



The REDHEAD



Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

Winter 2020

A Special Committee of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Vol. 14 No. 1

RHWO NEWS

RHWO Overwintering

Overwintering

This fall and winter (2019-20) there probably are more Red-headed Woodpeckers present at Cedar Creek than ever before. The official number of Red-headed Woodpeckers found on the Cedar Creek Bog Christmas Count held on December 15, 2019 was 98. We know we missed several due to the below zero temperatures and deep snow. There are wintering Red-headed Woodpeckers at Cedar Creek everywhere that they have ever been. For the first time, more than one Red-headed Woodpecker was in the far western part of the Cedar Creek savanna in the so-called Davis plots.

The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Project at Cedar Creek began in 2008. In 2012 birds began to breed in the savanna along the west side of East Bethel Boulevard. In 2019 the Red-headed Woodpecker population extended for a mile to the west. Overall because the eastern burn units have fewer and fewer trees, we are seeing the population shift westward into the western burn units where prescribed burning was begun more recently.

Here are two statements that we need better data to substantiate.

- 1) Wintering Red-headed Woodpeckers subsist largely, is not exclusively, on stored acorns.
- 2) The number of wintering Red-headed Woodpeckers depends on the number of northern pin oak acorns available.

- Jim Howitz



A Note from the Chair

Winter 2020

As we finalize plans for the work of the RhWR Project for the 2020 season, we also are receiving results from the work of the last few years. The data from one of “our” birds shows that it spent the winter of 2018-19 in the very southeastern tip of Iowa, around 400 miles south of Cedar Creek. And a Master’s student at the University of Toledo has published the first part of his project that includes data from Dr. Elena West’s work on RHWOs at Cedar Creek Ecosystems Science Reserve (Cedar Creek) from 2017-18.

We are planning to place 30 tracking devices on RHWOs this coming summer with hopes that they migrate in the fall of 2020, and return in the spring of 2021, and let us know where they traveled. Over 100 RHWOs are currently spending the winter at Cedar Creek. Learning why they choose to migrate some years and where they go is critical to helping their population numbers improve. Make a donation if you are able to help us cover costs of 3 summer research technicians, lab equipment, and educational materials to help get the word out about the plight of Red-headed Woodpeckers. And, if you can, attend our volunteer training on April 18 at Cedar Creek at 9:30 am to improve the success of our research.

Siah St. Clair, Steering Committee Chair

Note From the Editor

Some brief notes about this quarter’s newsletter. We apologize for the map appearance for those of you who receive this newsletter in black and white. The dark green is too dark to give a good contrast for some of the map details. When you look closely at the inset picture you can see small gray circles that show the bird’s position on several different days. To see this map in color and in better detail go to the blog at www.rhworesearch.org. We will strive to do a better job in the future.

Please review the list of volunteer opportunities on the back page and contact us (see page 2 for contact information) if you are interested in any of them.

Jerry Bahls, Editor

Tracking Data Reveals Red-headed Woodpecker Migration

By Dr. Elena West

Red-headed Woodpeckers are facultative migrants, meaning that they leave their breeding grounds during some winters but not during others. In general, facultative migration occurs in populations that experience seasonally fluctuating, but year-round, food at breeding sites, but it can occur due to other factors such as weather events. In contrast to facultative migrants, obligate migrants tend to leave breeding sites at the same time, in the same direction, and to the same wintering areas each year. The seasonal movements of facultative migrants are not well understood due to their irregular and often unpredictable occurrence.

Our understanding of the migratory movements of Red-headed Woodpeckers is limited to mostly anecdotal accounts and has focused on variation in food resources (i.e., annual mast production) as the primary factor hypothesized to drive whether individuals or populations leave their breeding sites in autumn. Determining the timing and distance of migratory movements, and sites used by Red-headed Woodpeckers outside of the breeding season are important for understanding their population dynamics, informing annual cycle conservation plans, and identifying the cues that may drive their migration patterns.

Over the last three breeding seasons at Cedar Creek we have marked 50 adult Red-headed Woodpeckers with miniature GPS tags to track autumn and winter movements and to better understand the frequency, timing, routes, and overwintering locations of birds that migrate from Cedar Creek. Prior to marking birds with these GPS tags we programmed GPS tags to record location estimates, once per week during the summer and winter months (May-August, December-February) and once every three days during the months in which we expected migration might occur (September-November, March-April). Each spring we attempt to recapture birds wearing these devices so that we can remove them (which are attached using harnesses made with strong ribbon) and download the stored data that shows where birds spent the non-breeding season.

Until recently, all of the data showed that the birds we recovered devices from spent their winters in and around Cedar Creek. However, in June 2019 we recaptured a female Red-headed Woodpecker that had been marked with a GPS tag in 2018, migrated to southeast Iowa in the fall, and returned to Cedar Creek sometime in 2019. The data from this bird's device indicates that she left Cedar Creek between September 1 – 4, 2018 and arrived in southeast Iowa sometime between September 7 – 10, where she appears to have spent the fall and early winter. During this bird's journey south, the device recorded a location on September 4 a few miles west of Wyalusing State Park, along the Mississippi River. On September 7, the device recorded a location a few miles outside of Dubuque, IA. Both of these locations appear to be in small, dense forest patches within landscapes dominated by agricultural fields.

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Membership Dues

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) receives almost all its operating revenues from membership dues.

- 1) Basic memberships are \$20.00/calendar year; 2) Those contributing \$50.00 or more will also receive a handsome embroidered patch along with the newsletter; 3) The newsletter will be published for members.

