



The REDHEAD



Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Program

Winter 2007

A Special Committee of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Vol. 1 No. 1

A Note from the Editor

This is the maiden issue of the newsletter that will be the main communication means with the newly formed Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Program (RhWRP). Thanks to a grant from the National Audubon Society, we are able to make this initial step in helping in the red-headed woodpecker recovery. We plan to publish this newsletter quarterly. Initially it will be distributed as an insert in the Kingfisher (March) and online through the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis website and via e-mail.

The approach will be two-fold; first, a program very similar to the Bluebird Recovery Program (BBRP) where members will put up nestboxes in habitat where red-headed woodpeckers are known to be and in habitat where they should be. These boxes will be closely monitored by the members. At the end of the nesting season a report will be submitted to RhWRP. Based on the reports, a summary report and some analysis of the results will be made to improve the chances of success in the following season. To keep costs down most of this reporting and analysis feedback can be accomplished through e-mail.

The second aspect of the program will be a review of red-headed woodpecker habitat and how can we restore it. We hope to do a literature search and consult with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service on red-headed woodpecker habitat. Based on the results, recommendations can be formulated that will outline steps they can take without altering the way owners use their land to provide the habitat that is favorable for the red-headed woodpecker. These recommendations will then be made into a pamphlet that will be distributed to landowners asking them to help our program. It is hoped that our members will be willing to provide some assistance to the landowners in the form of labor to accomplish the habitat restoration.

To get this Program started, we are asking you to become members of the RhWRP by filling out the membership application on the opposite side of this newsletter and sending a modest membership fee of \$5/year to us to help fund our activities. The other way to help is to volunteer to serve on a committee that will run the Program. All questions can be directed to Jerry Bahls (763 572-2333 or bahls001@tc.umn.edu).

Interim Editor—Jerry Bahls

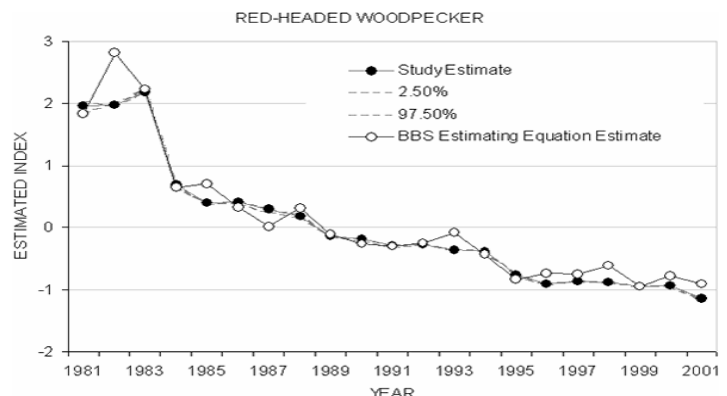
Habitat Information

Habitat Selection

The Red-headed Woodpecker excavates a cavity in a dead tree or a tree with dead limbs in open woodlands with a grassy understory, or little ground-level vegetation. Mature trees (birch, maple, oak, cottonwood, pines in the southern US) or utility poles are used for cavity sites. This species chooses Oak Savanna and Oak Woodlands over other forest types. Preferred trees vary from ~30-90 centimeters (12-36 inches) DBH (diameter at breast height). The cavity is located from ~2-25 meters (6-75 feet) above ground, with most being located ~7-12 meters (22-38 feet) above ground. They are often in a snag with no remaining bark. The Red-headed Woodpecker may be found nesting in an isolated snag in a grassland or agricultural field (Smith et al. 2000). Rodewald et al. (2005) found that Red-headed Woodpeckers nesting in golf courses chose nest patches that contained roughly twice as many hard-mast trees, snags, and dead limbs as non-nest habitat plots over the entire course. King et al. (*in press*) found that Red-headed Woodpeckers selected trees with greater dead limb length and nested in areas with greater basal area, cavity density, snag density, limb tree density, and total dead limb length. Red-headed woodpeckers exhibited a decadent tree threshold that was most accurately measured by the number of trees with dead limbs around (0.04 ha) nests.

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Red-headed Woodpecker Population Trend Graph—USGS



Habitat Availability

Loss of snags (dead or dying trees) is one of the chief problems for this species. Much habitat remains in the southern 2/3 of WI [Editor note—These comments can probably be more generalized to pertain to all of the upper Midwest.], but the species is nearly gone from much of its former WI range. Mature oak woodlands that have openings or on the edges in Wisconsin's Driftless Area harbor the most robust population remaining at present. Oak savanna in WI was this species' prime habitat, and 99% of presettlement savannah has been lost or altered. Response of the Red-headed Woodpecker to savannah restoration is promising. Grazed woodlots or any woodlot with abundant snags and few shrubs in the understory are also chosen, especially where savanna has been altered or lost (Davis et al. 2000, King 2003, Mueller 2002a and 2002b; Hansen and Mueller in press, King and Mueller, 2005; see also <http://www.wnrmag.com/stories/2005/aug05/red.htm>). Recent research on golf courses suggest that urbanized habitats with proper structure and composition could be important sources of Red-headed Woodpecker habitat (Rodewald et al. 2005, Rodewald et al. 2004).

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Recommended Management

Managing the Red-headed Woodpecker is best accomplished by protection of snags, removal of invasive shrubs, and the use of controlled burns and timber thinning in oak woodlands. Other methods include girdling of some mature trees for snag "creation" in savanna areas, and the restoration of preferred ground-layer vegetation. It has been recognized however, that "structure" seems more important to restoring this species than the composition of the vegetation community in which it is found. In simple terms, mature trees with a proportion of dead trees and dead limbs, with few shrubs and a grassy or low ground-layer, provide good habitat for the Red-headed Woodpecker (Davis et al. 2000, King 2003, Mueller 2002a). Managers wishing to manage specifically for Red-headed Woodpeckers should manage woodlands and savannas to contain 4 limb trees (trees with >1m dead limbs >10 cm in diameter) per 0.04 ha. Doing so will provide at least a 50% chance of having nesting woodpeckers (King et al. in press).

There is an excellent opportunity to manage for this species on smaller private lands, golf courses and city parks as tract size had little effect on breeding abundance or success (Brawn 2006, Rodewald et al. 2004). There is a significant opportunity to build upon programs that encourage private landowners/farmers, to manage woodlots in ways that promote this species (King and Mueller, 2005; see also <http://www.wnrmag.com/stories/2005/aug05/red.htm>).

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The RhWRP is interested in anyone with woodworking skills that would be interested in making nestboxes for its members at or slightly above material costs. Please contact Jerry Bahls at 763 572-2333 or bahls001@tc.umn.edu.

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Program Membership Application

Yes, I'd like to join! Please add me as a member of the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Program at the rate of \$5/year! Please send my membership information to the address below.

Yes, I'd like to join! Please add me as a member of the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Program and the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis at the rate of \$13/year. Please send my membership information and *Kingfisher* to the address below.

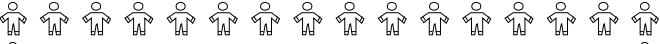


NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

E-MAIL _____

Send this application and make check payable to:
Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis
RhWRP
PO Box 3801
Minneapolis, MN 55403-0801


RhWRP Committee Members

Please contact Jerry Bahls to help get this program organized. It would be highly desirable to have a functioning committee meeting by the end of March. Much needs to be done to be ready for the coming nesting season. Preferred nestboxes need to be selected. Guidelines for box locations need to be drafted. Call!!!


RhWRP Contact Information

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