



The REDHEAD

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery



Fall 2024

Working to improve the future of Red-headed Woodpeckers

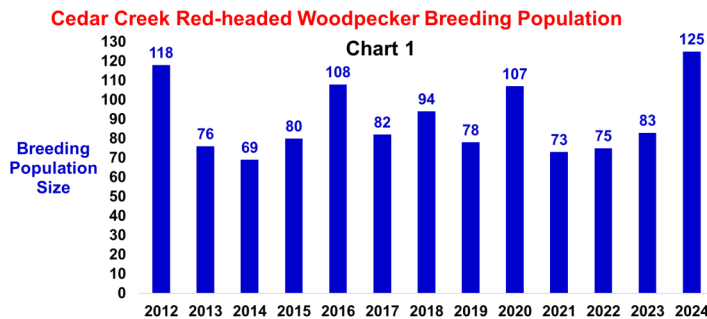
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RHOW NEWS

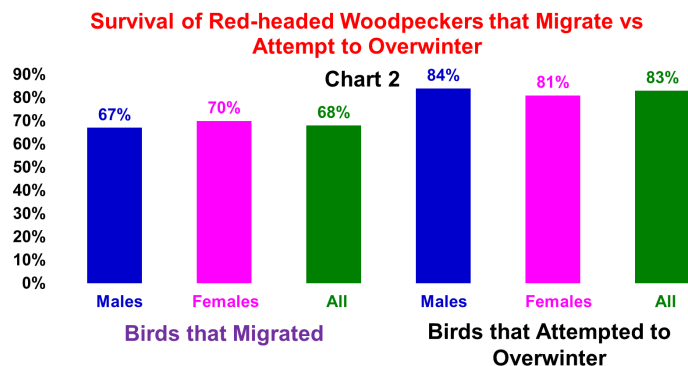
A Note from the Chair

Fall 2024

The 2024 Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve (Cedar Creek) Red-headed Woodpecker (RHW) breeding season was a record setter. The breeding population was the highest recorded since accurate counts began in 2012 and probably the highest ever. Chart 1 shows the Cedar Creek RHW breeding season population since 2012. The 125 adults in 2024 smashed the 2012 record of 118.



Acorn production by the northern pin oaks at Cedar Creek in 2023 was high, and all or nearly all of the RHWs present in the late summer attempted to overwinter, largely relying on stored acorns for food. RHWs that attempt to overwinter at Cedar Creek are more likely to be present in the subsequent breeding population than those that migrate elsewhere for the fall and winter (Chart 2). So, I expected a population increase in spring 2024.



Fledgling production in 2023 was the highest ever. So, some of the 2023 fledglings could have contributed to the 2024 population increase.

Fledgling production in 2024 was even higher than in 2023 because there were more breeding pairs in 2024 (Chart 3).

Continued on page 2, Bur oak

As I write this the fall colors are at their peak and my prairie gardens are making their transition to prepare for the months to come. The transition of the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery is near completion and is now an independent 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. See within this newsletter our new PO Box address and new website (not finished, but a good beginning). We will be getting more information into the new website soon.

We continue to learn more about Red-headed Woodpeckers (RHWs) constantly, which will help us all be better at helping them. I received communication from Carpenter Nature Center's fall migrating bird watch recently. They are located on the St. Croix River. They recorded more migrating RHWs than in any previous year of their count. While it feels good to hope this means there are more RHWs than in the past, we know now that RHW migration is connected to acorn productivity. We have also had reports from partners with cabins near the St. Croix River going north that their RHWs have all left for the winter. This information is probably connected to the large counts made at Carpenter Nature Center, and possibly low acorn production near the St. Croix River this year.

Meanwhile, at Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve in East Bethel, MN, the pin oak acorn production is the highest ever recorded and all the RHWs are apparently staying for the winter (120 RHWs at last count a few days ago with several areas still uncounted).

We are making plans to increase connections around the region to understand RHW locations, movements, and possible causes for movement. Contact us with any observations of RHWs that you may have to help grow this knowledge base.

Siah St. Clair, Steering Committee Chair

The RhWR is in need of volunteers to administer the organization. We need a Facebook editor to administer our page. We also need an assistant Webmaster to help monitor the website to keep it accurate and current. An assistant Newsletter Editor is needed to help with publication of "The REDHEAD". Watch for additional volunteer opportunities on the website. Contact either Jerry Bahls at rhwracm@comcast.net or Siah St. Clair at stclairs@comcast.net if you are interested.

