



The REDHEAD

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery



Summer 2021

A Special Committee of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Vol. 15 No. 3

RHWO NEWS

The Woodpecker Cavity Cam project went *Live* on May 18, 2021. Thousands of videos from the trail cameras installed at red-headed woodpecker cavities were made available for you to view—these video clips capture the behaviors and interactions of the community of animals that depend on these holes. Midnight sneak attacks by flying squirrels, foiled egg and bird predation attempts, parents bringing insects to baby birds and sharing childcare duties.....our cameras document it all! With your help classifying video clips, our team of scientists and community members will advance our understanding of red-headed woodpeckers and the role they play in their community! Hopefully this will be a fun and engaging way to stay connected with the project while we work to resume bird walks and volunteer activities at Cedar Creek.

You can still help classify videos! Head over to <https://z.umn.edu/woodpeckercams>, open a free account by clicking "Register" in the top right corner, and get started!

Since May 18th, 2021, more than 2,173 volunteers have combed through 22,709 videos. Each video received at least three independent classifications as to whether there are animals or not in view. Of those 22,709 videos, 15,296 (67%) indeed contained wildlife. Those 15,296 videos then received additional classification to species (along with behavioral data and numeric counts) from 3-10 independent classifiers. Of those 15,296 videos of wildlife, 9,082 (59%) contain RHWOs, and volunteers are now combing back through THOSE videos to give us data on bands, age classes, behaviors, and within-species interactions. It's an impressive amount of work to have been completed in such a short time!

We have another batch of ~14,000 videos to upload in the next few days, and are looking forward to continued volunteer engagement. Volunteers have found 28 different animal species in our first few batches of images, and documented a wide variety of interesting behavior. We're learning a ton about what goes on at the cavities, thanks to our international contingent of volunteer classifiers!

Here is the summary as of mid-July 2021:

Videos classified so far: 22,709
Videos with wildlife: 15,296
Videos with red-heads: 9,082
Volunteers: 2,173

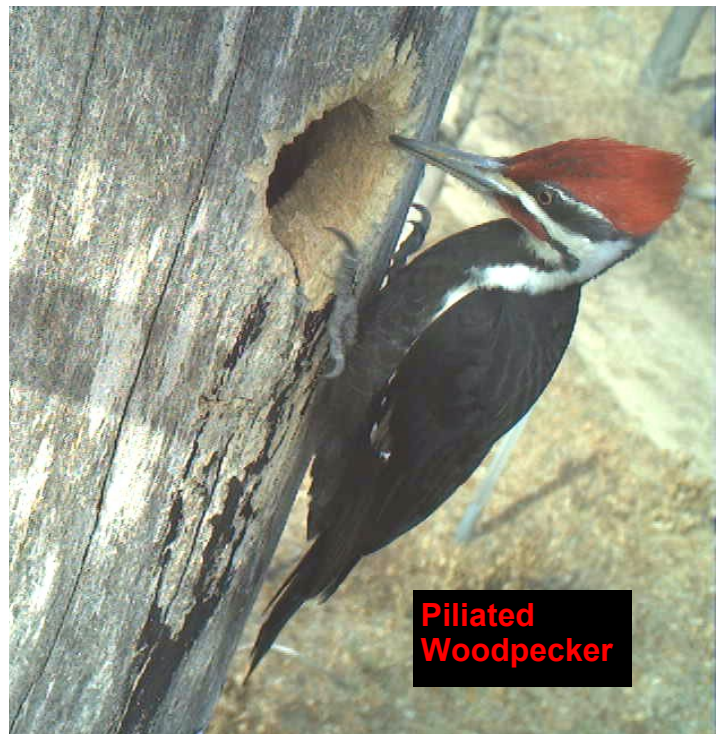
Caitin Barale Potter

A Note from the Chair

Summer 2021

- There is lots of good news on progress to learn more on how to help RHWO populations recover. A few examples are described in this newsletter. The Woodpecker Cavity Cam project on the Zooniverse platform has had more than 2,000 volunteers from around the world helping to classify videos taken from the RHWO nest cameras at Cedar Creek. Exciting new RHWO behaviors are being recorded by the nest cameras this summer.
- All of the RHWOs with tracking devices from 2020 that returned in spring of 2021 to Cedar Creek have been recaptured and the devices removed and data downloaded. We will learn where the RHWOs went and by which routes during this past winter.
- And, the MN State legislature has approved grant funds for a statewide research study on RHWOs. There will be more on that in the next newsletter.
- Thanks to everyone for hard work and donations to sustain this progress of work on RHWOs and the ecosystems they live in and help create.

