes to see if you can pick up some interesting insights into their habits that may be a clue as to why their numbers are declining. This is Citizen Science at work and it is also very interesting and fun!

- The Editor

A Note from the Chair

It's spring, and time to focus our energies on our red-headed woodpecker (RHWO) friends and where they live in Minnesota. This year we will continue our ongoing research at Cedar Creek Ecosystems Science Reserve, where 25 energetic volunteers will be conducting surveys on nesting birds. We will also be exploring some new areas at Cedar Creek, as well as nearby county parks and golf courses.

Our other big focus is locating **clusters** of RHWO throughout the state. We are not so much interested in single nesting pairs, but rather in groups of two or more pairs within the same (1/2 mile) area. If you know where there are **groups** of RHWO please contact us so we can begin working with landowners and help them maintain, or even improve, habitat. Also, for those golfers out there, we have discovered that RHWO like golf courses, so long as oaks are present. Sadly, it's the closest thing to oak savanna we have in much of Minnesota. We have a special program directed at locating RHWO on any of the more than 450 golf courses in Minnesota and we really could use your help with this one.

Please report **clusters** of RHWO to Mary Miller <marygracm@aol.com> or to Chet Meyers <chetmeyers@visi.com>.

And, if you really want to get involved, see our website and come to our next monthly meeting.

- Chet Meyers

Wanted: Graduate student to assist RhWR in studying red-headed woodpeckers at Cedar Creek and around Minnesota. Some funding may be available. Contact Chet Meyers or Jerry Bahls for more information.

Emerald Ash Borer

The emerald ash borer (EAB) is an insect that attacks and kills ash trees. The adults are small, iridescent green beetles that live outside of trees during the summer months. The larvae are grub or worm-like and live underneath the bark of ash trees. Trees are killed by the tunneling of the larvae under the tree's bark. All ash trees are susceptible to EAB and millions of ash trees have been killed in infested areas already. Minnesota has one of the highest volumes of ash on forestland in the U.S. with an estimated 867 million forestland ash trees and ash is a prominent component of our urban forests as well.

If the EAB reaches Minnesota, will it devastate the landscape like Dutch elm disease did? While this could be a tragic loss of trees, it could mean an increase in RHWO's, just like when the elm forests succumb to Dutch elm. Let's hope this is handled so that it minimizes the tree loss and allows the retention of the snags it may produce.

Membership Dues

The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) receives almost all of its revenue from its membership dues. The RhWR will increase its dues for new memberships immediately. The dues will increase to \$10/yr. New members will receive a packet, which will include the new RhWR button and sew-on patch as well as the latest "The READHEAD". Because we have decided to establish our membership year as July 1 - June 30 (all memberships will expire on June 30 of the year the membership was established), all new memberships established from now until June 30, 2010 will expire on June 30, 2010. Renewals will remain at \$5/year, but will expire on June 30 of the period of renewal. Look for future announcements regarding lifetime memberships and renewal dues.

New memberships and renewals can be made by sending your name, address and e-mail address or fill in the membership application form on the last page of this newsletter to the address below. Please make check payable to Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis RhWR.

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

Thank you for your continued support.

Looking for Birdies on Golf Courses

Birders-who-golf or **golfers-who-bird**, pick up your sticks' and your 'bins' and go looking for birdies... real birdies.

In the Upper Midwest red-headed woodpeckers (RHWO) have declined 50% over the past 40 years. This bird is a habitat specialist that is running out of habitat. In Minnesota oak savanna has historically been a refuge for RHWO. Sadly, due to intensive agriculture practices, oak savanna is now one of the rarest forms of biome in the state.

The good news is, from a bird's-eye view, flying aloft, golf courses look pretty much like savanna, with large open spaces and a few clumps of trees. Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery, a cooperative effort of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis, and the Minnesota DNR Nongame Division, needs help surveying golf courses for clusters of red-headed (not red-bellied) woodpeckers.

The RHWO recovery group wants to identify 'clusters' (two or more nesting pairs), not single pairs. A cluster of pairs means the habitat is viable and the recovery project folks will work with golf course superintendents to provide Best Management Practices that can be followed so clusters remain and prosper. Presently two golf courses that have been surveyed support numbers of RHWO. But, there are over 450 golf courses in Minnesota. You can help by reporting sightings of *groups* of RHWO to Mary Miller at <Marygracm@aol.com>. Please give the name of the golf course, county and nearest tow town. For more information please visit <www.RedheadRecovery.org>.

- Chet Meyers <chetmeyers@visi.com>



Did you Know?

Along with its regular diet of seeds, nuts, sap, corn, fruit, and insects, the woodpecker has been known to eat things such as bird eggs, nestlings, adult birds, and mice.

Only known woodpecker to cover stored food with bark or wood.

From: <http://audubon2.org/watchlist/viewSpecies.jsp?id=176>

RhWR Contact Information

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

President Jerry Bahls 763 572-2333
Website www.geocities.com/audubon.geoc

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

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Website	www.RedheadRecovery.org or http://rhwrp.moumn.org		

Specimen for Mounting

The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery is looking for a red-headed woodpecker specimen that it can mount to use at displays and events. If you should happen upon such a specimen that is in good condition, please place it in a freezer and immediately contact someone who is authorized to have migratory birds in their possession. Then contact us and let us know who has it so we can contact them and arrange to have it mounted.