Note From the Editor

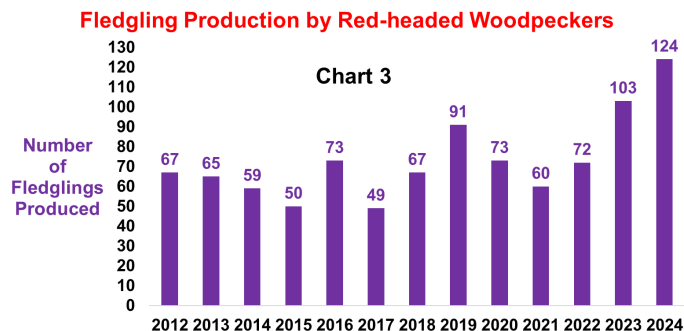
As you may have seen on our website or elsewhere, the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) has by mutual agreement separated from the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis. We thank them for nurturing us for the last eighteen years while we built a sustainable organization. We are now an independent non-profit corporation. We incorporated in May 2024 and received Internal Revenue Service exempt status in July 2024. This allows us to receive tax free donations from members and organizations. See the article in this newsletter on ways to contribute to the RhWR.

We have also been working very diligently to rebuild our website (<https://redheadwoodpeckerrecovery.org>) to provide information about our organization and to provide research results about Red-headed Woodpeckers that if implemented will help them survive and prosper. Visit it often!

Jerry Bahls, Editor

Bur oak, *Continued from page 1*

So, by August of 2024 over 100 adult RHWOs were present at Cedar Creek, as were over 100 juveniles.



The 2024 bur oak acorn crop was dismal, essentially zero. However, we have not seen RHWOs storing bur oak acorns for fall and winter. So, bur oak acorn production seems to have no effect on the number of RHWOs overwintering at Cedar Creek.

Much to my surprise, even though the 2023 northern pin oak acorn crop was very high, the northern pin oak acorn crop in 2024 was even higher. Consequently, many RHWOs are attempting to overwinter at Cedar Creek this fall. We are still trying to count them. They are avidly storing acorns as I write this account. By all measures, this has been a great year for the RHWOs we are studying.

The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery began because RHWO numbers were in decline in Minnesota and nationally. It is very gratifying that there are now more RHWOs on our principal study area than when the project began.

Jim Howitz

Contributing to RhWR

The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) depends upon its members and others to donate funds to run the organization and to fund the research on Red-head Woodpeckers (RHWO) to help them prosper when critical findings are implemented. Since 2017 the RhWR has funded research by contributing more than \$235,408 to learn what are critical factors that contribute to successful RHWO reproduction and sustaining their population. From 2017 to 2019 research was directed at learning what factors are important for drafting science based Best Management Practices for public and private landowners so that they will be able to implement practices that will benefit RHWOs.

The RhWR will be sending out letters in a few weeks to ask for your continued support. You can return the self addressed stamped envelope with your membership donation (\$20 is the base amount, but \$50 is suggested). Of course \$100 and higher donations are gratefully accepted. A check made out to Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery or RhWR is the lowest cost donation for you and us.

You can donate online via <https://rhwr.betterworld.org/donate> or on the RhWR website. Click on the "Donate" button. This will take you to the same BetterWorld website. This website accepts credit card donations for the RhWR. BetterWorld is a non-profit organization that does business raising funds for organizations. Donating by credit card is not free. You will have to pay a fee to donate by credit card. This fee is deducted from the donation before the donation is sent to the recipient. In a sample donation to the RhWR, we received \$23.97 of the \$25 donation. In addition to the credit card fee there also is a transfer fee charged by the company that actually transfers the money to our bank. This costs 2.9%+\$0.30/transaction which is deducted from your donation lowering the amount the RhWR receives. BetterWorld asks that you donate these fees to BetterWorld so that for a \$25 donation the RhWR would receive the full \$25. But your cost would be \$28.05 (based on a sample donation made by a volunteer, the communication received after the transaction indicated that \$1.06 was a donation to BetterWorld and \$1.99 was to cover credit card and transfer fees which BetterWorld collected and paid for the transfer). Please contact us if you want more info on these costs. We don't want to discourage you from donating via your credit card, but we want you to be informed about the costs. The best way to donate is by check sent by the US mail in the stamped self addressed envelope. We get 100% of the amount and there are no additional costs for you.

