



The REDHEAD



Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

Summer 2023

A Special Committee of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Vol. 17 No. 3

RHWO NEWS

Nest Location Surveyors Assist RHWO Roost Study at Cedar Creek ESR

With the beginning of Dr. Elena West's Red-headed Woodpecker (RHWO) Roost Biology Study at Cedar Creek this past spring it has been important to know where RHWO nests are located at Cedar Creek during this nesting season. Finding nests while eggs are still being incubated is required to install portholes into nests that are accessible with a ladder

(lower than 25 feet). Nestlings and adults from the same nest are then able to be fitted with transmitters for the study. Other ongoing information about the nests and birds is also being gathered.

Twelve Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Project (RhWR) volunteers made the commitment to accomplish this nest location/

survey task. Volunteer teams (5) agreed to accomplish a minimum of one field survey per week of at least 3 hrs for 8 weeks (now extended to 12 weeks). During these surveys nests would be located, documented with reports each week, and continuing observations made. Some teams with multiple nests (up to 6) have been at their areas twice per week and up to 5 or more hours per survey visit.

Observations, in addition to date, time, exact location, etc., included noting adult calls, incubation shift changes by adults, feeding of nestlings, nestling calls, presence of and

Continued on page 2, Surveys



Photo by Siah St. Clair

A Note from the Chair

Summer 2023

I hope everyone is in a place with shade or better during this hot and dry summer weather. I was out at Cedar Creek ESR yesterday monitoring Red-headed Woodpecker (RHWO) nests and they are busy with fledglings and second broods of the season. It has been a very busy summer season so far with many activities, researchers, and volunteers, conducting planned projects.

A big thank you to members for renewing and donating funds and to several organizations for providing grants that enabled us to reach our budget goal for this year. Those funds are now being used to cover wages for research technicians this summer and other actions that help us in our mission of Reversing the Decline and Promoting the Recovery of Red-headed Woodpeckers.

As I write this the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Project (RhWR) is providing funds and/or volunteers for multiple projects that involve daily activities throughout this summer. One example is Dr. Elena West's RHWO Bioacoustics study that is placing listening devices throughout Minnesota to learn where in the state RHWOs are nesting. The State LCCMR Commission has just announced that it is funding an extension of this project to continue this important research.

Another project example is the new RHWO Roost Biology Study that Dr. West began this spring. A group (12) of our volunteers has been assisting this project by conducting nest location and nest condition surveys every week through the summer. 55 nests have been located to date and over 55 fledglings have been observed, with 5 fledglings just from one nest. Dr. West and research techs are placing transmitters on adults and nestlings, in part to determine where each of these birds roost at night. One goal of this activity is to learn how many cavities are needed by a RHWO family within their nest territory to successfully reproduce.

There are several other projects the RhWR is involved with this summer. With your continued support we will keep working towards our long-term goal for the recovery of Red-headed Woodpeckers.

Siah St. Clair, Steering Committee Chair

Factoid: For Red-headed Woodpeckers in Northern Illinois, nest cavities at greater height had greater success and daily survival rates increased with nest age. (N. C. Hudson and E. K. Bollinger, *Am. Midl. Nat.* (2013) 170:86-94)

Note From the Editor

The Editor would like to thank Siah St. Clair and Jim Howitz for their articles that appear in this quarter's newsletter. Contributing articles is a tremendous help for the Editor.

Note From the Editor, *Continued on page 4*

Surveys, *Continued from page 1*

how many fledglings, adult interactions with fledglings, possible second nest activity, and nest inactivity due to nest predation/failure. Most of these take extended time to observe, and some luck.

At the date of this writing 55 nests have been located, a few have failed due to predation or other nest failure, and more second nests are being found as surveys are conducted into mid-August. There have been 55 fledglings seen to date, but there are more out there hiding in the trees. And a number of adults and fledglings are carrying transmitters that can reveal where they each are roosting at night.

Stay tuned for more information as we follow adults and fledglings through the summer.