Send your membership applications and renewals to - **Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis RhWR, PO Box 3801, Minneapolis, MN, 55403-0801**

Thank you for your continued support.

RhWR Contact Information

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Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

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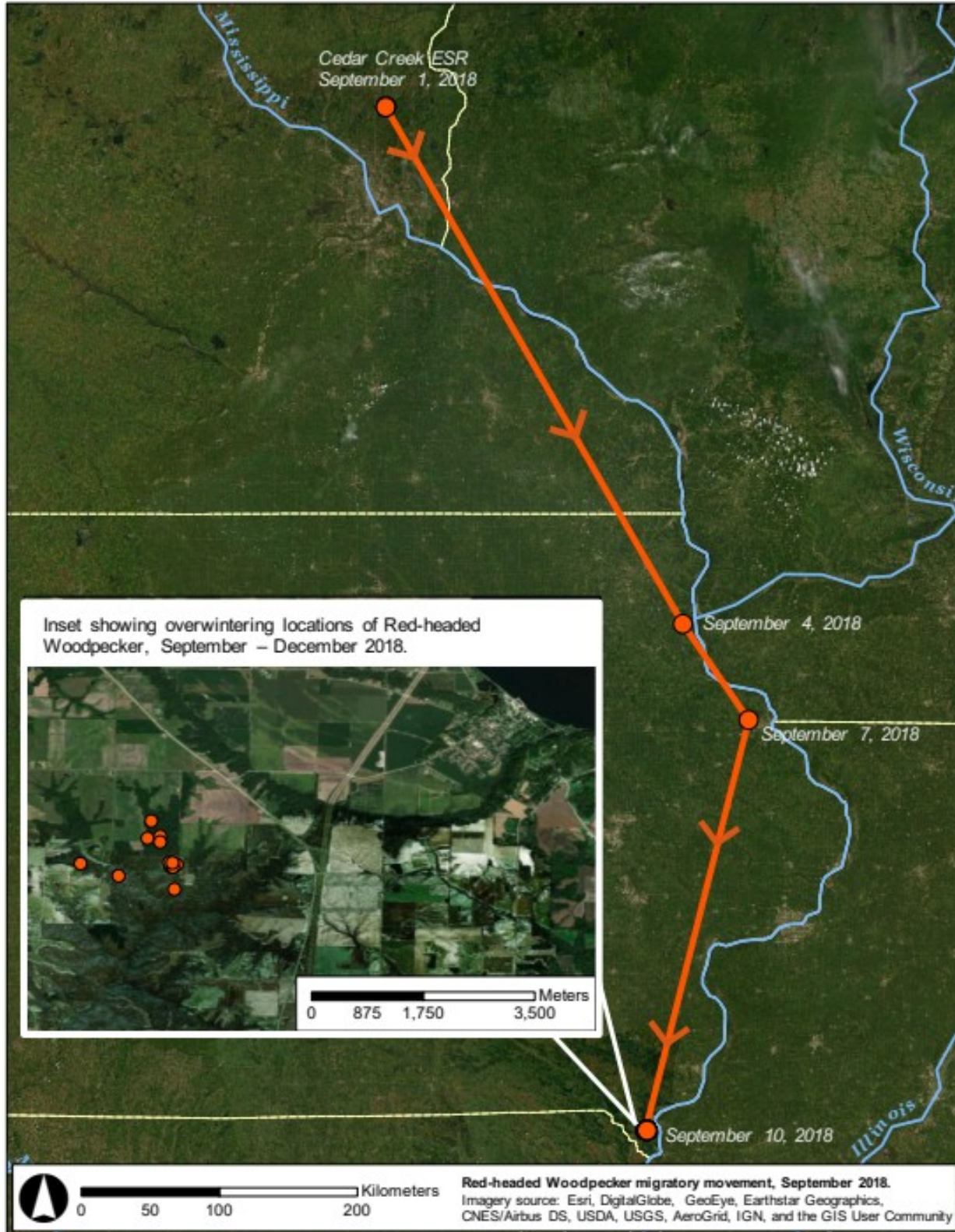
RhWR Fund Raiser

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**. If you know of an organization or individual that will donate money for research, please contact Jim.

Route, Continued from page 2

Location data from the device indicate that this bird spent the next three months in the southeast corner of Iowa, near the borders of Illinois and Missouri, in a patch of dense forest a few miles from the Mississippi River. Battery life on this device was shorter than expected and it stopped collecting data after December 27, 2018. Presumably this bird spent the remainder of the winter in this area, then returned to Cedar Creek in the spring. While the map shows known locations taken during the bird's fall migration, the lines connecting these points are not representative of the bird's path—birds do not fly entirely straight during migration after all! Based on the proximity of the points to the Mississippi River, it seems likely that the bird traveled along the Mississippi River flyway from Minnesota to southern Iowa. Our hope is that over

the next two years we are able to recover more GPS tags from red-headed woodpeckers that migrate from Cedar Creek so that we can learn more about the species' migration patterns and inform conservation planning throughout its range.



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) - Monitor roost sites, Monitor mast (Please note requires CCESR training.)

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 meeting will be on March 18, 2020 at the Brookdale Library at 6125 Shingle Creek Pkwy in Brooklyn Center at 7:00 pm. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please encourage friends to attend also. For current information check our website at www.RedheadRecovery.org.

Important Dates

Research Team Meeting	Mar. 16, 2020
Steering Committee Meeting	Mar. 18, 2020
ACM Board Meeting	Mar. 23, 2020
Cedar Creek Training	Apr. 18, 2020

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