



The REDHEAD

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery



Winter 2026

Working to improve the future of Red-headed Woodpeckers

Vol. 20 No. 1

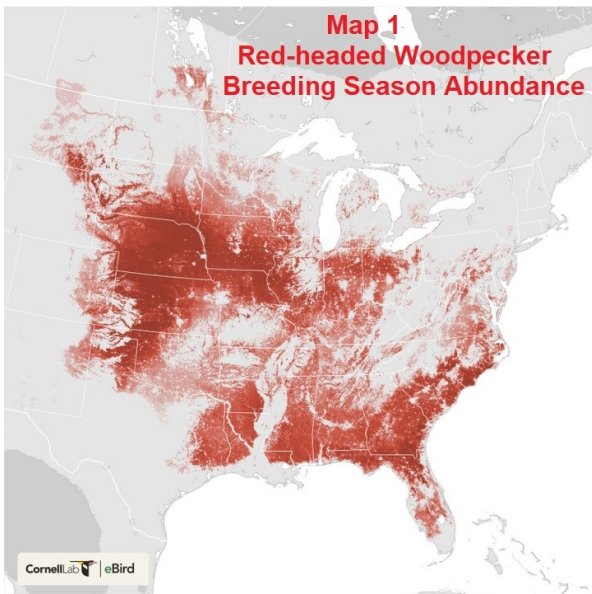
RHWO NEWS

Red-headed Woodpecker eBird Reports

I previously looked at Breeding Bird Survey (*The Redhead* Spring 2024) and Christmas Bird Count (*The Redhead* Summer 2024) data on Red-headed Woodpecker (RHWO) numbers. I concluded, "RHWO breeding populations appear to be stable or increasing throughout most of their range." Here I look at eBird reports.

All three of these surveys have limitations. Breeding Bird Surveys (BBSs) generally only cover areas accessible by roads and are essentially auditory surveys designed to detect singing songbird males. Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) only count birds from December 14 to January 5, and may emphasize maximizing the number of species reported rather than the number of individuals reported. Both rely on the expertise of individuals to identify birds in areas with which they have some familiarity.

The abundance maps produced by eBird use this definition: "Relative abundance is the estimated average count of individuals detected by an eBirder during a 1 hour, 2 kilometer traveling checklist at the optimal time of day for each species." During the breeding season, eBird reports should mirror the BBS reports, and during the non-breeding, non-migration season, the CBC reports.



Map 1 represents the numbers of Red-headed Woodpeckers (RHWOs) reported from 2009 – 2023 during the breeding season (June 7 – August 9). The darker the color, the more

birds reported. I am struck that most of Nebraska, Kansas, and Iowa, northern Missouri, southern South Dakota, and

Continued on page 3, Observations

A Note from the Chair

Winter 2026

As I write this my thermometer outside is reading minus 25 degrees. It is for these days that overwintering Red-headed Woodpeckers (RHWO) cache acorns within inches of the entrance to their roost cavities so they can get food without completely exiting their roost. Kind of like me this morning only partly opening my front door to get my newspaper.

There is a lot happening with our work to improve the future for Red-headed Woodpeckers. Our volunteers contributed over 2,000 hours in various activities in 2025. We have several new Habitat Partners and contacts for quite a few more in 2026. And we will be contributing funds for the wages of a research technician working on Red-headed Woodpecker research at Camp Ripley in 2026.

In addition, we have heard recently from nearly a dozen locations that they have RHWOs overwintering this year. We plan to follow up to see if these particular woodpeckers will be nesting at these locations in the summer of 2026. Special thanks to all those who have contributed to our recent membership renewal fund drive. Your funds are being well used to help Red-headed Woodpeckers. And also special thanks to our volunteers. Many spend long hours for several summer months in the field finding and observing RHWO nests.

Siah St. Clair, Steering Committee Chair

Habitat Partners

In the Winter of 2024, the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) decided to shift our emphasis away from pure research to more community involvement utilizing Habitat Partners. In the Fall 2025 "The REDHEAD", we defined what a Habitat Partner was and gave examples of who are and were Habitat Partners. The RhWR will be reaching out to potential Partners over the next year to try to establish or re-establish a relationship that will help us with the recovery of the Red-headed Woodpecker (RHWO).