Siah St. Clair



Photo by Siah St. Clair

RHOW Nestling Fledging from Nest on Video

Siah St. Clair

After 4 years, 23 nest locations, and over 300,000 videos, the Red-headed Woodpecker nest cameras have finally documented a RHOW nestling fledging from its nest at Cedar Creek ESR. Even witnessing this event has proved elusive as the nestlings seem to do this very quickly and when no eyes are watching. And they usually leap out of the nest and fly/flutter to another tree so rapidly that the cameras do not activate quickly enough to capture the event.



RhWR Contact Information

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Chair Marian Weidner mpweidner@gmail.com
Website www.MinneapolisAudubon.org

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

Chair Siah St. Clair stclairs@comcast.net 763 234-6146
Treasurer Jerry Bahls rhwracm@comcast.net 763 355-8726
Recorder <open>
Editor Jerry Bahls rhwracm@comcast.net 763 355-8726
Website www.minneapolisaudubon.org/rhwo2
Research Blog Website www.rhworesearch.org

With 8 nest cameras functioning 24 hours per day we thought we would catch this much sooner. But, on July 7, it finally happened, as the video frame shots here show. There are about 7 videos of this entire fledging process. This nest tree is isolated with only much smaller live shrubs surrounding it. That may have made the nestling nervous about leaping out with no landing spot in close proximity. And so it emerged from the nest cavity onto the nest tree and spent a few minutes getting a look around. Then the fledgling hopped to the top of the tree and flew into the trees some distance away.

Boo and Spooky

Boo and Spooky are our oldest surviving pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers at Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve (CCESR).

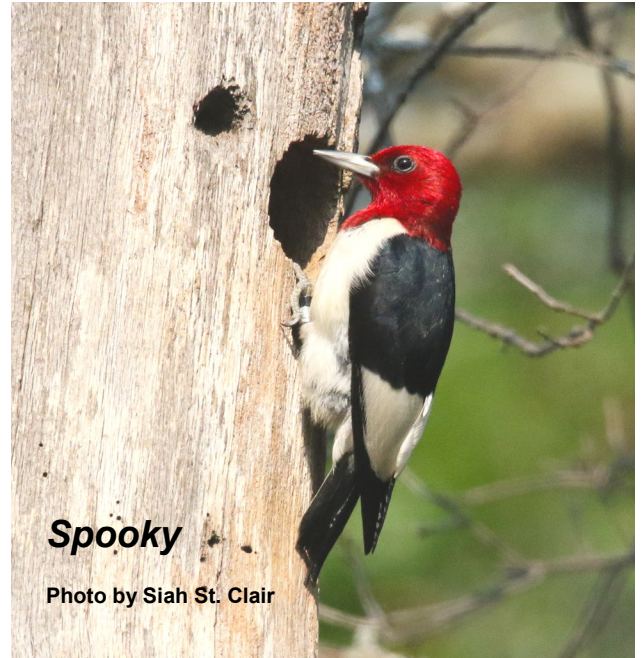
Boo (the male) and Spooky (the female) have nested along the path to the bison gazebo since 2019. Hundreds of visitors to CCESR have passed by their nests, and the birds are very used to people. They probably are our most photographed birds.

They have successfully fledged young every year. In 2019 they produced 3 fledglings, 3 in 2020, 3 in 2021, and 5 in 2022.

This year Boo and Spooky used the same nest tree as last year but nested in a new cavity lower down the dead tree than last year's. Our field techs, Caitlyn Jacobson and Maura Hearn, looked into the nest cavity with a pole camera and reported seeing five nestlings about ready to fledge. The most young in a single brood we have ever seen as fledglings is four. We have found four fledglings only 7 times in 373 broods. On July 7, the pole camera showed that the nest was empty. The young had either fledged or were taken by a predator.