RhWR Contact Information

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

Mailing Address - Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery
PO Box 32172
Minneapolis, MN 55432-0172

Website Address - <https://redheadwoodpeckerrecovery.org>

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An Example of RHWO Nesting Resiliency

Red-headed Woodpeckers primarily nest in dead trees, usually dead trees that have a significant amount of heart rot, making it easier to excavate a nest. Dead trees like this often have a higher risk of structural failure, from windstorms, or just from the stress of standing tall.



Photo by Siah St. Clair

On May 9th this past summer one of these high-risk nests was discovered at Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve (Cedar Creek). We did not know it was at any higher risk than any of the other dozens of nests we found in the spring. We simply knew that a pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers (RHWO) were conducting regular incubation exchanges during the day on May 9th, which meant that they had eggs in the nest, and we could mark it down as an active nest. It officially became nest #335 in the next few days. In a couple of weeks there were 4 nestlings observed in the nest. Life was good.

On the night of June 9th there was a windstorm at Cedar Creek, and aspen nest tree #335 broke off just below the woodpecker nest hole. When we learned about this on the morning of June 10th we went to the nest to see if there were any survivors. The adults were chattering and landing in the trees nearby and on the small remains of the nest cavity,

which was now open to the sky. Using my long camera lens (600mm) I was able to see the head of one nestling poking above the jagged nest remains, and the adults were feeding it.

On June 14th we returned to the “nest” and found two healthy older nestlings begging loudly and being fed by the adults regularly, as if it was normal to have their nest open to the sky and the open “cavity” only an inch or so deep. We were hoping that predators and bad weather would stay away for a week or so to give these 2 lucky (so far) nestlings the chance to fledge out of this “very changed” nest. They looked like they would fledge in a few days.

Of course, hopes don't always work out, and on the night of June 17-18 there was a heavy rainstorm at Cedar Creek which filled up what remained of RHWO nest cavity #335. We went out to see if we could find any survivors



Photo by Siah St. Clair

on the morning of the 18th and were unable to find adults or nestlings. But the nestlings had been nearly ready to fledge, and if they had survived, they would be hiding and quiet in the leafy branches of nearby trees for several days.

We returned on June 26th and within a few yards of the broken nest we found two healthy fledglings being fed by the adults. The fledglings were still quiet but able to fly from tree to tree very easily. By early August the adults had started a new nest in a new tree, and the two fledglings were healthy and active.

Red-headed Woodpeckers, both adults and nestlings, take huge natural “disasters” in stride, and just keep working toward the goal of nest success. This time, at least, it worked for two young ones out of four, which is the average for Cedar Creek Red-headed Woodpecker nest success (about 50%).



Photo by Siah St. Clair

RhWR Website

The Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) website has been active for about two months. However it still is a work in progress. Visit it at <https://redheadwoodpeckerrecovery.org>. Visit it often and delve into the inner pages to find interesting information about Red-headed Woodpeckers (RHWO). Use the "Contact RhWR" page to let us know what you think about the website and to inform us about anything related to RHWOs. Click "Donate" to fund us.

The goal of the RhWR website is to provide information about the organization so that everyone knows who we are and what we do. This is done to inspire visitors to support our activities and to help by volunteering and providing financial support so that we can continue funding research and education.

Part of this goal is a desire to publish scientific information about RHWOs so that our organization is the first place anyone goes to learn about RHWOs. They will visit our website to learn about Best Management Practices on managing for RHWOs. They will learn about where they can be found. They will learn about their nesting habits. They will learn about their migration. They can find literature references about RHWOs to expand their research library.

Next RhWR Steering Committee

The RhWR Steering Committee usually meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm every 2 months. The next *virtual* meeting will be on November 20, 2024 at 7:00 pm. If you would like to participate, please contact Siah St. Clair. All are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Important Dates

Steering Committee Nov. 20, 2024
Annual Meeting Jan. 15, 2025

ALL meetings are *virtual* until further notice.

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery
PO Box 32172
Minneapolis MN 55432-0172

Save that Snag!

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Stamp
Here



Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery 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).

I'd like to donate to the RhWR as part of my IRS Retirement Distribution. Please contact us if unsure how to make the donation. We can help make it happen.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

E-MAIL _____

Send this application and make check payable to:

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery
PO Box 32172
Minneapolis, MN 55432-0172

Memo line: Redhead Woodpecker Recovery or RhWR