If your organization is interested in becoming a Habitat Partner, please contact us by emailing anyone on our Board or message us through our website. Give a little background on who you are and what you have done or plan to do to help with the recovery of the RHWO. You need not have RHWO's in your area, but are endeavoring to attract them to your area.

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

Note From the Editor

We are wrapping up our fund raising campaign so if you haven't renewed please do so soon!

We are into the planning stage for the summer projects and activities. We are finalizing plans with some Habitat Partners and will be announcing plans that will begin this spring. We are excited to be moving into a new phase of our development.

Please note we still need volunteers to help. We are especially in need of members for our Outreach Committee who will guide our activities with the Habitat Partners. Please contact Siah St. Clair if you would like to help with the Outreach Committee. Planning meetings of the Outreach Committee will usually be monthly with the occasional extra meeting in some months. Hope to hear from you.!

Jerry Bahls, Editor

Membership Dues

Each Fall around Thanksgiving the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) sends out a notice to remind our members that it is time to renew their membership. The response has always been gratifying. We receive most of our operating revenues from these membership dues.

- 1) Membership is \$20.00 (\$50 is preferred)/calendar year.
- 2) The newsletter is published for members only.

Send your membership application and renewal to -

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

Or make an electronic donation to the RhWR by going to the RhWR website <<https://redheadwoodpeckerrecovery.org/>> and clicking on **CONTRIBUTE** then **eDonate**.

Thank you for your continued support.

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>

Chair - Siah St. Clair stclairs@comcast.net 763 234-6146
Treasurer - Jerry Bahls rhwrcm@comcast.net 763 355-8726
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A Bird Named "Baldy"



Apr 24, 2025

We have been feeding birds for several years living next to the Nerstrand Big Woods State Park. Red-headed Woodpeckers generally visit our feeders on a daily basis along with many other varieties of birds.

I first noticed a Red-headed Woodpecker with some affliction on its head in April 2025. It seemed to be healthy other than the appearance of its



May 3, 2025

head. In May 2025 I reached out to the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) Team to ask what may have happened to this bird. I was informed that it was probably an injury from a predator of some sort.



July 3, 2025



July 3, 2025

Since then, we have continued to monitor this bird

Continued on page 3, Baldy

Tree Diseases

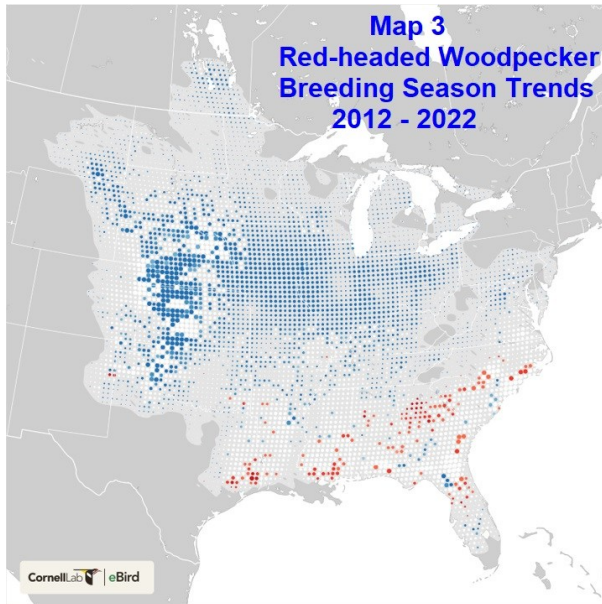
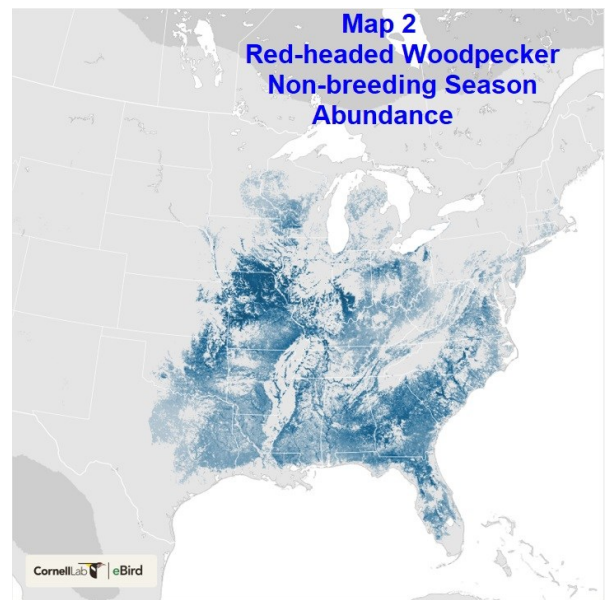
Tree diseases are a benefit for Red-headed Woodpeckers. They use diseased trees for their cavities since the disease softens the wood, making them easier to excavate.