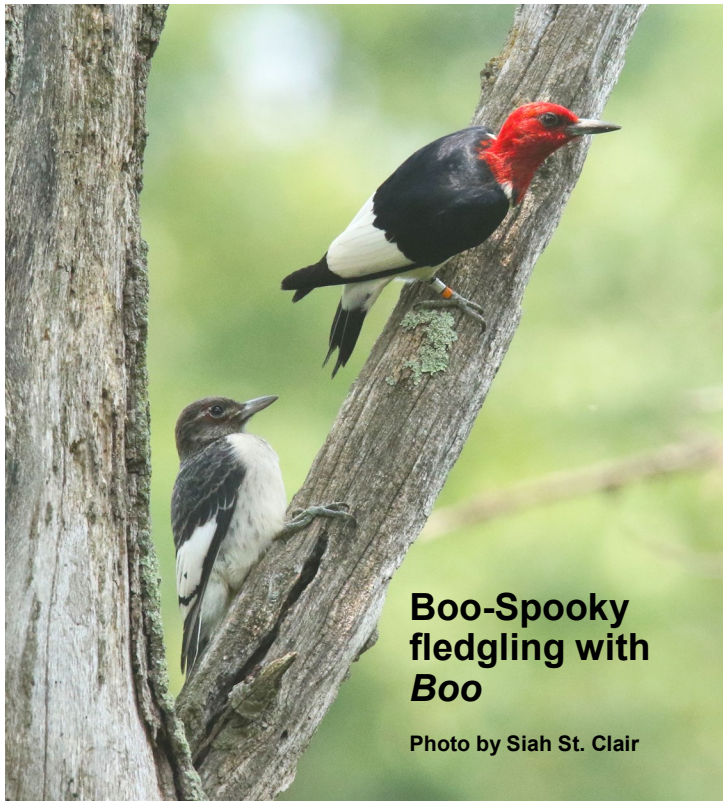
On July 11, Siah St. Clair and I went to Boo and Spooky's nest area, trying to find as many fledglings as possible. In the past, it has proved difficult to find all the fledglings in broods of more than two. So, I had little hope of seeing more than three of the fledglings that day.

As we approached the nest from the south, the adults appeared, eager for the peanuts they expected on the feeder near the nest. Two fledglings came from the south, passed us, and went north of the nest. Then two more fledglings came from the south and went north to the wooded area north of the nest. Finally, the fifth fledgling flew past.



Spooky

Photo by Siah St. Clair



**Boo-Spooky
fledgling with
Boo**

Photo by Siah St. Clair

With these five fledglings, Boo is tied for the fifth most fledglings produced over a lifetime by a male Red-headed Woodpecker at CCESR and Spooky is tied for first among females, both with 19 fledglings. From 2012 through 2022, 74.8% of Red-headed Woodpecker nests at CCESR succeeded in fledging at least one young. So, Boo and Spooky had about one chance in four of fledging any young. Red-headed Woodpeckers and woodpeckers in general exhibit brood reduction. Only rarely do all eggs hatch and result in fledglings.

Out of 113 Red-headed Woodpecker nests we have monitored at CCESR where at least one young fledged, on average 4.63 eggs were laid, 3.32 hatched, and 2.35 young fledged. So, we would have expected only two or three fledglings.

Why were these two birds able to fledge more young than we have ever seen in the past? They are experienced breeders and are very familiar with their territory. Their territory includes a small marsh, open areas, woods, and is adjacent to a large marsh. So, they have access to different insect prey, notably dragonflies and grasshoppers. They have been very successful in the past, but this year they have outdone themselves. They currently (July 24) are incubating five eggs in a second nest in the same cavity as the first, possibly adding to their record totals.

Jim Howitz

Continued from page 2, Note From the Editor

This has been another outstanding year of research on Red-headed Woodpeckers at Cedar Creek Ecosystems Science Reserve. While the Ornithological Research Technicians do receive remuneration, we would still like to thank them for their service. They do yeoman's duty up early and out late monitoring roost sites among the insects and heat.

We would also like to thank the volunteers who give up their time to be in the heat and feeding the insects.

While this description may not inspire all of you, we hope it inspires some of you to volunteer to help with this endeavor. It is absolutely amazing the amount of information our teams are collecting. I know Dr. Elena West is doing her utmost to get this information in the form of research papers so that the whole world will know about our success.

Finally I would like to thank the donors. It would not happen without **YOU**.

Jerry Bahls, Editor

Next RhWR Steering Committee

The RhWR Steering Committee usually meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm every 3 months. The next *virtual* meeting will be on September 20, 2023 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.

Important Dates

ACM Board Meeting Aug. 21, 2023
Steering Committee Meeting Sep. 20, 2023

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

I 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