Siah St. Clair, Steering Committee Chair



Piliated Woodpecker

Note From the Editor

If you happen to see your MN state representative or senator, please thank them for including the funding for the next red-headed woodpecker research project in the 2021 LCCMR legislation. Details of the research proposal will be in the fall "The REDHEAD".

Please note there is a matching donation available. While we again have been able to raise enough money to fund our research for the 2021 research season, we need to start planning for the 2022 season. It will be a departure from our usual research and surprise funds could be needed.

Jerry Bahls, Editor



Need Matching Grant Donors

The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) has an anonymous donor who is offering to match up to \$2500 for anyone who donates to RhWR. If you would like to donate to RhWR and have your donation matched by the Anonymous patron, send your donation to the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery at –

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery
PO Box 3801
Minneapolis, MN 55403-0801

Please state that the donation is for the Anonymous match.

RhWR Contact Information

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

President Keith Olstad klbolstad2@gmail.com 612 940-1534
Website www.AudubonChapterofMinneapolis.org

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

Interim Chair Siah St. Clair stclairs@comcast.net 763 234-6146
Treasurer Jerry Bahls rhwracm@comcast.net 763 572-2333
Recorder <open>
Editor Jerry Bahls rhwracm@comcast.net 763 572-2333
Website www.RedheadRecovery.org
Research Blog Website www.rhworesearch.org

Potential RHWO Nest Cavity Use by Other Bird Species in Spring 2021

Siah St. Clair

On April 22, 2021, three RHWO nest cameras that had been left out through the winter at Cedar Creek ESR had their memory cards replaced and batteries checked to prepare for the returning RHWOs this spring. When looking at the memory cards that were removed it became obvious that a few bird pairs were considering or definitely preparing to use an old RHWO nest cavity for their own nests this spring. Returning RHWO pairs may dispute cavity ownership, and may or may not win back their cavity if they choose to fight for it.

Nesting pair interests documented by the RHWO nest cameras this spring include:

- A. A Pileated Woodpecker pair took an interest in the cavity at nest tree 84. The camera captured them 12 separate times at the nest since November 3, and as a pair present together at least 3 times. On March 22 they "talked" softly together while checking out the nest. Unfortunately, a wind storm blew the huge dead nest tree 84 down on March 24. So ended the exciting possibility of recording a Pileated Woodpecker pair nesting from beginning to completion in a former RHWO nest cavity.
- B. On March 18th, a pair of Bluebirds were captured by the camera at nest 223. Both the male and female were going in and out of the cavity calling to each other. The camera recorded 61 events with this pair of Bluebirds removing old nest material from inside the cavity, talking and calling to each other, both going in and out of the cavity. Unfortunately, a pair of European Starlings also discovered the nest, and the Bluebirds finally stopped showing up on April 3.
- C. On March 18th a pair of European Starlings also discovered the nest cavity at nest 223. The camera captured 83 events with Starlings at the cavity between March 18 and April 20. The camera captured a fight with an intruding 3rd Starling, Starlings removing mouthfuls of nest debris 29 times, and many interactions between the pair. There appears to be a good chance that this pair may nest at this site unless driven away by an aggressive pair of returning RHWOs.

As ecosystem engineers, Red Headed Woodpeckers create cavities that other species use or adapt for nests, roosts, and other purposes. RHWOs are important for the survival and reproductive success of other species within their ecosystem.