From - Juliet E. Carroll, Plant Pathology, Cornell Cooperative Extension, 4-H Bulletin, J-116



western Illinois are nearly solid red. Undoubtedly, Red-headed Woodpeckers breed in these areas. However, I wonder how many of these observations are of easily seen birds on phone poles and power lines. RHWOs in wooded areas, especially in river bottoms, may be less likely to be reported. Note the near total absence of reports along the Lower Mississippi. Also note the scarcity of reports from cities in the Midwest, such as the Twin Cities, Milwaukee, Chicago, Omaha, Kansas City, and Indianapolis. RHWOs breed in pine woodlands in the South, as is consistent with the map.

Map 2 represents the numbers of RHWOs reported from 2009 – 2023 during the non-breeding season (November 8 – April 5). The lighter color evidently indicates fewer birds reported than during the breeding season. RHWOs are likely less evident during the colder months, as flycatching may be impractical and they spend less time foraging in the open. Note that the eBird data indicate that RHWOs are rarely reported in winter from the western parts of their breeding range. RHWOs breeding in the Plains States have long been thought to move east in the fall until they find a suitable mast-producing area. Map 2 suggests that the highest concentrations of RHWOs in winter are in Missouri, southern Iowa, possibly eastern Kansas and Oklahoma, and parts of Illinois and Indiana. The highest RHWO Christmas Count numbers since 2000 have generally been in Missouri, and eastern Kansas and Oklahoma, consistent with Map 2.



Map 3 depicts the cumulative change in estimated relative abundance during the breeding season (June 7 – August 23) from 2012 through 2022, with circles representing 27 km x 27 km regions. Red indicates decline and blue indicates increase. The darker the color, the stronger the trend. Circle sizes are scaled by the estimated relative abundance at the middle of the time period. I am surprised that eBird reports of RHWOs in all of the northern and central portions of their breeding range are increasing. The largest gains appear to be in the Great Plains, Wyoming and South Dakota to Oklahoma. My first guess is that it is an artifact of eBird reporting. That RHWOs seem to be stable or decreasing in the South is in conflict with the BBS data (See *The Redhead Summer 2024*).

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In any case, the eBird data support the conclusion drawn from the BBS and CBC data that RHWO populations appear to be stable or increasing throughout most of their range.

Jim Howitz



Baldy, Continued from page 2

(nicknamed Baldy) and are happy to say it appears to be thriving and is a very active regular at our feeders.

Becky Tatge

Editor's Note: All pictures were taken by Becky Tatge or Doug Tatge.

Clearly this injury that this Red-headed woodpecker has has healed sufficiently for it to function normally. It is interesting to speculate when the injury occurred. If there are wound experts out there who can give us an estimate when this bird suffered the injury and how it was inflicted, contact us!

Thank you



Outreach Committee

As you see in the "Important Dates" panel on the back page there is a TBA noted there. Part of the reason for that is the Committee needs to be re-structured with additional members to do its tasks.

To understand the function of the Outreach Committee one must know its mission and the tasks it needs to perform to fulfill its mission. Probably the first task of the Committee needs to be to draft a Committee mission statement. The Committee reaches out to the public to inform them of the goals of the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR). It will also be the Committee that is the lead in identifying, recruiting, assisting and funding Habitat Partners.

While we have several participating Habitat Partners, it would be nice to have several more that are spread across Minnesota and the upper midwest. Please review the Fall 2025 "The REDHEAD" article about Habitat Partners and determine if you qualify to be a Habitat Partner. If you determine you qualify send us a message through the website or to any Board member.

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

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 February 18, 2026 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 Feb. 18, 2026
Outreach Committee TBA

ALL meetings are *virtual* until further notice.

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

Save that Snag!

Place
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