Editor's note: The following two articles are "reprinted from <http://oaksavannas.org> courtesy of Thomas D. Brock, University of Wisconsin-Madison" a nonprofit foundation dedicated to the oak savanna community. These articles are reprinted with permission to give our members a better understanding of habitat favored by the RHW. Go to the website above and get much more information about savannas and their restoration.

What is an oak savanna?

A savanna is generally defined as a plant community where trees are a component but where their density is "...so low that it allows grasses and other herbaceous vegetation to become the actual dominants of the community." (Curtis, John T. 1959. *The Vegetation of Wisconsin*. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.) Savannas are found throughout the world, but the dominant trees differ. In North America, a major type of savanna has oaks as the principal trees. Three major areas of oak savanna in North America are found: 1) California and Oregon on the west coast; 2) Arizona, New Mexico, and Mexico in the southwest; and 3) the Midwestern United States. This web site deals exclusively with Midwestern oak savannas, of which many restorable sites exist. Oak savannas in the Midwest are most commonly found in a climatic zone intermediate between woodland and prairie, which is often called the prairie/forest border.

Savannas are often defined in terms of the openness of the tree canopy. Thus, the upper limit between savanna and forest is generally considered to be a tree canopy with 50% coverage. Therefore, if more than one-half of the ground area is in the sun at noon in midsummer, the vegetation is classed as a savanna. If the canopy has greater than 50% tree canopy coverage, the vegetation is called a woodland or forest. The lower canopy coverage, between savanna and prairie, is generally considered to be 10% tree coverage, although these upper and lower limits are only approximate.

Another term sometimes used as equivalent to oak savanna is "oak opening", which refers to the open-grown characteristic of the trees. Early travelers in the Midwest remarked at the "park-like" character of the vegetation. Some alternate terms occasionally used to describe a savanna-like setting are barren, brush prairie, glade, and open woodland.

The oak savanna landscape

A landscape is a mosaic of vegetation types, with sizes varying with the topography and other characteristics of the land. The term "oak savanna landscape" refers to a natural area or a complex of natural areas with a wide diversity of species. The dominant trees of the oak savanna are several major species of oaks. Within and among this oak tree canopy are numerous smaller trees, shrubs, grasses, and forbs. Thus, although the oaks are the most obvious plants, we must keep in mind the high diversity that is present. This diversity is important in the changes that take place in the landscape with time. Gradual climate change, year-to-year variation in weather, and external disturbance (logging, disease, wind, etc.) may lead to the elimination of individual trees or even wide swaths of the forest, but in a diverse natural area, other individuals usually move in and fill the gaps.



Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas (MNBBA)

The Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas (MNBBA) is the most comprehensive bird conservation project ever conducted in Minnesota and it is just getting started. The objective of the Atlas project is to identify all the species of breeding birds in the state and document where in the state they breed. This is the first of five breeding seasons where volunteer surveyors will be looking for as many different species as they can find within a priority survey 'block' and reporting the strongest breeding evidence for each species (e.g.: courtship behavior, bird seen carrying nesting material). Volunteers will make multiple visits to representative habitat in the block throughout the breeding season to observe bird behavior. Observations can be reported online or on paper. In addition to the observations by surveyors in the critical priority blocks, the MNBBA project encourages observations from volunteers anywhere in the state. What this means for the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Project is that there will be surveyors throughout the state reporting locations of breeding pairs of red-headed woodpeckers; this could also give us a clue to potential 'clusters' of these wonderful birds.

(Continued on page 4 "Atlas")

("Atlas" Continued from page 3)

In the next five years, we will survey more than 2000 priority blocks so we need the help of all bird enthusiasts in the state. You do not need to be an expert birder to participate; it is a great way to improve both your identification and observational skills. Go to <http://bird.atlasing.org/Atlas/MN> to register, request your block and start entering data. All participants in the Atlas project must be registered on this site, developed by Cornell Lab of Ornithology to support breeding bird atlas projects. If you requested a block through mnbba.org, you will need to re-request the block on the Cornell site.

Instructions for using the Cornell site, for now, are available from <http://www.birdconservationminnesota.org/>. On that home page, click on 'Click here' in the message about the Atlas and at the bottom of the Atlas page click on MNBBA Data Entry Instructions.

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If you are interested in learning more about the MNBBA project, check out www.mnbba.org or contact the Project Coordinator, Bonnie Sample, at bsample@audubon.org or 651-739-9332. Please join us?

Next RhWR Meetings

The RhWR usually meets on the 2nd Wednesday each month at 7:00 pm at the Lund's Store 1 block west of 50th & France in Edina. However, the next three meetings will be on **May 13, June 17** and **July 22**, because of the room availability. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. Check our website for current information.

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery
Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis
PO Box 3801
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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 \$10/year! Please send my membership information to the address below.

I'd like to renew! Renew my RhWR membership for \$5/year.

Yes, I'd like to join Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis also! Please add me as a member of the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery and the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis at the rate of \$18/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