Trail cameras at Cedar Creek reveal new animals and behaviors

Dr. West and her team have trail cameras at active and non-active nests again this summer, which are continuing to yield exciting new behaviors not seen before and some surprising life and death encounters. Most RHWO nests are in dead or dying trees, including a few that one can hardly believe are still standing. During a strong windstorm in the early morning hours of June 24th, an active nest tree was blown down and broken apart. Miraculously, the two nestlings inside were not injured, the cavity was not damaged and landed with the hole facing up. Surprisingly, the nest camera was also not damaged and continued to collect images. By sunrise, the parents were at the nest cavity, now on the ground, looking into the nest hole, making concerned calls. By 6:15 am the trail camera recorded them bringing food to the nestlings (see picture of adult at the cavity on the ground) who maintained their loud calls for food after the fall. At 12:27 pm, two members of the



Active nest tree on ground

research team discovered the nest on the ground and with quick thinking, dug a hole in the ground nearby and “re-planted” the section of the tree that had the nest cavity in it. The adult woodpeckers were recorded at the cavity feeding the nestlings within minutes of the researchers leaving. What’s particularly interesting about this event is that the trail camera captured how the parents at this nest continued to attend to their nestlings, despite it being on the ground.

Unfortunately, the journey of this nest did not end well, as a large Bull Snake (see photo on page 4) made its way up the tree on July 2 and ate the two nestlings inside. This nest had also previously survived a predation attempt by a Fisher (see below for details), but unlike this large mammal, the snake was able to get inside the cavity. The replanted tree was only 5-6 feet high, and may have been low enough for the snake to smell the nestlings and access them. Bull snakes are one of the very few successful nest predators of RHWOs that the researchers have documented so far.

Before this nest blew down and met its end by the Bull snake, it also had an encounter with a Fisher, which was the first time our research team has captured one on video. Fishers are uncommon in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, but are seen more regularly in the north metro and the area around Cedar Creek. There were three nestlings in the nest on June 16th when a Fisher was captured by the trail camera at the cavity entrance trying to get at the nestlings. The Fisher put its nose into the cavity and could likely smell the nestlings inside. The shape of the nest cavity excavated by the parents — narrow at the top and deep — foiled the Fisher and it went away empty handed, or with empty paws.

In addition to recording the daily happenings at active nests, some of the research team’s cameras are also continuing to record videos of what goes on at nests that are no longer thought to be in use by RHWO. After reviewing some of the videos captured this year, the research team learned that a camera left at a previously used cavity (2020) had captured the same pair using it again this year as a “secondary” cavity. The pair had returned to Cedar Creek this spring and nested in a different hole about 120 feet from their 2020 tree. The camera recorded them at the old cavity only a few times in 2021 until they started showing up fairly regularly in late June. On July 7th, one of the pair’s very new fledglings was recorded inside the cavity at about 8:45 pm with both parents present. Over the next six days both adults and 2-3 fledglings are recorded on over 200 different occasions. It appears to be quite a family affair as sometimes up to four members of the family are present in videos at one time. There are many videos of the parents feeding the fledglings, of sibling fights and attempts at dominance. One fledgling can be seen inside the cavity (possibly roosting there at night). This is new and exciting behavior to document and demonstrates the importance of previously used trees for RHWO across multiple years.



Fisher



Bull Snake

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 September 15, 2021 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.

Important Dates

ACM Board Meeting	Aug 23, 2021
Steering Committee Meeting	Sep 15, 2021
Research Team Meeting	TBA 2021

ALL meetings are *virtual* until further notice

RhWR Volunteer Opportunities

The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) has a need for many volunteers now and through the winter. Email rhwracm@comcast.net to sign up for any volunteer opportunities or to ask any questions.

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

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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 (\$50 is suggested rate)! Please send my membership information to the address at right.

I'd like to renew! Renew my RhWR membership for \$20/year (\$50 is suggested rate).

Yes, I'd like to join Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis also! Please add me as a member of the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (\$20, \$50 suggested) and the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis (\$20) at the rate of \$40/year. 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